Music in the 2024 Presidential Election Campaign as a Promotional Medium

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the use of music in the 2024 Indonesian Presidential Election campaign as a form of artistic practice involving social participation (socially engaged art), by analyzing the tension between its potential as a tool for collective mobilization and its risk of becoming a depoliticizing spectacle. Using a comparative case study of three major campaign strategies, namely the participatory-creative approach of Anies–Muhaimin, the populist mass mobilization of Ganjar–Mahfud, and the co-optation of fan communities by Prabowo–Gibran, this article argues that campaign music performances operate within an ambiguous space. Through the theoretical framework of Aleksandr Bogdanov, Claire Bishop, and François Matarasso, the analysis demonstrates how music effectively organizes affective collectivities (Bogdanov) and strengthens social bonds (Matarasso). However, the participation produced is often trapped in what Bishop terms an "artificial hell," where intense aesthetic experiences replace critical political deliberation and participation is reduced to passive consumption. This study concludes that although campaign music succeeds in forming partisan social bonds, its instrumental impact has the potential to deepen political polarization. Thus, this practice functions as a central arena in which the boundary between authentic cultural participation and managed political mobilization is negotiated, carrying significant implications for democratic health in the digital era.

1. INTRODUCTION

Discussion of performance cannot be separated from artistic entertainment, which is consistently presented before large audiences. Generally, audiences attend performances to seek entertainment, relieve fatigue, reduce stress, and relax (Sujarno et al., 2003). Such entertainment may take the form of dance, music, or drama. All forms of entertainment aim to provide sensory pleasure while serving particular purposes. Performances are typically held in non-formal settings, although some are presented in formal contexts. Art cannot be separated from social life and from interests closely related to collective beliefs.

Campaigning refers to efforts undertaken by individuals or groups to promote or advocate certain issues to the general public. Depending on the context, campaigns may take various forms, including business, social, political, health, or environmental campaigns. Campaign actors employ diverse strategies to reach the public, such as entertainment, speeches, digital media, and other channels. According to Regulation of the General Election Commission of the Republic of Indonesia Number 28 of 2018, Article 1, Clause 21, a campaign is defined as an activity conducted by election participants to persuade voters by offering visions, missions, and programs. Campaigns are also understood as organized communication efforts conducted within a fixed timeframe, aimed at producing specific effects and targeting large audiences (Pamungkas & Arifin, 2019).

This phenomenon becomes especially visible during political campaign periods in Indonesia. Legislative candidates and regional leaders compete to promote themselves to the public by conveying their visions and missions. Promotion is carried out through various methods, ranging from word-of-

mouth communication and billboard displays to the distribution of basic goods and the provision of entertainment. These efforts are supported by volunteer networks that assist candidates in organizing campaign activities.

Political campaigns in Indonesia are held every four years, both for legislative and executive elections. Candidates seek to attract public attention in order to secure votes during election periods. One common strategy is the provision of performances favored by the public, which encourages large crowds to attend campaign events. Musical performances, in particular, have become a recurring element in campaign activities. Many artists participate by presenting performances that resonate with local audiences. The presence of music in political campaigns is therefore significant, as it illustrates the direct intersection between art and political practice.

This perspective aligns with Aleksandr Bogdanov's (1919) argument that art organizes social experience not only at the cognitive level but also in the realm of emotions and aspirations, making it a powerful force in organizing collective action. Claire Bishop (2012), in *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, argues that socially engaged art maintains a direct relationship with politics and aesthetics and produces tangible social effects, while also being vulnerable to political manipulation. Similarly, François Matarasso (1997), in *Use or Ornament: The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts*, identifies several social impacts of participation in the arts, including personal development, social bonding, community empowerment, identity formation, imagination, and well-being.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative literature review approach. This approach was selected because the research does not aim to collect new empirical data, but rather to develop, revise, and synthesize arguments from existing texts through a new theoretical framework (Lesit et al., 2026; Snyder, 2019). This method involves the systematic identification, evaluation, and interpretation of various sources to construct a coherent and in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon (Templier & Paré, 2015). The data sources used in this study are based on relevant academic literature, including books and journal articles on participatory art theory, political communication, and Indonesian popular culture studies (Bogdanov, 1919; Bishop, 2012; Matarasso, 1997; Weintraub, 2010). In addition, credible mass media reports and analyses of music-based campaign practices during the 2024 General Election are used as contemporary case studies (Prabowo, 2024).

The data analysis technique adopts principles of critical discourse analysis (Gee, 2011; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). This approach allows the researcher not only to summarize the content of existing sources, but also to examine how language, symbols, and performance practices are used to construct meaning, negotiate power, and reproduce ideology within the socio-political context of election campaigns (Fairclough, 2013). The analysis seeks to uncover power relations and underlying assumptions that shape the use of music in the political arena. Accordingly, the originality of this study lies in its new interpretive synthesis of existing knowledge, framed through a specific theoretical and analytical lens.

3. DISCUSSIONS

The nomination of legislative candidates and regional leaders is consistently accompanied by diverse forms of campaigning. It is not uncommon for candidates to spend substantial financial resources to gain public sympathy. As discussed in the background section, one such strategy involves presenting musical performances as public entertainment. As noted by Tumimbang (2015), music functions as a form of entertainment that has become one of the dominant cultural fields because it conveys messages through lyrics, and the combination of melody and lyrics constitutes a powerful mode of communication in human life.

In practice, entertainment presented to the public is closely aligned with prevailing social trends. This can be observed as early as the 1970s, when politicians incorporated dangdut music to mobilize mass support during campaigns. Rhoma Irama occupied a privileged position in political campaigns because he had long been associated with "the people," particularly lower-income communities (Heryanto, 2012; Luaylik & Khusyairi, 2012; Romadhon, 2013). Politicians sought to present themselves as figures who were attentive and empathetic toward society, especially marginalized groups.

The use of music as a promotional tool for political parties has existed since the New Order era. During this period, music became a strong correlate of political power and developed rapidly in Indonesia. A clear example of this success is Suharto's repeated electoral victories, which shaped Indonesia's political direction and resulted in his election as president in every general election from 1971 to 1997 (Arum, 2020). Artists played a role as campaign volunteers, either through voluntary participation or paid engagement. They demonstrated creativity in their performances to entertain the public. In presidential campaigns, musicians expressed their creativity by composing and performing works specifically tailored to each candidate pair. Today, musical performances as a medium of political campaigning have significant effects on both society and artists. Political influence on artistic life is deeply embedded, with artists' creativity often inspired by party ideologies. Their presence enlivens campaign stages and contributes to increasing voter support for candidates.

The history of music in Indonesian political campaigns reflects changes in power structures and communication technologies. Its origins can be traced to the New Order era through the "Artis Safari" program, which mobilized artists to support the ruling party, Golkar. This model was highly centralized, with the state using artists' popularity to attract crowds and legitimize power in a monolithic manner (Ibrahim, 2015). Musical performances functioned as extensions of the state apparatus, transforming artistic stages into effective platforms of propaganda. The Reformasi era introduced a fundamental shift with the emergence of a competitive multiparty system. Music was no longer monopolized by a single political force but became a contested tool among various political actors. The "Salam Dua Jari Concert" during the 2014 election represents a paradigmatic example of this shift. Organized voluntarily by hundreds of musicians and creative workers, the concert attracted massive crowds and was framed by the media as a "manifestation of people power," signaling organic support for the Joko Widodo–Jusuf Kalla ticket (Putra et al., 2016). This event marked a transformation of music from an instrument of state co-optation into a symbol of civil society mobilization.

The culmination of this evolution was evident in the 2024 election, where music-based campaign strategies became increasingly fragmented and digitized. Three primary approaches can be identified. First, the continuation of mass concert models that rely on celebrity figures with strong fan bases. Second, the emergence of campaign jingles specifically designed for virality on social media. Songs such as "Oke Gas" for Prabowo–Gibran and "PAN PAN PAN" for the National Mandate Party proved highly effective in reaching young voters through platforms such as TikTok by utilizing catchy melodies and energetic rhythms to build emotional resonance and positive imagery (Londo et al., 2024; Yuliyanti & Hidayat, 2024; Zulhulaifah & Hidayat, 2024). Third, participatory approaches that attempt to involve the public directly. A consistent thread throughout this genealogy is the central role of celebrities as endorsers. Their role has evolved from hired vote gatherers into strategic partners whose personal brands and fan communities are leveraged for electoral gain, indicating an increasing convergence between the entertainment industry and the political arena (Nyarwi, 2008; Anindita, 2023).

Aleksandr Bogdanov, through his concept of "Tektology" or the universal science of organization, viewed art not as an ornament of life but as a vital functional force. According to Bogdanov, art "organizes living images of social experience in the realm of emotions and aspirations" (Bogdanov, 1919). In class societies, art becomes "the most powerful weapon in organizing collective forces" (Bogdanov, 1919). For Bogdanov, art is a practice that unifies understanding, feeling, and emotion into a coherent whole, shaping collective consciousness through its own methods (Poustilnik, 2021; Soboleva, 2022). This perspective provides a strong analytical lens for examining diverse musical strategies in the 2024 election.

Each candidate pair's approach can be analyzed as an effort to organize different collectives. The Anies–Muhaimin campaign, through the song "Amin Aja Dulu," represents a bottom-up collective organizing strategy. By allowing the public to create and perform campaign songs, this approach sought to build a collective grounded in shared creative participation rather than passive consumption (Mistortoify & Setiawan, 2024). In contrast, the Ganjar–Mahfud campaign, through the "Hajatan Rakyat" concerts, employed a populist cultural logic. The use of dangdut koplo, a genre strongly associated with lower-class communities, served to organize mass audiences by leveraging existing cultural affinities and emotional bonds (Weintraub, 2010; Raditya, 2017). Artists such as Slank and NDX AKA functioned to mobilize their loyal fan bases, creating a collective united by musical taste and class identity. The Prabowo–Gibran campaign demonstrated two modes of organization. First, by collaborating with Dewa 19, they mobilized an established social group, the Baladewa fan community,

and transferred its communal loyalty into the political realm, representing a consumption-based form of community organization. Second, through the viral jingle "Oke Gas," they utilized digital algorithmic logic to generate broad, albeit shallow, collective awareness by rapidly circulating among social media users (Yuliyanti & Hidayat, 2024; Zulhulaifah & Hidayat, 2024). The collective formed in this context resembles a fluid and temporary digital swarm.

Although campaign music successfully organizes collectives, the quality and political meaning of the participation it produces must be critically questioned. Claire Bishop (2012), in *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, provides a framework for such critique. Bishop argues that socially engaged art often falls into a trap where aesthetic projects substitute for genuine political action. She criticizes the tendency to evaluate such works based on ethical intention rather than aesthetic quality and political antagonism. Furthermore, she warns that these practices can be easily co-opted by power structures to create a superficial sense of social cohesion while obscuring deeper political issues (Segal, 2012).

From this perspective, large-scale campaign concerts in Indonesia can be understood as potential "artificial hells." These events create intense yet temporary affective communities in which thousands of individuals feel part of a collective movement. However, it remains unclear whether such experiences foster sustained political activation or merely produce a spectacle of participation. The key question concerns the nature of participation itself. Is dancing to dangdut koplo at a campaign a political act, or is it a depoliticized form of entertainment that renders political messages more easily consumable? Bishop's theory suggests that the latter often prevails, as pleasurable aesthetic experience replaces critical engagement (Bishop, 2012).

The role of celebrity musicians in this context is particularly problematic. The presence of figures such as Ahmad Dhani or members of Slank tends to encourage passive spectatorship rooted in admiration. Political choices risk being simplified into idol identification, where support for a candidate becomes equated with support for a favorite artist. Rather than facilitating critical political thought, this practice may reduce political participation to a consumerist act. This aligns with Bishop's argument that participatory art, when co-opted, can function as a means for ruling elites to maintain power while offering the public a limited illusion of agency (Bishop, 2012). These performances generate a sense of empowerment while leaving underlying power structures untouched.

As a balanced evaluation, François Matarasso's (1997) framework in *Use or Ornament: The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts* can be applied. Matarasso identifies several positive social impacts of participation in the arts, including personal development, strengthened social bonds, community empowerment, and reinforced local or communal identity. This framework allows campaign music to be viewed in terms of its potential utility beyond its ornamental political function. On one hand, campaign music undeniably holds positive potential. Attending concerts or mass rallies with thousands of like-minded individuals can authentically strengthen social bonds among supporters. These collective experiences can foster solidarity, provide psychological empowerment, and reinforce political identity. For individuals, participating in mass euphoria can validate political choices and transform individual beliefs into tangible communal experiences. However, when these effects are reconsidered through Bishop's critical lens, a more complex and problematic picture emerges. The social bonds formed are highly partisan. Rather than promoting broader social cohesion, they often reinforce in-group identity and deepen political polarization with out-groups (Prabowo, 2024; Sitorus et al., 2024). The perceived empowerment may be temporary and illusory, driven by emotional atmospheres rather than sustained political agency. Similarly, the identity reinforced is not organically developed but deliberately constructed and mobilized for short-term electoral objectives.

Thus, the social impact of political music campaigns occupies an ambiguous gray area. This practice cannot be reduced to purely instrumental utility or mere decorative ornamentation. Instead, it operates within a space where genuine social connection, affective mobilization, and political manipulation are deeply intertwined. The bonds that emerge are real, yet they are frequently harnessed to serve agendas determined from above.

4. CONCLUSION

The analysis of music in the 2024 election campaigns demonstrates that this practice has evolved into a complex, powerful, and problematic form of participatory art. The synthesis of theoretical frameworks yields several conclusions. First, in line with Bogdanov's theory, music is highly

effective in organizing supporter collectivities through diverse strategies. Second, the participation generated often risks becoming trapped in the "artificial hells" criticized by Bishop, where spectacles of engagement replace critical political deliberation. Third, although campaign music produces tangible social bonds as described by Matarasso, these impacts are ambiguous because they are instrumentalized for electoral purposes and may ultimately deepen societal polarization.

The implications for Indonesian democracy are significant. In the digital media era, the boundary between authentic cultural participation and managed political mobilization has become increasingly blurred. The affective power of music makes it an effective political tool, yet also one that is highly vulnerable to manipulation. Consequently, a higher level of critical literacy among citizens is required to navigate a political landscape saturated with spectacle and to distinguish between empowering participation and anesthetizing display.

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