# Technology Negotiation in Dangdut Koplo's Ecosystem and Practices

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**ABSTRACT** This article deals with the negotiation between the subgenre of Dangdut and technology. In this article, I articulate how agents of Dangdut Koplo use digital technology and how digital technology affects Dangdut Koplo's ecosystem, cultural, and social practices. It is necessary to discuss Dangdut Koplo because it has several practices that are impacted by technology. Their practices elaborate on how society negotiated the use of technology. Dangdut koplo is one of the regional dangdut (dangdut daerah) subgenres that has developed in Indonesia, particularly East Java. Dangdut koplo emerged in the 1990s in Jarak Street, Surabaya, East Java. Furthermore, I will refer to two moments that demonstrated the impact of technology on the subgenre: first, the local people's activation of the local recording industry, and second, the activation of the internet and digital platforms by local people. I will elaborate on these to show the negotiation pattern between technology and their music, Dangdut Koplo. At the first moment, technological advances made people develop their local industries. The existence of local industries changed their economic and cultural patterns. Furthermore, middlemen in the music industry that Jakarta previously monopolized shifted to their surroundings. As a result, they could activate and directly control their economy and society. Then, the first moment developed rapidly in the second moment, when the internet changed society's social, economic, and cultural patterns. The internet allowed everyone to distribute their work. They could directly access consumers without the role of the previous middleman. Melayu Orchestra does not need a local music label or distributor with a solid fan base. They could distribute their works on the internet and digital platforms. This technological impact meant the Melayu Orchestra could compete with the local recording industry and vice versa. This pattern also changed their production processes, where digital needs made daily impressions, the development of Melayu orchestra personas on gadget screens, etc. Based on these developments, I elaborated on these questions: How did the ecosystem changes and its relationships impact the dangdut community? How is the dangdut community negotiating with technology? Utilizing digital data and observation data (obtained in 2017), I articulate how technological developments changed society's ecosystem and practice; and how society deals with technology.

KEYWORDS *Dangdut Koplo; ecosystem; negotiation; technology*

## INTRODUCTION

The regional subgenre of Dangdut, Dangdut Koplo, became famous nationally in 2003 after Inul Daratista's performance was disseminated through video compact disc (VCD) or digital format video. The explosive impact made Dangdut Koplo receive considerable attention in Jakarta and many other areas. However, the impression was unbeneficial for the subgenre as many people condemned it for two reasons. *First,* the VCDs were pirated. *Secondly*, on the VCD, a female singer, Inul Daratista, does a particular dancing, "drilling" or *ngebor*. These things made Dangdut Koplo's image horrible.

Also, society viewed three things about Dangdut Koplo as problematic: (1) The dance performances to Dangdut Koplo are erotic, sexy, and even pornographic. Inul Daratista's video received mixed responses from society; some responded negatively, and others were neutral. Indonesian scholar, Ariel Heryanto

(2009, p. 15), also noted several actions that blamed Inul Daratista because of the dance; (2) There were no new song compositions of the subgenre. The Melayu Orchestra in East Java only performs the music without the tendency of composing a new song. The Melayu Orchestra in East Java is considered a plagiarist because they do not compose new songs and only play existing ones. Raditya and Simatupang (2018) articulated the condition of East Java's Melayu Orchestra that focused on song arrangement; (3) There are allegations of distributing pirated music without a permit and via buses. Many pirated VCDs were disseminated in the Pantura area. Songwriters, producers, and legal distributors hated this format hated. These acts do not align with the previous Dangdut system and ecosystem, which Rhoma Irama and PAMMI created. PAMMI is the Association of Indonesian Dangdut Malay Musicians and Singers created by Rhoma Irama. The rivalry between them seems unfinished to this day.

I am interested in exploring this rivalry between Dangdut Koplo and Rhoma Irama without favoring one side against the other. Furthermore, I want to show what makes Dangdut Koplo different, particularly the role of digital technology in their development and popularity and vice versa. For instance, how they leveraged the digital technology of video recording to produce sexy and erotic performances and made them explicit. They also employed the digital organ and sound technology called MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) to intertwine the appearance of a cover artist and tracer. Lastly, using the reproduction technology system because of inadequate distribution, which now resulted in piracy.

Dangdut Koplo's agents deployed several technology tools, such as video recording, electric organ, sound MIDI, and reproduction system. For instance, despite the Melayu Orchestra producing the sound from various manual instruments, in 2010, they used MIDI—a sample sound in keyboard instruments or organs. Through MIDI, they attempted to provide a way to communicate all musical performance features digitally (Hahn, 2020). So the group can combine the music with manual instruments and MIDI sound during live performances. The negotiation in MIDI sound is the type of music that they use. Edy Sonata uses the bamboo sound—that he recorded by himself as MIDI. Edy said I thought the sound of bamboo was good, so I recorded the bamboo sound by myself because it was hard to find an expert these days (pers. comm., 6 September 2017). In short, Edy did not only follow the default sounds of the MIDI but also put other sounds that he needed.

Another example is video recording. Before the Melayu Orchestra became familiar with video recording, live performances were the only way to watch the performance. But with video recording, the producers used the tools to disseminate the new songs and artists and keep their audiences. The audience also uses video recording for their collection by taking videos randomly. Technology became the primary medium for spreading Dangdut Koplo.

This paper examines the development of technology and the logic of use regarding the Dangdut Koplo music subgenre. I highlight two moments of utilizing technology in the development of Dangdut Koplo, among others. *First*, the implications of digital

technology in the late 1990s—the emergence of Dangdut Koplo—and *second*, the impacts of digital technology in the internet era. I focus on the triumph of Dangdut Koplo in 2014 and 2015. In my opinion, these two moments are essential for showing agents' interaction with technology development.

I will discuss those two moments with the mediatization theory written by media scholar Couldry (2008). He writes,

*Mediatization, as developed by Friedrich Krotz, Winfried Schulz, Stig Hjarvard, and others (Hjarvard, 2004; Krotz, 2001; Schulz, 2004), is a useful attempt to concentrate our focus on a particular transformative logic or mechanism that is understood to do something distinctive to (that is, to 'mediatize') particular processes, objects and fields: a distinctive and consistent transformation that, it is suggested, can only properly be understood if seen as part of a wider transformation of social and cultural life through media operating from a single source and in a common direction, a transformation of society by media, a 'media logic' (Altheide and Snow, 1979). This is an important general claim, and insofar as it involves the specific claim that many cultural and social processes are now constrained to take on a form suitable for media re-presentation, it is based on transformations that are undeniable: there is, for example, no question anymore of politicians doing politics without appearing in or on media, and no social campaign can operate without some media presence (p. 377).*

Regarding Couldry's notes, media's logic and transformative mechanisms impact social and cultural life transformations, whereas media also affects other contexts. Therefore, it also affects the logic and even ecosystems of users. Furthermore, this finding automatically describes the pattern of negotiations between technology and the actors of Dangdut Koplo. As a result, this paper will analyze several questions: how does technology affect the Dangdut Koplo community ecosystem? How does the Dangdut community negotiate with technology?

There are dozens of studies on Dangdut music, and these works are laudable and trustworthy because of their interdisciplinary perspective. For example, many scholars have discussed the issue of Dangdut Koplo and Inul, such as discussions about Inul regarding the post-New Order socio-political context (e.g., Faruk & Salam, 2003; Heryanto, 2009; Weintraub, 2010; Sushartami 2012); or Inul associated with the locus, Dangdut Koplo (Raditya 2013; Raditya 2017; Raditya 2020; Weintraub 2013). Also, there were books on the site, www.dangdutstudies.com, specifically about Inul, both supporting and condemning, including *Only Inul* (*Hanya Inul*), Faruk & Salam (2003); *Drilling Hypocrisy: Inul, Sex, and Power* (*Mengebor Kemunafikan: Inul, Seks, dan Kekuasaan*) Gunawan (2003); *Inul!*, Triwikromo (2003); *Inul is a Diva?* (*Inul itu Diva?*), Moller (2003); *Inul is More Than a Glass of Wine* (*Inul Lebih Dari Segelas Arak*), Kathur (2003); *God Between Inul and Gang Doly* (*Tuhan Antara Inul dan Gang Doly*), Hakiem (2003).

I reviewed three pieces of literature that are important for this research. These three pieces of literature will show the knowledge gap in previous studies and the purpose of this article. The first piece of literature I want to discuss is the thesis of anthropologist G.R. Lono Lastoro Simatupang (1996), *The Development of Dangdut and Its Meanings: A Study of Popular Music in Indonesia.* His thesis deals with the Dangdut trajectory and its music identification. He also discussed the distinction in dangdut music and referred to television's popularity for straightening the technology. His arguments are relevant to my research, mainly to explore the impact of technology on dangdut.

The second piece of literature is by ethnomusicologist Andrew N. Weintraub (2010). His book, *Dangdut Stories*, consists of several chapters that reveal the history of dangdut, image construction in dangdut, dangdut as national identity, the dangdut development in several areas, narration in dangdut lyrics, and also the meaning of the society. Weintraub did not directly concentrate on technology implications, but he highlighted the interactions between the dangdut agents and technology when he discussed dangdut development, both in a national and regional context.

Michael H.B. Raditya wrote the last piece of literature necessary for this research. His article, "The Popularisation and Contestation of *Dangdut Koplo* in the Indonesian Music Industry," articulated three eras of Dangdut Koplo in the Indonesian music industry. Raditya showed the causes and causality of its popularity. This article focused on the contestation between local and national standards. The popularity of Dangdut Koplo in those years revealed that dangdut is not homogenous. On the other hand, this article discloses how technology is a part of earning popularity in Indonesian popular music. Raditya did not implicitly examine how the technology works.

This article will articulate several cases from those pieces to show how technology operates in dangdut music and how dangdut music leverages technology. The identification of those cases is divided by year to see the negotiation differences. To answer the question and knowledge gap, I elaborated and triangulated some data: literature data, observation data (which I had in 2017), and digital data. The literature data gives the general context, and I will use the observation and digital data for two moments that I mentioned before. Then I will elaborate on those data to show the negotiation among agents of Dangdut Koplo to maintain their ecosystem and practice.

## DISCUSSION

### Another Story of Dangdut Koplo

Dangdut Koplo is a variant of dangdut music developed in East Java—at the regional level. Some other regional Dangdut include West Sumatra with Saluang Dangdut; Riau with Dangdut Melayu; Banjar with Dangdut Banjar; West Java with PongDut; Cirebon with Tarling Dangdut; and several other places. Like father like son, Dangdut Koplo also uses the same musical formula, which combines popular music. Dangdut is also doing the same thing: combining Malay music with popular music genres from the 1960s to the 1970s, such as Indian music, Middle Eastern music, Arabic music, and Western music (see

Frederick, 1982, p. 109). In the Dangdut Koplo dictionary, this pattern is called "*oplosan*" (*oplosan* is mixing one or more materials to get the best formula). However, Dangdut Koplo combines Dangdut music with other musical elements developed at East Java's regional level.

There were also several adjustments to Dangdut Koplo. Ethnomusicologist Weintraub (2010) writes:

*These forms of regional dangdut are sung in regional languages and are marketed to people of specific ethnic groups, some of whom (including migrant populations) live in different geographical locations. These forms utilize a dangdut musical framework, but they signify ethnicity in different ways from previous forms of dangdut and in different ways from each other. (p. 204)*

The emergence of regional Dangdut is engaging because they copied Jakarta's Dangdut and interpreted the Dangdut in the local context, such as language and musical references, tones, and musical instruments. That is the reason why regional Dangdut is segmented. Weintraub (2010) wrote, "Regional dangdut is marketed to people of specific ethnic groups" (p. 204). Furthermore, the use of regional languages and musical elements close to the community is essential in presenting to (as well as representing) their fans.

The term 'Dangdut Koplo' has several interpretations; first, a type of narcotics, the Koplo pill; second, human nature meaning koplo or stupid; third, the tempo is so fast that it makes you want to keep dancing

without control. Weintraub also articulated this logic:

*Koplo refers to the performance style, the drum rhythm, and the fast-tempo, metal-inflected music that accompanies Trio Macan. "Koplo pills" (pill koplo) are hallucinogenic drugs. Koplo music was a way to express a drug-induced sentiment about a style of dance that people considered "unbelievable" or "out of this world." Koplo was created in the early to mid-1990s and exploded during the "crazy times" of the post-Suharto era, full of instability and chaos but also energy and hope. On recordings, koplo also refers to the electronic remix style, which is usually fast and characterized by active percussion parts (p. 216).*

Regarding Weintraub's statement, I highlight several things. First, musical identification; we can identify a different type of music from the previous Dangdut, where Dangdut Koplo has a drum rhythm and fast-tempo, metal-inflected music. Second, the origin of Dangdut Koplo; according to Weintraub, Koplo was created in the early to mid-1990s, and regarding its origin, the author writes:

*Koplo was created in East Java, but its origins are unclear. Malik B. Z., the composer of "Keagungan Tuhan" (The Greatness of God), claims credit for inserting a koplo -like a rhythm from a local East Javanese genre, reog ponorogo, into one of his popular music compositions in the 1970s. Yadi, a keyboard player in Bandung, West Java, theorized*

*that the main koplo drum rhythm derives from the drum motif that accompanies the stepping pattern (mincid) in Sundanese jaipongan (Yadi, pers. comm., 19 December 2006), and this view was confirmed by musicians in the East Javanese cities of Surabaya and Banyuwangi. In the 1980s, jaipongan drumming traveled to East Java via cassettes, where it was incorporated into various forms of music. However, jaipongan drumming also incorporates dangdut rhythms. Therefore, koplo may have originated as a reinterpretation of a dangdut rhythmic pattern that had been translated through jaipongan. These rhythms were subsequently reinterpreted by Sundanese drummers playing koplo music in localized Sundanese dangdut ensembles. These creative appropriations illustrate intercultural processes among ethnic groups rather than the dominance of national forms over local ones (p. 216)*

Weintraub also explained how several groups interpret Dangdut Koplo. Mixing of the music occurs at the local level, appropriating between local elements, East Java and West Java.

However, there is information not different from that given by Tirto.id. According to Slamet Rudi Hartono, the kendang player for M.O. New Pallapa, Dangdut Koplo appeared on Jarak Street in the Surabaya region. Dangdut Koplo was born for visitors and drinkers of Koplo pills. (Wibisono, 2017). I got the same story when I visited one of the Melayu Orchestras in Jombang, East Java (M.O. Sonata), in 2017.

They also said that Dangdut Koplo appeared in 1996 in East Java. The appearance refers to a place in Sawahan, Surabaya.

Continuing with the statement by Slamet Rudi Hartono, Gang Jarak, Sawahan, is one of the prostitution areas in Surabaya. This street is close to the most extensive prostitution area in Surabaya, Doli. The difference between Doli and Jarak is the age of the prostitute. The prostitutes on Doli street are young and pretty women, while the prostitutes on Jarak Street are more mature or older women. Furthermore, many cafes and karaoke places serve musical performances on Jarak street. The music is used to support the parties in that place, and Dangdut Koplo is one of the music available there. In a prostitution area, the music is usually fast-paced, referring to house music and other fast-paced music.

Meanwhile, the Dangdut Koplo players made drum initiatives as well as a faster tempo. The visitors to this area were fond of the music. The music spread outside the prostitution area of Sawahan, particularly to other areas in East Java. The Melayu Orchestra in East Java, which emerged in the 1980s, followed this pattern because of the community's demand. Edy, the founder of M.O. Sonata, also revealed that he would not want to follow this pattern because of the significant market demand.

Dangdut Koplo features in societal entertainment and personal celebrations such as birthdays, weddings, circumcision, and pilgrimages, as well as public events such as the celebration of independence day, the new year, political campaigns, etc. Dangdut Koplo is already popular in East Java, no matter how Dangdut is in Jakarta. All they

need is popular songs that will be rearranged into Dangdut Koplo. However, I agree with Weintraub's statement that Koplo's popularity increased after Inul (originally a rock singer from East Java) merged her trademark "drilling" dance with Dangdut. The televisual mediation of Inul occurred at the national level, and these broadcasts traveled back to East and Central Java (2010, p. 217). In this way, Inul expanded Dangdut Koplo's reach to the national level.

This local and national problem indicates that the emergence of Dangdut Koplo in 2003 was in line with democracy and regional autonomy, which allowed the regions to show who they were. Weintraub also asserted that Dangdut Koplo was one of the results of the 1997/1998 monetary crisis. The collapse of the new order and the emergence of the democratic era became important markers for Dangdut Koplo. The community could activate access and openness without an intermediary. It reminded me of the New Order system, where every citizen must be submissive. As a result, the collapse of the new order system helped change several existing systems, one of which was music.

The emergence of Inul Daratista at the national level was unpredictable. Inul did not experience competition in the Jakarta music industry, such as Rhoma Irama, Elvy Sukaesih, Evie Tamala, Rita Sugiarto, Cici Paramida, or today's singers Nasar or Lesti Kejora. However, utilizing the VCD technology made Inul become the dangdut star in Jakarta. In my opinion, one of the reasons why Rhoma Irama was mad was because Inul was not part of the dangdut music industry scheme and the dangdut rules he created. I got an interesting fact when I researched Dangdut in Jombang. The leader of M.O. DOC, Asmi (not the real name), told me that the management of Rhoma Irama called them and went mad because they used and arranged Rhoma Irama songs without legal permission. Then I interpreted that thing as a Rhoma Irama's surveillance.

So, what are the effects of technology on Dangdut Koplo music? *First*, I need to highlight that the Melayu Orchestra in East Java has existed since the 1970s -1980s; they performed the song, Rhoma Irama (Raditya & Simatupang, 2018, p. 446). Playing songs like the original – considered uncreative by many, or the horrible assumptions made about Dangdut Koplo – was a musical pattern before Dangdut Koplo existed. In my opinion, this is an organic act from society because people wanted to see Rhoma Irama or Jakarta Dangdut stars. They realized that Rhoma Irama could not perform weekly in many regions, so the local Melayu Orchestra emerged to satisfy the local audience's desire.

Talking about the existence, several local Melayu Orchestra incorporated Dangdut Koplo into their musical specialties, such as M.O. Sonata, M.O. RGS, M.O. Nirvana, etc., in Jombang. Others include M.O. Sagita, M.O. Laigsta, etc. in Nganjuk; M.O. New Kendedes, M.O. Lasso, etc. in Kediri; Sidoarjo has M.O. Palapa and M.O. New Palapa, and so on. The interesting point is that they did not change their names. For instance, they did not change the name of the group from Melayu Orchestra to Dangdut Orchestra (D.O.) or Dangdut Koplo Orchestra (O.D.K.) for several reasons. In my opinion, there are three factors why they did not change the name, *first*, this kind of music is associated with the Melayu Orchestra. Since the 1970s, Melayu

Orchestra has performed its music from stage to stage. *Second*, the famous group of Dangdut Koplo used to be a Melayu Orchestra that played the Dangdut music. *Third*, the Department of Cultural and Tourism in many provinces also uses the label 'Melayu Orchestra.' *Forth*, some of these orchestras provide musical innovations, either creative arrangements or instruments.

The important thing is that technology development creates previously impossible possibilities, such as recorded performances and the emergence of local recording studios or video recordings. Talking about live and recorded performances, Wurtzler (1992) wrote:

> As socially and historically produced, the categories of the live and the recorded are defined in a mutually exclusive relationship, in that the notion of the live is premised on the absence of recording, and the defining fact of the recorded is the absence of the life. (p. 89)

Regarding Wurtzler thought, the old perspective defined recorded as not having liveliness. Meanwhile, Auslander (1999) also responded to this perspective, "In other words, the common assumption is that the live event is 'real' and that mediated events are secondary and somehow artificial reproductions of the real" (p. 3). As a result, the recorded is an artificial product of the real, especially in terms of liveliness. The previous perspective believes that recorded performances are different from those shown live. I know this is debatable, but I see that VCDs and DVDs helped dangdut agents activate another space; recorded dangdut performances that can be watched anytime and anywhere.

However, the recorded performances were freely used after the new order. This pattern occurred because the quality of the recorded music was terrible, so good-quality recordings were done in big cities like Jakarta or Surabaya. This problem also happened with video recording. Only a few people could rent a camera to record the event. After the new order, technological advances changed this pattern, where the local public could directly access music and video recordings. One example of the products was Inul Daratista's performance at a celebration that spread to Jakarta. Audio or video recordings of performances can be made by anyone, whether Melayu Orchestra, legal recorders, illegal recorders, owners, etc.

Videos can also be distributed via VCDs, and files sent via Bluetooth or infrared. Spreading via Bluetooth or infrared is exciting because it is hand-to-hand based on trust or friendship. On the other hand, VCD was distributed through music stores or the market. This change is the pioneer of the local ecosystem becoming an important issue.

## Same System, but Different Agent; Strengthening the Local Circle through VCD

The development of technology, particularly digital technology, makes the user's logic different. Regarding Dangdut Koplo, the changes caused by VCDs and DVDs made the Melayu Orchestra consider other income sources besides live performances. They started leveraging VCDs and DVDs to

disseminate their performances. There is also the gradual process of how video recording is done, including the documentation mode; this principle is the most frequently used, considering that video owners usually have video recording services for public events. Then the private mode, where the perspective of the recorded image is determined by the camera's owner, so certain parts of the image can be in focus. Lastly, the television mode, which has become a model for how to take an ideal image. The television model gradually became basic in shooting.

Meanwhile, in Dangdut Koplo VCDs, especially pirated ones, the documentation mode became a public perspective, sometimes mixed with the private mode. This kind of video is side by side with pirated videos. This logic is also seen in Inul Daratista's video. However, the video quality is slightly improving with the proliferation of video recording services in the regions.

It makes Dangdut Koplo videos a very random product; there are videos with good quality images, and videos with images resulting from documentation of an event, the fandom version, which the audiences usually record with their tools, etc. This change also impacted the ecosystem. The local industry also began to work seriously year after year. When the new order collapsed, pirated videos dominated the society, either sold in the local market or disseminated hand by hand for free. However, Melayu Orchestra began producing and packaging their music videos well year after year. They also tried approaching national products in video, music, or packaging materials. For example, Figure 1 shows the layout and packaging are better than the previous packaging.



**Figure 1 The Dangdut Koplo's products**

*Source: Michael H.B. Raditya, July 2017*

Local producers competed to make their products more like the packaging in music stores in Jakarta. They also focused on the rights of the songs. The local products are side by side with pirated videos. I think the relationship between producer and middleman can reduce pirated videos. Regarding fandom or audience piracy, I agree with the submissions in Benjamin's (1935) article "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." The article is an essay of cultural criticism which proposes and explains that mechanical reproduction devalues the aura (uniqueness) of an objet d'art. Piracy that is supported by technology devalued the song, and the PAMMI construction and ecosystem--PAMMI and Rhoma Irama believe on composing the new song. As a result, I focus on quality video, so we can talk the quality of videos in the same level. Another reason is that the audience preferred the video created by a local producer to that created by the fandom because the fandom video is not stable and has poor video quality. Based on this fact, I focus on local producers.

A producer can be a Melayu Orchestra or Music Studio (music publisher) located at the regional level. Apart from producers, distribution issues also affect several agents,

such as middlemen. Krakovsky (2015) wrote, "A middleman is different because he or she will buy a particular type of good all the time. As a result, a middleman has an incentive to make a large investment in skills that enable him to detect a product's true quality" (p. 58). This explanation is the basis for categorizing VCD and DVD sellers as middlemen because they also look for good items to sell. Moreover, many sellers choose production goods that are more legally clear.

The question is, how about the middleman in Jombang? Before the collapse of the new order, in Jombang, a music store was quite famous in the era of 1980s -1990s. The store sold cassettes or compact discs (CDs) legally. A nationwide music distributor verified the store. The music store was located on the main street of Jombang and had become a potent agent and even a patron for musicians or music fans in Jombang. Agus, once a radio leader in Plandi, Jombang, also said something similar, "there was a music store near the train station; that place was famous. However, many people were selling the same thing in the post-new order." After the collapse of the New Order and an invasion of VCD and other digital technologies, the legal store went bankrupt.

Regarding the decline in purchases ratio at legal stores, several vendors sold CDs and VCDs (in pirated formats), which were increasingly spreading. They did not sell their products on the main road—because the rent was expensive. Nevertheless, CD and VCD vendors were in the market in Jombang, behind Legi Market. In the market, five places sold CDs, VCDs, and DVDs. These five places were not peers but competed with each other even though their locations were not far apart.

I believe the position of the CD and VCD vendors in the market was strategic. The way they transacted was different from a music store. These sellers sold other necessities, such as vegetables, fruit, clothes, etc. It shows VCDs, CDs, and DVDs, which are not too expensive. The sellers understood that the product must match the prices of other goods in the market. The market position is also strategic, it is located where everything is available, so it is not challenging to go specifically to a location to get Dangdut Koplo products while buying other things. This flow is inherent as middle-class and lower-class people go to the market daily.
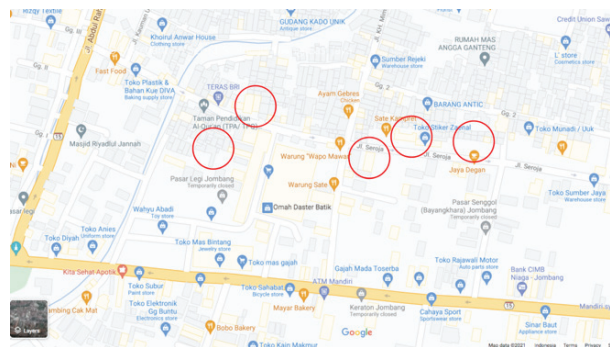


**Figure 2** Map of Market in Jombang
*Source: Google map: Pasar Legi, Jombang, East Java*

During a transaction, there is a long conversation between the buyer and the middleman. The middleman provides services and curates who needs to be seen, the new orchestra, and who is necessary to hear. He also freely gives discounts and credits to buyers, like the market. I believe that the relationship that arises is limited to transactions and creates more relationships with buyers. That is why the relationship between middlemen and consumers becomes interesting. It is akin to a market strategy

but depends on how far the middleman's relationship with the orchestra owner is and the relationship pattern built between them.

I believe the relationship because of the straight evidence. When I talked to two sellers in 2017—Riyanto and Sunaryo—they said they know a particular Melayu Orchestra or music studio leader. I also confirmed with several orchestras—O.M. Sonata and O.M. Roneta—regarding their relationship. I was also surprised when one of the orchestra leaders came to the VCD selling place and put some pieces there. They spoke intimately. As a result, the producer and middleman relation is no longer limited to buying and selling (transactional—negative reciprocity) but balanced and general reciprocity. According to Sahlins (1974, p. 195), there are three kinds of reciprocity: generalized, balanced, and negative. Negative reciprocity is another word for market exchange. Sahlins writes that general reciprocity exists because of closeness (e.g., mother-child, siblings) without controlling rules or law, while proportional reciprocity occurs because certain rules and laws govern a comparable exchange (Hudayana, 1991, pp. 26-28).

Furthermore, these two types of reciprocity are intertwined between producer and middleman. However, they used "close people" or "our people." The reason is that they may be related because they are both Jombang indigenes. The similarity between these entities is that they can communicate with various waivers. For example, producers can deposit their goods with the middleman for sale; the middleman can pay when the goods are sold, etc. This pattern indicates general reciprocity, but

sometimes this mode also changes to "comparable reciprocity," especially for some sellers who supply many goods from various Melayu Orchestra.

The VCD and DVD seller makes me believe that the middleman has moved from the center to be close to them. This closeness becomes an exciting pattern that emerges due to technological developments. As a result, they can activate and directly control their economy and society. They can also trust each other during the mode of actively close people. I think this pattern empowers local people and exists at the district or province level. On a broad scale, this is one implementation of democracy—or we can also link it to the regional autonomy (decentralization) program in music practice.

These are indications that the patterns and schemes of the local music industry are changing. Things that only had big city consumers are changing with digital technology. Local people can have the same access as central people to record music and videos. There is also a middleman in the consumption scheme that local producers can directly access. They do not need a Jakarta music label to make their music and videos. They only need to make a VCD or DVD and distribute it through a middleman close to them. This finding is interesting because producers, middlemen, and consumers are local people; they live in the same area. Furthermore, this makes their local music industry alive and empowered. In this first phase, the schema and system remain with the previous system, but there is a change where the agents (producer and middleman) are their people.

## Welcome to the Internet; New "Land" With the Same Agent

After forming a holistic and empowered local music industry, the previously existing patterns have changed. The internet changed the patterns in 2014/2015. It began with the explosion of the song "Sayang." The song was successful on the internet and digital platforms. However, OM Wawes, a band from Jogja, first produced the song in 2012 through SoundCloud (Raditya, 2020, p. 86). SoundCloud is a music-sharing space on the internet; this website has been on since 2008. Three years later, after "Sayang" was distributed, the rap group, NDX Aka, made a rap version of the song and shared it through the same platform, SoundCloud. The song was popular in 2015.

The East Java Melayu Orchestra, whose musical mode is an arrangement of the existing song, performed the song on stages in East Java. The song exploded quickly as Dangdut Koplo has excellent power in East Java. The singer from Surabaya, Via Vallen, popularized the song—even bought the copyright. Other songs such as "Bojo Galak," "Ditinggal Rabi," and others experienced a similar trend. The important thing highlighted is that the internet popularized all these songs.

The explosion of Dangdut Koplo in Indonesia in 2015/2016 cannot be separated from the internet's influence. In 2015/2016, many Melayu Orchestra or music and recording studios (such as Perdana Record, Sandi Record, etc.) finally took two routes, compact discs—both VCDs and DVDs—and soft files. VCDs or DVDs are still being preserved because many people—baby boomers and generation X—still enjoy their songs on compact discs. However, their music video files are distributed through the YouTube site to access Generation Y and more comprehensive media users. YouTube is an online video sharing and social media platform that plays or streams videos. Again, this technology changed how Dangdut Koplo works, particularly how it is distributed and consumed.

Regarding production, not much has changed from how Melayu Orchestra made music videos; the only thing that has changed is the packaging. Distribution technology has become one of the most influential because there is a change in roles where producers can directly access consumers through YouTube intermediaries. Furthermore, the positions of middlemen that local people previously filled changed. YouTube as a sharing medium can be interpreted in two ways; first, as a sharing space used independently; second, I can still define YouTube as a distributor or "middleman." However, just as different mediums have different uses, there are logical consequences. YouTube has conditions for music videos to earn money. There is a monetization process. It has minimum eligibility requirements to join, including:

- *The YouTube monetization policies are a collection of policies that allow you to monetize on YouTube. As a YouTube partner, your agreement, including the YouTube partner program policies, requires compliance with these monetization policies to earn money on YouTube potentially.*

- *Live in a country/region where the YouTube Partner Program is available.*

- *Have more than 4,000 valid public watch hours in the last 12 months.*

- *Have more than 1,000 subscribers.*

- *Have a linked AdSense account.*

*Source:*https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/72851?hl=en

Music agents in the region responded to monetization in various ways. Some Melayu Orchestra or music studios took the monetization path. They fulfilled all the requirements of YouTube monetization policies to earn money from YouTube. YouTube became a new space for disseminating works and earning money. The logic is that the more subscribers and viewing-time videos get from consumers, the more money they can earn. The East Java Melayu Orchestra, which has no subscribers, chose to join a music studio or intermediary. Not all Melayu Orchestra can achieve an astonishing number of subscribers, so they must think twice to keep accessing this new land. Although the profit-sharing will be different, that is the path that small Melayu Orchestra who want to get a chance on YouTube can take. Not a few Melayu Orchestra are famous in their area but cannot compete on YouTube. This fact is primarily due to the generation gap. According to the fact, the internet is a new field for old agents.

Managing YouTube is not just a matter of having many subscribers because every monetized account is responsible for maintaining and caring for its fans. The impact is that production becomes more



**Figure 3: The Vlog and interviews model**
*Source: YouTube, Cak Sodiq Official*

complex if it is limited to music, but they could provide other shows, develop Melayu Orchestra personas on gadget screens, etc. Some singers try to make vlogs (left on Figure 3), interviews with dangdut figures (right on Figure 3), etc.

However, figure 3 shows that video's audience is not higher than their song videos. Honestly, not all Melayu Orchestra can do this. As a result, some accounts of the Melayu Orchestra have become spaces only for disseminating works, indicating that the accounts are not optimally utilizing YouTube's potentials. The impact on the fans is that they are not being very active and watching their accounts regularly. This is not a strategic step.

Some Melayu Orchestra tried to organize their fan group differently; through Facebook. Facebook, an online social media

and networking service, became the space they used. On Facebook, they could exchange messages, connect, and be closer. Some may ask, isn't there a chatbox on YouTube? On YouTube, the relationship is casual between the orchestra or studio and the audience—the audience can be anyone, whether they like it or not. While on Facebook, the relationship between the orchestra or studio and fans is considered more personal than on YouTube, so they created a fan group there. Furthermore, YouTube can substitute television, while Facebook can substitute messaging, providing intimacy.

So, what is the impact of technology on the flow and scheme of Dangdut Koplo? The internet blurred the role of the agent, who was a middleman. Consumers can now directly access producers without human intermediaries. The intermediary between producers and consumers is the internet with various applications, including YouTube, Soundcloud, Joox, Spotify, etc. This finding is a significant differentiator between the two types of digital technology experienced by Dangdut Koplo.

Furthermore, who will help curate fans of Dangdut Koplo music? Curation has gone from a suggestion from a middleman to a requirement for high subscribers and watch hours. The more subscribers and viewers, the more the public will refer to the Melayu Orchestra or studio. However, they did not leave it up to YouTube but instead activated alternative spaces, such as activating more intimate conversation spaces like Facebook. They still believe in loyal fans and old fans. Regarding the experience of Dangdut Koplo and internet technology, I conclude that these

Melayu Orchestra and music studios borrow YouTube and other digital technologies as their only way of gaining popularity. They are previous agents—in media studies, considered immigrants in the internet era—who are [coincidentally] empowered in a new world called the internet.

## The Negotiation of Technology and Practice of Dangdut Koplo

How do agents of Dangdut Koplo music negotiate technology? Benjamin's (1935) article, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," definitely placed Dangdut Koplo as a caused who devalued the song of Rhoma Irama and other singers. However, despite using the perspective of Benjamin, I am interested in the idea that culture is ordinary (William, 1958). William tried to articulate that every group of people has its culture. He states:

> A *culture is common meanings, the product of a whole people, and offered individual meanings, the product of a man's whole committed personal and social experience. It is stupid and arrogant to suppose that any of these meanings can in any way be prescribed; they are made by living, made, and remade, in ways we cannot know in advance. (p. 96)*

I am interested in this phrase by William, "culture is made by living, made, and remade." The Dangdut Koplo subgenre was made, remade, and lived the culture, particularly from two impressions I discussed in the previous section. Thus I can deduce that Dangdut Koplo does not devalue previous Dangdut.

Furthermore, the media technology helps them remake the culture, ecosystem, and practice. Couldry (2008) stated:

> *Mediatization is a useful attempt to concentrate our focus on a particular transformative logic or mechanism that is understood to do something distinctive to (that is, to 'mediatize') particular processes, objects, and fields: a distinctive and consistent transformation that, it is suggested, can only properly be understood if seen as part of a wider transformation of social and cultural life through media operating from a single source and in a common direction, a transformation of society by media, a 'media logic' (p. 377).*

VCDs and the internet impacted the Dangdut Koplo and its practice and ecosystem. As a result, a new thing that has not been experienced before will come up in the future. For instance, what is a middleman's role in the VCD and Internet era? What was the production and distribution circulation in that era? There will be adjustment and adaptation in every media era, or as William said, they will be "made by living, made, and remade."

## CONCLUSION

According to the two moments that were impacted by the technology, the question is: does digital technology limit the work of Dangdut Koplo agents? Are they utterly dependent on the digital world? Interestingly, they faced limits, particularly VCDs or the internet, which are their way of gaining popularity from new media.

They know that technology is developing rapidly, so following new technology is not a mistake. However, they only use technology to support their stage performance directly. They were born from the stage, not from the media. The agents only borrow the media for their needs. The goal of their activity is on the dangdut stage (live performance), which society watches.

If we consider the current problem, what about during the Covid-19 pandemic? Digital technology certainly helped them survive; with YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, they can interact and create a digital stage. However, the liveliness of live Dangdut performances is irreplaceable for Dangdut actors and fans. They do not want to move even though liveliness can be pursued in various ways. I also want to emphasize that technology exists and provides innovation, but it does not make the old format obsolete. The exciting thing is that in Dangdut Koplo, the innovations—Dangdut Stage, CD, VCD, DVD, YouTube, Spotify, etc., live side by side. As a result, I want to emphasize how technology opens up opportunities for regions to compete 'nationally' and with centralization. Moreover, I am pretty happy because local Dangdut has the power to compete with what they consider national or international. This struggle is evidence of how decentralization works.

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Interview

Name: Edy Sonata
Date: 6 September 2017
Place: Peterongan, Jombang

Name: Yul Roneta
Date: 7 September 2017
Place: Peterongan, Jombang

Name: Riyanto
Date: 10 September 2017
Place: Pasar Legi, Jombang

Name: Sunaryo
Date: 10 September 2017
Place: Pasar Legi, Jombang

Name: Asmi
Date: 8 September 2017
Place: Peterongan, Jombang

Name: Agus
Date: 1 September 2017
Place: Plandi, Jombang.