The Urban Working Class Representation of Perunggu Band's Ini Abadi

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Abstract

This article analyzes the lyrics and musical composition of a song by the Perunggu Band titled Ini Abadi. Perunggu is known as a viral band that promotes ideas about the urban working class. The lyrics express the grievances of the working class in facing economic realities and the political alienation of power. The context of urban labor is tied to the oppression of time and mental effort, creating a polemic around social and cultural status. This band is recognized as "the office workers' band," reflecting a lifestyle that is commonly faced by band members in Indonesia, who juggle two professions: being musicians and holding primary jobs. In the music industry context, the creation and determination of lyrics and musical composition can hold significance regarding the urban societal context. The aim of this research is to dissect the lyrics and musical composition created by the Perunggu Band, which represents the urban working class. The approach employs descriptive methods to analyze the song, utilizing theories of popular music analysis and cultural studies. The results indicate that this work represents the identity and anxieties of the urban working class through reflective lyrics and a composition that evokes a collective context of experience, resistance, and solidarity among the urban working class in Indonesia.
Keywords: Music Composition, Lyrics, Perunggu, Socio-Cultural, Urban Working Class

1. Introduction

In The spread of bands associated with socio-cultural contexts offers a focus on issues of identity and macro representation within the realm of urban culture. The cumulative index of band personnel with dual status reflects their existence. Perunggu is one such band that embodies dual roles as urban workers and musicians. Based in Jakarta, each member works in the SCBD (Sudirman Central Business District). This band presents ideas about urban workers and how to navigate life in the city. With 463.7k listeners on Spotify, each of their songs averages five million listeners, including tracks like "33x", "Kalibata 2012", "Pastikan Riuh Akhiri Malammu", "Biang Lara", and Ini Abadi. Given this number of listeners, it can be assumed that the themes conveyed in these lyrics successfully

represent a segment of urban society. Their Instagram account titled Office Rock Band illustrates how the band navigates life as both workers and musicians.

The musical quality of Perunggu, characterized by a dominant guitar distortion that feels fuzzy, overdriven, and distorted, signifies resistance against the hegemony of the urban working class. This rock music, known for its hard and strong nature, even anti-establishment, is evident in the harmony featuring noticeable chord transitions and modulation in every section. In the context of critical theory, the working class is seen as victims of power (Sholahudin, 2020). Economic power shackles workers' subjectivity in negotiating their place. The subject becomes alienated from the truth and is forced to follow the space of hegemonic sublimation. Thus, this song has gone viral, capable of depicting the socio-cultural identity in Indonesia, particularly among the urban working class.

Examining identity through music has

been conducted by several researchers, such as Born (2011), who stated that musical identity can be viewed through social mediation, including practices and experiences, as well as social and institutional conditions that provide certain types of musical practices. This indicates that music and social context are interrelated and mutually influential. Another perspective on identity is offered by Spyrou (2019) as liquid identity, where music in all its creative forms presents its identity, similar to the avant-garde phase post-World War II, with developing issues of nationalism.

In line with the idea of music and social representation, Raditya (2016) discusses ideologies related to music, and the idea of radicalism is identified through musical genres. Anwar (2020) explains that ideas about musical and personal aspects cannot be separated when searching for musical identity and examining culture.

This article focuses on the song by the Perunggu Band titled Ini Abadi. This principle is taken from the perspectives of musicology and cultural studies, where in the context of popular culture, the

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production process generates many practices of meaning in the form of values, ideologies, subordination, representation, existence, and political economy (Ida, 2014). Likewise, McDonald states (Strinati, 2014) that the context of popular culture as a dynamic force breaks down ancient boundaries, traditions, tastes, and blurs various differences to produce a homogeneous culture (Fitryarini, 2023). Strinati mentions that the consumption of popular culture by the masses will raise intellectual concerns among political leaders or moral and social reformers (Strinati, 2014), and not reflecting themselves and their groups is considered unproductive (Heryanto, 2012).

1.1 Analysis of Popular Music

In examining this research topic, the researcher utilizes the theoretical framework of popular music analysis articulated by Machin (2010). Machin elaborates on music studies through album iconography, visual composition, lyric analysis, sound semiotics, arrangement and rhythm, and genre.

Based on this theory, the researcher will employ lyric analysis, arrangement and rhythm, as well as genre to dissect and obtain results.

The lyric analysis is viewed through values, participants, and agency. To understand this, Machin (2010) monitors the basic structure of songs by outlining the themes presented; subsequently, the participants in the lyrics are identified within the role scheme present in the lyrics (Richardson, 2017), whether individual, interpersonal, or as a third party; further, actions and agency in the lyrics (Machin & Thornborrow, 2003) are examined to uncover the actors in the lyrics, whether they align with a positive/good side or as victims; next, the context occurring is considered as settings and circumstances (Cutler, 2000); and lastly, the activity schemes.

Arrangement and rhythm are viewed as meanings, perspectives on music, instrument arrangements, soundscapes, sound quality, sound origins, experiential meaning potential, and rhythm. In pop music, perspectives are created by different musical instruments or groups of instruments played at varying levels, or by the number of

instruments playing a part. Van Leeuwen (1999) posits that the positioning of sound and instruments expresses significant relationships with social distance. Meanwhile, instrument arrangements aim to consider these various patterns in unity and foreground to create different roles for individuals and communicate various types of social organization (Tagg, 1994; Tagg & Collins, 2001).

Soundscape is defined by Schafer (1993) as the typical urban sound represented by lo-fi and forests represented by hi-fi. Considering the associations of these different types of sounds, Van Leeuwen (1999) states that such types can distinguish the origins of sound quality meanings, origins, and metaphorical associations. The potential for experiential sound meaning focuses on the determination of specific cultural contexts, such as distorted guitar sounds depicting greed and resignation while simultaneously expressing aggressive resistance from soft acoustic (folk) guitars. Rhythm can be predicted through three aspects:

'pulse', 'accent', and 'meter' (Cooper, Cooper, & Meyer, 1963).

1.2. Approach to Popular Music Composition

Storey (2018) summarizes the views of Adorno and Simpson (1941) in analyzing pop music, which can be distilled into three specific points. First, it states that pop music is 'standardized,' as demonstrated through its most general to specific aspects, such as lyrics and musical patterns, which are exploited until reaching 'standard crystallization.' Second, pop music encourages passive listening, evident in the non-productive correlation of pop music that diverts attention from reality. Third, it claims that pop music operates by manifesting listeners into two types: compliant and emotional. In this view, standardization is musical and is interpreted into the works, thus the initial perspective in reading music is to focus on the working music text, from creation, process, to composition. This view is also echoed by David Machin (2010) in analyzing popular music, which he examines through image, sound, and text. In his theory, musical forms, visual imagery, actions, and functioning lyrics are articulated as signs.

The emerging meanings are also identified within class ideologies, listeners, and creators. Consequently, this refers to the creation of genres and the division of musical characteristics, shaped by youth waves and visualized on stage in dance music, which also hints at gender (Bennett, 2001).

1.3. Musical Identity

Bailey (2004) posits that musical identity explores the role of music in shaping identity from a social constructivist perspective, considering the self as a fluid identity that is reconstructed and renegotiated through experiences, situations, and interactions. This aligns with Spyrou (2019), who states that fluid identity in musical composition is based on a new image of musical sound, allowing for anarchic creative practices without an end goal. However, the context of identity in music and music in identity is perceived differently by MacDonald and Saarikallio (2022). Musical identity is seen as dynamic (constantly evolving, dialogic, and actively played out), embodied (shaped by how music

is expressed and physically experienced), and situated (emerging from interactions with social, technological, and cultural contexts).

Another perspective is offered by Põder and Kiilu (2015), who explain that musical identity is the perception of one's musical self, influenced by the surrounding social and cultural environment. Following a similar idea, Barbas (2022) describes music as a key element of identity, offering perceptions of self and collectivity.

1.4. Representation of the Urban Working Class in Music

Rodger (2020) observes popular music as a reflection of the worldview and aspirations of the working-class population, articulating class values and gender constructs of the working class. Musical genres are recognized as representations of specific classes, such as jazz and vaudeville as music that embodies the hopes and aspirations of the urban working-class community in Africa (Ballantine, 1991). Even country music can serve as a verbal form that builds a unique identity and as a space for socialization in the working-class life of Texas (Haugh,

2007), as well as representing the cultural and intellectual wealth of the working-class community (Fox, 2004).

2. Methods

Data collection was conducted by examining the song Ini Abadi by the Perunggu Band, as well as analyzing its lyrics and musical composition. Documents were obtained through articles, photos, social media, and stage videos from YouTube. The analysis of lyrics and composition follows Machin (2010), focusing on text, arrangement, rhythm, and music genre. Meanwhile, the context of musical identity is examined according to Frith (2004) and MacDonald and Saarikallio (2022) based on dynamics, embodiment, and situation.

To address the first question regarding the socio-cultural context of the urban working class in the lyrics of the song Ini Abadi by Perunggu, the theory of popular music analysis will be utilized, dividing roles, schemes, activities, and agency present in the song, which will

then be examined through the lens of urban working-class theory. The identified urban working class will then be interpreted within the context of musical identity, paying attention to music genre and instruments. The sounds and voices representing the context of urban society, as outlined in the second question regarding the musical composition constructed by Perunggu in the song Ini Abadi, become an identity that represents the anxieties of the urban working class.

3. Discussions

3.1. Socio-Cultural Context of the Urban Working Class in the Lyrics of the Song Ini Abadi by Perunggu

As expressed by Machin (2010), lyrics can articulate conceptual matters. Lyrics possess sign codes and contain complex values, ideas, and identities, simultaneously reflecting the cultural context and subcultures that shape the meanings and significance of popular music. Particularly, the themes and roles within the lyrics can represent societal contexts; this view is associated with the reflection of the moral

values of listeners (Preniqi, Kalimeri, & Saitis, 2022). For listeners, the lyrics of the song represent a part of life expressed through sound, containing values of struggle, shared experiences, and integrity toward the essence of life and challenges (Kuduk, 2018). In reading this context, the lyrics hold value regarding the socio-cultural conditions, especially those that express issues of the urban working class. Perunggu is a band consisting of three members: Maul Ibrahim (Vocals), Adam Adenan (Bass), and Ildo Hasman (Drums). All three members have backgrounds as people from Bandung, studied in Bandung, and later worked in Jakarta. The song Ini Abadi was created by Maul, depicting the life of migrating to a big city for work and livelihood.

Fig. 1 Lirik Lagu Ini Abadi Karya Perunggu Band

Narrative Analysis of the Song Ini Abadi The storyline in the lyrics of the song Ini Abadi revolves around a conflict concerning unfulfilled promises, wrapped in dialogues that ease tensions through memories of Bandung, which always serves as a comfort when expectations are unmet. The discussion reflects hopes for a sufficient life, to avoid overtime and the daily commute between Bandung and Gambir.

In Verse 1, two roles, "I" and "you," signify a state of unrest or conflict. Silence becomes the bitterness in a relationship assumed to be angry, manifested through quietness, creating an uncomfortable atmosphere. Verse 2 addresses promises that have yet to be fulfilled. Verse 3 reduces the tension in the relationship by recounting memories, expressed through scents lingering on clothes. Verse 4 reflects on how the next day might unfold (communication about dreams). Overall, the verses present the current context as a metaphor for a relationship/couple that complains and questions hopes/dreams for the future.

Verse 1:
Dihentak Sunyi
Geram gusar mu mulai
Gerayangi kupingku

Verse 2:
Dibungkam lagi
Janji yang sumbang itu
Tak semenarik dulu

Verse 3:
Sejuk wangimu
Tersisa di sela-sela
Baju hangatku

Verse 4:
Terakhir kali
kita bicarakan semua
besok kan bagaimana

Bridge:
Lihatlah semua sudut itu
Bandung kan selalu memelukmu
Dinginnya hangatkanmu selalu
Dilengkapi lapisan selimut

Reff:
Yang berupa dekapan nadi yang mengalir
Menjadi seruan di hati
Bermuarakan kabar baru
Tentang mimpi berkecukupan

Tanpa harus lembur lagi ke Gambir lagi
Senin pagi dilanjut taksi tenangkanlah
Ini abadi

The roles are depicted by A as the worker, husband, and partner working outside the city, and B as the spouse, wife, residing in a different city, in a passive position (silent). This indicates that A holds the primary role in narrating the lyrics. Maul, as the lyricist, draws from personal life experiences, and it is assumed that Maul represents A (male/husband) in the lyrics. A becomes a victim of power, with economic factors narrated in the working-class context, toiling for survival while being separated from family. Meanwhile, B is affected by A's behavior due to distance and unfulfilled promises. This role highlights how A is influenced by an economic system and power that sacrifices time, space, thought, and energy for survival.

Maul's role as a lyricist is intertwined with his sociocultural background. This shows that music is deeply connected to socio-cultural contexts, shaping understanding and appreciation for its origins (Davidson, 1997). The living conditions of the creator play a crucial role in the formation of personal and collective identity (Kablova & Teteria, 2020). The lyrics of Ini Abadi represent the identity of the songwriter's experiences as a narrative of resistance, integrating musical idioms with thematic discourse, symbolizing social protest. As noted by Treece (2018), song lyrics articulate the experiences of individual and collective oppression through codes, transforming personal struggles into powerful expressions of defiance.

The bridge describes Bandung as a "home" that can always be relied upon, serving as a refuge. It negotiates the situation and resolves the conflict by recalling memories to soothe grievances. The refrain, "the embrace of flowing veins," signifies life, embodying hopes for a sufficient life where commuting for work is unnecessary (Gambir as a marker of a major city/Jakarta), and the worry of tomorrow (Monday) is absent. The final phrase, the song's title Ini Abadi, acknowledges that these activities have become habitual and will be endured forever, with the attitude taken being one of patience (calm down). In the bridge and refrain, the description of the location where the events unfold—Bandung-Gambir—and the

markers "Monday-Taxi" signify the start of work activities. This portion outlines one's hope for a peaceful life without worrying about tomorrow, presumed to involve wealth and financial abundance, so overtime/commuting is no longer necessary. Yet, on the other hand, it reflects resignation to the situation and patience in facing it, despite the discomfort it may cause both oneself and those around them (partner/family).

The lyrical composition is constructed by narrating a pattern of challenge, resistance, and the struggle for justice against the powers that be (Fijai, Pujiati, & Setiawan, 2022). Although it may seem like a complaint, the narrative in Ini Abadi actually offers a critique of certain institutions as powers that sacrifice workers' bodies. The reality of the working class depends on corporate structures for survival, striving for a better future. However, the lyric markers "promise," "new news," "dreams of sufficiency," and "overtime" represent the reality of

office workers that contradict their desires. This creates an alienation of workers from the industrial work world. Thus, the song Ini Abadi implicitly expresses a stance on economic factors that bind and dominate, triggering activism and class consciousness, as individuals strive to reclaim agency and challenge oppressive structures, highlighting the complex relationship between experience and social movements (Sawyer & Gampa, 2020).

The evolution of the song's meaning over time reflects changes in the political landscape, allowing for reinterpretation and new relevance in contemporary struggles (Dean, 2023). This is demonstrated through historical context shifts and the collective memory of music as a medium for expressing demands and resistance. Popular music often provides opportunities for negative narratives and expressions of hatred in subtle ways. In this regard, lyrics act as reflections of societal values and issues, frequently criticizing and commenting on contemporary culture (Fedorak, 2018).

The socio-cultural context depicted by the lyrics of Ini Abadi by Perunggu Band

illustrates the story of workers seeking livelihoods in the city, representing the reality of urbanization where individuals choose large cities as their means of income. The urban working-class context shows the necessity of acquiescence under the power dynamic, which restricts freedom of movement and enforces a daily routine of overtime. Ini Abadi is interpreted as a critique of the behavior of urban workers who resign themselves to sacrificing time, energy, and thought within the alienation of economic power.

3.2. Musical Expression Reflecting the Urban Working Class

Musical expression can be examined through musical elements such as pitch, rhythm, harmony, form, timbre, and texture (Spyrou, 2019). These elements of musical composition can be viewed as identity, reflecting and shaping social meaning. Although the framework of music production, reception, and object is dynamic, it often results in diverse interpretations (Martin, 2012). As Machin (2010)

observes, arrangement and rhythm convey meaning, making sound quality a vehicle for identity. The song Ini Abadi is enveloped in rich piano play, strings, and expansive backing vocals. The prominent placement of the piano and strings serves a social role. Piano and string instruments are known as high-class classical instruments, initiated based on the historical development of global music concerning these instruments. Thus, their role serves as a symbol of macro culture with a strong dominance in the music industry. The sentimental theme in the lyrics of Ini Abadi makes the music attempt to create an equivalent space with higher social classes through piano and strings.

The arrangement of instruments, such as the piano in Ini Abadi, features an arpeggio pattern with chromatic root bass transitions, producing a dark atmosphere.

Fig. 2 Piano Play Pattern in the Song Ini Abadi by Perunggu Band.

The song features repeated verses up to four times. The verses represent the reality and

grievances of role A in the industrial work world, while the refrain is often assumed to express hope, prayer, or desire. The flat melodic flow in the verses indicates a horizontal pattern, interpreted as temporal, while the structure represents a vertical spatial role (Morgan, 1980). Counting more verses than refrains indicates that reality contrasts with hope, creating an imbalance. This is viewed as a context of power, where the space for the working class cannot harbor high hopes.

In the arrangement of instruments, there exists an identity of hegemony represented by the piano and strings. Piano and strings, recognized in Western classical music, denote strength, power, and dominance. According to Hsu, Huang, Nordgren, Rucker, and Galinsky (2015), these instruments communicate the ideology of the powerful, using high notes and arpeggio play to symbolize strength for individuals. Although representing the ideology of the powerful, Perunggu uses these instruments as a

communication medium to voice social themes. Piano and strings are commonly used in popular music; Chau and Horner (2015) understand them as having emotional nuances that evoke feelings such as happiness, romance, and tranquility in high notes and anger and heroism in low notes. Nevertheless, Perunggu utilizes high notes in piano accompaniment as a marker to convey anxiety, darkness, and concern.

The rhythm produced at a tempo of 65 BPM, with soft piano play, evokes tranquility and sadness (Chau, Mo, and Horner, 2016). In Ini Abadi, the impression conveyed is one of anxiety and concern, yet it also possesses tranquility, reflecting the behavior of urban working-class individuals facing the realities of the work world. This musical language is highly collective; Vieillard, Roy, and Peretz (2012) read it as an emotional nuance where instrumental performance can be responded to by listeners through musical expression that shows a universal impact. The urban context, in this case, sees Jakarta and Bandung as objects articulated in lyrics and instruments chosen as a conventional language.

Backing vocals serve as a backdrop, marking

a deep voice that expresses grievances. Van Leeuwen (1999) considers the placement of sound as a social distance. The phrase Ini Abadi echoed by the backing vocals signifies the role and position of subjects dominated by power in this song. Backing vocals represent the urban working class; the phrase Ini Abadi is viewed as an awareness of workers' lives, indicating that their position and role in this job will last forever.

Fig. 3 Vocal Melody Phrase of the Song Ini Abadi by Perunggu Band

The vocal melody phrase shown in the image above indicates a tenor range. Tenor is often used as the cantus firmus (main melody) in SATB music structure. The use of tenor identifies a common context, representing the urban working class (male). Van Leeuwen (1999) describes the arrangement of sound as social organization. The role of vocals and backing vocals signifies position within the social structure, which is distanced and separated from the individual's ability to achieve the top position.

4. Conclusions

Based on the analysis of the lyrics and musical composition of the song Ini Abadi by Perunggu Band, this article finds that the representation of the urban working class is articulated strongly through lyrical narratives highlighting the daily realities, anxieties, and socio-economic dynamics faced by workers in major cities. The song's lyrics reflect not only the grievances and hopes of the working class but also serve as a medium for collective expression that connects personal experiences with structural issues such as alienation, economic pressure, and identity negotiation amid the hegemony of power. Through the approach of popular music analysis, it is found that the narrative structure of the lyrics of Ini Abadi consistently positions the urban worker as both a genre and a victim within the urban social landscape, showcasing the duality of the musician's role, who is also an office worker.

From a compositional perspective, Perunggu

utilizes rock elements such as guitar distortion, dynamic rhythms, and strong harmonies to represent resistance, anxiety, and the distinctive energy of the urban working class. The arrangement choices and soundscape presented not only reinforce the lyrical message but also build an authentic musical identity relevant to the socio-cultural context of its audience. Thus, the song Ini Abadi functions not only as an artwork but also as a space for articulating identity, solidarity, and social critique for Indonesia's urban working class. This finding emphasizes that popular music, through integrated music and composition, can serve as both representation and a catalyst for change within the dynamics of contemporary urban society.

5. Acknowledge

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