

DIPLOMACY OF SEMARANG CITY GOVERNMENT THROUGH INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS FESTIVAL 2021-2022

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Abstract

Discourses on the role and responsibility of regional government in protecting and fulfilling human rights have drawn serious attention of international community. On the international level, the concept of human rights cities (Human Rights cities or regions) was introduced to promote more active engagement and empowerment in developing and advancing its respective regions. This discourse is facilitated by involvement and active participation of sub-national government (regional government or city government) in responding international issues. Studies on the involvement of cities in diplomacy has been conducted, yet none of those discussed the cities' engagement in international human rights issues. Semarang city has been selected as the host of International Human Rights Festival in 2021. The purpose of this research is to find out the motivation of Semarang City Government in becoming the host of International Human Rights Festival. Theoretical framework for this research is city diplomacy and human cities rights concept. The method used in this research is qualitative, data collected through interview, observation and document study. The finding of this research shows that the purpose of Semarang city government in becoming the host of International Human Rights Festival in 2021 is to promote Semarang city's image, advance international relations, to improve awareness of its people on human rights issues and promoting tourism.

Keywords: Semarang City Diplomacy; International Human Rights Festival; Cities' Image

Abstrak

Diskursus mengenai peran dan tanggung jawab pemerintah daerah dalam melindungi dan memenuhi hak asasi manusia telah menarik perhatian serius dari komunitas internasional. Di tingkat internasional, konsep kota hak asasi manusia (Human Rights Cities) diperkenalkan untuk mendorong keterlibatan yang lebih aktif dan pemberdayaan dalam mengembangkan serta memajukan wilayah masing-masing. Diskursus ini difasilitasi oleh keterlibatan dan partisipasi aktif pemerintah sub-nasional (pemerintah daerah atau pemerintah kota) dalam merespons isu-isu internasional. Penelitian mengenai keterlibatan kota-kota dalam diplomasi telah dilakukan, namun belum ada yang membahas keterlibatan kota dalam isu hak asasi manusia internasional. Kota Semarang terpilih sebagai tuan rumah Festival Hak Asasi Manusia Internasional pada tahun 2021. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui motivasi Pemerintah Kota Semarang dalam menjadi tuan rumah Festival Hak Asasi Manusia Internasional.

Kerangka teori yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah diplomasi kota dan konsep kota hak asasi manusia. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah kualitatif, dengan pengumpulan data melalui wawancara, observasi, dan studi dokumen. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa tujuan Pemerintah Kota Semarang dalam menjadi tuan rumah Festival Hak Asasi Manusia Internasional pada tahun 2021 adalah untuk mempromosikan citra Kota Semarang, meningkatkan hubungan internasional, meningkatkan kesadaran masyarakat terhadap isu hak asasi manusia, dan mempromosikan pariwisata.

Kata Kunci: Diplomasi Kota Semarang; Festival Hak Asasi Manusia Internasional; Citra Kota

INTRODUCTION

Subnational diplomacy has become an increasingly important part of foreign policy and international relations. Subnational diplomacy is commonly referred to as paradiplomacy.¹ In the context of City Diplomacy, the actor is the Mayor who leads the city government.² The study of City Diplomacy concerns a situation that is not necessarily clear or given. First, based on the definition, local governments usually carry out subnational activities and address issues that affect their constituents.³ Second, in many countries, subnational governments carry out these agendas without an actual legal framework that allows such initiatives. However, with the increasing global interdependence, policy areas such as environmental protection, human rights, immigration, and trade, among others, require action at both the international and territorial levels, as many of them transcend political administrative boundaries.⁴

As a result, at the beginning of the 21st century, various forms of international relations can be determined by subnational leaders. These activities involve direct interactions carried out by regional leaders and bureaucrats with other cross-border actors

(private, non-governmental, and national or subnational government), participation in transnational networks, and/or participation in international policy-making.⁵ Because local governments are closer to the community and can test experimental or innovative policies with less risk, they can often be pioneers of efforts that can be applied or replicated elsewhere in the international arena. Policy leadership like this is just one element of subnational involvement in the diplomatic arena where subnational governments move across jurisdictions, breaking the scale that has been established where they usually operate.

The transformation process in the international arena has led to an increase in the importance of cross-border affairs, as well as greater recognition of non-state actors and their influence in world politics. In this context, the concept of paradiplomacy was introduced to analyze the participation of local and regional governments in international relations.

Paradiplomacy has become a subject of study for scholars of International Relations.⁶ This has helped to organize and make the behavior of local and regional authorities visible, especially their contributions to international relations. During this process, a larger con-

¹Acuto, M.; Rayner, S. "City networks: breaking gridlock or forging (new) lockins?" *International Affairs*, v. 92, (2016).

²Duchacek, I. D. (1988). Multicommunal and bicomunal polities and their international relations. In D. Duchacek, D. Latouche, & G. Stevenson (Eds.), *Perforated sovereignties and international relations: Trans-sovereign contacts of subnational governments* (pp. 3–28). Greenwood Press.

³Duchacek, I. (1986). *The territorial dimension of politics: Within, among and across nations*. Westview Press.

⁴Joana Setzer and Karen Anderton, (2019), *Subnational Leaders and Diplomacy*, International Studies, International Studies Association and Oxford University Press, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.013.504>

⁵Alvarez, M., & Oddone, N. (2020). Revisiting paradiplomacy in the context of COVID-19. In Rodrigo Ventura De Marco (Ed.), *Revisiting paradiplomacy in the context of COVID-19*. E-International Relations.

ceptualization of the term has also been developed, overcoming case studies and forming a formally emerging field of research. Paradiplomacy is increasingly spreading in terms of dissemination so that ideas and recommendations cross borders and spread through the academic community through congresses, seminars, publications, and/or technical meetings. However, the paradiplomacy research agenda can still be considered a newly emerging theoretical research agenda. Although important efforts have been recognized for the delimitation and systematization of conceptualization, it is time to deepen the analysis on a global and regional scale.⁷

In recent years, researchers investigating the external relations undertaken by local governments have dedicated considerable effort to understanding local motivations for entering the international arena. However, what these studies lack is an understanding of the implications of local government involvement in international relations. Existing research focuses a lot on international cooperation and its implementation. This research will explore further the biggest motivation for the involvement of the Semarang city government in international relations. One event that is very spectacular and is seen as best practice in implementing city diplomacy is the election of the City of Semarang to host the International Human Rights Festival, which ultimately led to the Mayor of Semarang making a speech on the international stage, namely at the International Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland on June 15 2022.

The idea of Regency/City is an idea that emerged in 1997 by The People's Movement for Human Rights Learning (PDHRE).⁸ This idea was then stated in the report of the 10th session of the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council in 2014 which was developed through the holding of the World Human Rights Cities Forum (WHRCF) every year by

the Gwangju City Government, South Korea. This forum is a forum for cities in the world to share experiences and inspiration in managing their local governments based on human rights.

METHOD

The research method used is qualitative with data collection techniques through interviews, observations, and document studies. In this study, the researcher used literature review methods, field observations, and interviews. Through the literature review method, data in the study were obtained from literature such as books, printed bulletins, and academically accountable internet sources. Furthermore, to obtain direct knowledge from the field, the researcher conducted field observations and interviews.

The main target of the interview was the Semarang city government, especially those involved in the negotiation and implementation of becoming the host of the International Human Rights Festival. The interview will be conducted through stages that include: a) determining the subject or informant to be interviewed, b) preparing for the interview, c) conducting the interview and maintaining its productivity, and d) stopping the interview and obtaining a summary of the interview results.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

International Human Rights Festival and Human Rights Cities

The discourse on the role and responsibilities of local governments in protecting and providing human rights has become a serious concern internationally. At the international level, the concept of human rights cities (HAM

⁶Duchacek, I. D. (1988). Multicommunal and bicomunal polities and their international relations. In D. Duchacek, D. Latouche, & G. Stevenson (Eds.), *Perforated sovereignties and international relations: Trans-sovereign contacts of subnational governments* (pp. 3–28). Greenwood Press.

⁷Aranda, G., Ovando, C., & Corder, A. (2010). Experiencias paradiplomáticas en la región de Tarapacá y su proyección subregional. *Estudios Internacionales*, 42(165), 33–74.

⁸Bigo, D. "Freedom and speed in enlarged borderzones", In *The contested politics of mobility. Borderzones and irregularity*, edited by Squire, V, London: Routledge, 2010.

Districts/Cities) is starting to become known in order to encourage local governments to be more active and empowered in advancing and developing their regions.

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The Semarang City Government gave a presentation on February 3 2021. The presentation was made boldly via a zoom meeting. Hendrar Prihadi, Mayor of Semarang, conveyed the readiness of the City of Semarang to host the 2021 Human Rights Festival. He also explained the conditions and situation in the City of Semarang such as diversity, traffic, lodging and lodging which he felt were very supportive of holding the Human Rights Festival. Hendrar continued his presentation regarding the choice of format for holding the 2021 Human Rights Festival, which may still be during the pandemic. The format in question includes the Human Rights Festival which will attract 2000 participants in an attractive manner; The Human Rights Festival will be held in a hybrid manner, a combination of bold and offline; or the Human Rights Festival will be carried out completely boldly if conditions are still during the pandemic. The city of Semarang stated that it is professionally ready to host the 2021 Human Rights Festival and there will be community involvement. The Semarang City Government will invite

all levels and elements of society to take part in the 2021 Human Rights Festival. In terms of budget, the Semarang City Government has allocated its APBD for the Human Rights Festival if it is held according to schedule, namely in November 2021. Semarang City has experience as a host for the event. big events, so that if the 2021 Human Rights Festival is held in Semarang City the echo will be heard.

Based on strategic issues, Komnas HAM basically wants to place regional governments as one of the front guards in protecting, fulfilling and promoting human rights. This issue was then linked to the concept of Human Rights Cities. The Human Rights Festival is not only a ceremony, but also as a medium to strengthen the role of Regional Government in protecting, fulfilling and promoting human rights. More research needs to be done so that the Human Rights Festival can become a national public discourse. In terms of substance, it is necessary to think about how to choose the host of the Human Rights Festival. This is not only related to the willingness of the Regional Government, but it is also important to see what good practices the host has that can be emulated by other Regencies/Cities. The preparation of the PIC and team has been carried out since November 2020, even before the 2020 Human Rights Festival was held. Louvikar Alfian Cahasta as PIC of the 2021 HAM Festival expressed that his greatest hope is that the objectives, outputs and outcomes of the activities can be achieved. It is hoped that the 2021 Human Rights Festival can become a space for multi-stakeholder dialogue to create districts/cities that have a human rights perspective, increase public awareness regarding the importance of implementing human rights values at the local level, and also become an inspiration for district/city governments in that governance in their regions relies on human rights.

Improving The Image of The City of Semarang

The city of Semarang was chosen as the host of the 2021 Human Rights Festival due to several considerations. First, the City of Semarang

has prepared a thorough action plan to host the 2021 Human Rights Festival. Second, the City of Semarang has implemented human rights (HAM) values in development policies and programs and is committed to continuing to improve the protection and fulfillment of human rights. Third, the City of Semarang has been selected by the global Open Government Partnership (OGP) as one of four regional governments in Indonesia as OGP Local Champion 2021-2025.

Komnas HAM considers this Human Rights Festival activity to be important because the Human Rights Festival is a space for learning and sharing from districts/cities in Indonesia about the implementation and innovation of human rights. In addition, the Human Rights Festival is important to hold because regional governments are ranked third with the most complaints from the public to Komnas HAM after the police and the business sector. "Every year there are around 4,000 to 7,000 public complaints submitted to Komnas HAM, and complaints against regional governments are in third place. Apart from that, I think the role of regional governments and district/city governments is very important in jointly advancing human rights. "At the same time also resolving problems related to upholding human rights in Indonesia," said Beka Ulung Hapsara as Commissioner for Education and Counseling of the Indonesian National Human Rights Commission, saying that the format of the Human Rights Festival which will be held on 16-19 November 2021 is: first as a learning space and sharing human rights innovations for every region in Indonesia. Apart from that, this activity also provides discussion sessions with various themes. Starting from the themes of women, public services, disabilities, young people and human rights, freedom of religion and belief, intolerance and radicalism, to bringing together the works of civil society and state actors. These discussion sessions seek to find the roots of existing human rights problems as well as jointly formulate solutions to human rights problems in Indonesia. "We are always filled with news about human rights, violence, human rights, provocation, disputes over places of worship, and so on. But we forget one side that the regions also have

a lot of innovation related to human rights. For this reason, the Human Rights Festival is a space for sharing and learning. Not only nationally, but also internationally. Because currently in the world there is also a new wave of human rights movements, namely how to position local governments as one of the most important actors in promoting and upholding human rights. Next, Beka said that at the 2021 Human Rights Festival, the city of Semarang and the surrounding area could display various innovative works related to human rights. This can be a collective inspiration to place human rights as the basis of development and governance in Indonesia.

Improve International Relations

The city of Semarang has the opportunity to host the international Human Rights Festival. This has become a special prestige for the city of Semarang. The 2021 Human Rights Festival has started on November 16 2021. By presenting 99 speakers, 13 opening remarks and a Keynote Speaker. The Human Rights Festival was attended by all regents and mayors throughout Indonesia, both offline and online. By presenting resource persons filled with big names such as the Chairman of Komnas HAM, Ahmad Taufan Damanik, Deputy Minister of Law and Human Rights Edward O.S. Hiarij, Deputy External Chair of the National Human Rights Commission Amiruddin. Mayor of Batu, Dewanti Rumpoko, Mayor of Pontianak, Edi Rusdi Kamtono. A number of international human rights figures also joined online, namely Nandini Lahe-Thapa, Senior Director at Nepal Tourism Board, Helena Olsson, Senior Program Officer RWI (Raoul Wallenberg Intitute). The total number of participants in the Human Rights Festival was 1,799 consisting of 1,055 offline participants and 744 participants who took part online.

Increasing Public Awareness About Human Rights Issues

The Human Rights Festival is an annual event held in the city of Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia, to raise awareness of human rights

Table 1. Semarang City Cooperation

No.	Year	Form of city	Government/Related Agencies Cooperation
1	2016	MoU	Split City Government, Republic of Korea and Semarang City Government
2	2016	Agreement on the Establishment of Sister City Cooperation	Fuzhou City Government, PRC and Semarang City Government
3	2016	MoU	Junggu City Government, Ulsan Metropolitan, South Korea and Semarang City Government
4	2018	MoU	Nanjing City Government, PRC and Semarang City Government
5	2018	MoU	Brisbane City Government, Australia and Semarang City Government
6	2022	Extension of Memorandum of Understanding	Junggu City Government, Ulsan Metropolitan, South Korea and Semarang City Government
7	2022	Extension of Memorandum of Understanding	Fuzhou City Government, PRC and Semarang City Government

Source: VOI, 2023.

issues and promote human rights values. This festival is organized by the National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM) in collaboration with the Semarang city government, NGOs, academics and the community. The festival features various activities such as workshops, seminars, exhibitions, performances, and field trips to educate and engage the public on human rights issues. The theme of the 2021 Human Rights Festival is "Moving Together to Strengthen Diversity, Inclusion and Resilience" (Moving Together to Strengthen Diversity, Inclusion and Resilience), which aims to encourage tolerance, participation and solidarity in overcoming human rights challenges, including the Covid pandemic -19.

The 2021 Human Rights Festival in Semarang brings a shared spirit of advancing human rights. However, it also accompanies great hopes for the real implementation of human rights protection in every dimension of citizens' lives, not just a formality. This festival is considered successful in encouraging tolerance, participation and solidarity in

overcoming human rights challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic. This festival also aims to strengthen diversity, inclusion and community resilience. The festival features various activities such as workshops, seminars, exhibitions, performances, and field trips to educate and engage the public on human rights issues. This festival was attended by 99 speakers, 13 opening remarks and keynote speakers. This festival was also attended by international participants,

Participants were invited to see the Sam Poo Kong building which is a cultural heritage that represents tolerance, in line with the theme of the 2021 Human Rights Festival, "Moving Together to Strengthen Diversity, Inclusion and Resilience". They visited the Tambakrejo Fishermen's Row Village, which became a solution after dozens of families were affected by the East Semarang Canal Flood normalization project. Then, visit the Tlogosari Indonesian Baptist Church (GBI) in Malangsari, which was built after being rejected by a number of residents. Participants in the 2021 Human Rights Festival from Jakarta

said that the Semarang City Government's initiation and efforts to resolve human rights issues were quite good. The government provides space for dialogue for citizens who have polemics, even though in the end it still requires the intervention of Komnas HAM. Various issues related to human rights were discussed featuring a number of speakers. The total number of participants was 1,799 people, consisting of 1,055 offline participants and 744 online participants. At the 2021 Human Rights Festival, which was held by the Presidential Staff Office, Komnas HAM, the International NGO Forum on Indonesian Development (Infid), and the Semarang City Government, a Mass Organization-NGO Expo was also held.

Deputy V of the Presidential Staff Office, Jaleswari Pramodhawardani, said that a human rights-friendly district/city will encourage and place its citizens in strategic positions in overcoming every problem. Citizens are seen as a means of designing better policies. The key is at the implementation level. It is important for all parties, from ministries/institutions to local governments, to be active in supporting this. Based on the internationally agreed principles of human rights-friendly cities, the Indonesian government has established district/city policies that care about human rights as a paradigm shift from technocratic policies to policies based on human rights. Paintings by poet Widji Thukul decorating cloth are displayed at the 2021 Human Rights Festival at Paragon Mall, Semarang City, Central Java, Thursday (18/11/2021). Widji Thukul is a dark portrait of human rights violations.

Chairman of the Association of Indonesian Municipal Governments (Apeksi), who is also the Mayor of Bogor, West Java, Bima Arya Sugiarto said that for regional heads or leaders, humanizing humans, glorifying the country, and guaranteeing the rights of minorities without exception are the main obligations. Building a city should not only beautify the city, but also build human character. It also means building a generation, which includes resolving legal issues despite pressure from extreme groups and demonstrating siding with minorities. The struggle is not only against stupidity or ignorance, but today's struggle is

also against the intoxicating political desires of political adventurers who exploit sectarian issues for political targets.

A number of areas that are pilot human rights-friendly districts/cities include Banjarmasin (South Kalimantan) and Wonosobo (Central Java). The city of Semarang, as the host of the 2021 Human Rights Festival, is also considered capable of maintaining tolerance amidst cultural, ethnic and religious diversity. One solution to human rights issues in the city of Semarang that is considered successful is the construction of the Indonesian Baptist Church in Tlogosari. Having received a building construction permit (IMB) since 1998, construction was hampered because it was rejected by a number of residents, who questioned the legality of the administration. After mediation, facilitated by the Semarang City Government and Komnas HAM, both parties finally accepted each other. The Semarang City Government then issued a new IMB on September 24 2020. Now, construction has been completed and more than 100 church congregations can worship at that location.

The 2021 Human Rights Festival in Semarang was marked by the Semarang Kamisan Action at Signature Park, right across from the Po Hotel which was the festival location, Thursday (18/11/2021). At around 11.00, Presidential Chief of Staff Moeldoko together with, among others, the Mayor of Semarang Hendrar Prihadi and Komnas HAM Commissioner Beka Ulung Hapsara approached the crowd. Moeldoko emphasized that the government continues to try to resolve human rights issues in the past, but he asked all parties to understand that there are things that are not easily resolved. The government places a very clear emphasis that national development policies must prioritize human rights and the environment.

In one of the 2021 Human Rights Festival plenary discussions, Semarang Mayor Hendrar Prihadi acknowledged that pressure from vulnerable groups still exists. "So, we entered from the smallest environment. "We prioritize handling problems with communication," he said. It must be acknowledged that the

handling of past human rights cases tends to be stagnant. There needs to be a new approach in resolving human rights issues. On the other hand, civil society needs to work together and not distance itself to formulate joint solutions. At the end of the activity, Hendrar Prihadi, representing various elements from the central government, regional government, civil society, to the private sector, read out the declaration and formulation of the results of the 2021 Human Rights Festival conference in Semarang. "Fulfillment of human rights must be inclusive and increase the active role of all parties, especially people with disabilities, women, children, as well as minority and marginalized groups. "The central and regional governments must proactively work together, synergize, and implement all existing human rights policies," reads an excerpt from a number of points in the declaration.

To Increase Tourism Promotion

Even though it doesn't have a direct impact, hosting an international event brings prestige to the city. Hosting international events can bring many benefits to a city's tourism industry. Some of the advantages of holding international events include: first, increased tourism. Hosting international events can attract visitors from all over the world, thereby boosting the local tourism industry. Visitors can stay in local hotels, eat at local restaurants, and visit local attractions, which can generate revenue for the city. Infrastructure improvements: Hosting international events often requires cities to upgrade their infrastructure, such as transportation, accommodation and event venues. These improvements can benefit the city even after the event is over, as they can make the city more attractive to tourists and investors. Increased exposure: Hosting international events can increase a city's exposure to the world. The event may be covered by international media, which could help promote the city as a tourist destination. Cultural exchange: Hosting international events can provide opportunities for cultural exchange between the host city and visitors. This can help increase understanding and

appreciation of different cultures, which can benefit the city in the long term.

CONCLUSION

The 2021 Human Rights Festival in Semarang City is an event that aims to increase public awareness about human rights and promote human rights values. This festival was attended by 99 speakers, 13 opening remarks and keynote speakers, and was attended by all regents and mayors throughout Indonesia both offline and online. The 2021 Human Rights Festival has the theme "Moving Together to Strengthen Diversity, Inclusion and Resilience".

This event consists of various activities such as workshops, seminars, exhibitions, performances, and visits to important places in Semarang City. The 2021 Human Rights Festival is considered successful in promoting tolerance, participation and solidarity in facing human rights challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic. Through this festival, the City of Semarang also tries to strengthen local identity and promote city development in the era of globalization.

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- <https://voi.id/berita/258308/kota-semarang-jajaki-kerja-sama-dengan-kota-fuzhou-china>, diakses tanggal 18 September 2023, jam 07.00 Wib