

## Art as a Cultural Politics and Diplomacy

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Sebagai aktivitas kreatif, seni tidak hanya ungkapan individu, tetapi panggung sosial tempat dibangunnya pengalaman estetik bersama. Sebagai produk sosial, seni adalah medium bagi berbagai kepentingan sosio-politik dari kelompok, atau institusi. Dengan menggunakan metode riset partisipasi, tulisan ini bertujuan untuk memahami bagaimana seni digunakan oleh institusi negara untuk membangun dua fungsi saling berkaitan. Pertama, secara internal, seni digunakan untuk memperkuat perekat sosial dan kebersamaan dalam institusi, dan untuk meningkatkan produktivitas serta kreativitas kerja. Kedua, secara eksternal, seni dipraktikkan sebagai bentuk diplomasi budaya untuk mempromosikan kepentingan nasional dalam konteks hubungan internasional. Berdasarkan analisis disimpulkan, bahwa fungsi seni dalam konteks institusi negara adalah sebagai bentuk pengalaman estetik, penguatan institusi, penghimpunan komunitas, dan diplomasi budaya.

As a creative activity, art cannot be merely understood as an individual expression, but a social stage, in which common aesthetic experiences are socially built. Being a social product, art is a medium of various socio-political interests, particularly the interests of a particular community or institution. By employing a participatory research method, this paper is aimed at understanding of how art is used by a particular state's institution for two interrelated functions. Internally, art is used to create social cohesion and commonality, to enhance work's productivity and creativity in the institution. Externally, art is practiced as form of cultural diplomacy, to promote national political, economical and cultural interests in the context of international relation. The conclusion of the research is that the functions of art in the context of state's institution are as a form of esthetic experience, institutional and community building, cultural exchange and cultural diplomacy.

**Keywords:** Art, Aesthetic, Institution, Cultural Diplomacy, National Security and Safety.

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Being a medium in social relations, art has to be understood as a part of "social production", in the sense that it is produced in the social world. It is for this reason that the understanding of art as a part of social construction necessarily involves the understanding of "...the ways in which various forms, genres, styles, etc. come to have value ascribed to them by certain groups in particular contexts" (Wolf, 1981). In other words, as a creative or innovative activity, art cannot be released from numerous structural determinants or institutional interests. In a wider context of creative works, "...creativity does not happen inside people's heads, but in the

interaction between a person's thoughts and a socio cultural phenomenon" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997).

As the consequence, the judgment and evaluation of art works is not only on the purely aesthetic basis, but also the social roles or functions of the arts, in determining the social process itself. The judgment comprises social dimensions of the works, in the sense of the role of the works in shaping social relation and strengthening social cohesion. In terms of the function of arts in a particular institution, the judgment is on the role of arts in shaping the institutional relation and in strengthening social cohesion

at the institutional level, in enhancing the productivity of the institution, and particularly, in encouraging creativity at the institutional level.

This paper is focused on the study of the role of arts—particularly folksong—in shaping social relation, strengthening social cohesion, enhancing productivity and stimulating creativity in the Indonesia Maritime Security Coordinating Board (IMSCB) and the related state's institutions as stakeholders. As a state apparatus, the duty of IMSCB is to secure and safe maritime patrol in the territorial waters of Indonesia and the Indonesian jurisdiction. Since 2010 this state's institution has formed a folksong group as a part of its institutional development, namely Indonesia Raksamahiva Camudresu Choir (IRCC), means "Guardian of Indonesian Waters". This research is an attempt to understand the roles and functions of music choir of IRCC in the development of IMSCB as a part of goverment institutions.

Since the music choir of IRCC is a rather complex and multidimensional aesthetic group, deep, extensive, and comprehensive data is highly demanded, in order to understand the nature and essence of the art group in the context of a wider art community. On the one hand, IRCC is an "aesthetic community" which invokes certain deep aesthetic meanings and messages. On the other, it is a part of goverment agency, which abstractly involves certain institutional interests or ideologies.

In order to get this kind of comprehensive data, Participatory Research Method (PAR) is employed, which involves a range of different social actors, who are taken part in the music production and performance in the community. In the research on the music choir of IRCC, the researchers and members of community of IRCC as research participants systematically participated not only in the gathering, classifying and analysing data, but also in certain capacities in the development, realization and implementation of the institutional art program.

Participatory Research Method is a method, through which people in the community under study are not regarded as passive informants or 'objects' of research, but active participants or subjects in the very process of research itself. They are called active participants because they actively

take part in the research processes, from the primary phase of research design, data gathering, discussion, data analysis and the conclusion of the research. In other words, a social group or community as an "object" of the research, is functionally transformed to be a 'subject' of the research, who actively participate in gathering, classifying and analysing data.

In the process of data gathering, several methods of data gathering are employed, particularly Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and interview. Participants that are involved in these methods are Chief Executive of IMSCB and staffs, Manager of IRCC; IRCC's coordinator, music instructor, director, coordinating staff, musicians, choreographer, conductor, music narrator, and 19 singers. Several structured or unstructured interviews with the participants were also prepared and conducted to collect data concerning the function, value and meaning of the music choir for the institution. In addition, the observation method was also employed to cross-check the data from the participants, to generate a relatively comprehensive understanding of the role and function of music choir in the institutional development.

## ART AND INSTITUTION

This research is an attempt to understand the social functions of arts—particularly music choir—as a part of particular institution and community. From the data gathered, it can be identified that art is not an autonomous entity, but an inherent part of an institution, in which it is created, produced or performed. However, art is not only a part of institution, but also a part of a wider community, beyond the institution itself. This is because art has certain audiences, spectators or appreciator, who come together in a particular space or place, to form what is called "aesthetic community". It is the space between the institutional and community functions that art has another function, namely, a 'diplomatic function', since art is a specific medium of 'cultural diplomacy', in the context of a wider international relation.

In certain form and manifestation, art cannot be detached from an institution, in which it is created, produced or performed. This is because "... the construction of the modern notion of aesthetic

artifact is thus inseparable from the construction of the dominant ideological forms of modern class society, and indeed from a whole new form of human subjectivity appropriate to that social order" (Eagleton, 1990). Therefore, the understanding of art sociologically should investigate ". . . all the processes in which art is produced, looking at artists, institutions, audiences and works of the arts themselves" (Wolff, 1983).

Since art cannot be separated from its institution, it cannot also be separated from any 'interest' of the institution itself, in the wider sense of the word. When an institution uses art for its particular purpose, this is cannot be separated from certain 'interest' inherent in this purpose. This interest could be an ideological, political, economical, social, cultural, spiritual or even the interest for the knowledge itself, namely, "knowledge for knowledge's sake". In this context, the term 'interest' is understood as ". . . the basic orientations rooted in specific fundamental conditions of the possible reproduction and self-constitution of the human species, namely work and interaction" (Habermas, 1972).

IMSCB is a government agency which functions to coordinate 12 stakeholders pertaining to security and safety in territorial of Indonesian waters, which is one of the largest maritime countries with more than 3,5 millions km<sup>2</sup> sea areas, which consists of more than 17.000 islands, 300 languages and 300 ethnic groups. This agency has two main and inseparable missions. Externally, IMSCB has a function in promoting and disseminating Indonesian international interests, both politico-economically and socio-culturally. Internally, it has a main function in strengthening national security, unity and integration. It is on the foundation of these missions that Indonesia Raksamahiva Camudresu Choir (IRCC) established.

IRCC was formed from the craze s few employees in the art of singing. IRCC has been took part in various activities of ICG such as Anniversary, Refresher for the Ship Commander Event, seminar, welcoming ceremony for foreign delegation, and etc. IRCC has participated in several international choir competitions, in Budapest (2013), Barcelona (2013), Latvia (2014), Italy (2015). The choir has achieved several diplomas in various levels of inter

national festival in folksong category. In addition, up to present time, IRCC has produced 6 CD albums record with patriotic song and folksong theme, which is presented the cultural diversity of Indonesia.

As a part of government institution, IRCC not only represent the interests of ICG, but also other ICG's stake holders: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Law and Human-Right, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Transportation, Ministry of Maritime and Fisheries, Attorney General, Commander of the Indonesian Armed Force, Chief of National Police, Chief of Intelligence Service, Chief of Indonesian Navy Staff. In other words, IRCC represent the wider social, political, economical and cultural interests of the state as an institution. As remarked by Ranciere, an institution is the whole of politics ". . . as a specific form of connection. It defines the common of the community as a political community, in other words, as divided, as based on a wrong that escapes the arithmetic of exchange and reparation" (Ranciere, 1995: 12).

It is on the basis of these interests that IRCC is demanded to develop its creativity in music composition and performance. Here, an example of how on the basis of several existing traditional folksongs from different ethnic groups in Indonesia, a new narrative for a set of music performances are created:

"For ages, the fellowship of young people, in joy and the beauty of culture is always fun. Working together makes everything easier and cheerful. All the jokes and the laughter make the work no longer heavy and exhausting. After a hard working day, it ends with a dance party to relax and socializing. And when the eye crashed to and embarrassed pretty face on the dance floor, it makes the heart fly away, making the young man fall in love".

At a first sight, the above narrative is appeared as a unified narrative, which is built by a very clear story, meaning or message. It essentially tells us about the meaning of working hard, and also togetherness, socializing, joy, fun and relax. The message of the narrative is about the meaning of everyday life that has to be built through the principle of "equilibrium". But actually the manifestation of the narrative in musical form is constructed by different

units of folksong originated from different ethnic groups, which blend one to another to construct a kind of “intertext”. To put it differently, the narrative is “...a permutation of texts, an intertextuality: in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intertext and neutralize one another” (Kristeva, 1989).

The above narrative is manifested in a series of music performance consisted of four pieces of folksong, which are originated from four different ethnic groups:

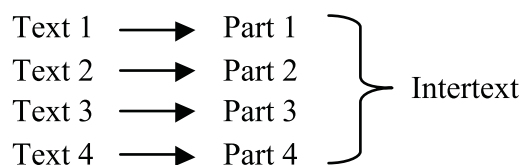
1. *Goro-gorone*. A folksong of Maluku, the song about an invitation from a young man to a pretty girl to dance with. It becomes Part One of the narrative, in which the girl accepts the invitation.

2. *Ampar-ampar Pisang*. A folksong from South-Kalimantan, the song about making the traditional snack. It becomes Part Two of the narrative, where the couple depicted preparing for wedding.

3. *Buah Ara*. A folksong from East Kalimantan, the song of admiration from a young man who tries to attract a pretty girl to be his lover. It becomes Part Three of the narrative, where the couple is getting closer.

4. *Cik-cik Periuk*. A folksong from West Kalimantan, the song as representing of happiness. It becomes Part Four of the narrative, where the pretty girl finally accepts the young man for married.

Although the narrative is appeared to be a “single-voice discourse”, with a single narrative, a single semantic orientation and a single meaning or message, yet the manifestation of the narrative in the series of music performance, in fact, has to be understood as a kind of “two-voice discourse”, which refers to two context of enunciation: the original enunciation in its ethnic context, the present enunciation in accordance with the mission of IRCC. This “two-voiced discourse” is characterized by “. . . the fact that not only is it represented but it also refers simultaneously to two contexts of enunciation: that of the present enunciation and that of a previous one” (Todorov, 1984). Here, through the mechanism of intertextuality, IRCC builds its new semantic orientation based on its mission as a state agency.



In the context of institutional interests or ideology, intertextuality can be understood as a “textual strategy”, that is, a strategy of constructing a single text built from several different texts to produce a particular meaning or message. The cross-section of these different texts produces a particular text, namely, a “hybrid”. Hybrid can be seen as a textual strategy, through which different texts are crossed one another to produce what is called the “third meaning”. Here, every type of intentional stylistic hybrid is “. . . more or less dialogized. This means that the languages that are crossed in it relate to each other as do rejoinders in a dialogue; there is an argument between languages, an argument between styles of language” (Bakhtin, 1990).

## ART AND COMMUNITY

As can be seen from the above discussion, arts can be used as a medium for institutional building or strengthening, particularly in internalizing the meaning of working hard, togetherness, social cohesion and leisure as part of work climate. However, at the level of actors involved in the institution and also at a wider national context of the role of the institution, arts can also be seen as a way of building common experience at a local, national, regional or international level. A particular art is created and performed in a particular space and time, and by particular artists and spectators, who share a common arts experience.

It is in this sense that music choir of IRCC can be seen as a configuration of common aesthetic experience at national or international levels. Some art aims directly at arousing these aesthetic experiences. At a national level, IRCC capable of assembling together members of different government institutions as a “we” of a nation. Being a national agency in the international relations, IRCC can be seen as a medium of nationality and national unity in diversity. This is because, we can never “. . . simply be “the we”, understood as an indistinct “we” that is like a diffuse generality. “We” always expresses a plurality, expresses ‘our’ being divided



and entangled...” (Nancy, 2000: 65). At an international level, the choir capable of assembling together members of different nations as a “we” of an international community.

To put the above argument differently, the music choir of IRCC can be understood as a particular way of opening a space and time for assembling, communicating, collaborating, and sharing experiences of different people both at national and international levels, who in their differences capable of creating new modes of common aesthetic and sensible experiences, and the sense of togetherness as human being. There is common aesthetic and cultural experience shared by different people in the international relation. This is because these relations are based on “. . . a distribution of spaces, times, and forms of activity that determines the very manner in which something in common lends itself to participation and in what way various individuals have a part in this distribution” (Ranciere, 2004: 7).

Based on the above argument, music choir of IRCC can be seen as particular form of community building, through which common aesthetic experiences are shared. Not only individuals involved directly in the music production or performance, but also people involved in the consumption of the music can also be regarded as a community. It is in this sense that we can talk about an “art community” or “music community”. Here, IRCC can be seen as a music community in the sense that it gathers individuals from different background—as members of producer, stake-holder, agency or consumer—to try to share their common purposes, interests or experiences: aesthetic experience, communication, social interaction, cultural exchange or value sharing.

Art creates “community” because it assembles people from different backgrounds in a common activity, perception, experience, discourse, emotion and meaning. The essence of community is a “commonness”, that is, a thing shared as a common belonging for all members of community. The music group of IRCC creates community in the sense that it assembles people from different institutions, professions, ethnics, nationalities, races, religions, genders, or ages to produce a common aesthetic or cultural experience. This is because the essence of community is “. . . a “prop

erty” belonging to subjects that join them together: an attribute, a definition, a predicate that qualifies them as belonging to the same totality, or as a “substance” that is produced by their union” (Esposito, 2000: 2).

As can be implied from the above arguments, art is a medium of the construction of community, through which people from different background are knitted together in a fabric of commonness. Here, art is a particular way of practice, through which an artist does, makes, composes, constructs or performs a particular art form in a particular space-time, namely “artistic space”. Yet, aesthetic practice is not an artist personal world, but the world shared by people from different background, of what is called an “aesthetic community”, in which ideas, messages, meanings or values of the art are shared by the member of community. It is in this community that the relationship between an artist and their community are socially constructed: an artist and his/her spectator.

From the point of view of society, art has a wider social dimension, particularly a political dimension. Art can be political if it is understood as a particular way of manifestation of values, beliefs, interests or ideologies shared by the members of wider community. In other words, art is a particular way of framing or reframing social world through the opening of common space-time, in which people are knitted together as a community. This is because the social function of art is “. . . to reframe the world of common experience as the world of a shared impersonal experience. And in this way it helps to create the fabric of common experience in which new modes of constructing common object and new possibilities of subjective enunciation may be developed that are characteristic of the ‘aesthetics of politics’” (Ranciere, 2010:19).

As has by now become very clear from the above argument, that art is a particular form of politics in so much as it is a particular form of collective enunciation, that is, a social manifestation of ideas, messages or meanings. Thus, art is a particular way of making sense of the world through the exploration of material resources to produce an art work as a part of sense experiences (sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch). Art is a particular form of politics because it is an organization of ideas in the context

of wider social relation and community. It is in the community that the political dimensions of art are revealed, in which particular social ideas, interests, values or ideologies are shared. Here, the music choir of IRCC can be seen as a particular form of politics, in the sense that it assembles people together as a community, through which a particular ideas, interests, values or ideologies are represented and more importantly struggled for.

It can be argued furthermore that the music choir of IRCC is political because it utters the voice of institution and more widely the voice of nation-state. In other words, there is a particular dimension of politics in the aesthetic expression of the music, in the sense that the ideas, values or ideologies as aesthetic contents of the music are not merely the voice of the artists themselves, but also the voices of institutions, which are represented in the community in order to construct knowledge, to persuade feeling, to arouse emotion or to build attitude. Thus, if community is understood as a 'being-in-common', it is through the common presence of people in a particular art space that a particular idea can be shared. This is because ". . . being-in-common is the condition for the possibility of meaning. Existence is only materialized through being partitioned and shared" (Hinderfilter, 2009: 15).

As can be concluded from the above arguments, that IRCC represents wider social, political, economical and cultural interests of various state apparatuses, which have to be ideologically represented in the themes of the music themselves. It is in this sense that IRCC can be seen as a representation of at the same time the "voice of institution" and "the voice of community". On the one hand, through the mechanism of intertextuality, IRCC builds its new semantic orientation based on its mission as a state agency. Here, intertextuality is aesthetically used as a textual strategy to promote the institutional interests or ideologies at the national and international levels. On the other hand, IRCC is also a voice of community, in the sense that it represents the sense and sensibility of community

### ART AND DIPLOMACY

In the context of international relation, the relations among sovereign states are 'institutionalized'

through an official based institution and through a mechanism of 'diplomacy', in order to build a close, good and mutual relation between sovereign states. This relation is mediated by diplomat offices and official based at home or abroad, through which inter-relation and communication between two states are officially built. Through mechanism of diplomacy, one state establishes its representatives in the international relation, whose duties are to promote their national achievements, to communicate and interact with others on the mutual basis, and to keep the good mutual relation with them.

One of these forms of diplomacy is a 'cultural diplomacy', in which arts have important roles as a medium of diplomatic communication and interaction. Cultural diplomacy is a particular diplomacy, which concerns with the promotion or advertisement of national achievements in the fields of sciences, technologies, arts, social sciences and human sciences. Here, art can be seen as a specific and unique form of diplomacy, because through arts one nation capable of not only promoting its national achievements, but also constructing a particular form of community, namely, "art community", both at a national or international levels. This is because, the nature of art, in certain extents, is beyond all limits or borders: nationality, states, beliefs, or ideologies.

Based on the above arguments, music choir of IRCC can be seen as a particular form of "art diplomacy", since it is a particular way of promoting national cultural achievements at the international level. But, as has by now become very clear, the function of IRCC is to promote and disseminate Indonesian international interests, through participations in various international art events, festivals and competitions. Nevertheless, the function of art is not only as a medium of 'communication', but also as a 'space' of assembling people together as a 'community'. It is in this sense that IRCC can be seen as a particular way of the building of 'community' at various levels. At a national level, the function of IRCC is to strengthen national security, unity and integration. At the international level, its function is to build 'common-international-art-space' for people to share common aesthetic experiences, beyond all national borders.

Furthermore, international relations, interactions

and communications in the context of diplomacy, cannot be understood as a 'one way' relation, through which one nation state imposes its own interest internationally, but a 'reciprocal relation', through which mutual benefits are constructively built. It is in this sense that diplomacy is not only being understood as a form of 'promotion' but also 'exchange', through which certain forms of 'take and give' between two nation-states are taken place. The encounter between two sovereign states is not a simple process of promoting one own culture to another, but a more sophisticated process of intercultural exchange, which involves a complex strategies of a dialogue, negotiation, influence, persuasion, share and exchange, through which each nation invests its cultural modalities in order to build a mutual cultural relation between nations.

This process is what is called a 'cultural complex', that is, "...a group of processes all of which motivate and cajole us to work with processes which screen, order, sieve, select and activate signs and symbols so that we make cultural encounter productive, meaningful and therefore possible" (Scott, 1997: 128). Art is an important part of this cultural complex, through which the complex processes of selection, classification, organization, construction, and exchange of signs, symbols and meanings are taken place. It is in this sense that the music choir of IRCC can be seen as a part of this cultural complex, through which various elements of sign or symbol are chosen, organized and combined to produce a certain meaning and message. It is a complex process, because it is not only a process of selection, organization or construction, but also a process of encounter with other national cultures, which involves the inclusive process of acceptance, admission, appreciation, and absorption.

To put the above argument differently, art as a part of cultural diplomacy is a complex process of take and give between two sovereign nations to build a common aesthetic or cultural experience. As a medium of cultural diplomacy, art is not only an organization and construction of signs and symbols—to be presented or represented in a particular community and in a particular art space, in order to construct certain meanings or messages—but a complex process of mutual relation between national cultures. In the process of encounter with other national cultures, 'cultural

diplomats' had "...to set up shop somewhere beyond suspicion. In projecting their cultures, groups and nation-states from the beginning of history had insisted on balance, on "exchanges," on reciprocity, and on bidirectional flow" (Arndt, 2006: xii).

The peculiarity of cultural diplomacy—in particular art as a medium of diplomacy—in the recent globalization and information age is that it in certain way works naturally and organically, beyond state's power, control and intervention. This is because in this age, various forms of everyday cultural exchange are taken place naturally beyond the power of nation state to control them: tourism, media, entertainment, social media, migration, book selling, digital communication and teleshopping. This is a true challenge for art as a part of cultural diplomacy, since art has to promote at the same time national interests and to build art space for the global community that beyond national control and intervention. On the one hand, art has to promote national interest as a part of national agency. On the other, it has to consider, acknowledge and reserve values of other national cultures as a part of cultural diplomacy, particularly through cultural exchanges.

It can be concluded that the recent development of global-digital interconnectedness, in which communication and information flow are built in a kind of 'open system' model, has been a true challenge for recent cultural diplomacy. Here, a diplomatic interaction and communication is no longer taken place on the face-to-face basis, but on a digital-virtual basis, which is more opened and loose in its character. In this new space, cultural diplomacy has significantly been changed, where cultural spaces are more virtual in their character that fundamentally change the ways of communication and social interaction. In this new digital diplomatic space, diplomats "...are increasingly engaging in the new activity of the diplomacy of culture, in which culture is a field of international relations in its own right as much as a tool of foreign policy: diplomacy for the purposes of culture rather than culture for the purposes of diplomacy" (Kozymka, 2014: 9).

## CONCLUSION

As can be seen from the above discussions and arguments, that the functions of art in diplomacy,



particularly cultural diplomacy, cannot be seen merely in the aesthetic frame. Art, in fact, has a much wider functions that encompass social, cultural, ideological and political functions. First, as a part of cultural diplomacy, art in certain capacity, has a political or ideological function. This is because art is used as a medium in communicating, promoting and advertising national cultural properties and legacies, which are carried out through art community established in the relevant government agencies. Through participations in various international art spaces, art events, art performances, this government agency uses art as a medium in promoting its national interests.

Second, art has also an internal-institutional function of strengthening the institution itself through the promotion and socialization of cultural meaning of working hard, togetherness, socialization, and equilibrium of life (work/relax, think/fun). Here, art can be understood as a particular 'method' in the institutional building, in the sense that the institution not only need a constructive and productive but also a creative work climate. On the one hand, art can be used to create a balanced work climate, through the integration of world of fun, relax and joy as part of work system. On the other, art certainly an important medium in encouraging creativity and innovation in the institution.

Third, art has an external-social function, in the sense that a particular art assemblages people in a particular space, time or place to share a common experiences, particularly an aesthetic experiences. Because art assemblages people together in a particular space-time, it can be said that art is a particular way of building a community, through which things common to the community are shared: signs, symbols, senses, meanings and values. However, the type of community built through art is not restricted to local, national, regional, but also an international community, of what can be called 'international-art-community'. Moreover, the recent development of social media and virtual community has fundamentally changed not only art community itself, but also the tradition and method of diplomacy, which has been more and more virtual.

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