

Punk Community Activism: Seizing Urban Space (A Comparison between Indonesian and Malaysian Punk Communities)

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Abstract

Purpose: We compared two punk communities: Lamidet Society (Yogyakarta) and Rumah Api (Kuala Lumpur) in conducting the activism movement related to urban issues; and identified the strategy used to fight the authorities, analysed how both communities adapt the spirit of resistance of the punk culture to the local culture and politics.

Methods: This study used in-depth interviews and participant observation to obtain deeper insights into the experiences and comparisons of punk community engagement in Yogyakarta and Kuala Lumpur. It also conducted a content analysis of interviews, encompassing zines, internet platforms, and lyrics to elucidate their ideology and socio-political statements regarding the appropriation of urban places.

Findings: Lamidet Society and Rumah Api diverge in their particular emphases, modes of expression, scale of scenes, and cultural contexts, reflecting the unique social and political landscapes in each country and the diverse nature of punk activism within the broader punk subculture. Thus, the dynamic character of these movements remained shaped by their specific circumstances and local conflicts in Indonesia and Malaysia.

Originality: This study addressed the demand for innovation by examining punk culture, particularly its evolution into a global phenomenon and its capacity to highlight local issues in the context of resistance against authorities, including urban issues. The juxtaposition of two punk communities in relation to their social and political contexts revealed its inherent novelty. Extensive research has been conducted on punk communities; however, comparative studies between the punk communities in Indonesia and Malaysia remain scarce.

Keywords: Punk Community, Urban Space, Activism, Urban Issues, Politics.

Introduction

Punk is a youth subculture that has a long tradition of anti-establishment politics and opposition to the dominant capitalist system. As a subculture, punk is identified by its alternative music and styles representing its ideology of resistance. Punk first appeared in England in the 1970s. Young people who represented the working class formed punk to oppose several conditions prevailing in urban England at that time, identified as the dominant culture. [During \(2005\)](#) mentioned there are three predecessor factors: (1) the highly industrialized of heavy metal and other rock genres, (2) the fading of the hippie movement with its middle-class overtones, and (3) the artificiality of glam rock. Therefore, punk brought new ideologies of anti-establishment and capitalism reflecting the urban issues.

From England, punk has spread to several parts of the world. It continues to grow up to now with various resistance of ideologies in line with the development of popular culture as well as modernity and capitalism. Punk subculture images and messages, in its development, have been tamed into popular culture's mainstream. Despite this

Article History: Received March 20, 2025; Revised April 26, 2025; Accepted December 05, 2025; Published December 28, 2025.

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commercialization, punk consistently functions as a sound of protest. Several instances have been identified in Asia. Punk possesses a dynamic and evolving presence in Asia, particularly in nations such as Indonesia, China, Myanmar, and Japan, frequently functioning as a medium of dissent and resistance.

In Japan for example, punk and hardcore subculturalists in northern Japan offer a chance to reconsider concepts of subcultural resistance. The Sapporo punk scene rejects the ‘salaryman’ as a representation of Japanese ‘national character’ through their daily act of resistance, which is both spectacular and unacknowledged as resistance (Letson, 2021). Punk activism in China engages in combative protests over urban issues. Examples of resistance include: (1) protesting government initiatives to develop Wuhan’s Donghu Lake for commercial purposes by capturing photographs and submitting them to a designated website; (2) participating in antidiscrimination events organized by pro-LGBT groups; and organizing events focused on themes such as LGBT rights. Both actions can be perceived as macro-oriented resistance, with members of subcultural groups participating in a broader societal movement (Xiao & Donaghey, 2022).

In South-East Asia, punk activism is promoted by authoritarian and post-authoritarian regimes. The Myanmar punk band The Rebel Riot, for example, joined the ‘Burma Wave’ or street demonstration with hundreds of thousands of people to protest armed resistance and widespread killings since the military detained Aung San Suu Kyi (DeHart, 2013; Ferrarese, 2022). In Malaysia, a song entitled *Turun Najib Turun* created by Kuala Lumpur based punk rock band *Dum Dum Tak* addressed corruption allegations against Najib Razak, Malaysian prime minister at that time (Ferrarese, 2022). In Indonesia, there is a new generation of punk subculture, called Islamic punk. The emergence of Islamic punk in the Indonesian post-authoritarian period is the result of a combination of state repression, commercialization, and increasing religious conservatism (Saefullah, 2017; Saefullah, 2018). Interestingly, punk in certain Southeast Asian cities serves as a subcultural boundary-work that distinguishes the underground from the mainstream (Martin-iverson, 2018; Hannerz, 2016). However, punk’s impact extends far beyond its fashion and musical landscape. It serves as a symbol of countercultural resistance, championing anti-authoritarianism and DIY creativity, including DIY urbanism; a small scale, informal interventions in urban spaces and decision-making processes, together with an examination of their formalization through co-production (Kaya & Görgün, 2019).

In this study, we compare the punk community activism in Malaysia and Indonesia. Extensive research has been conducted on punk communities; however, comparative studies between the punk communities in Indonesia and Malaysia, two adjacent nations with similar cultures, remain scarce. Notably, these communities exhibit distinct characteristics in their approaches to activism. Examining the comparative activism of punk communities in Indonesia and Malaysia is essential for enhancing studies on punk in Southeast Asia.

As neighbourhood countries, Indonesia and Malaysia have almost the same characteristics: the people, language, history of colonialism, and religion. Despite these similarities, there is a difference in the history of punk in the two countries. Punk, first came to Malaysia in 1978, and was introduced by Malaysian students who study in the United Kingdom. It then was distributed in elite schools and boarding schools through cassette tapes, shortwave radio broadcasts, and magazines from the United Kingdom, like “Smash Hit” and others (Annuar et al., 2016b). Meanwhile, in Indonesia punk arrived relatively late, about a decade after it appeared in Malaysia. Nevertheless, punk grew

generally more publicly and had a greater tendency to oppose (Nusyhidah et al., 2015). Numerous studies indicate that the narrative of the punk movement in Indonesia is intertwined with the youth's resistance against decades of tyranny during the New Order era under Suharto, as they sought to transition into a more democratic epoch (Wallach, 2005; Wilson, 2013; Pickles, 2000; Dunn, 2016). However, the punk community's resistance spirit was not always in a national context. Other studies suggested that punk resistance also emphasizes local politics (Baulch, 2003); or religious (Donaghey & Stewart, 2015).

According to (Martin-Iverson, 2018), in Malaysia, underground scenes, including punk, express, and contest the dominant politics of ethnic pluralism, at the same time punk also plays an important role in managing their new urban identities. Many punk communities are still exclusive and closed due to the acceptance of society that is still prejudiced against the group. Punk groups are always portrayed by the mainstream media in Malaysia as vagrants, homeless people, and even criminals. (Yusof, 2010) said that there is moral panic encouraged by Malay morality, in this context of Islam, labelling the punk community as deviant. However, the state in the two countries considered punk to have the potential to become a subversive element so that their activities should be monitored.

Punk created subcultures. Thus, the difference in the social context in Indonesia and Malaysia might construct different punk subcultures. (Martin-Iverson, 2012) once stated that punk in Indonesia during the post-authoritarianism period in the 2000s has been depoliticized and changed its orientation to lifestyle. Economic motives have replaced punk identity as a movement of resistance. However, it does not represent the entire punk community. There are still many punk communities that consistently bring the spirit of resistance. Several punk communities are still voicing the working-class aspirations of urban problems. Rumah Api, a punk community from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; and the Lamidet Society from Yogyakarta, Indonesia is two of them. Rumah Api is renowned in Kuala Lumpur as a community that boldly challenges the prevailing norm. Simultaneously, the Lamidet Society effectively mobilizes the lower class to engage in opposition against governmental authority, primarily through local football supporter clubs. The disparities in the political climate of Indonesia and Malaysia are reflected in the activist movements within both societies. This warrants additional exploration.

This study attempts to compare the activism movements of the two communities in struggling the urban problems. Moreover, this paper also identifies the resistance they conducted: what was resisted and how to fight against it. Furthermore, punk is often associated with globalized youth culture, but local contexts inevitably shape its manifestations. This comparison between the Indonesian and Malaysian punk communities could also highlight the tension between global punk ideals and locally relevant forms of activism.

As previously explained, this paper tries to compare how the two communities as subcultures voice, through music and activism, have fought for urban issues. For this reason, a literature summary is necessary to provide an understanding of the findings. It helps the researchers to absorb the historical context of the topic, assess the current state of knowledge, and define the research questions or objectives. Numerous literary works depict the rise of punk in Indonesia as coinciding with the changeover phase from the New Order to the Post-New Order. (Wallach, 2005) asserted that the rise of the underground music scene, encompassing punk, marked the advent of a more democratic epoch in Indonesia, particularly from the 1990s to the post-1998 period. Meanwhile,

according to (Wilson, 2013) in the mid-1990s, punk bands included slogans and symbols voicing social and political conditions at that time. Some punkers even joined opposition groups or built their own activist networks. However, in the 2000s punk became much less politically active (Martin-Iverson, 2012). The broader trends among Indonesian youth toward lifestyles and political pessimism are the causative factors (Xiao & Donaghey, 2022). Consequently, there are divisions of punk activities in the post-new order punk: some punkers prefer to ignore politics, while the rest are connected to global punk as a political movement (Pickles, 2000). The growth of the internet and communication technologies in the late 1990s facilitated Indonesian punkers in exchanging ideas and identities with worldwide punkers via fanzines, pamphlets, flyers, and tape sales. In subsequent developments, the popularity of punk triggered the music industry to commercialize Indonesian punk bands, starting with Rage Generation Brothers in 2000, and followed by Superman is Dead in 2003. The commercialization of punk is seen as dissolving punk ideology as an anti-authoritarian movement and anti-capitalist (Wilson, 2013).

Meanwhile, the birth of punk in Malaysia is often traced back to the late 1970s. Like the punk movements in other parts of the world, the emergence of punk in Malaysia was a response to social and political issues, as well as a desire to express individuality and rebellion against mainstream culture. The punk scene in Malaysia was heavily influenced by the global punk movement, particularly the punk scenes in the United Kingdom and the United States (Annuar et al., 2016a). The DIY (do-it-yourself) ethos, anti-establishment attitude, and loud, fast music were all characteristics that resonated with young Malaysians who were disappointed with societal norms and felt marginalized by mainstream culture (Hamid, 2017). Yet, there are two opinions about the beginning of punk music in Malaysia, namely through international dimension and domestic dimension premises.

The international dimension observes that punk has appeared in three ways such as (i) brought in by the Malaysian students pursuing studies in the United Kingdom, (ii) disseminated then in elite schools and boarding schools, and (iii) conversation among the young people who listened to cassettes and shortwave radio broadcasts or that read used magazines from the United Kingdom. Meanwhile, the domestic dimension can be examined through the first gathering of several individual punk music enthusiasts which started and spread in Terengganu around 1979. At that time, most of them are secondary school students. Therefore, the early trend of punk in Malaysia involves a lot of exchanging fanzines and punk music cassettes from abroad. Discussion is as well done through correspondence activities between them. In addition, the phenomenon of music studios only started around the mid-1980s, especially in big cities like Kuala Lumpur, Johor Bahru, and Penang (Annuar et al., 2016b). (Ismail, 2004) also stated that punk as underground music has become vibrant starting in 1988 when many punk bands actively produced demo-tape, published fanzine, and organized gigs. Slowly, it then spread to other states in Malaysia and has been participated by most young people from working class background.

The punk movement in Indonesian post-authoritarian develops into various interests. The background of Indonesia as a diverse country implicates to the diversity of local punk scenes. Although punk has been less political, it does not mean punk lose its concern as a form of resistance. (Martin-Iverson, 2020) sees the contestation of DIY politics: some punk scenes as youth lifestyles were co-opted by entrepreneurial projects (such as the distro industry of independent music and fashion outlets); the other punk

scenes stayed focus on a strong commitment to non-commercial DIY production by creating their own autonomous DIY community. Moreover, in terms of the growth of Islamist and authoritarian nationalist movements, the punk community reacted in the opposite ways. Some cases that subjected Indonesian punks to a new social disease, hence they must be re-educated. In December 2011, a punk concert in Banda Aceh, the regional capital of Aceh province that conducted Sharia law, was disbanded by public order officers and the police. They arrested punkers and forced them to undergo several weeks of rehabilitation (Wilson, 2013). On the contrary, there was a religious turn in some sections of Indonesia punkers. They created scenes, such as Punk Muslim and One Finger Movement, as proselytizing-oriented movements (Saefullah, 2018). However, with all the different or even contradictory ways, according to (Martin-Iverson, 2020), punk scenes have maintained their movements to challenge or at least provide an alternative to dominant power. Distro industry brings the spirit to be independent and alternative (Luvaas, 2012), meanwhile, punk Muslim are concerned with social activism by empowering street kids in the slum areas. They also fight against negative images of punkers through religious activities (Saefullah, 2018).

The intersection of punk and Muslim tradition also occurs in Malaysia. (Ismail & Liu, 2024) examined the clothing practices of female Muslim punks in Malaysia, analyzing the intricate relationships among gender, religion, and subcultural identities in the Malaysian context. The women utilize dress as a means of self-expression, empowerment, and resistance, thereby contesting historical omissions in punk discourse.

Punk and activism in Malaysia involve using the punk subculture as a platform to address social, political, and environmental issues, as well as advocating for change and raising awareness about various causes. There are several ways in which punk and activism has manifested in this country. Rooted in the rebellious spirit of punk culture, they utilize their music, art, and a DIY ethos to challenge societal norms and advocate for justice. They also confront issues such as corruption, cost of livings, human rights abuses, and censorship (Lee & Ferrarese, 2016). In addition, the punk community leverage their platform to address a spectrum of concerns, from environmental degradation and LGBTQ+ rights to racial inequality and freedom of expression. Benefit shows, fundraisers, workshops, zine publications, forums, and charity events are common approaches executed by the punk community in Malaysia to create spaces for education and empowerment (Hie, 2015). Furthermore, facing opposition and potential risks, they often connect and nurture a network of solidarity, both within the country and with the international punk communities and global activist movements. This networking amplifies their voices and helps them to access resources and support. Resilient and unyielding, punk activism in Malaysia disrupts the status quo, amplifying voices that demand change and contributing to a multifaceted fight for a more just society. However, some of them prefer to keep a low profile these days. They fear the threat of being detained and arrested for speaking out against the government (Ferrarese, 2018).

Methods

Studying punk and activism in Indonesia and Malaysia necessitates a comprehensive research methodology that accounts for cultural nuances and socio-political landscapes. Therefore, in this study, in-depth interviews and participant observation as the research method in collecting data help to gain further insights into the experiences and comparison of the punk community activism in both (Bernard, 2018; Patton, 2015). Comparative analysis between the two countries can reveal commonalities

and differences. Besides, this study implements content analysis of those interviews, including zines, online platforms, and lyrics to understand their ideology and socio-political messages in seizing the urban spaces (Krippendorff, 2018). Therefore, adopting a critical lens, at the same time we criticize power dynamics, identity politics, and subcultural resistance to comprehensively explore the complex relationship between punk culture and activism, and understand how it both reflects and challenges societal norms.

We interviewed six members of Lamidet Society as informants. There was also a total of five informants from the punk community especially Rumah Api that have been interviewed. These informants were selected due to their comprehensive awareness of the issues pertinent to the researchers. They were asked about their resistance, activism, causes, urban issues, and challenges. Observations have also been made in Rumah Api.

Results

The inseparable relationship between punk and urban issues is illustrated through the concept of punk urbanism mentioned by (Woods, 2019) in his interesting writing entitled *Punk Urbanism: Insurgency, Crisis, and Cultural Geography*. This concept reflects sections of London punk in the 1970s which revealed that a cultural geography based on coherent urban meanings creates another that does not accord with the dominant culture of urban space. Punk attempts to support the ‘other’ to interrupt and fights against the dominant urban culture. Woods also argues that the history of punk in London is close to urban insurgency, a redefinition of a dominant urban meaning which is assign as a goal to cities in general. Through his reading of songs entitled “Holiday in the Sun” by Sex Pistols, and “Suburban Relapse” by Siouxsie and the Banshees, he found out that both songs contain the spirit of urban insurgency and attempt to redefine a new form of urban politics organized around heterogeneity and contested difference.

The relationship between punk and urban issues is also traced from the term ‘scene’ which emphasizes everyday talks about urban cultures (Straw, 2004). Punk scenes play a role in the production and transformation of urban space and ways of life, that is the way it contributes to the development of cities. They claimed, reconfigured, and produced urban space. According to Straw, it is because the scene can describe people occupying public space in attractive ways. The correlation between music and urban issues has also been extensively examined. (Van der Hoeven & Hitters, 2020, Van der Hoeven & Hitters, 2023) assert that the interaction between live music and the built environment is enhanced, emphasizing how this cultural phenomenon contributes to the performance, re-development, and narration of urban places. However, the relationship between punk and urban issues raises a question, can punk scenes regenerate the city? Punk tradition is motivated by disillusionment with the authority who support capitalism to take over public space for industrialization, whereas urban project for regenerating cities is on the contrary.

(Shin, 2019) research on punk in Korea answered this question. His research shows that punk as a subculture is related to urban revitalization, regeneration, and renewal. However, capitalist urban projects have exploited the creativity of the punk subculture in their urban design policies. However, the punk subculture continues to create its own space in the city niches. (Martin-Iverson, 2020) research on Bandung hardcore punk also mentions the same concerns. Punk subcultures still work for social and political movements, but they are confronted by the attempts of capitalization from commercial creative industries and state-driven development. We also found the same concern in Lamidet Society and Rumah Api. However, both communities have different practices.

We describe how Lamidet Society and Rumah Api exercising punk as subculture to seize urban space in the next discussion.

The dominant urban interpretation has been contested by the initiatives of Lamidet Society. The Lamidet Society is a collective of young musicians united in their objective to enhance Yogyakarta's underground music scene. It was established in 2018 to shape their marginalized identities affected by discriminatory local government practices. The group comprises individuals from diverse backgrounds, including students, hotel staff, unemployed persons, and online motorcycle taxi operators. Despite their diverse backgrounds, they share a mutual interest in and concern for the issues facing Yogyakarta. Ultimately, they decided to use music as a medium to articulate their perspective on the issue. Consequently, we perceive the Lamidet Society as an environment, a youthful collective that emerged from their aspiration to cultivate values and articulate themselves through music (Shank, 1994). They are opposing the local authority through social media and participation in large-scale protests.

The supporters of the local football teams are members of Lamidet Society. Their connection as a fandom also influences and cultivates their identities as urban, working-class, and marginalized individuals. Their identities as football supporters have been incorporated into their extensive protests and musical performances.

The Lamidet Society is an activist group that seeks to contest the policies of the Yogyakarta administration. The capital of the Indonesian province of Yogyakarta is designated as the Special Region of Yogyakarta. Yogyakarta is the sole Indonesian province now governed by a monarchy system, rendering it distinctive. The monarchy has engendered two significant issues: Yogyakarta's status as a tourist attraction and agricultural problems. Provinces are urged to regulate the development of their respective regions under the regional autonomy policy (Laksono et al., 2011). For example, land prices have increased due to the Yogyakarta government's policy. The majority of the land in the city is owned by investors and immigrants (Sesanti, 2016). The city's status as a tourist attraction has prompted the construction of several hotels since 2012, resulting in various adverse effects, such as increased traffic, the depletion of green and public spaces, and soaring land values. Key districts in the city center are increasingly dominated by substantial capital investors, resulting in the erosion of municipal rights and the threat of eviction for residents.

According to Adnan Kusuma, a member of the local punk band DOM 65 and the Lamidet Society, Yogyakarta's municipal administration has enacted a policy aimed at increasing tourism, which adversely affects the local community. The water sources of the residents near the hotel have been depleted due to the hotel's constructions. He and other Lamidet members expressed concern on the inadequate minimum wage in the region, the exorbitant property prices, and the reality that only affluent immigrants could acquire real estate. As Lamidet engaged with the Brajamusti, a support organization for PSIM (Persatuan Sepak bola Indonesia Mataram), a professional football team in Yogyakarta, their concerns regarding urban issues intensify. Their connections to this fandom contribute to the formation and evolution of their identities as urban, working-class, and marginalized individuals.

The Lamidet Society exemplifies the essence of punk urbanism, which contests a uniform and coherent urban significance. From Terrace to The Stage (FTTS) is a community music concert organized by the Lamidet Society in 2018. Supporters of local football and underground music participated in distinct events. At this preliminary FTTS, political issues had not arisen. The primary objective was to offer a platform for local

musicians in Yogyakarta. The inaugural FTTS compilation album, *Titik Nol (Zero Point)*, was launched in November 2019, followed by the second FTTS performance in December 2019. This time, the bands addressed urban concerns such as class inequity between affluent immigrants and impoverished natives.

The Lamidet members exhibited banners and declared *Tourism Kills the City* to protest tourism-focused development that prioritizes large investors at the expense of the general populace's necessities. The other banner proclaimed *Nrimo Ing Pandum Dalam Ketimpangan* (Surrender to the Inequality), critiquing the ongoing issue of class inequity. This concert was autonomously arranged and funded by item sales. The fellow members of Lamidet deliberately rejected the propositions from various sponsors to maintain their independence. In May 2021, FTTS launched its second compilation album, *Urban Hurk*, which includes tunes that explore social concerns.

The creation of albums and the staging of events encapsulate the core of punk urbanism. Through CDs and concerts, they undermine the portrayal of Yogyakarta as a tourism city advocated by the municipal administration and investors. The Lamidet Society also restores the city of Yogyakarta as a dwelling for those deemed 'different' by the authorities. In contrast to (Woods, 2019) claim that the songs *Holiday in the Sun* and *Suburban Relapse* exemplify alternative insurgence urbanism rather than an urban movement, the Lamidet members continued their resistance through street protests, including a large demonstration against the harmful Job Creation Act in October 2020. The demonstration intensified into violence; law enforcement detained and assaulted the Lamidet members. Nevertheless, political acts through street protests function as manifestations of increased political solidarity. The involvement of Lamidet members in political activities challenges (Wallach, 2003) assertion that participants in the underground scene do not assume an active political role, as music is their only method of addressing political concerns.

The Lamidet activism is reinforced by the DIY ethos. Resistance requires autonomy from record labels or financial support. They create their own music, managed by Terrace Records, an independent label. In addition to generating recordings for online streaming, they also produce tracks on compact discs. They employ social media for promotion and Spotify for the dissemination of music. They create videos and podcasts on YouTube (see in Figure 1). The objective of these two platforms is to market content and distribute their work to audiences. All bands employ collaborative marketing strategies to enhance community welfare.

The aforementioned explanation explores the activism undertaken by the Lamidet society aims to amplify the views of native populations disadvantaged by the local administration, which has transformed Yogyakarta into an industrial metropolis. The industrial metropolis city makes Yogyakarta more profitable for immigrants than for native residents. The Lamidet's endeavor seeks to reclaim the significance of Yogyakarta as a city that rightfully belongs to its indigenous folks.



Figure 1. This image displays a screenshot from a podcast or talk show event entitled *Cangkemu* (your mouth). The topic of discussion was *Musik Dan Sepakbola Beda Tempat, Namun Dapat Beriringan* (Music and Football: Distinct Domains, Yet Capable of Coexistence) (source: the collaboration between From Terrace to The Stage (FTTS) and the Lamidet Society)

We move our discussion to Rumah Api's activism (see in Figure 2). We observed that Rumah Api's activism as an effort to produce alternative space of the city. According to (Martin-Iverson, 2020), punkers' hangouts have been important sites for urban, working class, and young people's sociality and place-making which differentiate them from the mainstream. Punk scenes establish spaces, such as performance venues, studios, distros, shop houses, galleries, art spaces, community organizing, or activist spaces of various kinds. They produce their own space, specifically an autonomous one, to run collective decision-making and social place which can be connected to as a form of protest and as an alternative to life away from capitalism. In addition, it is not subject to intervention from the state and economic pressure. Thus, the struggle to defend the space is important because it determines whether the punk community will be independent or otherwise (O'Connor, 2008). In Malaysia, several spaces are often associated with titles such as punk community, underground, alternative, or DIY. One of which is Rumah Api (Ampang, Kuala Lumpur).

Rumah Api was founded in December 2010. In the beginning, it was a place to have punk music gigs only. However, it started long before that, in 2007 under the name of 'Gudang Noisy.' Now, Rumah Api is not only actively organizing gigs, but also forums, discussions, exhibitions, and so on. Besides, they also joined and organized various activism such as Really, Really Free Market, Food Not Bombs, campaigns against highway projects, protests, and benefit gigs. The space is characteristically independent, grassroots, and run by members of the punk community themselves. Rumah Api's punk community shares the same values, for instance, social justice, equality, anti-establishment, autonomous action, collectivism, and DIY principles. They also follow the principles of no racism, no sexism, and no homophobia, aiming to create a safe and accepting environment where attendees can freely express themselves without fear of discrimination.

The punk community in Kuala Lumpur, as in many other cities, creates its own spaces for various reasons that are influenced by both global punk values and local dynamics. Moreover, Kuala Lumpur's urban landscape is dominated by mainstream culture and commercial spaces. Therefore, a punk community such as Rumah Api seeks to challenge these dominant narratives and norms by creating alternative spaces that allow for counter-cultural expressions, artistic experimentation, and youth empowerment. Their

space allows international and local punk bands and artists to showcase their talents, support underground talent, and provide a platform for art that might not fit into mainstream galleries. In addition, Rumah Api also serves as a gathering point for activists to organize political events, workshops, and discussions. Hence, the space offers an inclusive environment where anyone can embrace their unconventional identities and connect with others who share critical and similar thinking, values, and interests.

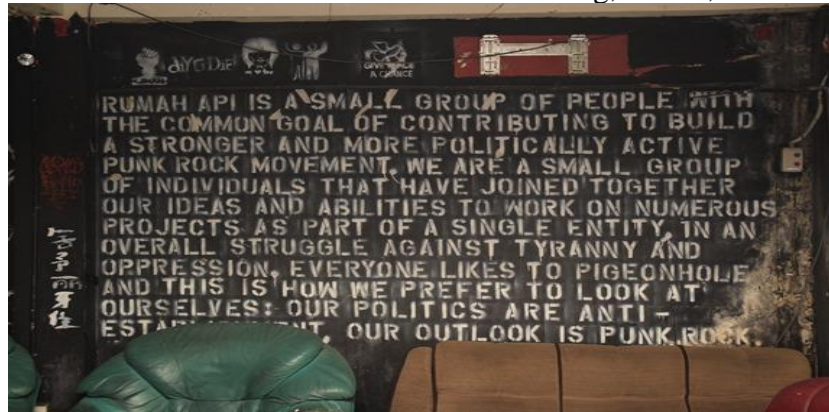


Figure 2. The photograph depicts a wall inscribed with words about Rumah Api, a diminutive, politically engaged punk rock collective. It delineates the collective objective of fortifying the punk rock movement, collaborating on initiatives as a unified organism, and combating tyranny and oppression. The group characterizes its ideology as anti-establishment (source: Rumah Api's activism)

However, there have been several occasions where the space has been raided by the police. One of the famous incidents was during the gig before the BERSIH 4.0 rally. On August 28, 2015, the police raided and arrested more than 100 people with accusations of harming parliamentary democracy, unlawful assembly, and entertainment permit violations. This raid may relate to the title of the gig that night: *Party Tonight, Revolution Tomorrow*, and the sentiments about the dangers of anarchism propagated by the government (MalayMail, 2015). No conviction occurred at that time. It was then seen as an attempt to intimidate the punk community. The authorities might target the space because they perceive them as sources of dissent or potential disruptions. This issue has also received attention and solidarity from the punk community in other countries. Nevertheless, this also shows that even the idea of resistance is continuously highlighted by the punk community as embedded in their space Rumah Api, but when they are openly confronted with the authority, they may have great difficulties and challenges. They also moved from a shophouse to a building on the 18th level due to the high rental price of the premises and to avoid complaints from the neighbourhood. However, recently, in 2023, the space is still visited and disturbed by the police.

Yet, as punk culture often emphasizes the DIY ethos, Rumah Api takes matters into their own hands and creates space and initiatives without relying on any institutions, industries, or government resources. This autonomy is a central aspect of punk's philosophy and contributes to the authenticity and grassroots nature of punk spaces. Rumah Api is supported by the punk community itself through donations, ticket sales for gigs, merchandise, and other forms of grassroots funding. They are practical and innovative in finding ways to fund and protect their space. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Rumah Api as a space also faced significant challenges, as did many other types of venues and cultural spaces. They quickly embraced digital platforms to stay connected and sustain their operation. Hence, Rumah Api has started a Patreon monthly

subscription for \$3 (MYR14) with subscribers getting early access to gigs and releases, and a 50 percent discount on tickets for gigs organised by Rumah Api (Ng, 2022). Hence, although Rumah Api might face various challenges in keeping its space, the space can still draw attention and be seen as source of activism and consciousness.

Discussion

Some studies have scrutinized the idealism of the punk subculture. They questioned punk's reliability in opposing state authority and capitalist domination. Their viewpoint is susceptible to exploitation by commercial sectors and state-led growth. Nonetheless, Lamidet Society and Rumah Api remain somewhat insulated from state and industrial interference. They persist in playing a significant part in orchestrating anti-domination protests, necessitating confrontation with state apparatus; the police assaulted and apprehended the punks. It perpetuates punk's notion that references particular locales or subcultures, having been recognized as a broad anti-establishment sentiment and an anti-consumerist stance, accompanied by a proclivity for do-it-yourself (DIY) initiatives (Sharp & Threadgold, 2019). Diverse manifestations of resistance were executed, encompassing both overt and everyday resistance. Everyday practices that challenge or seek to contest an established order may be regarded as resistance. According to Vinthagen and Johansson in (Hill, 2024), resistance is frequently unacknowledged, often concealed or obscured, individualistic, and lacks political articulation.

In his examination of contemporary global punk rock, Kevin Dunn notes that the most enduring and prosperous punk rock ventures are those that eschew market logic and its focus on perpetual profit maximization in (Carswell, 2016; Haworth, 2023). The Lamidet Society and Rumah Api engage in these activities to fight against commercial industries in their every day's activities. Both communities retain their independence from commercial industries by practicing DIY culture. Considering Zavella's assertion, punks adopt a DIY mentality that rejects capitalism and commerce in (Rhodes, 2023). Additional elaborations included the creation of zines or crafts, as well as engaging in other creative pursuits such as writing, playing music, or participating in political activities to effectuate change. Nonetheless, there was an impression that DIY encompassed personal accountability and collective autonomy Martin-Iverson in (Way, 2021). The concept of DIY executed by the two communities embodies both individual and collaborative aspects.

Nonetheless, both communities employ different strategies in executing the activism movement concerning urban challenges. The Lamidet Society employs music and performance to critique local governmental policies that align with capitalist enterprises. FTTS serves as a platform for articulating the perspectives of 'the other' or those excluded by urban policies. The 'other' in this context refers to the PSIM supporters identified as Brajamusti. The urban policymakers regarded Brajamusti's actions as detrimental. (Fuller & Junaedi, 2018) posits that Brajamusti are perceived as troublemakers and outsiders due to their actions diverging from conventional Javanese behavior. Brajamusti, as stated by Lamidet members, symbolizes the Yogyakarta citizens who have been disadvantaged by urban growth. FTTS presents an alternative perspective on urbanism, aligning with Wood's concept of punk urbanism, and is structured around a confrontation with otherness and heterogeneity. The stage performances of bands provided diverse insights of Yogyakarta. Following their condemnation from the stage, public protests ensue. Consequently, Lamidet's advocacy focused on questioning and fighting the notion of Yogyakarta as a tourism city.

The activism of the Lamidet Society seeks to directly oppose the local administration. In the context of rapid urbanization and globalization, Yogyakarta encounters significant challenges in fulfilling contemporary requirements (Ariwibowo & Fibiona, 2025). The sultanate's ensuing policies did not advantage the local populace, especially the lower socioeconomic strata. Criticism of the Yogyakarta Sultanate's policies is considered taboo within the institution of the monarchy. Critiquing the Yogyakarta Government equates to critiquing the revered institutions of the Sultanate. Their courage in challenging the government is intrinsically linked to the history of punk in Indonesia, which emerged as a response to New Order tyranny. The underground scene included punk, in Yogyakarta exhibited a profound concern for the political climate of the 1990s. Their expressions and critiques of the political landscape have persisted following Suharto's resignation, and the Lamidet Society embodies this attitude today in opposing local governance.

Meanwhile, Rumah Api establishes the autonomy space as their response and struggles against the domination of an authoritarian state and capitalist system. They push and advocate for inclusivity, accessibility, and safe spaces within the punk scene and broader society. This form of activism is specifically aimed at creating environments where people from diverse backgrounds and marginalized communities can take part in any activism or social change without fear of discrimination or exclusion.

The creation of this space may also be perceived as a strategy to resist prevailing authority. Contemplating Bourdieu's proposition that social space serves as a metaphorical space to delineate the framework of social relations and power dynamics inside a society. It is not a physical space but a conceptual framework for comprehending the positioning of persons and groups relative to one another, shaped by elements such as economic and cultural capital. Particular field configurations and challenges within the punk field may alter the legitimacy and prominence of those capitals. Consequently, hierarchies of habitus and cultural taste may be challenged in (Sharp & Nilan, 2017). Consequently, the physical space established by Rumah Api embodies the evolving significance of capital.

Moreover, the DIY principles are central to punk space activism. Rumah Api often runs its own inclusive events, gigs, and other projects that promote their values and principles. Therefore, they could represent the resilience of punk culture as a platform for social and cultural transformation. The community demonstrates that punk is not just about music and fashion but can also serve as a powerful tool for advocating for social justice and creating spaces where everyone's voice and identity are respected and valued. Through grassroots initiatives, Rumah Api could be a testament to the enduring force of punk as a vehicle for social change and resistance. Yet, the authorities may still attempt to co-opt punk's anti-establishment, infiltrate or monitor punk communities, and manipulate the depiction of the punk community, focusing on its extreme or sensational aspects while downplaying its social and political critiques.

As local communities, Rumah Api and Lamidet Society have localized the global influence of punk, as noted by Dunn in (Vass & Heffernan, 2023). However, while both Lamidet Society and Rumah Api share a commitment to activism and resistance, they differ in their specific focuses, expressions, scene sizes, and cultural contexts. Lamidet Society may focus on more localized social and political problems through songs, whereas Rumah Api addresses a wider range of concerns by creating their own space, exposing the complexities of their society. These differences reflect the unique social and political landscapes in each country and the diverse nature of punk activism within the

broader punk subculture. Hence, the evolving nature of these movements continues to be influenced by their respective contexts and local struggles in Indonesia and Malaysia.

This study, despite its thoroughness and comprehensiveness, possesses some weaknesses and limits. Firstly, our research only examines the activities and initiatives undertaken by the Lamidet Society and Rumah Api. As a result, it lacks data regarding the effects of activism conducted by both communities, concerning both the constituents or people they represent, and also the authority they challenge. Consequently, greater investigation of the impact of this movement is required. Secondly, this report solely delineates the activities of the two groups, highlighting their similarities and differences. The limited space in this publication has not afforded the authors the opportunity to elucidate the relationship between the disparities in social, political, and cultural contexts in Indonesia and Malaysia about Rumah Api and Lamidet Society activisms. The subsequent paper addressing this issue will be prepared thereafter.

Conclusion

This study discovered that punk communities continue to engage in activism and resistance. As part of a global phenomenon, they emphasize their attention on local issues. The social and political context affects their specific emphases, means of expression, scene scale, and cultural surroundings. Following the findings from studies on Lamidet Society and Rumah Api, this research suggests that the presence of punk activism remains essential to counterbalance the activities or policies implemented by authorities, specifically the government or elites influenced by the capitalist system. Additional studies are advised to enhance the critical interest of the research on amplifying the voices of minority groups, in this case punk communities as subcultures constitute minority groups. Alternative methods for investigation must also be developed to assist with this objective.

Conflict of Interest

We certify that there is no conflict of interest with any financial, personal, or other relationships with other people or organization related to the material discussed in the manuscript.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank to *Lembaga Riset dan Inovasi* (Research and Innovation Institute) Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta for providing funding, and the opportunity given to finish this research.

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