

# JAKARTA INTERNATIONAL LITERARY FESTIVAL: A CONSTRUCTIVIST STUDY OF CITY IDENTITY AND CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

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## Abstract

Cities are dynamic places where culture grows and develops, affected by and affecting the population within. Culture has been perceived as an asset that can be utilized by actors, including cities, to bridge themselves with the foreign world through cultural diplomacy. Jakarta is not only the largest city in Indonesia but also one that has strong cultural roots, particularly literature exceeding decades of different eras in the nation's history. Realizing the existence and significance of literature as an ideational driver shaping city identity, the city initiated an international cultural event called the Jakarta International Literary Festival as a form of city cultural diplomacy. This study aims to describe the city's identity construction through the event in addition to the objectives to be achieved in the long run. This research employed the qualitative method and the concept of cultural diplomacy under the umbrella of constructivism. The results demonstrate that literature contributed to city identity construction formalized by agents through the international festival event. As a form of cultural diplomacy, in addition to molding a good image for the city, the event was projected to pursue several specific objectives; such as to emplace the city to be a hub of global literature, to promote Indonesian literature, and to facilitate literary dialogues between the Global Souths as well as between the Global South and the rest of the world. Through the case of Jakarta, this study offers a perspective that cities in the developing world began to be aware of their cultural assets – thanks to the role of agents – so that they desire to get involved more in global cultural conversations. Furthermore, cities, especially those belonging to global city networking, have been increasingly creative by initiating their cultural diplomacy; the practice that is still actually dominantly carried out by states.

**Keywords: cultural diplomacy, city identity, literature, Jakarta, constructivism.**

## Abstrak

Kota merupakan tempat di mana budaya tumbuh dan berkembang, dipengaruhi oleh dan mempengaruhi populasi di dalamnya. Budaya dilihat sebagai aset yang dapat digunakan oleh aktor, termasuk kota untuk menjembatani mereka dengan dunia luar melalui diplomasi budaya. Jakarta tidak hanya kota terbesar di Indonesia melainkan juga memiliki akar budaya yang kuat, khususnya sastra yang telah melewati berbagai era dalam sejarah bangsa. Dengan menyadari keberadaan dan signifikansi sastra sebagai faktor ideasional yang membentuk identitas kota, Jakarta menginisiasi perhelatan budaya internasional yang dikenal dengan *Jakarta International Literary Festival* sebagai bentuk diplomasi budaya kota. Studi ini bertujuan mendeskripsikan konstruksi identitas kota melalui perhelatan tersebut dan tujuan yang hendak dicapai dalam jangka panjang. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dan konsep diplomasi budaya dalam pendekatan konstruktivisme. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa sastra berkontribusi pada konstruksi identitas kota

yang diformalkan oleh agen melalui perhelatan festival internasional. Sebagai bentuk diplomasi budaya, selain bertujuan membentuk citra positif bagi kota, perhelatan tersebut diproyeksikan untuk mengejar tujuan-tujuan spesifik, seperti menjadikan Jakarta sebagai pusat sastra global, mempromosikan sastra Indonesia, dan memfasilitasi dialog sastra antar Dunia Selatan dan antara Dunia Selatan dan wilayah lainnya. Melalui kasus Jakarta, studi ini menawarkan perspektif bahwa kota di dunia berkembang mulai sadar akan aset budaya mereka dengan adanya peran agen, sehingga mereka memiliki keinginan untuk terlibat lebih dalam percakapan budaya global. Kemudian, kota khususnya yang tergabung dalam jaringan kota dunia semakin kreatif dalam menginisiasi diplomasi budaya sebagai praktik yang sebenarnya masih didominasi oleh negara.

**Kata kunci : diplomasi budaya, identitas kota, sastra, Jakarta, konstruktivisme.**

## INTRODUCTION

The study of cultural diplomacy in international relations sees how nations strategically utilize culture to advance interest and increase mutual understanding. Cultural diplomacy helps to shape perception and build inter-nation relations and therefore acts to complement traditional diplomacy. Cities as the regions that are rich in cultural assets become important actors in cultural diplomacy. In addition to the dynamic environment, sufficient resources and existing international networking pave the way for cities to conduct diplomacy as an initiative to leverage urban development (Luerdi, 2023b). Cities have also become dynamic and creative actors in the cultural exchange and cooperation within the networks (Luerdi, 2023a). One of the cultural assets that cities can use in cultural diplomacy is literature which has long been alive and well developed in urban areas.

Culture is often used by cities in their agenda to pursue not only material but also non-material interests through attractive international events. As one of the largest megapolitan cities in the Global South, just like other world cities, Jakarta has placed culture as a tool to build relations with global communities as well as identity through cultural events. The Jakarta International Literary Festival (JILF) was an annual international literary event initiated by the city for the first time in 2019 involving *littérateurs* and literary activists from diverse countries. The city has frequently hosted several international events at home and participated in similar events abroad, especially related to culture.

The scholarly discussions on diplomacy, specifically cultural diplomacy and linkage with international events have been studied by scholars. The studies attempt to look at numerous actors, such as states

(Boy & Menezes, 2019; Dubinsky, 2019; Ismail et al., 2022; Koivunen, 2021; Lee, 2021; Nikolaeva et al., 2017) as well as cities and non-state actors (Byrne, 2014; Kolokytha, 2022; Luerdi, 2023b; Murray & Pigman, 2014). Such events took place in the form of sports (Byrne, 2014; Dubinsky, 2019; Koivunen, 2021; Lee, 2021; Luerdi, 2022; Murray & Pigman, 2014), cultural forums (Nikolaeva et al., 2017), and cultural festivals (Ismail et al., 2022; Koivunen, 2021; Kolokytha, 2022). The events' objectives had multiple dimensions like economy (i.e., tourism promotion, investment), social (i.e., cultural promotion), and politics (i.e., diplomatic relations, cooperation).

States have utilized cultural diplomacy as a foreign policy tool to pursue national interests (Boy & Menezes, 2019; Dubinsky, 2019; Ismail et al., 2022; Nikolaeva et al., 2017). Foreign policy frequently defines and shapes the objectives of international events (Nikolaeva et al., 2017). Through an international event, cultural diplomacy narrowed the gap between nations (Boy & Menezes, 2019). However, Koivunen (2021) and Lee (2021) offered another perspective on state efforts in hosting international events. International events enabled to transform state positive images for a short-term purpose, but not for a long-term

period, particularly in Western society (Koivunen, 2021). In addition, the impact of international events would be determined by political occurrences entailing them (Lee, 2021).

The mapping of international events concerning diplomacy has been studied by scholars (Murray & Pigman, 2014). The study differentiated international events as diplomatic instruments from those as diplomacy, diplomatic representation, communication, and negotiation among non-state actors (Murray & Pigman, 2014). Differently, Byrne (2014) analyzed diplomatic dynamics defining the relations of international events between cities and sporting federations. Although both were in reciprocal need for maximizing interests and advancing public policy agenda, their relationship was found asymmetric, leaving host cities as the most vulnerable actors (Byrne, 2014).

The study on international green events and infrastructure in the context of city diplomacy has been conducted by Luerdi (2022, 2023b). Such green events and infrastructure were meant to create and advance city branding in the global arena (Luerdi, 2023b). In addition, the international event was purposively held to convey a message that the city was a safe place and

ready for economic recovery post-pandemic (Luerdi, 2022). Furthermore, Kolokytha (2022) suggests that even a peripheral city was capable of conducting cultural diplomacy beyond the national political agenda which was strongly rooted in citizens' initiatives and collective actions. The studies demonstrate that cities are actors acting creatively for their specific motives.

The existing studies show that international events with numerous forms have been an important part of cultural diplomacy by actors, including cities. Cities have now integrated themselves into the global system through various initiatives, one of which is in the form of international events. However, the studies on city cultural diplomacy and identity construction through a festival-like event, especially in the case of Jakarta have been understudied by scholars of international relations or city (para-)diplomacy. This study is expected to narrow the gap and aims to describe Jakarta's identity construction through the event of JILF as a form of cultural diplomacy through the lens of constructivism between 2019 and 2022.

This study offers a perspective that cities in the Global South begin to be aware

of their cultural heritages and with which, be encouraged to play a role penetrating national boundaries. In addition, this study contributes to enriching scholarly discussion on cultural diplomacy amidst the dominance of "state-centric" cultural diplomacy themes.

## **ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK**

This research applied the constructivist approach and the concept of cultural diplomacy. Constructivism is one of the alternative approaches that attempt to see reality as a social construction preceded by the interaction and perception among agents<sup>1</sup> called intersubjectivity (Hurd, 2009). The approach emphasizes the important role of ideational factors, such as norms, culture, and identity in influencing the relations between agents. An agent's behavior and interest are determined by the identity constructed by such ideational drivers (Hurd, 2009). While convergent identity among agents would lead them to cooperate, their divergent identity would lead otherwise; either conflict or competition. Similar to other pluralist approaches, constructivism embraces diverse actors in international relations, including sub-state actors like cities.

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<sup>1</sup> The word "actor" and "agent" can be interchangeably used in this study. However, when it comes to the

identity construction process, the authors would rather to use the word "agent."

In terms of cities and their cultural assets, constructivism suggests a dynamic interaction between culture and urban development. Cities are used to growing and changing and so are culture's meaning and significance (Afolabi, 2023). New cultural expressions can emerge which reflects the shifting in demography, economy, and social norms in which old symbols have been reinterpreted and revitalized in a new context. With such an occurring process, according to the constructivist approach, a city shall adapt where its identity is suited to current reality, but still connected to its historical roots. Thus, cultural assets are active components – instead of merely passive old things – continuously constructing city identity and affecting how they are perceived by dwellers and outsiders.

Cultural diplomacy has been popular lately as the consequence of diverse issues and actors in international relations. While culture is subject to contestation (Afolabi, 2023), the concept of cultural diplomacy sees cultural factors as tools or important parts of actors' diplomatic activities. Culture can be defined as, for example, “a complex whole of knowledge, belief, customs, values, interests, arts, morals, law, and any other capabilities and habits acquired or exhibited by man as a member of society” (Tylor, 1958, cited in

Afolabi, 2023). On the other hand, in the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, UNESCO (2021) defines culture as:

“The set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional features of society or a social group that encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions, and beliefs.”

Meanwhile, cultural diplomacy can be referred to as “the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples to foster mutual understandings” (Cummings, 2003). Relying on such understanding, cultural diplomacy is a peaceful effort or diplomacy in a peaceful situation.

Cultural diplomacy is also often associated with foreign policy due to the involvement of state authorities (Pajtinka, 2014). In its development, it is no longer the privilege of state authorities (central/national governments), but an area of new expressions for local governments or other local actors. Despite this fact, cultural diplomacy by non-central governments does not contradict state foreign policy or national interest often time still with formal or informal hierarchical monitoring. However, diplomacy by state (also called traditional diplomacy) differs

from that by local governments. Keating (2013) suggests that diplomacy by local governments (also called para-diplomacy) is functionally more specific and more targeted as well as more opportunistic and more experimental. In this sense, in some cases, sub-nationals' actions – when relying on creativity and own initiative – can represent a non “state-centric” paradigm in diplomacy studies.

In the constructivist approach, in the case of cities, culture contributes to their identity transformation through cultural diplomacy activities engaging several cultural elements, such as sports, food, arts, and others. In addition, cultural diplomacy is strongly attached to soft power – a framework frequently used to understand the logic of cultural diplomacy (Clarke, 2020) – to build a positive image and influence others' perceptions and behavior. However, a city's soft power is socially constructed, so it can change, just like identity and belief in ideational factors.

This study attempts to see the city of Jakarta and its cultural diplomacy through the event of JILF with which the city put efforts to create an identity driven by the city's rich legacy in literature. Relying on unit-level constructivism, this study reveals that both the Jakarta Provincial Government and the

autonomous Jakarta Arts Council are considered to have played important roles as local agents in such efforts. Both are the bodies that are responsible for executing art agendas and formulating public policies regarding arts in the city.

## **METHODS**

This research employed the qualitative method with library research type, where authors focused on the data collection and analysis retrieved from written and digital sources. Within research activities, authors gathered primary data like documents, recordings, and official websites of the Jakarta Provincial Government and the Jakarta Arts Council. Besides, authors collected secondary data covering, for instance, scholarly articles, books, and other references relevant to the research topic. All data were analyzed through an interactive model developed by Miles and Huberman, involving a set of repeated processes; data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Overview of JILF**

The JILF was the first Jakarta's international literary event conducted by the Literary Committee of the Jakarta Arts

Council – an autonomous body created by the urban artist community – fully supported by the Jakarta Provincial Government. Despite its autonomy, the city arts council is the partner of the provincial government in formulating policies and planning several programs to back the activities and development of arts in the city (Dewan Kesenian Jakarta, n.d.-b). Before the JILF, the city arts council held a local arts festival called the DKJ<sup>2</sup> Fest to sustain the quality of Indonesian arts, particularly in Jakarta.

However, in 2019, the city arts council initiated another larger agenda, but more focused on literature called the JILF held at the Taman Ismail Marzuki (Dewan Kesenian Jakarta, n.d.-a). The JILF 2019 that was taking place from 20<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> August 2019 brought a theme “Pagar: Redefining Borders” and provided several sub-events, for instance; keynote speeches, symposium, talk show, reading nights, literary ecosystem lab, book right market, and community and literary exhibition (Dewan Kesenian Jakarta, n.d.-a). The event involved 55 writers, 26 publishers, and 21 literary communities coming from various countries, such as South Africa, Botswana, the Philippines, India, the United Kingdom, Germany, Turkey,

Malaysia, Mauritius, Palestine, Singapore, Cyprus, Somalia, and Thailand (Dewan Kesenian Jakarta, n.d.-a; Tirto, 2019). At the opening session, the Palestinian novelist Adania Shibli, conveyed a narrative work entitled “I do not speak in my language” as a resistance against colonialism of the Israeli government (Tirto, 2019).

In 2020, the JILF was absent due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and in 2021, the event was virtually held with another theme “Heroes: (Re)Making History” (Tempo, 2020). The Literary Committee of the Jakarta Arts Council again held the JILF 2022 with the theme “Our City in Their World: Citizenship, Urbanism, and Globalism,” attempting to reveal the existential crisis of citizenship and discuss marginal social groups when the direction and trend of world’s cities led to uniformity and homogeneity (JILF, 2022). In this sense, cities became places only for a thin number of people with huge access to power and capital. The event of JILF 2022 which lasted from 22<sup>nd</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> October 2022 was comprised of several sub-events, such as keynote speeches, authors’ forums, reading nights, community projects, book fairs, fringe events, and performances (JILF, 2022).

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<sup>2</sup> DKJ stands for Dewan Kesenian Jakarta (Jakarta Arts Council).

The JILF 2022 constituting 41 different sub-events in total involved 25 writers and 11 communities from both Indonesia and abroad, such as Tanzania, Malaysia, Japan, the United States, Timor Leste, and Somalia (JILF, 2022). Despite the decrease in number of international participations compared to that in 2019, the involvement of international representatives demonstrated that the international literary event remained attractive among *littérateurs* and literary activists. In a key speech by the University of York's Abidin Kusno, the interaction between cities – previously formed or ruled by colonial powers – and literary works also led to grow anti-colonialist sources (Tirto, 2022). Further, cities were expected to enable space for the spirit of change towards equality that was sounded at the event. Just like the JILF 2021, the JILF 2022 was also preceded by a pre-event called “Road to JILF” to discuss the issues around literature as well as to announce the incoming main event.

## **2. City Identity: Literature and JILF**

The world's cities are the centers of cultural assets rooted in, for example, urban history, arts, and diverse communities which contribute to shaping the blended human experience and the existence of cultural

assets leads them to be creative actors (Kourtit & Nijkamp, 2019). Cities are home to museums, galleries, theatres, and landmarks reflecting past events that have formed nowadays cultural narratives. Diverse populations in urban areas have also united traditions, languages, and customs, acting as a meeting point in which new ideas and artistic expressions emerge and find themselves easily developed.

Literature, as one of the cultural assets, is believed to have played a significant role in enriching urban culture (Times Now, 2023). Literary works that offer rhythm and desire for urban lives can inform people about the experience of those living in a challenging environment (Zayed, 2017). Urban literature represents city nature overseeing various perspectives, such as street lives, identity exploration, social classes, and power. Literature with different forms can enrich the understanding of the urban complex environment. Through written words of literature, cities stay eternal and stories about them flow beyond generations and geographical locations.

Jakarta, as one of the megapolitan cities in Indonesia, is rich in literature. Literary development in the city has been influenced by its complex history constituted during colonialism, national independence,



and the modern era (Andani, 2023). In Indonesia's early nationalism, literature in Jakarta was known as the means used by pro-independence scholars and activists to express ideas and criticism against colonial rule as well as to bold national awareness. As there was increased literary creativity post-independence, Jakarta became a center for *littérateurs* and literary activists to explore themes, for instance, not only identity but also social justice and changing urban landscape. Nowadays, thanks to the development of digital media and the growth of independent publishing in numbers, literature in the city advances with more various themes reflecting its dynamics and population within.

According to the constructivist approach, cultural assets contribute to constructing city identity in which agents (including individuals and communities) create and interpret the meaning of their environment. Using the analysis of unit-level constructivism, the study suggests that the Jakarta Arts Council and Jakarta Provincial Government were the agents perceived in constructing the city's identity, realizing that Jakarta was the place where literature found its roots. Such an argument is reasonable as both are the formal bodies that have legitimate authority to develop and liven up

arts, including literature in the city. Despite such suggestion, this study does not mean to oversee the roles of individuals and communities since the cultural identity of the city has been growing for decades thanks to the multiple agents' interaction.

As cultural representation, city identity shall be formalized and promoted beyond national boundaries through international events like the JILF that would strengthen Jakarta's representation among global literary communities as argued by Governor Anies Baswedan at the press conference of the JILF 2019 (Jakarta Provincial Government, 2019). He argued that it was time and right for Jakarta to give color to the global conversation as the city had a long, astonishing record of human history transformed into urban literacy in addition to having a status as the biggest city in the Southern of the globe (Jakarta Provincial Government, 2019). Furthermore, as conveyed by Danton Sihombing, the acting chairman of the Jakarta Arts Council at the same moment, such an international event provided an opportunity for local and national *littérateurs* and literary activists to interact with colleagues from various countries (Jakarta Provincial Government, 2019).

The city's willingness to be present in global literary conversations was parallel with its ambition to transform to be a global city. The idea of a global city encouraged the city to host numerous international events at home as well as to gain international recognition regarding urban development. For the latter, to mention that realizing its cultural asset, the Jakarta Provincial Government proposed membership for the "City of Literature" within the UNESCO's Creative Cities Network and was admitted into the club, together with its counterpart world cities; Gothenburg (Sweden) and Vilnius (Lithuania) in 2021 (Berita Jakarta, 2021). The entitlement by UNESCO indicated that Jakarta had proven itself to be committed to cultural development and intercity cooperation, especially in the field of literature.

Jakarta's ambition to be equal to other global cities was followed by physical development like the provision of world-class facilities (Luerdi & Fitria, 2023). For example, the Jakarta Provincial Government revitalized the Taman Ismail Marzuki as the main venue for the city's art activities including literary programs like the JILF, accommodating the needs of artists and catching up with global trends. Such a facility was expected to help Jakarta build world-

class urban arts and a healthy cultural ecosystem (iNews, 2022).

The JILF was a city initiative to raise the identity that was historically attached to literature. The city which was rich in literature growing, living, and developing amidst a diverse and dynamic urban population could be the message to the audience. Cultural assets like literature that were packed in any form, including festivals became media for city dwellers to express their experiences, values, and collective aspirations. As a cultural element, literature transformed into symbols used by agents to define themselves and their city from which to strengthen shared identity. In addition, through literature, the city of Jakarta shall be connected with others regardless of national or geographical boundaries. However, as reality is socially constructed (Adler, 1997), in the case of a city, its identity is not static but is continuously shaped and reshaped.

### **3. JILF as City Cultural Diplomacy**

This study suggests that the JILF is an example of cultural diplomacy by the city of Jakarta. The city used literature listed in its cultural assets as a bridge of diplomacy to interact or communicate with others, especially those beyond borders. The event turned out to be a platform that facilitated the

exchange of ideas, knowledge, and literary development between nations which as argued by Cummings (2003), fostered mutual understanding. By initiating the JILF, Jakarta was actively engaged in the effort to create wider cultural relations through literature amidst the trend of a borderless era of globalization. Hardly did the city distance itself from the foreign world while well realizing the existence of cultural assets, expertise, resources, and networking.

Cultural events like festivals are not new things among cities, particularly those in the developed world that could be more aware of the importance of cultural resources for urban development than their counterpart cities in the Global South. Some of them have transformed to be cultural mega-events and international mega-projects with established traditions and solid reputations, some of which are the Berlin Film Festivals, the Verona Opera Festival, the Oscars, and others (Nikolaeva et al., 2017). The topography and festival along with creative expression, interaction of and engagement with people as well as art work as enablers of city cultural diplomacy (Kolokytha, 2022).

Literature, in particular, has been integrated into city public policy and promoted widely to foreign audiences through international literary events. To

mention that, for example, cities within the network of UNESCO Creative Cities of Literature enliven their environments with literary festivals and are encouraged to engage with various nations. In a broader sense, cities now have a bigger role in international affairs, particularly in narrowing gaps through cultural relations.

As cultural diplomacy according to the constructivist approach, the JILF was intentionally held to construct as well as reflect its identity. Through international events like the JILF, Jakarta was able to introduce itself on the global stage, in which literature was used as a medium to build international perception of the city rich in cultural heritages especially literature, creative, and active in the world's cultural discourse. The JILF become an important instrument to project the image of Jakarta's culture globally as well as to facilitate interactions enriching and affecting city identity. Regarding the former, creating a good image was the general purpose of Jakarta's cultural diplomacy as the frequent logic of cultural diplomacy practice (Clarke, 2020). In the long run, the city's good image as a whole – not only due to cultural factors but combined with others – is believed to gain recognition and attention, attracting tourists, investments, and human resources.

In addition to building the city's good image, projected as cultural diplomacy, the JILF had several specific objectives that Jakarta was willing to pursue. Such objectives were parallel with what Keating (2013) suggests that sub-national diplomacy is not only more specific, but also more targeted, opportunistic, and experimental. To start with, projecting Jakarta as a hub of global literature could be the top aligning with its ambition to be a global city (Antara, 2022; Jakarta Provincial Government, 2019). Literature that shaped the city across generations and eras should be a driving factor contributing to urban development. Furthermore, globalization and technological advancement allow the city to promote itself as one of the global hubs in terms of literature and its commitment to literary development should be widely reckoned, one of which through the event of JILF.

That the JILF shall be a platform that invited writers, poets, intellectuals, and more literary workers from diverse countries to participate was expected to embolden Jakarta's image as a city that highly appreciated literature. The event was not only to promote local culture like literary works but also to emplace Jakarta as a node of international literary networking (Jakarta Provincial Government, 2019). The event

was fully supported by the provincial government, matching the regional vision to show that Jakarta as a city consistently growing culture and building civilization (Media Indonesia, 2019).

Being a hub of global literature, Jakarta was expected to attract global attention in terms of literature in addition to creating opportunities for international collaboration and getting engaged in the world's literary conversations. Such effort was suited to the commitment to the city's global engagement and desire to achieve the international reputation that had been demonstrated for the last few years (Luerdi, 2023b; Luerdi & Fitria, 2023).

The JILF also aimed to promote Indonesian literature at the international level (Antara, 2022; Jakarta Provincial Government, 2019). At the domestic level, as a capital city, Jakarta has often become the benchmark to consider national development, including arts. In this case, the city is used to being a center of national conversation for Indonesian cultural development, providing space and intensity for dialogues, exchanges of thoughts and ideas, including engaging international communities in national development (Berita Jakarta, 2019).

The JILF provided a stage for the Indonesian *littérateurs* as well as literary

works to be introduced before the global audience. The sub-events like discussions, exhibitions, literary speeches, and others encouraged international recognition of the Indonesian literary wealth, more widely known, learned, and respected. By presenting Indonesian literary works before global communities, the event helped to widen global access and understanding of the nation's literary heritage.

In addition, the JILF aimed to bridge dialogue among literature in the Global South as well as between the Global South and the rest of the world (Antara, 2022; Dewan Kesenian Jakarta, n.d.-a; Jakarta Provincial Government, 2019). In terms of global literary development, there were such gaps separating *littérateurs* and their works based on the regions they were hosted. The JILF, particularly the 2019 edition event, attempted to address such issue by bringing a theme "Pagar: Redefining Borders" to introduce and embolden literary works from the Global South, responding to the fact that current international literary narratives were dominated by those in the Global North. Such a theme was the expression of dissatisfaction against domination and the effort to explore the barriers between *littérateurs* in the Global South (Dewan Kesenian Jakarta, n.d.-a). The theme reflected Indonesia's position as a

developing country in terms of literature and aspiration to be an actor contributing to the dynamics of global literature as well.

The JILF had a role in connecting efforts of cultural dialogues, particularly among developing countries in which *littérateurs* and literary activist with various socio-political backgrounds could gather to share their experiences and ideas. The event that strengthened inter-regional solidarity and bridged literary exchanges between the Global South and the established Global North was expected to widen space for dialogues in the literary world. Hence, the involvement of international *littérateurs* at the JILF conveyed that Jakarta was a representative place to provide intercultural dialogues (Jakarta Provincial Government, 2019).

As argued by the constructivists, identity is understood as a result of interactions among both local and international agents. The participation of *littérateurs* from various nations at the event enabled the exchange of ideas, values, and perspectives which contributed to the image of Jakarta as an open and inclusive city supporting cultural plurality. Such things showed that Jakarta attempted to construct and strengthen its position in global cultural

mapping packaging literature resource in the form of literary festival.

## CONCLUSION

Jakarta's awareness of cultural assets encouraged the effort to build a particular city identity through literature. Such city identity was constructed by utilizing the wealth of literary tradition as part of cultural diplomacy that encouraged the city's role at the global level. Using the constructivist approach, instead of being shaped naturally, such identity was resulted in strategic activities consciously designed, one of which through international events like the JILF. The event became a consequential platform to manifest literature as an integrated part of city identity.

The case of Jakarta in this study is one of the examples from the developing world representing non "state-centric" paradigm where cities have initiatives by less dependently exploiting potential resources to conduct cultural diplomacy.<sup>3</sup> Collaboration among agents in cities shall be able to leverage urban development, leading to creating opportunities for larger-scale collaboration with global entities. Cities in the Global South are not always occupied

with local-oriented policies. Instead, they possess the ambition to take part – even to exercise leadership – in global conversations on many issues, not limited to culture-related concerns.

To maintain sustainable efforts, this study recommends that the JILF be a consistently held annual cultural event with larger participation from global communities and shall be fully supported by all stakeholders, particularly both the Jakarta Provincial Government and the Jakarta Arts Council. Jakarta's vision of the "global city" dan "City of Literature" should continue despite the changing city leadership. A strong commitment is required to ensure the city's identity develops and stays sturdy amidst urban challenges. For a long-term purpose, the JILF has the potential to help Jakarta transform into be destination of literary tourism like several global cities in developed countries in addition to strengthening its position as a cultural city with global attraction.

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<sup>3</sup> Less dependence refers to a certain degree of autonomy as constitutive power owned by sub-state actors. Within the unitary state system, subnational

actions may be subject to central governments' approval and monitoring.

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