

A Marxist Analysis of Economic Rights Disputes in Industrial Design: A Case Study of Decision No. 76/Pdt.Sus-Desain Industri/2023/PN.Niaga.Jkt.Pst and Supreme Court Ruling No. 266 K/Pdt.Sus-HKI/2024 on the “Suitcase Generator”

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to analyze the industrial design dispute between CV. Rajawali Diesel and Tommy Admadiredja (Decision No. 76/Pdt.Sus-Desain Industri/2023/PN.Niaga.Jkt.Pst) through the lens of Karl Marx's theory. This case, centered on a claim for damages following the cancellation of an industrial design right, serves as an ideal case study to examine how law functions as a superstructure shaped by the capitalist economic base. The analysis reveals that the Industrial Design Law operates as an instrument to create and protect private property rights (exclusive monopolies), which are foundational to capitalist relations of production. Furthermore, the court's decision to dismiss CV. Rajawali Diesel's claim on formal-legal grounds specifically the lack of legal standing demonstrates how the legal superstructure prioritizes legal certainty and formalism essential for capital accumulation, often at the expense of substantive justice for the materially disadvantaged party. This ruling illustrates the ideological function of law, which presents itself as a neutral entity while in reality perpetuating and reproducing the interests of the dominant class by safeguarding market mechanisms and property rights.

Keywords: *Industrial Design, Economic Law, Justice*

INTRODUCTION

Fundamentally, it is widely believed that all achievements and wealth originate from a single idea. Intellectual Property (IP) represents human creations as cultural beings. These creations may take the form of literary works, artistic endeavors, or technological innovations. All such human creations rooted in ideas are in line with the theoretical foundation of the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) regime, which asserts that “creativity will flourish if creative individuals are granted economic rewards.”

The international protection of industrial designs is governed by Articles 25 and 26 of the TRIPs Agreement. Following Indonesia's independence, the system of intellectual property rights protection developed rapidly, marked by the emergence of various laws and ratifications in the field of intellectual property. These ratifications were subsequently implemented through revisions to the three primary intellectual property laws in force at the time, including the enactment of Law No. 31 of 2000 on Industrial Designs.

The legal protection system for industrial designs in Indonesia is based on a constitutive registration mechanism known as the "First to File" system. Under this system, the first

applicant is recognized as the legitimate holder of the industrial design rights, enabling them to claim novelty and prevent unauthorized use. An industrial design must obtain a certificate of registration before it can be lawfully produced in Indonesia, as the certificate confers legal clarity on whether the design originates from a good-faith intellectual creation or otherwise.

Disputes over Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) are often viewed as technical-legal conflicts falling within the private domain. However, upon deeper examination, such disputes reflect underlying economic conflicts inherent in capitalist societies. The case study between CV. Rajawali Diesel (Plaintiff) and Tommy Admadiredja (Defendant I) and PT. Pelangi Teknik Indonesia (Defendant II) provides a compelling narrative for critical analysis.

This case began when Tommy Admadiredja (Defendant I), holder of the industrial design certificate for “GENSET KOPER” (Certificate No. IDD0000058869), reported CV. Rajawali Diesel (Plaintiff) to the Indonesian National Police's Criminal Investigation Division for alleged infringement. This led to business disruptions and the seizure of CV. Rajawali Diesel's products. Ironically, CV. Rajawali Diesel successfully annulled the industrial design certificate held by Tommy Admadiredja through a legally binding court decision (Case No. 78/Pdt.Sus-HKI/2022/PN Niaga Jkt.Pst) on the grounds that the design lacked novelty. Armed with this legal victory, CV. Rajawali Diesel filed a lawsuit seeking compensation for material and immaterial damages due to the violation of their economic rights.

However, the Commercial Court, whose decision was upheld by the Supreme Court, rejected the lawsuit in its entirety. The primary reason was that CV. Rajawali Diesel did not meet the formal legal requirement to file a damages claim under Article 46 of Law No. 31 of 2000, which stipulates that only “the holder of the industrial design rights or a licensee” has standing to sue.

This study aims to analyze the court's ruling not from a dogmatic-legal standpoint, but through the lens of Karl Marx's theoretical framework.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research method employed in this study is a normative juridical approach, which is grounded in the analysis of applicable legal norms. This normative legal research seeks to discover truth through scientific reasoning from a normative perspective, emphasizing the examination of statutory regulations and relevant legal documents. The primary focus lies on written legal norms that govern the legal issues under investigation. The research is descriptive-analytical in nature, aiming to provide a comprehensive overview of a specific legal condition and present relevant data to describe and analyze the problems addressed.

Data collection was conducted through library research, which involves the identification and examination of secondary data sources. These secondary legal materials are categorized into three types. First, primary legal materials, which are binding sources of law such as the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, relevant statutory regulations particularly Law No. 31 of 2000 concerning Industrial Designs as well as relevant jurisprudence and international treaties. Second, secondary legal materials, which provide explanations and interpretations of primary legal sources, including academic research findings, legal scholars' opinions, and other scientific publications. Third, tertiary legal materials, which offer supplementary explanations of primary and secondary sources, such as legal dictionaries, encyclopedias, and other supporting literature sourced from printed media, scientific journals, the internet, and previous research relevant to the topic.

All data obtained in this study were analyzed using a normative-qualitative method. Normative analysis was carried out by examining applicable legal regulations to identify legal principles and norms relevant to the issues studied. Meanwhile, the qualitative approach was applied to interpret and examine the data in depth, with the aim of constructing logical and systematic legal arguments and formulating scientifically accountable conclusions.

RESULT & DISCUSSION

Legal Protection of Registered Industrial Designs in Indonesia

Legal protection refers to the safeguarding granted to legal subjects through legal instruments, both preventive and repressive in nature, and whether codified or not. In other words, legal protection reflects the function of law as a concept that provides justice, order, certainty, utility, and peace.

1. How does industrial design relate to economic development from Karl Marx's perspective?

Theoretical Framework: Law in Marxist Thought

In Marxist theory, society is divided into two primary components: the base and the superstructure.

Base (Economic Structure): This constitutes the foundation of society, comprising the "forces of production" (tools, technology, labor) and the "relations of production" (social relations between individuals involved in production, such as the relationship between capital owners/bourgeoisie and workers/proletariat). Under capitalism, the base is characterized by private ownership of the means of production and the pursuit of profit accumulation.

Superstructure (Law, Politics, Ideology): This consists of institutions like law, state, politics, and dominant ideologies (morality, religion), which are shaped and determined by the economic base. The primary function of the superstructure is to legitimize and sustain the existing relations of production. These foundational ideas significantly influence the understanding of social conflict and inequality in modern society. From Marx's perspective, the relationship between industrial design and economic development in this case can be analyzed as follows:

1. Industrial Design as a Means of Production and Capital Accumulation

According to Marx, the economy is driven by the "base" of production, which includes the means and relations of production. In modern contexts, industrial design especially when manifested in products, goods, industrial commodities, or handicrafts functions as an integral component of the means of production.

This case demonstrates how industrial design plays a crucial role in economic activity. The holder of an industrial design right has the "exclusive right" to manufacture, use, sell, import, export, and/or distribute the product. This exclusive right serves as a legal mechanism (superstructure) enabling capital accumulation for the design owner. By controlling the design, the owner can regulate production and distribution, restrict competition, and maximize profit.

For instance, Defendant I registered the design "GENSET KOPER" and used it as legal grounds to file a police report against the Plaintiff an effort to maintain market monopoly and protect their economic base by excluding competitors.

2. Class Conflict (or Business Interests) Over Design Control

Marx's theory centers on the conflict between owners of the means of production (bourgeoisie) and workers (proletariat). Although this case does not represent a traditional class conflict, it may be interpreted as a struggle between two capitalist entities (Plaintiff and Defendant) competing for control over design as a means of capital accumulation.

The Plaintiff, as an authorized agent selling the "Genkii" generator, perceived an infringement on their economic rights when accused of violating Defendant I's design, resulting in product seizure. The Plaintiff's damages claim reflects a struggle for market control and the right to participate in profitable economic activities a contest over surplus value derived from the production and distribution of designed goods.

3. Law (Superstructure) as Guardian of Capital Interests

Marx asserts that law, as part of the superstructure, serves the economic base. In this case, the Industrial Design Law (Law No. 31/2000) and the judicial system (Commercial Court, Supreme Court) regulate and protect intellectual property rights, essentially forms of ownership over economically valuable ideas or creations.

The Commercial Court emphasized legal formalities only "Design Right Holders or Licensed Parties" can file infringement lawsuits demonstrating how law formally supports and legitimizes capital ownership (industrial design rights) and restricts legal recourse for parties lacking formal status.

Even though Defendant I's design was ultimately invalidated due to lack of novelty, the Plaintiff's lawsuit was dismissed for lacking legal standing (not a registered holder or licensee). This reflects the law's prioritization of formal ownership recognized by the state over the Plaintiff's substantive economic harm demonstrating law's role in preserving capitalist order. This dynamic facilitates a system where dominant groups increasingly exploit and marginalize others.

4. Economic Development and the Struggle Over Surplus Value

From a Marxist viewpoint, economic development occurs through capital accumulation and surplus value extraction. Industrial design enhances a product's aesthetic and functional value, generating higher profits. The struggle over design rights is essentially a struggle for surplus value generated from product production and sales.

While the invalidation of Defendant I's design should have opened the market to more producers, the Plaintiff's claim was rejected due to formal legal standing. Thus, even after eliminating one form of monopoly (a non-novel design), access to economic gains from the design remains tightly regulated by legal formalities.

2. Why is law in this case demonstrated as a superstructure serving the economic base?

2. Law as a Tool for Protecting Exclusive Rights and Capital (Economic Base)

Industrial Design as Exclusive Right: Law No. 31/2000 on Industrial Designs explicitly defines the "Right to Industrial Design" as an exclusive right granted by the state to the designer for a limited period, to exercise or permit others to exercise the right. Article 9(1) further explains that the right holder can prohibit others from producing, using, selling, importing, exporting, and/or distributing the product without their consent.

Serving Economic Interests: These exclusive rights directly protect the economic benefits derived from industrial design. By restricting unauthorized use, the law ensures that the right holder monopolizes production and distribution, maximizes profit, and

deters harmful competition. This clearly illustrates how law (superstructure) serves the economic base by securing control over production (design) and its circulation.

3. Litigation as an Economic Conflict Mediated by Law

Infringement Lawsuit as Economic Dispute: The Plaintiff, CV. Rajawali Diesel, filed for damages and cessation of actions based on Articles 46(1) and 9(1) of Law No. 31/2000, claiming material and immaterial losses due to an alleged design infringement by Defendant I. This reveals that the legal dispute is fundamentally about market control and economic gain.

Law as a Field for Class (or Business) Struggle: Although Marx focused on social classes, in modern capitalism this can be interpreted as a struggle between business entities. Both parties leverage the legal framework (superstructure) to advance their economic interests. The Plaintiff sought to restore their "economic rights," while Defendant I previously used design rights to suppress competitors.

4. Court Rulings and Economic Consequences

Design Right Invalidation: The rulings of the Commercial Court and Supreme Court that invalidated Defendant I's design registration directly impacted their economic rights removing their exclusive ability to block similar product circulation.

Right to Free Trade: Defendant's expert argued that once a design is invalidated for lacking novelty, no party retains exclusive rights, and everyone may freely trade the product indicating a shift in the economic base from monopoly to open market.

Financial Impact: The Plaintiff's demand for IDR 9.37 billion in damages highlights the economic focus of the case, using the legal system to quantify and recover economic loss.

5. Limitations of "Letter of Authorization" in Legal Framework

Strict Definition of Licensing: The court rejected the Plaintiff's claim of having legal standing as a "licensee" based on a Letter of Authorization (LoA), holding that LoA is not equivalent to a "License Agreement" under Articles 1(11) and 33 of Law No. 31/2000, which requires it to be granted by the registered right holder.

Legal Formalities Serving Existing Structures: The emphasis on legal formalities (license registration) shows that law not only protects the economic base but also regulates who may participate in the system and how. Even though Plaintiff's expert argued that LoAs are standard in international practice, the court adhered to strict domestic definitions, reinforcing how legal superstructures uphold structured economic hierarchies.

3. Does formal legalism function as an instrument for securing capital interests over substantive justice?

1. Definition of Formal Legalism in the Case:

Restriction of Legal Standing: The court formally restricted who may sue for industrial design infringement to registered design holders or licensees, per Article 46(1) of Law No. 31/2000.

Strict Interpretation of "License": The court interpreted "License Agreement" narrowly, excluding LoAs for failing to meet the legal definition despite the Plaintiff having commercial authorization. Legally, the Plaintiff was not recognized as an eligible licensee under Indonesian law.

Registration as the Key to Exclusive Rights: Defendant's expert testified that industrial design rights are constitutive, arising from registration and certification. Likewise, licenses must be recorded to be enforceable against third parties emphasizing legal formality in acquiring and maintaining economic rights.

2. How Formal Legalism Serves Capital Interests (Marxist View)

Form Over Substance: The court dismissed the Plaintiff's claim based on formalistic legal standing even though they suffered substantial economic harm and succeeded in invalidating Defendant's design. From Marx's view, this shows how formal legalism prioritizes maintaining structured capital ownership over delivering substantive justice (e.g., economic compensation).

Protecting Registered Capital Owners: By emphasizing that exclusive rights derive from state registration, the law formally protects capitalists who fulfill bureaucratic requirements, creating barriers for others with legitimate claims but without formal legal recognition.

Regulating Access to Legal Mechanisms: Legalism determines who has the "authority" to access judicial remedies. Even though the Plaintiff was deemed an "interested party" in the cancellation suit, this did not automatically grant standing for damages highlighting how legal access is stratified by formal legal status, ultimately securing capital interests.

Stabilizing the Capitalist System: From a Marxist perspective, formal legalism helps stabilize capitalism. Resolving disputes within rigid legal frameworks despite sometimes ignoring broader notions of justice preserves predictability and trust in economic transactions. Consistent legal application, even at the cost of individual justice, is seen as essential to maintaining capitalist order.

CONCLUSION

From a Marxist perspective, this case underscores how industrial design functions as a vital economic asset within the capitalist system. Law, through mechanisms of registration and enforcement of rights, operates as a tool (superstructure) to legitimize and protect ownership over such assets, thereby facilitating capital accumulation. The legal conflict reflects the struggle among capitalist entities to control and maximize the economic benefits derived from the design.

This case illustrates how law (as superstructure) provides a framework for defining, protecting, and contesting economic rights (the economic base) in relation to industrial design. The courtroom conflict represents economic competition, wherein the parties involved utilize legal instruments to secure and maximize their financial interests. The court's decision, in turn, directly influences the economic conditions of the disputing parties.

Formal legalism proves to function as a means of securing capitalist interests by prioritizing legal form and procedural compliance (such as formal registration and licensing) over substantive claims to justice (such as the economic losses suffered by parties lacking formal registration). This aligns with Karl Marx's view that law, as part of the superstructure, serves and protects the capitalist economic base by maintaining exclusive property rights and regulating access to legal mechanisms through formalities.

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