Theorizing the Selves: Hip-Hop and Subjectivity among Ambonese Youth

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Abstract Theorizing the island as a landscape within the humanities requires empirical engagement to foster a dialogue between established theoretical frameworks and the lived realities of the communities being studied. The concept of "the Selves and the Others," long developed by Western theorists, provides a useful foundation for examining identity dynamics. However, empirical realities contribute significantly to academic debates by revealing internal contestations within "the Selves" rather than solely positioning them in opposition to "the Others." This study explores how such contestations manifest within Ambonese identity, particularly through the lens of Hip-Hop. As a popular art form among Ambonese youth, Hip-Hop serves as a point of departure for understanding these internal negotiations. This study employs the vignette method, drawing from interviews with Ambonese Hip-Hop artists. While some artists embrace uplifting and energetic tones to counter adversity, others adopt melancholic expressions. Traditional Ambonese pop music is predominantly melancholic, centering on themes of longing and love. However, contemporary Ambonese youth have gravitated towards Hip-Hop as a genre that articulates their identity in a distinct manner. This shift signifies a conscious departure from the melancholic themes of previous generations, positioning Hip-Hop as a vehicle for self-expression, resistance, and liberation from entrenched narratives of trauma and sorrow.

Keywords Hip-Hop; island studies; Ambon; selves; youth

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Introduction

Islands serve as entities that simultaneously represent disparities, exploitation, and injustices between the center and the periphery, as well as struggles and agency. In Indonesia, the term "island" in everyday usage typically refers to small islands separate from larger landmasses. While Indonesia is an archipelago comprising both large and small islands, in the Indonesian context, individuals from major islands rarely use the term "island" when describing their place of origin. Formally, people may refer to "the island of Java," "the island of Sumatra," or "the island of Kalimantan." However, they seldom recognize that they inhabit or originate from an island. Even Papua, the easternmost large island of Indonesia, is almost never referred to as "the island of Papua." Papuans themselves rarely use this designation, instead referring to it as "the land of Papua." Indonesians are more accustomed to conceptualizing their geography through terms such as *tanah air* (land and water), *gunung dan laut* (mountains and sea), *desa dan pantai* (villages and coasts), or *kota dan pinggiran* (cities and suburbs). Among the most commonly used terms reflecting Indonesia's maritime nature is *pantai* (coast). This term often functions as an independent entity without direct reference to an island. For example, *Pantura*

(*Pantai Utara* or "North Coast") refers to the northern coastal region of Java, yet it is never associated with the term "island." People from Pantura identify as coastal inhabitants rather than islanders. Their attachment to Java as *tanah* (land)—reinforced by the phrase *Tanah Jawa* (the land of Java)—is far more pronounced than any identification as part of an island. These naming conventions reflect perspectives shaped by dominant cultural centers, particularly those who do not reside on smaller islands. The discourse surrounding islands, therefore, underscores their marginalization within Indonesia's geographical, geopolitical, geocultural, and geosocial frameworks.

This paradox is particularly striking given Indonesia's reputation as an archipelagic nation. The following descriptions are commonly used in geography textbooks, government promotions, and tourism campaigns to define Indonesia's identity: Indonesia is portrayed as the world's largest archipelagic state, comprising 17,580 islands and spanning 1,004,569 km². It is also recognized as the country with the sixth-highest number of islands globally. Another name for Indonesia is *Nusantara*, meaning "*nusa antara*" or "islands in between." Geographically, Indonesia is situated between two continents—Asia and Oceania—and two oceans—the Pacific and the Indian (Conrad; Mackinnon). Meanwhile, Indonesia's land area is recorded at 1,919,440 km², while its maritime territory covers 3,273,810 km², indicating that the majority of Indonesia's territory consists of ocean.

Maritime Identity

From a geopolitical, geostrategic, and common discourse perspective, pride in Indonesia's maritime identity and its thousands of islands is deeply embedded in national narratives. This pride is reinforced through educational materials from elementary school to university curricula and is reflected in broader national discourse. Songs such as *Nenek Moyangku Seorang Pelaut* ("My Ancestors Were Sailors") are widely sung by kindergarten and elementary school children. However, this maritime pride often remains superficial—an abstract national rhetoric rather than an ingrained mindset in everyday life. In practice, islands do not feature prominently in the consciousness of most Indonesians.

This is evident in how islanders are perceived and how they perceive themselves. People from small islands consistently identify as islanders. The Ambonese, for example, explicitly recognize their islander identity, stating, *kami orang pulau* ("we are islanders"). At the same time, they are acutely aware of their marginalization across various dimensions—economic, political, social, and

cultural—largely due to the dominance of majority cultures, such as the Javanese and Sumatranese. This dominance has resulted in multiple, and often conflicting, definitions of what it means to be an islander.

This situation of conflicting definitions is closely tied to the New Order era (1968–1998) under President Suharto, a Javanese leader who positioned Java as the center while relegating regions outside the island to the periphery. A rigid hierarchical structure was established, in which the Self was centralized in Java, while the Others referred to those beyond it. The term *wong sabrang* (literally, "people from across the sea") illustrates this dichotomy, reinforcing Java as the center ("the Self") and those outside the island, including island communities, as "the Others."

Within the islands themselves, however, internal complexities emerge arising from the intersection of ethnicity, generation (age), religion, social class, and other overlapping social categories. Ambon, the research site for this study, reflects these layers of complexity, having experienced conflict driven by contestations over religion, ethnicity, and social class. However, these contestations are not static; they continue to evolve, giving rise to new forms of internal negotiation. Among these is an intergenerational dynamic that, while not necessarily manifesting as overt conflict, challenges established discourses shaped by previous generations.

The study of islands intersects with geography, geopolitics, economic inequality, and regional development disparities, among other issues. Theorizing island studies requires a broad range of empirical experiences. Empirical inquiry, combined with internal critique, plays a crucial role in advancing critical island studies. While many scholars focus on how islanders are constructed as "others" from a Western perspective, theorizing the internal selves offers a strategic approach to developing island studies. However, these selves are highly heterogeneous, necessitating internal critique and self-reflection.

In that regard, this study generally employs the vignette methodology, which uses language as an entry point to understand specific social phenomena. Language serves as a tool to examine human cognition, as reflected in the way people express themselves. The research involved interviews with 22 artists in Ambon, particularly those engaged in Hip-Hop, conducted between 2023 and 2024. According to Finch (105), a vignette is "a short story about hypothetical characters in specified circumstances, to whose situation the interviewee is invited to respond." This short scenario format presents an individual's story, which serves as a reference point for analyzing perceptions, beliefs, or attitudes (Hughes 381). A key aspect of this method is examining how these narratives are presented, how the collected data is

structured, and how informants' responses are incorporated into the study's findings.

The research process using this method consists of three main steps. First, the collected data is interpreted to explore the informants' situational contexts. Second, clarifications are made, particularly regarding the dilemmas they face. Third, discussions are conducted on sensitive experiences, especially in relation to information shared by other informants.

Selves and Others

The discourse on the self (the selves) and the other(s) has been a central theme in international academic scholarship. Thinkers such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus have extensively examined the concept of *l'autrui* (the other) within their existentialist frameworks. Sartre, in particular, positions *l'autrui* as a fundamental element of existentialist philosophy, asserting that human relationships are inherently inescapable (Murdoch). However, within these relationships, individuals are inevitably positioned as either subjects or objects. This subject-object dynamic is marked by an ongoing conflict, as one's existence is constantly defined in opposition to the other (Kaufmann). The notion of *being* is central to existentialist thought, with concepts such as *être en soi* (being-in-itself), *être pour soi* (being-for-itself), and *être pour l'autrui* (being-for-the-other) forming the foundation of how existentialists, including Sartre and Camus, conceptualize the self in relation to the other.

One of the most significant existentialist contributions to the discussion of *l'autrui* comes from feminist existentialist Simone de Beauvoir. In her seminal work *Le Deuxième Sexe* (*The Second Sex*) published in 1959, which profoundly influenced the Second Wave Feminist Movement in the post-World War II era, Beauvoir critically examines the hierarchical construction of the self and the other. According to Beauvoir, women exist as *l'autrui*—the second sex—often occupying a marginalized position in social structures. They are relegated to second-class status beneath men, who are granted the privileged position of the self (Udasmoro).

A second group of theorists examining the subject-object relationship, with a stronger focus on the concept of the Other, emerges from psychoanalytic thought—most notably Jacques Lacan and his followers, including Julia Kristeva and Hélène Cixous. Lacan ("The Signification of the Phallus"; "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious") elaborates on the theory of the Other by distinguishing *the Other* (with a capital O), which he associates with two crucial dimensions: the Symbolic and the Real. Additionally, Lacan identifies a

dimension of *the Real* within Otherness, which is intricately connected to love and psychosis— what he describes as an unknowable "x." The Real is the *intelligible form of the horizon of truth* within the *field of objects* that has been disclosed (Johnston).

Among Lacan's followers, Julia Kristeva, a French feminist of Bulgarian descent, introduces the concept of *abjection*, which describes subjects structurally degraded due to their very existence. In *Le Pouvoir de l'Horreur* (*Powers of Horror*), Kristeva (Kristeva) associates abjection with human reactions of horror and revulsion— such as vomiting—manifested when individuals are excluded because of their identity. Meanwhile, Hélène Cixous, a French philosopher of Greek-Jewish descent, places greater emphasis on the subject, or the Self. For Cixous, the most fundamental means of achieving this is through writing, especially autobiographical writing. She argues that writing about one's sexuality is crucial, as women's experiences have historically been narrated predominantly by men.

Beyond psychoanalysis, the notion of *otherness* has also been a central concern in postcolonial studies, particularly in Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994). Said examines how people in colonized nations undergo processes of marginalization, positioning them as *the Other*. These individuals often strive to become *the Self* yet continually face challenges in doing so. Mimicry becomes a key strategy in this process; however, the Self they attempt to embody remains a mere replication of the colonizers' cultural, political, and social constructs. Similarly, scholarship on *otherness* has explored the exclusion of those perceived as undeserving of centrality. Gayatri Spivak's seminal essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988) addresses this issue, introducing the concept of *subalternity*— a framework that contextualizes *otherness* within postcolonial conditions.

In political and cultural studies, theories of the other and the self have pointed to layers of power structures and macro identities that are formed in historical, national and political contexts. Much analysis examines the dynamics of articulating the postcolonial and national self in moments of transition and distinction from the colonizing other. There are layers of distinctions and identities that develop within the postcolonial or settler contexts. In the literature on settler colonialism, scholars have paid particular attention to the ways in which indigenous knowledge challenges or subverts the epistemic frames of colonizers, but also the ways in which indigenous and colonized populations do not have uniform experiences or thoughts and also may at times be unable to avoid becoming co-responsible or complicit with colonizers (Morgensen 3). In such complex situations, it is important

to analyze forms of resistance and identification between the self and others in an array of contexts including categories of gender, sexuality, race, and nation that are negotiated in power-laden contexts and not stable categories (Morgensen; Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*; Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things*). It is especially important to look beyond issues of cultural recognition and consider the forms of refusal or distinction that exist within state boundaries (Simpson). These processes are ongoing and evolving over time and not finished at the moment in which nation states are consolidated. It is equally important to understand the conditions in which the national and individual selves come to be seen as "pure" or "authentic" and the relational consequences of this, particularly for minoritized or indigenous populations (Heryanto).

As theories of *the Other* have evolved, so too have conceptualizations of *the Self*, particularly in relation to subjectivity. Theorization of subjectivity gained significant traction following Michel Foucault's (1977) work on power and the subject (Foucault). In Foucault's framework, *the subject* exists within power relations— every individual possesses power, and thus, every subject is an agent of power. Poststructuralist and Cultural Studies scholars have subsequently expanded on the notion of *the Self*, as seen in Anthony Giddens' theorization of self-identity. Giddens (1991) argues that self-identity is not a static quality but a dynamic and ongoing process of self-reflection and self-interpretations. The individuals continuously revise their understanding about themselves through their experiences and interactions with others. The central issue remains that *the Selves* are constantly positioned in opposition to *the Other*. This opposition is intrinsic, as *the Self* seeks to assert dominance culturally, politically, socially, and economically. Within society, various *Selves* exist as distinct yet competing entities. However, akin to a pluralized "I," these *Selves* are also engaged in internal contestation, navigating conflicting identities and roles within themselves.

Island Selves in the Subject-Object dynamic

Western scholars have laid the groundwork for theoretical frameworks that enrich the social sciences and humanities. However, these theories must be further developed by examining diverse contexts, particularly in regions with distinct sociopolitical and cultural dynamics. The application of these theories in developing countries—where social hierarchies are highly complex—reveals significant variations that challenge conventional dichotomies of subject and object. This

complexity disrupts simplistic frameworks that view gendered power structures as universally applicable. In the context of Ambon, conflict itself is deeply multifaceted. Various forms of difference and power relations intersect, particularly in the entanglement of ethnicity, religion, and social class. These intersections highlight how cultural identity has been strategically employed in Indonesia over time, particularly in the context of conflict.

Similarly, when discussing subjectivity in the context of *the Self*, island communities do not merely contend with *the Other* as an external force that asserts dominance as *the ruler,* an entity that organizes, controls, and dictates their existence. Rather, hierarchical structures also emerge within island societies, where *the Selves* are engaged in ongoing internal contestations. These *contested internal Selves* reveal the absence of a singular, centralized authority, emphasizing the multiplicity and fluidity of selfhood. In addition, shifts over time in the forces of authority and the multiplicity of island selves as generationally distinct, relationships to past authoritarianism, and communal conflict further complicate island selfhood. In Ambon, this complexity is particularly evident as individuals navigate shifting forms of consciousness, expanding access to education, and evolving power dynamics. These factors contribute to a dynamic interplay of identities, challenging fixed notions of subjectivity and authority.

Hip-Hop and the Contestation of Internal Selves

Ambon, an island in eastern Indonesia, experienced violent conflict between 1999 and 2002. The conflict intensified conditions in which antagonists were identified as former members of the community now divided by religion rather than unified by cultural and ethnic identity. In the aftermath, Ambon emerged as an entity in which its identity became the Selves, as the end of the conflict reinforced a collective spirit among Ambonese people, emphasizing the importance of rebuilding their region. In this context, the Other was no longer defined by religious differences but rather by external groups often blamed for inciting the conflict, exacerbating tensions, and making the situation difficult to control (Rigual et al.). Among the most scrutinized were journalists from Javanese newspapers, who were perceived as provocateurs due to their framing of events in ways that appeared to favor one side. There were also provocations by the State security forces considered as trigerring the conflict. These journalists, the Javanese media outlets and the security forces were regarded as outsiders whose reporting contributed to the escalation of violence (Udasmoro et al.). However, divisions within Ambonese society persisted, not along

religious lines but across generational differences. Older and younger generations held divergent views on music and its role in social life.

Following the conflict, peacebuilding efforts led by Ambonese youth, coupled with the rise of digital media accessible to younger generations, fostered a cultural shift. Hip-Hop emerged as a preferred artistic medium, offering a distinct space for self-expression that set them apart from the older generation. Globally and historically, Hip-Hop, is often seen as a music of resistance or rebellion. For example, in South Korea, it is a genre and space that allows socially marginalized individuals and groups to convey their concerns (Kim and Sung). As Yanko and others have recently argued, hip hop has moved from being a global and unifying context for shared resistance, to become a site for emphasizing local and indigenous languages and providing a context for indigenous and marginalized groups to preserve language and convey grievances to centralized states (Yanko). Yanko's compelling analysis demonstrates how musicians from Eastern Indonesian "pulau," or island, contexts have migrated to more urbanized, prosperous islands in search of economic advancement and along the way encountered dehumanizing discrimination and denial of rights to which they are entitled as citizens of multicultural Indonesia. Through the use of local languages, one "group [Mukarakat] links the decentralization of governance and cultural preservation to national prejudice and implicit racism" (Yanko 385–86). At the same time that they advocate to end discrimination of their region, as they move through national contexts and experience forms of discrimination, they also demonstrate their place in the diverse nation, but with a more dynamic notion of culture than prescribed by the centralized state (Yanko).

Ambon provides a slightly different *pulau* (island) context in large part because of Ambon's national and international distinction as a city of music. It could be argued that it provides elements of both center and periphery in the context of the national music scene. In this article, we focus on the role of youth as they use hip hop to negotiate their post conflict identities relationally in the context of national identities, conflict pasts, religious and cultural identites of their region, and generationally. Through Hip-Hop, young people in Ambon conveyed a wide range of narratives, using lyrics to articulate their lived experiences and social realities. For them, Hip-Hop is not merely a vehicle for melancholic storytelling—an approach the young Ambonese associated with the older generation, which tends to romanticize the past rather than engage with the present. In making this distinction, Ambonese youth seek to redefine Ambonese music itself, asserting that it is no longer confined to its traditional melancholic form.

Music in the Everyday Life of the Ambonese

Ambon is one of Indonesia's major producers of pop music, with its singers and songwriters achieving recognition at both national and international levels. Beyond commercial pop, Ambon also has its own distinct musical tradition, which is performed at various social events, including café performances, weddings, and other routine gatherings. Music is deeply embedded in the everyday life of Ambon; even public transportation vehicles play music at high volumes, allowing pedestrians to hear Ambonese songs as vehicles pass by. Given the centrality of music in daily life, UNESCO designated Ambon as a *City of Music* (Wahyudi). This designation also stems from the role of music in fostering peace during and after periods of communal conflict. During the conflict, music served as a unifying force between Christian and Muslim communities. In the post-conflict period, it has continued to play a crucial role in reconciliation efforts among Ambonese youth, helping to rebuild fractured social bonds.

Traditional Ambonese pop music, largely composed by the older generation, typically follows a repetitive four-verse structure, with lyrics that are looped throughout the song. Young musicians in Ambon often criticize this format as monotonous, lacking creativity, and insufficient for conveying complex ideas. In contrast, Hip-Hop employs a more dynamic lyrical structure. In Hip-Hop compositions, each verse explores a different theme, allowing for multiple narratives to unfold within a single track. This structural variation enables Hip-Hop to communicate a wide range of messages more effectively.

> Many topics can be explored in a single song. For instance, the guys can write a song about peace, dedicating the entire song to peace — like highlighting the theme of loving Maluku. Specifically, they bring this theme into Hip Hop songs. (Interview with Firman Wally, May 31, 2024)

Ambonese youth seek to distinguish themselves from the previous generation. By producing their own music, they assert their identity and resist the transmission of narratives they perceive as belonging to the older generation. In doing so, they construct a musical expression that becomes an integral part of their own *Selves* as Ambonese youth.

> In Hip-Hop, we can pour all our ideas into the music—whether they stem from anxiety, happiness, or any other emotion. A senior Hip-Hop musician from Maluku once said: 'Hip-Hop is different from pop music or other genres because, in Hip-Hop, a single song can address multiple themes. That's why we choose Hip-Hop—because all the thoughts and concerns in our minds can be expressed through it.' (Interview with Firman Wally, May 31, 2024)

The statements above illustrate how young musicians in Ambon aim to contribute to society by articulating their concerns through song lyrics. In their view, Hip-Hop is not merely a performative art form but a political channel through which they engage with the public and policymakers. This perspective sets their music apart from that of the previous generation, which primarily regarded music as a form of artistic expression and a source of pleasure—one that conveyed personal emotions, romanticism, and love.

From Melancholia to Happiness Across Generations

The pursuit of happiness through art appears to be generational. In Ambon, older and younger generations have distinct ways of achieving happiness. The flexible and evolving storytelling structure of Hip-Hop, which often incorporates themes of love and solidarity, is one reason why young Ambonese artists have sought to move away from the melancholic music produced by the older generation. They reject sorrowful tones in their songs, as they have grown up in an environment where their parents have physically endured hardship, particularly as a result of past conflicts. For them, Hip-Hop represents a means of realizing their aspirations for happiness through which the young Ambonese use Hip-Hop to could escape sorrow. This choice stems, in part, from their desire to break free from the past and from the historical narratives shaped by the older generation—a generation that long controlled the music scene. Instead, they seek to establish a "happy generation," unafraid of the future, and to construct an identity rooted in joy and love. Through Hip-Hop, they also reconstruct a sense of camaraderie among the Ambonese. Hip-Hop lyrics can genuinely uplift people. They inspire enthusiasm, offer solutions, and provide a sense of direction.

> There are hundreds of Hip-Hop communities in Maluku because Hip-Hop itself serves as an echo—an echo of literature, an echo of reconciliation. If you pay attention to Hip-Hop songs from 2010 and 2011, [you'll notice they] don't

> contain 'I love you' lyrics, [not conventional songs about] love. [Instead, they address] segregation: 'How did you and I meet? We are brothers. We've come together. We love each other. (Interview with Eka Poceratu, 27 May 2023)

Hip-Hop is often perceived as street music. However, for young Ambonese, it serves as an inspiration and a means of liberation from injustice, exploitation, and sorrow. Their music has gained recognition in Jakarta, with several Hip-Hop groups from Ambon establishing a presence in the capital.

In their Hip-Hop compositions, these young musicians challenge dominant cultural forces, particularly genres that have long dominated the Indonesian music scene, such as reggae, pop, and rock. Hip-Hop endures because, in young people Ambonese view, it embodies the spirit of freedom.

> Hip-Hop just feels closer to young people. The streets feel closer. Culturally, Hip-Hop comes from slavery, from the streets, and [it gives us a space to] express our anxieties through rap—no limits to what we can talk about. It's all about freedom of expression. And as for other genres, like rock, reggae, maybe [they are] influential too, [mostly] because of the references the young people here [draw from]. And yeah, culturally, there's not that much difference between rock, reggae, and Hip-Hop. The issues raised are often similar. Reggae speaks of freedom. Hip-Hop speaks of freedom. Rock does too. (Interview with Eka Poceratu, 27 May 2023)

Hip-Hop serves as a means for the Ambonese youth to construct a distinct political identity, setting themselves apart from the older generation. Through Hip-Hop, they engage in a process of liberation, shifting from a melancholic musical tradition to one that embodies a more joyful and forward-looking compositions. They adapt elements of street culture to the island context in their own way, crafting a distinctly Ambonese Hip-Hop style. This "island way" is reflected in how they preserve their identity as islanders by embedding narratives about Ambon within their music.

Beyond its role as a medium for self-expression and happiness, Hip-Hop also offers economic opportunities. Amid growing economic hardship and increasing job scarcity, Ambonese youth use Hip-Hop as a source of income. Leveraging media and Indonesia's expanding music industry, they actively participate in the broader musical landscape, widening their economic prospects. Their efforts have gained international recognition, leading to invitations to perform abroad.

> I have my own Hip-Hop group, as well as a band and a Maluku ethnic music group. So yeah, I'm usually invited to perform at events around Ambon, like in open fields or other local venues around here. The farthest I've traveled was in May 2023, when my friends and I were invited to Kentucky, United States, to a city called Paducah. The city is one of UNESCO's Creative Cities and has strong ties with Ambon [as] the City of Music. And in 2022, some of my friends were also invited to perform in Jeonju, South Korea, though I wasn't able to join. (Interview with Edwin Titahalawa, 31 May 2024)

The economic dimension of Hip-Hop is seen as a crucial factor in achieving happiness. As demonstrated above, the concept of happiness differs between the older and younger generations in Ambon. For the older generation, happiness in music is derived from personal expression and the cathartic experience of melancholic songs, which they consider an essential part of their island identity. In contrast, for younger Ambonese musicians, happiness is tied to the freedom to articulate the realities they face even as economic sustainability has become an integral component of this pursuit of happiness.

Conclusion

Theorizing islands is essential to understanding how islanders empirically define their identity and navigate lived experiences that differ from those in central or mainland contexts. Some islands achieve economic success due to readily available income-generating opportunities, such as tourism. However, many others face significant challenges, with their inhabitants struggling even to survive.

Within these constraints, the dynamic between *the Selves* and *the Others* is not static; rather, it is shaped by historical and social relations. In Ambon's context, particularly in the aftermath of conflict, *the Others* were often perceived as outsiders—those from beyond Ambon who were seen as having brought the region into turmoil. These outsiders were labeled as provocateurs. However, with the arrival of peace, a sense of unity emerged, fostering the idea of a singular Ambonese entity working collectively toward rebuilding. Yet, even this notion of *the Selves* is not monolithic and remains fluid over time and across generations.

Before the conflict, *the Selves* in Ambon were segregated primarily along religious (Muslim and Christian) and ethnic lines (native Ambonese versus migrant communities such as the Bugis, Butonese, and Makassarese). However, during and after the conflict, generational differences became a defining factor in

shaping *the Selves*. Ambonese youth constructed an identity distinct from that of their elders, whom they perceived as having a different vision of what it means to be Ambonese. While the older generation's identity was shaped by narratives of suffering, memories of conflict, and melancholic artistic expressions, Ambonese youth challenged these perspectives by adopting a more pragmatic outlook through Hip-Hop. They sought to liberate themselves from the weight of the past, embracing Hip-Hop as a medium of artistic and economic emancipation—one that, in their view, represents freedom on both creative and financial fronts.

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