

# Hegemony, Resistance, and Destabilization of Meaning: Study of the *Horeg Sound* Fatwa through Ernesto Laclau's Post-Structuralist Analysis

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## Abstract

This article examines the contestation of *horeg sound* meaning through Ernesto Laclau's post-structuralist discourse analysis approach. This study places the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) Fatwa of East Java Number 1 of 2025 concerning the use of *horeg sound* as a *nodal point* in discourse analysis. This research is conceptually-empirically based with qualitative methods that combine document studies and digital observations of the fatwa text, media coverage, and social media. Data analysis is conducted through three dimensions of post-structuralist discourse analysis, namely; articulation, hegemony, and repositioning of meaning by exploring the relations of equivalence and differentiation between symbols. This analysis positions the fatwa prohibiting *horeg sound* not to be interpreted simply as a matter of religious law, but this phenomenon reflects the discursive struggle between religious authorities and popular culture. The fatwa functions as an instrument of hegemony of meaning, in which religious authorities attempt to assert moral dominance by categorizing *horeg sound* as a negative practice articulated with disturbance and haram. This hegemonic effort sparked social resistance, particularly from young people who resorted to symbolic repositioning through the term "carnival sound" as a form of symbolic resistance to religious authority. The research results show that the fatwa actually destabilized meaning and opened up new spaces for contestation within the field of discursivity. This confirms that religious discourse is contingent, fragile, and always open to negotiation of meaning and social resistance.

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## INTRODUCTION

This article examines contestation of hegemonic discourse over the fatwa prohibiting *horeg sound* in East Java. The debate over the fatwa prohibiting *horeg sound* issued by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) of East Java is not merely a matter of religious law, but reflects the discursive struggle between religious authorities and popular culture in the contemporary public sphere (Kaptein, 2018). This fatwa functions as an instrument of hegemony, in which religious institutions attempt to assert moral-religious dominance by categorizing *horeg sound* as a negative practice associated with immorality, noise, and *muḍarāt* (harmful). However, this hegemonic effort has triggered social resistance (Okubuiro, 2020), particularly from young people and those in the local entertainment industry who interpret the fatwa as an attack on their cultural identity and freedom of expression. In response, a symbolic repositioning has emerged, replacing the term *horeg sound* with *carnival sound* as a form of symbolic resistance to religious authority. This situation indicates a widespread contestation of meaning in the digital public sphere, where moral conflicts arise between groups that uphold religious piety and those who defend cultural expression. This struggle manifests itself in debates, memes, and digital campaigns that delegitimize each other. Within the framework of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's post-structuralist discourse analysis (1985; 2005, 2014), this tension demonstrates how fatwa functions as discursive articulations that attempt to stabilize meaning within a specific moral-religious horizon, while simultaneously opening up space for dislocation and destabilization of meaning by popular cultural actors.

Therefore, this article examines how seemingly normative religious practices actually function as arenas for hegemonic struggles between religious morality and popular cultural expressions in the postmodern era; where truth is no longer final and is constantly negotiated within a space of social resistance (Rosidi, 2021).

The issue and phenomenon of *horeg sound* have been widely discussed by scholars. Fikri et al. (2025) have described *horeg sound* as an arena for symbolic negotiation between technology-community-based youth expression and moral-religious power that seeks to maintain the definition of truth regarding sound, body, and space. However, their review and analysis are descriptive in nature and do not include a critical examination of how hegemony forms and the process of destabilizing the *horeg sound* meaning. In this study, the author presents Ernesto Laclau's post-structuralist discourse analysis approach (Jacobs, 2018), which provides a perspective on how the conflictual consensus between Islamic fatwas and the socio-cultural practice of *horeg sound* constitutes a never-ending hegemonic struggle. Until now, studies on Islamic fatwas have been mostly examined from a legal perspective, which is considered fixed and binding (Hooker, 2003; Hallaq, 2009). In Laclau's analysis, law is not essential and will always be vulnerable to the structures of meaning that develop in social space. This article will show that fatwas are not merely normative legal products, but rather hegemonic instruments that are always intertwined and confronted with the potential for resistance and destabilization of meaning in contemporary public space.

Scholars have examined the *horeg sound* phenomenon through various perspectives reflecting their respective disciplines. Studies on *horeg sound* are viewed separately as part of the diversity of each discipline. The process of reading the issue of *horeg sound* tends to be fragmented. From a sociological perspective, *horeg sound* is understood as a form of transformation and expression of popular culture that reflects the dynamics of social class and changes in the lifestyles of the younger generation (Darmawan & Efendi, 2024; Kh et al., 2024; Syah, 2024); meanwhile, from an Islamic religious perspective, this phenomenon is considered to contain elements of sin because it is considered to encourage behavior that deviates from moral and spiritual values (Adhim, 2025). In the realm of economics, *horeg sound* actually provides material benefits for business actors and Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) who utilize it as a creative business opportunity (Aprilian et al., 2025). An ethical perspective views *horeg sound* as disturbing to the public due to its noisy nature, thus it can be interpreted as an expression of "anti-culture" (Sahuri, 2024; Vince, 2025). In the realm of legal science, the sound of *horeg sound* is categorized as an unlawful act based on Article 1365 of the Civil Code, so the government is deemed necessary to enforce clear regulations (Novira & Puspytasari, 2025; Winanda & Alam, 2025; Fitria, 2025; Lesgasevia, 2024; Suhala, 2025). From a health science perspective, *horeg sound* noise is seen as causing damage to cochlear hair cells leading to permanent hearing loss (Prihandini & Kurnia, 2025). A communication science perspective highlights media framing and stereotypes attached to supporters of *horeg sound* (Cahyani, 2025; Kurniansyah & Hanif, 2025), while environmental science emphasizes the impact of noise on the vital functions of species, from communication, navigation, to reproduction (Fitrianggraeni & Davey, 2025). From a psychological perspective, this phenomenon is linked to the problem of collective narcissism and the self-esteem of its fans (Salsabila, 2025). These varied readings demonstrate that each discipline "voices" what it knows; like Althusser's (1971) conception of interpellation, Laclau (2014) views subjects as always engaging in enunciation, namely, an articulation effort that shapes a horizon of meaning. The author can say that a fierce ideological struggle is invisibly occurring within the field of discursivity, where *horeg sound* becomes a contested discourse field across various horizons of knowledge.

Currently, *horeg sound* has developed into a discourse field fraught with battles over meaning, interpretation, and never-ending claims to truth. The *mberot* tradition and *horeg sound* have become mainstream youth discourse and are driving shifts in cultural preferences (Frenadya & Safara, 2024). *Horeg sound* is no longer simply interpreted as loud music popular with young people, but rather a void that can be filled with various articulations. For the creative community,

*horeg sound* is an expression of freedom, culture, entertainment, and even social solidarity in the form of a carnival community; while for religious authorities, it is represented as a symbol of immorality, *muḍarāt* (harmful), moral degradation, and disturbance that must be rejected. This is where an antagonistic political frontier emerges: at one pole, there are groups that support *horeg sound* as a cultural freedom, while at the other pole, there are groups that reject it as a threat to the moral and cultural order. This bi-polar struggle shows how *horeg sound* functions as a contested point of articulation within a broader discursive field. This struggle sparked increasingly intense tensions when religious authorities responded by issuing a haram status through the Fatwa of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) of East Java Number 1 of 2025 concerning the use of *Horeg Sound*. This fatwa functions not only as a normative prohibition, but also as a discursive intervention to stabilize the meaning of *horeg sound* within a moral-religious horizon. As noted by Hooker (2003), fatwas in Indonesia often serve as a tool for social and political articulation that connects religious authorities with the wider community. Therefore, the fatwa prohibiting *horeg sound* can be understood as an institutional effort to articulate this phenomenon as a moral deviation.

The reality observed by the author shows that the fatwa prohibiting *horeg sound* is not immediately accepted as a total hegemonic truth. A small portion of the younger generation shows varied responses, ranging from support, rejection, to negotiation. In various digital spaces, *horeg sound* is even parodied or defended as a symbol of youth community identity that does not submit to claims of moral authority. This is in line with Mahmood's (2005) findings that religious practices and practices of resistance can never be separated from the social context that shapes them. This phenomenon indicates a clash between authoritative religious discourse and popular discourse that grows within subcultural cultures. This condition shows that the meaning of *horeg sound* is never stable, but is continuously reproduced in discursive tensions that bring together claims of truth, authority, and resistance. Based on this, this article seeks to answer the question of how the discourse on the prohibition of *horeg sound* became a hegemonic discourse and how efforts to destabilize and reposition the discourse offered by supporters of *horeg sound*. This question arises because the haram fatwa issued by religious authorities not only functions as a normative prohibition on a practice, but also as a discursive strategy to lock the meaning of *horeg sound* within a particular moral-religious horizon. Thus, the focus of this research question is not only on the position of religious authorities in defining *horeg sound* as haram, but also on the political dynamics of meaning that emerge when these hegemonic claims interact with counter-discourses in the public sphere.

## METHODS

This study uses Ernesto Laclau's post-structuralist discourse analysis approach to examine how the fatwa prohibiting *horeg sound* is produced, circulated, and contested in the digital public sphere. This approach starts from the assumption that discourse is an open and never-final arena for contestation of meaning, where every sign can be articulated into different horizons of meaning (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). In this context, the prohibition on *horeg sound* is treated as a *nodal point* at the center of the struggle for meaning between religious authorities and popular communities.

This research is an interpretive qualitative article (Yin, 2023) with a post-structuralist critical discourse analysis design. The units of analysis include the fatwa text, public statements by the East Java Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), national and local online media coverage, and digital discourse expressions on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, X, and TikTok, which most frequently feature discursive debates. The digital observation period was set from July to November 2025, aligning with the emergence and intensification of public debate regarding the fatwa. The data sample was selected using purposive sampling based on relevance criteria directly related to the fatwa or responses to the *horeg sound* phenomenon, as well as the accessibility of open accounts and content. The total data analyzed included one fatwa document, 24 media articles, and 38 relevant social media posts. The data analysis technique was carried out through a three-

dimensional discourse analysis: first, articulation to identify how the meaning of *horeg sound* is constructed and framed as a deviant practice; second, hegemony to explore the strategies of religious authorities in locking meaning and building moral legitimacy through fatwas and media; and third, repositioning as a step to identify counter-discursive practices that destabilize these hegemonic claims in the digital realm. The analysis will be conducted manually by mapping the similarities of the themes by triangulating between the fatwa text, media, and online public expressions. All data used is public and does not involve direct interaction with human subjects. The names of social media accounts cited are only those that are public and free from privacy. This research has followed ethical guidelines for social research by avoiding digital copyright infringement and ensuring the use of data for academic purposes only.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Articulation on the Haram of *Horeg Sound*

The *horeg sound* phenomenon has occupied a unique position in the rural popular culture landscape of East Java in recent years. *Horeg sound* is not merely an entertainment practice, but an arena for expressing local community identity and pride. Eventually, *horeg sound* became a popular culture and ritual in the form of sound checks, sound parades, and sound battles in rural areas (Sumarsam, 2014). Behind this, a new discourse emerged regarding quite massive complaints from the community about extreme noise, health problems, and even moral unrest due to party practices considered excessive. Public pressure and a petition rejecting *horeg sound* by 828 people on July 3, 2025, which articulated *horeg sound* as "impolite" and "deviant" behavior, prompted institutional intervention by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) of East Java (MUI Digital, 2025). In this context, the East Java Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI Jatim) issued Fatwa Number 1 of 2025 concerning the Use of *Horeg Sound* on July 12, 2025, in response to public pressure and moral pressure from religious groups (MUI Jatim, 2025). The normative text in this fatwa not only affirms moral prohibition but also functions as a hegemonic articulation that seeks to stabilize the meaning of *horeg sound* within a religious horizon.

Within Ernesto Laclau's theoretical framework (Marker, 2020), the fatwa prohibiting *horeg sound* can be understood as a master signifier that binds diverse discursive elements into a stable chain of meaning. *Horeg sound* was initially a floating signifier articulated variously in separate elements; for youth communities, it symbolized freedom of expression and solidarity; for MSMEs, it served as a means of earning a living; while for religious groups and officials, it was associated with noise, waste, and social disruption (Fair, 2015). The East Java MUI fatwa attempted to contain this instability by centering meaning around the category of "haram". The word "haram" here serves as a nodal point that unites a new chain of equivalences between the *horeg sound* and various negative signs such as: noise → disturbance → waste → *muḍarāt* → haram. Through this chain, the *horeg sound* is shifted from the realm of popular culture to the realm of moral-religious (Beng, 2022). The author sees the citation of the Qur'an, Surah Al-Aḥzab verse 58 in this fatwa as legitimizing the following religious authority which the meaning, "And those who harm believing men and believing women for [something] other than what they have earned have certainly born upon themselves a slander and manifest sin".

The Quranic verse Al-Aḥzab 58 and several hadiths concerning enjoining good and forbidding evil are quoted not only as articulations and interpretations of religious law, but also to fill a moral space that can bind religious discourse, social discourse, state discourse, health discourse, and scientific discourse within a single horizon: the *horeg sound* as *muḍarāt*. This can be seen in the various articulations of the *horeg sound* that have appeared on social media described in table 1.

Table 1. Articulation of the *Horeg Sound* on Social Media

Articulation on Social Media	Discursive Elements	Nodal Points and the New Meanings They Produce
<p> rara_1302 · 2 Agt</p> <p>Ya Allah kenapa <b>sound horeg</b> munculnya di Jawa? 🙏            Geter semua jendelakuuu.            Aku nih pulkam mau malmingan dg tidur nyenyak bukan malah keganggu <b>sound horeg</b> 🙏🙏  <b>Horeg</b> kabeh jendelaku geter, berisik bgt astaghfirullah.  <b>Dosa</b> banget ngerampas kebebasan buat orang yg mau bobo dg tenang</p>	Disturbing Sleep	
<p> #TuanMuda™@TheUncleDee · 4 Agt</p> <p>Membalas @tvOneNews</p> <p><b>Sound Horeg</b> ini SUDAH HARUS DILARANG..</p> <p>Sama sekali ngggak ada faedah</p> <p>Malah nyiapin Tempat Orang MABOK MIRAS dan JOGET JOGET</p>	Drunk Place	
<p> naiii@cargloss_kuning · 24 Jul</p> <p>Membalas @cargloss_kuning</p> <p>Apalagi kalau udah ganggu orang lain, ibadah, bahkan tidur warga sekampung.</p> <p><b>Sound horeg</b> itu bukan <b>dosa</b> besar—tapi jadi <b>dosa</b> sosial kalau dipake tanpa akhlak. Kalau ulama bilang itu haram, bukan karena mereka benci musik, tapi karena mereka sayang ketenangan umat.</p>	Sicial Sins	
<p> faridamardiani</p> <p>Nek dodo rasane ampeg seseg loro..kuping cumpleng</p> <p>14w 1 like Reply See translation</p>	Extreme Noise	
<p> Adi Anugra Sukma Nugroho</p> <p>Di RT ku juga gitu mas .            Saya sebagai warga yang terdaftar.            Tapi sebelumnya sudah musyawarah dulu akhirnya di ambil titik tengahnya.            Ada yang 600-1jt            Kalo ada yang keberatan bisa di bicarakan terus yang mampu bisa menutup kekurangannya biar sama sama enak.            Ini untuk agustus tahun 2026.            Kalo saya sendiri gak merasa di beratkan soalnya sama sama sukanya asal guyup,            Tapi warganya sama sama ngerti jadi enak, meskipun ada sedikit pro kontar itu wajar.</p> <p>6 minggu Suka Balas Bagikan 3</p>	Extortion of Neighborhood Association Dues	<p>Haram</p> <p>↓</p> <p><i>Horeg Sound as Muḍarāt (Harmfull)</i></p>
<p> M Maki</p> <p>Yang di sebut peningkatan ekonomi juga hanya jangka pendek, kalau hanya ada acara .. malah hanya sekedar konsumtif pemborosan uang</p>	Waste Money	
<p> Muhammad Firdaus</p> <p>5 Agustus · 🌐</p> <p>Sound Horeg !!            Ga Mau Diharamkan Tapi Isinya Banyak Sekali Pelanggaran Agama.. 🙏🙏</p> <p>Beginilah fakta di lapangan... Orang-orang yang menolak fatwa haram sound horeg justru mempertontonkan pelanggaran agama secara terang-terangan, mulqi dari pesta miras, campur pria wanita sampai mengatasnamakan perut untuk membenarkan maksiat. Padahal Allah-lah pemberi rezeki, dan rezeki halal jauh lebih banyak. Lalu, siapa yang lebih layak ditaati?? Hawa nafsu atau syariat?</p>	Revealing the Aurat and Mixed Dance of Men and Women	
<p> Jabodetabek24.info</p> <p>26 Juni · 🌐</p> <p>Gapura ini harus di robohkan lantaran Sound HOREG tidak bisa masuk.</p> <p>Beredar video memperlihatkan pembongkaran sebuah gapura oleh sejumlah orang. Bukan tanpa alasan, gapura itu di bongkar gegara sound HOREG tak bisa melintas.</p>	Damaging Public Facilities	
<p> Alex Bae Antenna</p> <p>23 Juli · 🌐</p> <p>Sound horeg merusak budaya Nusantara</p>	Destroying Nusantara Culture	

Source: Processed by Researchers from Various Social Media Sources

The fatwa makes the *horeg sound* not merely a technical issue, but a matter of public morality. This is where what Laclau calls a "temporary closure" occurs, when religious institutions attempt to monopolize the interpretation of a previously fluid sign.

The East Java MUI fatwa did not exist in a vacuum. It emerged in response to public pressure facilitated by digital media and citizen communities. On Change.org and in local media outlets such as Jawa Pos, Radar Blitar, Radio Andhika, and Radio Patria, narratives emerged about "the noise of *horeg sound* disturbing residents", "roof tiles damaged by vibrations from the *horeg sound*", "parties of mixed alcohol with the *horeg sound*", and "the *horeg sound* resembling a street discotic" (Hadi, 2025; Hariyanto, 2025; Radar Blitar, 2025a). By combining the evidence of the Qur'an, hadith, and Islamic jurisprudence such as *ad-ḍarāru yuzal* and *ẓar'ul mafāsīd muqaddam 'ala jalbil maṣāliḥ*, the MUI attempts to provide a legitimate religious basis for their claims to gain widespread acceptance (Ahmad, 2025). In the fatwa document, the data is processed from immanent arguments into empirical arguments, including noise measurements during battle sound with an average finding of 115–125 dB and categorized as dangerous according to the World Health Organization (WHO) (Harnish, 2021). In this way, the MUI combines scientific discourse with religious norms as an articulation practice that connects heterogeneous domains to strengthen legitimacy. The fatwa not only states "haram because it causes *muḍarāt*," but also absorbs scientific language such as decibels, cochlea, and mental health, as well as positive laws such as laws and regional regulations. The author can see how the chain of the prohibition of *horeg sound* is articulated in the state's positive law as stated by the Director General of Intellectual Property, Ministry of Law as follows;

As a form of artistic expression, *horeg sound* must adhere to religious norms, social norms, and public order. If it causes damage or problems, it can certainly be restricted. Moreover, Law Number 28 of 2014 concerning Copyright also contains strict restrictions... Article 50 of the Copyright Law states that everyone is prohibited from announcing, distributing, or communicating works that conflict with morals, religion, decency, public order, or state defense and security (Dgip.go.id, 2025).

This cross-domain articulation creates a new discursive horizon in which religion emerges as a moral and epistemic bridge between society, the state, and science. In other words, the fatwa becomes a meeting ground for "moral discourse" and "rational discourse," as Laclau and Mouffe define the politics of articulation.

Interestingly, the East Java MUI fatwa does not completely reject *horeg sound*. It makes exceptions for religious events like *pengajian*, *shalawat*, and wedding party; as long as they do not violate *sharia* norms. In this context, the exception actually demonstrates a political discursive operation: it creates a boundary between religious and profane *horeg sounds*. For example, the use of Disc Jockeys (DJs) with modified remixes of *sholawat* by *Dekengane Pusat* Majelis Sabilu Taubah led by Gus Iqdam is socially accepted, even though it technically fulfills the characteristics of *horeg* (Ulfah, 2023). In fact, loud DJ music is also part of the *horeg sound* practice prohibited by the fatwa. This is in accordance with the statement of Prasetawati & Asnawi (2018) that many Islamic expressions are rich in cultural-religious creativity, but in certain areas and fields there have been deviations from Islam. This shows how the MUI not only prohibits but also defines the space of "what is allowed" and "what is not allowed," resulting in a symbolic separation between piety and sin. In fact, this process has become increasingly institutionalized with the emergence of numerous policy recommendations for the implementation of noise regulations, public education, the establishment of special zones, and the enforcement of *horeg sound* laws (Fauzi dkk., 2024; Puspita dkk., 2025). In Laclau's discursive logic, the formation of this *antagonistic frontier* is crucial to maintaining hegemonic stability (Retamozo, 2017). *Horeg sound*, categorized as "haram", becomes "the Other," which must be defined so that the "true" religious identity of the community can be affirmed. In the language of Laclau & Mouffe (1985), the East Java MUI Fatwa No. 1 of 2025 is understood as a form of *political frontier*, namely a discursive demarcation line that separates "right" from "wrong," as well as "halal" from "haram." Thus, the fatwa does not merely

provide moral guidance but also produces a new collective identity: a community that rejects noise and sin.

By reading this fatwa as an articulation practice, rather than a mere legal decision, we can observe a significant epistemic shift. The fatwa operates as a hegemonic practice that attempts to connect various discursive elements into a single horizon of mutual understanding: that *horeg sound* is *muḍarāt* and dangerous, and therefore forbidden (Biglieri, 2017). However, because meaning is always contingent, this effort is never final. Counter-discourses in the digital space continue to challenge this monopoly of meaning with strategies of irony, humor, and the assertion of local identity. Thus, the fatwa not only represents a religious intervention in popular culture but also reveals the politics of meaning in the digital era: how religious authorities attempt to establish legitimacy in an increasingly decentralized discursive landscape. Within Laclau's theoretical horizon, *horeg sound* functions as an empty signifier that becomes a field of struggle for meaning between religious morality, cultural freedom, and state regulation (Maxey et al., 2025). The East Java MUI fatwa is an attempt to fill this void, but public resistance will demonstrate that the space for articulation remains open.

### **The Hegemony of Religious Authority in the *Horeg Sound* Discourse**

In this section, the author begins by explaining how the discourse on the prohibition of *horeg sound* shapes a hegemonic configuration in the public sphere. In Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) perspective, the process of constructing hegemony always occurs through two main logics: the logic of equivalence and the logic of difference. The logic of equivalence works by linking diverse differences into a common opposition, and the logic of differentiation works by reducing antagonism through the accommodation of specific demands so that differences remain within the framework of the hegemonic project (Sotiris, 2019). In other words, the logic of equivalence connects various particular demands into a common opposition, while the logic of differentiation functions to reduce antagonism by establishing a boundary between "us" and "them." With these two logics, religious discourse is able to organize meaning, construct symbolic enemies, and affirm moral identity. Through Laclau's perspective, *horeg sound* becomes a field for the political articulation of meaning that is open to contestation (Slama, 2021). The fatwa issued by the East Java chapter of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) serves as a *nodal point* uniting various elements of discourse on order, health, and piety within a shared horizon that *horeg sound* is *muḍarāt* (harmful). Initially, *horeg sound* was articulated not merely as an acoustic disturbance, but also as a connection to moral, health, social, and even religious issues. The ban on *horeg sound* is not merely a matter of public comfort, but represents the struggle to uphold morality, maintain public health, and protect social order. The MUI fatwa firmly states that all forms of *horeg sound* activities that cause noise, disrupt public order, or lead to immorality are haram. This statement was then widely repeated through mainstream media coverage such as Detik Jatim, Berita Jatim, MUI Jatim, and various Jawa Pos channels, as well as religious sermons that asserted that *horeg sound* was a "futile activity that brings *muḍarāt*" (Berita Jatim, 2025; Detik Jatim, 2025; MUI Jatim, 2025; Radar Tulungagung, 2025; MUI Jatim, 2025).

In the chain of equivalence, various particular elements that articulate the various meanings of *horeg sound* are united under the hegemonic meaning of "haram." The prohibition of *horeg sound* serves as a master signifier that unites various public complaints: from public unrest due to noise, medical arguments about the dangers to hearing, legal criticisms of violations of Article 1365 of the Civil Code, to ethical calls for cultural degradation. Anti-*horeg sound* Islamism interprets haram as a binding force for various other meanings in the chain of equivalence. Other meanings will resonate the meaning of haram *horeg sound* within the larger framework of Islamist discourse such as; Islamic liberalism which interprets the elimination of Muslim worship rights due to *horeg sound*, Islamic feminism which interprets the exploitation of Muslim women who dance sexily, Islamic patriotism which sees the moral degradation of Islam Nusantara, conservatism which regrets the neglect and destruction of Javanese culture and customs, positive law which considers it

a violation of Article 1365 of the Civil Code, and ecology which rejects environmental damage and surrounding noise. All these complaints are tied within the horizon of the meaning of "haram", a category that carries both moral weight and authoritativeness because it comes from religious institutions.

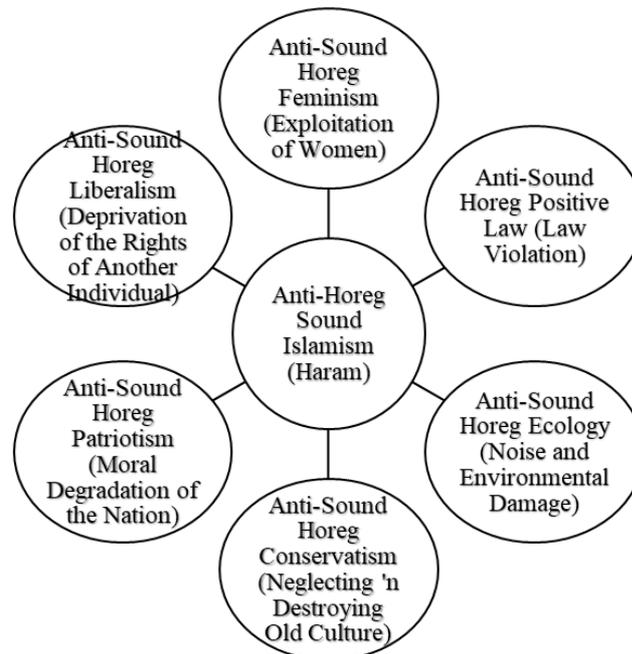


Figure 1. Hegemony Construction through the Chain of Equivalence  
*Source: Processed by Researchers*

The figure 1 schematically shows how the knot of meaning "haram" binds the elements of the articulation of meaning. This emphasizes that the prohibition on *horeg sound* is not simply interpreted as a matter of noise, but as an effort to uphold public morality in accordance with Islamic principles. On the other hand, religious institutions also utilize legal, medical, and scientific language in positivist constructions to strengthen moral legitimacy. As stated by Abdul Haris, a member of the Fatwa Commission of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) of East Java, *"If we violate the haram fatwa, then our nation will become a primitive nation because it rejects science"* (Jitu TV, 2025). This statement suggests the meaning of the values of rationality and science in interpreting the haram of *horeg sound*. Furthermore, researchers also observed a number of regional officials linking the ban on *horeg sound* to state laws as an effort to maintain public order and respect other citizens. This can be captured from the statement of Blitar Police Chief, AKBP Arif Fazlurahman, who gave an appeal that *"Don't let the entertainment of one party disturb other residents. This is a matter of tolerance and mutual respect. We don't want those values to disappear from social life just because of loud noises"* (Radar Blitar, 2025b). In this way, the meaning of "haram" functions as the main node in the chain of equivalence that connects various particular issues of religion, health, social, and law into one cohesive discursive horizon. *Horeg sound* is represented as a symbol of moral decay, cultural degradation, and a threat to social order. The haram fatwa not only silences *horeg sound* as a popular cultural practice of young people, but also articulates it as a symbol of various forms of social disturbance (Wallach, 2014). The haram fatwa functions as a speech act of securitization, namely; a discursive act that shifts *horeg sound* from the realm of culture to an existential threat (Pradana, 2025). This process shows how religious authorities operate the logic of equivalence to strengthen their hegemonic claims by transforming one particular practice into a representation of a broader moral threat.

To solidify this hegemony, religious authorities and fatwa supporters also operate the logic of differentiation, namely by creating dividing lines between groups of "moral vs. immoral", "believers vs. non-believers", and "just vs. oppressors". In the Friday sermon on July 18, 2025 at the Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Islamic Boarding School in Sukorejo, Situbondo, East Java, the preacher read a sermon on "*Sound Horeg, Neighborly Rights, and Signs of Perfect Faith*". In this sermon, it was conveyed that people who disturb neighbors are unbelievers because according to the hadith narrated by Imām Bukhārī that, "*By Allah, he does not believe. By Allah, he does not believe. By Allah, he does not believe. The companions asked, 'Who, O Messenger of Allah?' He replied, 'The one whose neighbors do not feel safe from his disturbance'*" (Kholilurrohman, 2025). In line with this, M Ajie Najmuddin from the *Lembaga Ta'lif wan Nasyr Nahdlatul Ulama* (LTNNU) Surakarta also wrote a Friday sermon entitled "*Too Much of Anything is Bad, Including Noise Pollution*". The sermon text labels the actions of those who play *horeg sound* as oppressive because they interfere with the rights of others (Najmuddin, 2025). This sermon is recommended to be distributed to mosques affiliated with the Nahdlatul Ulama organization. Through the sermon, *horeg sound* is labeled as "behavior that resembles ignorance and an act of oppression." On social media, posts from several accounts also display a similar narrative, emphasizing that those who play *horeg sound* are "primitive", "*SDM rendah*", "*prindapan*", and "narcissistic" (Cahyani, 2025; Jitu TV, 2025; Salsabila, 2025). This discourse reinforces the symbolic opposition between "us" as religious and civilized people and "them" as the *horeg sound* community, considered destructive. This process of differentiation creates a political frontier (Laclau, 2005), where *horeg sound* functions as the 'Other' that must be rejected to maintain public morality. Through the media, sermons, and regional regulations, this opposition is reproduced repeatedly until it becomes public normality.

The hegemony of *horeg sound's* prohibition is institutionalized within formal state institutions. This hegemony is operationalized through policies and social actions. Following the fatwa's issuance, on August 6, 2025, the East Java Provincial Government issued Circular Letter Number 300.1/6902/209.5/2025 concerning the Use of Loudspeakers in East Java. Several district/city governments also issued similar circulars to limit the use of high-powered sound systems at public events in their respective regions. Furthermore, security forces also intervened to regulate a number of events deemed to violate the fatwa, and this was widely reported in local media (Radio Andika, 2025; Radio Patria, 2025). Thus, religious discourse aligns with state officials, making "haram" not merely a moral category but also a mechanism for regulating public space. Therefore, the hegemony of religious authority over the discourse of *horeg sound* demonstrates a simultaneous operation that binds various social grievances within a single moral-religious horizon and ensures the existence of symbolic boundaries against "the other" so that everything appears correct and rational (Strube, 2024). The MUI fatwa is a primary tool that facilitates the unification of meaning while negating differences. However, as Laclau emphasizes, hegemony is never final. Amid the dominance of religious discourse, counter-practices have emerged on social media that attempt to reposition *horeg sound* as a symbol of youth creativity. This demonstrates that the hegemony of meaning is always temporary, fragile, and open to renegotiation.

### **Destabilization and Repositioning of *Horeg Sound* Discourse**

The phenomenon of labeling *horeg sound* as haram through a fatwa marks the hegemonic attempt of religious authorities to monopolize the meaning of a cultural practice. This fatwa places *horeg sound* in a chain of equivalence with sin, social disruption, and immoral acts, thus forcing the public to accept a single interpretation that *horeg sound* is a deviant activity. Although the discourse of *horeg sound's* haram dominates the entire field of meaning, this hegemonic discourse is not passively accepted by *horeg sound* supporters. After the fatwa was issued, sound system entrepreneurs, entertainment communities, and *horeg sound* supporters rejected the "haram" label and initiated a symbolic repositioning using the term *carnival sound*. This change of term cannot be seen as a mere name change, but rather a discursive strategy to destabilize hegemonic claims. As

reported by the media, sound system entrepreneurs and *horeg sound* supporters declared Indonesia Carnival Sound (SKI) to replace *horeg sound* (Metro TV, 2025). *Carnival sound* serves as a new *nodal point*, shifting negative associations and simultaneously opening up space for reinterpretation, allowing the activity to be understood as a legitimate cultural expression, a folk festival, and a community carnival. From the perspective of Ernesto Laclau's discourse theory (Hammer & Granberg, 2025), this repositioning marks a *moment* when dominant meanings lose their stability due to the emergence of counter-articulated articulations that challenge a single definition.

The repositioning of the term *horeg sound* to *carnival sound* is not merely a linguistic shift, but a discursive political act that challenges the hegemonic claims of religious authority. On Monday, July 29, 2025, a declaration was made by *horeg sound* community leaders to change the name to *carnival sound*: Memed Potensio, also known as Thomas Alva EdiSound, as the founder of *horeg sound*; Bre, the sound system entrepreneur at Brewog Audio; and David Stevan, the Chairman of the United Malang Sound Association. In his statement, David Stevan stated, "We will no longer use the name *horeg sound*. We have pledged to use the name 'Indonesia Carnival Sound'. We will change the name from *horeg sound* to Indonesia Carnival Sound" (Detik News, 2025). This statement marks a collective effort to break free from the negative association of *horeg sound* with *muḍarāt*. The term "horeg", previously associated with noise, immoral behavior, and immorality, has been replaced with "carnival," which carries associations with folk culture, expressions of communal joy, and legitimate public entertainment. Thus, this repositioning is not simply a semantic shift, but rather a political rearticulation of meaning, in which stigmatized practices are reintroduced into a positive and legitimate horizon of meaning, moving from being forbidden (haram), immoral, and *muḍarāt* (harm), to entertainment, carnival, and culture (see table 2).

Table 2. Repositioning of *Horeg Sound* Discourse

Aspects	<i>Horeg Sound</i> Fatwa	Repositioning <i>Carnival Sound</i>
Discursive Connotations	Haram, <i>muḍarāt</i> , immorality, disruption	Culture, entertainment, community carnival, expression of freedom
Dominant Actors	Religious authorities, security forces, moralistic actors	<i>Horeg sound</i> community, Businessman, cultural actors, sound enthusiasts
Chain of Equivalence	Noise, Rights Loss, Legal Violation, Moral Degradation, Haram	Entertainment, Culture, Joy Community, Social Solidarity
Discursive Strategies	Moral labeling, securitization, symbolic repression	Rearticulation of terms, public declarations, regulatory negotiations
Medium	Fatwa, sermons, television news, social media	Social media, exclusive communities
Public Reaction	Moral panic, demands for a ban	Calls to "Regulate, not ban!"
Social Effects	Stigmatization of youth and entertainment actors	Community consolidation, pluralization of meanings, policy dialogue

*Source: Processed by Researchers*

The repositioning of the *horeg sound* discourse gained momentum in the digital space. On social media, the hashtags #SoundKarnavalIndonesia, #AllinGampingan, and #AllinPesonaGondanglegi began to be widely used by the *horeg sound* community in East Java from August to November 2025. Videos of the *carnival sound* implementation have been uploaded on various social media channels, including TikTok, Instagram, X, and Facebook. Many videos show narratives about the compliance of *horeg sound* performers with the rules according to the Joint Circular (SE) of the Governor, the Regional Police Chief, and the Commander of the V Brawijaya Military Command regarding noise restrictions, time, location, and the requirement for crowd permits. In one of the videos uploaded by Kompas TV on the TikTok platform entitled "Sound Horeg is not prohibited in East Java, but strictly regulated" on August 13, 2025, sparked

public comments under the video, indicating the dislocation of discourse, namely the emergence of instability of dominant meanings (Kompas TV, 2025). Before *horeg sound* repositioned and adjusted government regulations, the majority of public comments were moralistic, with *horeg* being articulated as sinful, immoral, and *muḍarāt* (harmful). After the repositioning and adjustment of the decibel (dBA) regulations, comments appearing on TikTok became more pluralistic, such as: Gemforfot's comment, "*Entertainment still exists, livelihoods continue to flow, people's ears are also safe*", Idunno's comment, "*This is correct, noisy music is still allowed but doesn't damage the ears*". Kka\_Yohanes' comment "*It's a cultural treasure that must be preserved, not thwarted*", and Wong Jatim Nyel's comment, "*I totally agree, entertainment continues, only those who deviate are eliminated*". This shift in the tone of discourse indicates that the fatwa no longer holds an absolute hegemonic position. A new space for articulation has opened up where loud sound systems can be framed not as sinful, but as public entertainment with technical regulations (Santaella, 2024).

The repositioning of discourse through identity change into carnival sound is driven by resistance strategies employed by its supporters. The first strategy is a collective declaration, in which sound system entrepreneurs openly declare a change in terminology and a mutual agreement to abandon the word "horeg." The community of supporters and sound system entrepreneurs in Malang, Blitar, and Pasuruan held a joint declaration "Indonesia Carnival Sound" on Tuesday, July 29, 2025, at Gedog Kulon Village Field, Turen District, Malang Regency. This declaration marks the formation of a new collective identity as cultural actors, not moral violators (Colnaghi et al., 2025). The second strategy is negotiation with regulations, namely their willingness to adapt to government regulations regarding decibel limits and operating hours. The Indonesian Sound Carnival Community adopted a cooperative approach with the local government through an agreement on decibel limits and operating hours. David Stevan, Chairman of the United Malang Sound Association, firmly stated that, "*We hope that in the future there will be no more noise related to this sound. We will also always comply with government regulations*" (Detik News Jatim, 2025). This demonstrates that resistance is not articulated as a frontal struggle, but rather as a strategy of co-option, namely by accepting some technical claims of authority while rejecting the totality of absolute prohibitions. In religious law, the relationship between religion and modern culture needs to be structured by initiating vertical and horizontal relationships, which are then translated into forms of indigenization, negotiation, and conflict (Cahyono, 2016). The third strategy is the use of social media and mass media to disseminate the repositioning narrative. Video declarations, news reports, and online debates demonstrate that repositioning is not merely a local event but has also become a broader public discourse. The narratives of *horeg sound* and *carnival sound* are also reproduced through parody videos, memes, and sarcastic posts.

This type of parody functions as an instrument of counter-hegemonic humor, ridiculing moral panic and inviting young audiences to renegotiate moral values in the digital public sphere. This repositioning illustrates a moment of dislocation, when dominant meanings lose their stability due to the emergence of credible counter-articulations. The fatwa "haram," which previously functioned as the master signifier, is now shaken by the symbol "carnival," which embodies a new horizon of meaning: order, joy, and cultural participation. This dislocation does not mean the disappearance of religious hegemony, but rather a shift towards a more fluid state of discursive contestation. This repositioning has several tangible social implications, ranging from the consolidation of community solidarity and the strengthening of the identity of sound enthusiasts, as evidenced by the enthusiasm for the "All in Gampingan" sound performance in Malang Regency from October 10-12, 2025, to the issuance and adjustment of technical regulations for carnival sound activities by the Malang Regency, Blitar Regency, and several regions in East Java, to the emergence of selective public acceptance of sound system activities that comply with the regulations. This repositioning confirms that popular cultural practices have the articulate capacity to challenge established hegemonic claims. Through symbolic and digital strategies, carnival sound actors successfully construct a more inclusive, alternative horizon of meaning. Within Laclau's theoretical framework, this demonstrates that hegemony is always temporary and fragile and can always be shaken by new articulations that

are more resonant with the social context. The repositioning of *horeg sound* into carnival sound is not merely a semantic event, but rather a political practice of meaning-making that confirms that the digital public sphere is now a primary arena for negotiations between morality, culture, and freedom of expression.

## CONCLUSION

A study of the East Java MUI's fatwa No. 1 of 2025 on the prohibition of *horeg sound* demonstrates how religious authorities attempt to establish a hegemonic meaning through discursive interventions in popular cultural practices. This fatwa functions not merely as a normative prohibition on social behavior, but also as an articulatory device that places *horeg sound* within a moral-religious horizon deemed deviant and destructive. Through the logic of equivalence, religious authorities link *horeg sound* to a chain of negative meanings such as immorality, noise, disturbance of public order, and *muḍarāt* (harmful), while simultaneously distinguishing themselves from the counter-discourse of cultural communities that view the practice as a creative expression. Thus, the fatwa acts as an attempt to close off meanings that claim a single pretense of public morality. However, as explained by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985), every hegemonic articulation is contingent, never final, and always open to challenge. In this context, the fatwa prohibiting *horeg sound* actually gives rise to dislocation, namely an event in which the dominant meaning loses its stability due to the emergence of new articulations that challenge the single definition. This is evident in the emergence of a repositioning of meaning through the term *sound carnival*, a symbolic strategy employed by the sound system community to renegotiate its social legitimacy. This repositioning is not simply a change in terminology, but rather a political strategy of meaning-making that seeks to break the chain of negative equivalences and build a new, more positive horizon: from "haram" (forbidden) to "folk entertainment," local culture, and community carnival. Empirically, this phenomenon has several important social implications. First, the "haram" fatwa has shifted the relationship between religious authorities, local governments, and popular culture communities. Several regions in East Java are reviewing regulations on the use of sound systems, indicating that the fatwa functions as both a moral instrument and a policy reference. Second, the repositioning as "Indonesia Sound Carnival" demonstrates the consolidation of community solidarity that rejects moral stigmatization in creative and adaptive ways. Public declarations, social media campaigns, and online news coverage demonstrate that the sound system community is not merely resisting but also negotiating its existence within a new legal and moral framework. Third, the shift in terminology contributes to a shift in public perception. Some people are beginning to view sound system practices not as a form of sin, but as entertainment that can be controlled and legitimized. Thus, this repositioning is not merely symbolic but also produces social effects in the form of normalization and rearticulation of meaning in the public sphere. Theoretically, these findings reinforce the understanding that the politics of meaning in contemporary society occurs not only in the institutional realm but also in the symbolic arena, where language, labels, and narratives become tools for power struggles. Religious fatwas can be read as a form of hegemonic articulation that attempts to lock in social meaning, while the repositioning of *carnival sound* is a destabilizing practice that opens up space for pluralistic interpretations. Within Laclau's discourse analysis framework, *horeg sound* functions as a *nodal point* whose meaning is continually contested by various social and ideological forces. Fatwas attempt to close it within a religious horizon, but community resistance reopens it to alternative fields of meaning that cannot be fully controlled by religious authorities. However, this study has limitations. The scope of the digital data analyzed is limited to the initial period after the fatwa was issued, thus not depicting the long-term dynamics of discourse in the digital public sphere. Visual artifacts such as memes and short videos have also not been systematically analyzed, even though these elements are crucial for understanding public reception of the repositioning of meaning. Furthermore, this study has not directly explored the implications of micro-policies at the local level, such as mediation between local governments, religious organizations, and entertainment

communities. Overall, this research shows that the fatwa prohibiting *horeg sound* constitutes a crucial moment in the politics of meaning in the digital era. It emphasizes that moral-religious hegemony always confronts the power of popular culture, which has a new articulatory capacity. This contestation between religious authorities and cultural communities demonstrates that social meaning is never final, but is constantly produced, negotiated, and contested. In this context, a poststructuralist framework provides a powerful conceptual tool for understanding how fatwas, symbols, and language become instruments of power as well as arenas of resistance in the contemporary public sphere.

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