**Rumah Budaya Indonesia: Cultural Promotion in Globalization**

Pradipto Bhagaskoro, S. Hub. Int.  
*Japan Foundation Jakarta Staff*

Rommel Utungga Pasopati, S. Hub. Int.  
*Graduate Student of Driyarkara School of Philosophy Jakarta*

*Expertise Staff of Indonesian House of Representatives 2014-2019 Period*

**ABSTRACT**

Strategic location of Indonesia enables it to have thousands of culture as its society's knowledge. Those culture need to be understood, developed, and promoted as well. Indonesia has a cultural center named *Rumah Budaya Indonesia* (RBI), which could promote Indonesian culture in global arena alongside with cultural diplomacy. It is the same as other countries; France with its IFI, Great Britain with its British Council, and Japan with its Japan Foundation. This article would examine RBI as a model, which may enable strategic promotion of Indonesian culture worldwide. By asserting qualitative method, concepts will be explained; cultural adaptation and socialization in cultural diplomacy, Bourdieu's habitus on open and mobile cultural capital, and Bauman's liquid culture in bridging identities and differences. In this article's analyses, RBI as discourse is discussed so cultural promotion is not merely based on economic and political motives that recognizing culture itself. In addition, the strategies of cultural promotion need necessary collaborations between government and society to attain total cultural diplomacy. In conclusion, establishing Indonesian cultural center is to build cultural narration, to bring local to global, and to interpret differences as diverse identities.

**KEYWORDS:** cultural center, diplomacy, globalization, identity, strategy

It is widely known that Indonesia is situated in a strategic geographical location between Asia and Australia and between Pacific and Indian Ocean. That fixed aspect in geographical location then reflects a dynamic context in cultural side of Indonesia. Indonesia contains of diverse cultural ideas from traditional tribes to modern cities, from royal kingdoms to social groups of citizens, and from individual understandings
to social constructions. These aspects are meant not just to be kept domestically but also to be promoted globally since these cultural aspects are abundant modals as national interests of Indonesia.

Seeing diverse cultural ideas of Indonesia as presuppositions, Indonesian government shaped Indonesian Cultural Center or *Rumah Budaya Indonesia* (RBI) to promote images, appreciations, and closer cultural relationships globally. RBI has been established in Timor Leste, United States of America, Australia, Netherland, Japan, Germany, South Korea, France, Singapore, and Turkey. These countries were chosen because of their closeness to Indonesia including neighbors, business relations, and diplomatic connections. Stated under Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia, RBI was supposed to build cultural activities rather than merely to show physical artifacts so that it may involve dynamic Indonesian cultural promotions. Moreover, RBI could be a known Indonesian cultural center like Germany with its Goethe Institut, Japan with its Japan Foundation, and Great Britain with its British Council.

The purposes of RBI are to promote Indonesian culture as substantial resources, to attract more valuable tourists to Indonesia, and to tighten business and diplomatic relations in realizing Indonesian national interests. These purposes are related to Indonesian government rather than people of Indonesia who are actually the owners of that culture. Therefore, RBI should also enhance people's cultural participations beside merely supporting national interests. This article would like to examine the importance of RBI as dynamic and strategic cultural promotions of Indonesia, to assert other minor and undervalued Indonesian cultural actors and ideas that actually could have better participation in global arena, to compare RBI to other
countries' established cultural centers, and to support RBI as a center which could enhance Indonesian cultural studies both domestically and globally.

**RBI AS PART OF INTERACTION OF SOCIETY AND DIPLOMACY**

As a country which consists of thousands of islands, Indonesia has diversity on culture. The diversity comes from many ethnic tribes in those islands. Some of those culture have been recognized as world culture inheritance by UNESCO. There are at least 13 Indonesian which have been recognized by that UN organization (pusaka-indonesia.org, 2015). Meanwhile, those recognitions should never make Indonesian people to stop exploring their culture. It is because there are still many scattered culture which Indonesian people do not know yet.

Related to its international relations issue, Indonesia still always needs to promote its culture to other countries. Societies in other countries need to know that Indonesia has many natural and cultural resources. By promoting its culture, there are many positive aspects which could be attained. In a short term, that promotion could attract foreign tourists to come to Indonesia. In a long term, the promotion through cultural center of a country in other one could benefit in many things. The benefits are cultural promotions, cultural studies center, cultural regeneration enhancement, cultural diplomacy, and cultural interactions among societies.

Kirsten Bound in an article about cultural diplomacy emphasized that culture and its activities are important channels of public diplomacy (Bound, 2007:24). That article examined purposes of public diplomacy; Increasing Familiarity, Increasing Appreciation, Engaging People and Influencing People’s Behavior (Bound, 2007:24). In addition, Kirsten Bound also emphasizes that culture activity in terms of public diplomacy still undervalued by government. These cultural issues are not weighed as
major issue; it is undervalued to be asserted to international politics. Therefore, these kind of issues are also poorly coordinated by government.

Moreover, based on Bordieu, cultural interaction is situated in a special field which could not be defined in fixed meanings because culture could be both subjective and objective based on how social condition is reflected in a specific place and time (Lau, 2004). In the same line, there are five principles of cultural diplomacy; Respect & Recognition of Cultural Diversity & Heritage, Global Intercultural Dialogue, Justice, Equality & Interdependence, The Protection of International Human Rights, and Global Peace & Stability (culturaldiplomacy.org, 2016). In this diplomacy, culture is like a channel of interaction which could be unlimited because of its appreciation, protection, and interdependence.

Therefore, cynical sayings on cultural interactions should be changed. A country, especially like Indonesia, which has cultural diversities, should maximize promotion of its cultural center. The existence of cultural center should always be appreciated because of many purposes and efforts that those already achieved. First achievement is Indonesian cultural promotion to foreign people. Foreign people should know other Indonesian cultural diversities beside merely Bali, Jogjakarta, Angklung, or Batik. Despite many recognized culture by UNESCO, there are still many culture which have never been explored.

In addition, cultural center could also enhance cultural appreciation and respect to the culture. This phase is continuation in cultural promotion. If culture has been known, appreciation will come not only from owner of the culture but also from other social structures where that culture is promoted so. By the time goes by, internal appreciation to the culture will find its place and then enhance more cultural studies.
Interactions among culture will be developed into cultural actor regenerations furthermore.

The existence of Indonesian cultural center abroad will also shape better cultural understanding and awareness. This awareness will take Indonesian people to further understanding about their minor culture which have been undermined before. Some conflicts about cultural ownership among countries, such as Batik and national songs confrontation between Indonesia and Malaysia, will be well known and understood.

Moreover, this enhancement of cultural interactions by Indonesian cultural center will affect to Indonesian Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). Many cultural activities which were done by Indonesian cultural center could also build more chances for those enterprises to participate as cultural actors in foreign countries. In reality, some cultural actors are still limited by government. This condition is different from cultural understandings which are so vast and unlimited. Many cultural actors go abroad by their own fund to have cultural interactions in film, dance art, or painting art without being coordinated by Indonesian cultural center. Therefore, Indonesian cultural center should develop more culture by accommodating those minor cultural actors.

To support Indonesian cultural interaction overseas, Indonesian Government and RBI should perform public diplomacy through culture because culture is based on human interaction in meeting, blending in and developing furthermore. RBI should undertake cultural promotions, cultural studies and strength of Indonesian culture overseas. Indonesian government should coordinate the programs of RBI to adapt, to spread, as well as to socialize the characteristic of Indonesian culture.
RBI in Singapore in its official website stated three purposes in Indonesian Culture Expression as a space to introduce Indonesian cultural heritage such as batik exhibition, traditional dance and music show, shadow puppet show, Indonesian culinary bazaar, keris exhibition, and Indonesian literature exhibition (rumahbudayaindonesia.sg, 2016). In addition, there is Indonesian Culture Learning as a place to conserve and to continue Indonesian culture and art heritage such as batik workshop, traditional music and dance exercise, and Bahasa Indonesia learning. Last one is Indonesian Culture Advocacy and Promotion as a place to discuss and to develop Indonesian cultural images, which have been broadly known by global communities and Indonesian Diasporas. The discussions include Indonesian culture and its potentials or obstacles to develop RBI. The main purpose of RBI in Singapore is to be a media to communicate Indonesian cultural heritage to global arena which will also attract foreign tourists to Indonesia (rumahbudayaindonesia.sg, 2016).

RBI in Paris and Austin have same purposes on Indonesian Culture Expression, Indonesian Culture Learning and Indonesian Culture Advocacy and Promotion. The main purpose of RBI in Paris is to develop an understanding and recognition from global community to the existence of the Indonesian culture. Other purposes are giving contribution to develop the world civilization and to promote cooperation in the field of culture between Indonesia and the countries. Those purposes then are located in the main area around the world to preserve and to revitalize cultural assets as well (parisppi.wordpress.com, 2014).

The programs of RBI in Singapore, Austin, and Paris in Culture Expression and Culture Learning were quite enough to qualify the “increasing familiarity”. Meanwhile, Culture Advocacy and Promotion should be more enhanced furthermore to realize importance of culture in international arena. RBI should enhance the
programs to the phase of “Engaging People and Influencing People’s Behavior” or “Global Intercultural Dialogue”. RBI should really be mini Indonesia in foreign lands as described in other countries’ cultural center in Indonesia such as Japan Foundation, IFI, Goethe Institute, Erasmus Huis and et cetera. RBI should be such Indonesian cultural representation in foreign lands by not only to introduce Indonesian culture but also actively to push that culture to interact with other global societies. The phase of ”Engaging People and Global Intercultural Dialogue” should be encouraged in many RBIs. RBI should encourage Indonesian Cultural Actor to interact with the actor from other countries. This condition will shape love to Indonesian culture.

As mentioned above, ‘Engaging People’ aspect from Kirsten Bound and others in Global Intercultural Dialogue of Public Diplomacy needs to be asserted by importance of cultural center's existence. Many interactions, which are built culturally, should be main sources in international relations. Cultural diplomacy should also appreciate much minor and undervalued culture. RBI to shape Indonesian cultural consciousness should use this appreciation as a strong effort. Through this effort, RBI could also strengthen other culture beside merely batik, angklung, gamelan or Bali. There are still other thousands of culture which needs to be explored by RBI. More than just static cultural artifacts, multicultural condition of Indonesian people also reflects its nice social system to anyone. This social system relates to hospitality, which is needed to be strengthened, explored, while being promoted as well.

In this RBI matter, Wiendu Nuryantias as Vice Minister of Education and Culture of Indonesia stated that RBI was hoped to be Indonesian representation in foreign lands so that it could enhance images, appreciations, and cultural bonds between Indonesian people and international community (varia.id, 2015). Policy makers and stakeholders of Indonesian culture who could participate more in further
cultural interaction through RBI should do realizing those representations. On the other hand, RBI is also prepared to be Indonesian representations in foreign lands through cultural evolution in long-term process. Therefore, RBI's existence should be developed in its quantities by expanding to other countries and also in its qualities by making better projects to support other minor culture that have never been explored.

**RBI'S STRATEGY IN INTERNATIONAL ARENA: RESEARCH AND CULTURAL EMANCIPATION CENTER**

RBI is a breakthrough from of Indonesian government through the Ministry of Education and Culture is essential and well conceptualized. RBI was intended to be a home for cultural icons and activities held abroad, whether undertaken by native Indonesian or people of host country (kemdikbud.go.id, 2014). This "home" is allocated to accommodate the expression of Indonesian culture and a place for host country's people to learn the culture of Indonesia (parisppi.wordpress.com, 2014). In addition, RBI is also functioned as a forum to advocate and to expand the appreciation of tangible or intangible Indonesian cultural icons. From here, it is known that the concept of RBI already aimed ideal goals for the sake of Indonesian culture’s greatness. To achieve those ideal goals, Indonesian government needs to give serious attention to the RBI not only by building its concept but also its administrative and organizational structure, nature of the organization, as well as its activities in the future which must be thoroughly programmed.

**RBI as Cultural Research Institution**

Cultural resources that provide many alternative strategies to introduce its culture abroad overwhelm Indonesia itself. Indonesian Culinary, for example, is an interesting commodity to be marketed overseas. The diversity of Indonesian culture yields a number of culinary options allowing to be enjoyed internationally. Indonesian
Culinary can be a pioneer in introducing Indonesian culture abroad. Through researches, the most favorite flavor and taste of food could be known in the host country. By knowing those kinds, Indonesian traditional foods could be introduced while being suited with their taste. Some modifications could also be done to familiarize culinary in their taste. In addition to these modified culinary, RBI will still be able to introduce Indonesian culinary with its authentic flavor. The introduction of Indonesian cuisine can be done by holding a festival or bazaar of Indonesian culinary that will be thematically based on a specific ethnic category every month by involving Indonesian local SMEs. This involvement of Indonesian local SMEs aims to advocate, to emancipate lesser-known cultural entities—that are represented by these SMEs—, and to introduce them to their future global market.

Beside cuisine, Indonesian traditional textile products are also able to gain market abroad. There are countless types of traditional weavings and batik patterns that can be explored from various regions in Indonesia. These traditional textiles can be processed into fashionable clothing and with some attractive marketing strategies could also build a strong market foundation. In such way, traditional textile manufacturers can be intensified while supported by RBI’s program to open wider ways to find market abroad. The intensified textiles contain not only the already famous one—such as batik, for example—that can be introduced and marketed abroad, but also other Indonesian textiles that have not been highlighted yet. To find and to study the already and rarely found weavings culture, research is needed. From the research, people could find cultural actors who play important roles in their fields. Those cultural actors—in a form of cultural experts or SMEs that produce cultural commodities—will be brought out to promote culture abroad. These particular and
rarely known traditional commodities and their cultural actors should be introduced internationally to find their own interactions with the market abroad.

Conclusively, the cultural strategy of Indonesia represented by RBI should be measured through proven research. This research then will be presented to Ministry of Education and Culture and Ministry of Foreign Affairs to be processed furthermore into form of policies and programs to be implemented by RBI abroad. The research will be done, at least, to discover fundamental issues, for instance, what type of Indonesian cultural products or goods that are likely interested in host country. It will then determine strategies in the RBI’s early presence in the foreign lands. For example, after a survey, it is known that the people of host countries appreciate certain traditional crafts. This will be an opportunity for local Indonesian SMEs to introduce their unique and traditional crafts through RBI as their condescending. In this case, RBI may cooperate with the regional and local government.

RBI as a research institution is also engaged with exploring and rediscovering actions of cultures from remote region in Indonesia. The experts of anthropology, archeology, historians and other social scientists will do RBI’s role as a research institution. Without this research work, Indonesian culture will merely become a tradable commodity without any scientific or even philosophical depth in meanings. With these experts, some aspects could be expected such as further discourse of Indonesian culture which can be developed both as a science and a process of civilization.

The structure of RBI organization should be centralized in its headquarter and should be formed as a separate institution outside the ministries and their directorate. It is intended to keep the fluidity of culture, thus allowing the discourse of regional culture of Indonesia to flourish and to interact freely with international community. It
is important to interpret the culture as a product of civilization that could go beyond duality of right and wrong, black and white, or even high and low. By doing so, Indonesian traditional culture can be easily studied and developed dynamically as a social science. Without centralization of RBI, actors who often have the spotlight in the international arena will only dominate individuals who participate in the RBI’s program abroad. Besides, international performance and its performers require substantial amount of funds, which are used to be promoted and dominated by individual with larger capital.

In practice, activities of RBI in the host country consist of two primary things; exhibitions and educations. Beside above-mentioned exhibition of cultural commodities, the introduction of Indonesian culture abroad should also provide knowledge to international community on the culture itself. To strengthen this effort, Indonesian culture experts can be brought to the host countries to convey the philosophical and fundamental elements of the culture that is being introduced. Cultural experts could present and serve in the form of talk show or discussion that is attended by all audiences. Experts of Indonesian culture in the host country should also present in this activity to enrich displayed cultural perspectives. In this sense, RBI should act as a patron to Indonesian culture abroad and become the most important reference for Indonesian studies around the world.

RBI, in this sense, also plays role as the center of Indonesian Studies. In addition to the scientific work to support this role, it also needs literature supports that could take form as Library of Indonesian Literature. By having a library, RBI may present an overview for society of the host country about Indonesia in accountable literature works. Thus, Indonesia can provide many references to the image of Indonesia in international communities. In addition, library also serves to develop
discourse on Indonesian literature abroad. With the growing recognition of Indonesian literature abroad, there will be more feedback and discussions taking place both from general and intellectual readers so that Indonesian literature could also be developed through this dynamic. Previously, the form of cultural diplomacy activities are undertaken in the field of Indonesian literature performed by holding speech contest and literature work readings (rumahbudayaindonesia.sg, 2016). It is a good start, but should be enhanced so that many things can be achieved to make better and effective effort through more thoroughly measured programs.

**RBI as Form of Bureaucracy**

In order to achieve ideal objectives, RBI must stand on its own as a state-sponsored institution that performs cultural duties at home and abroad. Ministry of Education and Culture initiated RBI in 2014 under Directorate of Indonesian Culture. Ideally, RBI needs to be specifically institutionalized apart from ministries and headquartered in Indonesia. Although RBI’s funding is obtained through the ministry’s operational funds, Ministry of Education and Culture should act as advisor and partner to RBI. From RBI Headquarter, RBI in host countries can obtain information about cultural actors in Indonesia. RBI Headquarter is also responsible to establish good relationship with these cultural actors. RBI Headquarter will establish policies and cultural projects that will be applied to RBI in the host countries. This centralization is important to lead cultural projects with measurable level of effectiveness in accordance with Indonesian national interests in this cultural field. RBI Headquarter reports and is accountable for its projects to Minister of Education and Culture and advised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Indonesian cultural promotions abroad led by RBI need to encourage other Indonesian culture beside already known and exploited ones in Java and Bali for
example. In the organizational structure of RBI headquarter itself; there should be divisions according to the specifications of islands or ethnic communities. Each division will later be associated directly or indirectly to Provincial Government in Indonesia to establish connections with the local cultural actors that are required in the program conducted by the RBI. This model in divided divisions aims to encourage cultural actors of each region in Indonesia to develop their cultural works and to avoid exploitation of certain culture that are already stated in primary discourse. Through these divisions, RBI is expected to focus on promoting rarely known local culture to the most particular ones. These divisions are expected to compete with each other in exploring local culture in their respective working areas while shaping better, creative, and dynamic process in composing and running many cultural programs.

RBI in abroad regions could also have its own funding without burdening Indonesian government budget. For example, own funding could be collected by opening a restaurant or a gift shop that is registered as business entities in host countries. The products sold from these businesses can be produced from domestic workshops, which automatically involve local SMEs from Indonesia. RBI's cultural tasks include many things from the promotion of culture to economic emancipations of ethnic minorities. On the other hand, RBI also serves as a research institution that affects its programs worldwide. In this sense, it is important for RBI to have its own funding and organizational structure. By doing so, RBI's works could be more independent, dynamic, and creative but with minimal bureaucratic hurdles from the ministry.

**RBI as Indonesian Cultural Recognition**

As explained above, RBI relates to how Indonesian cultural understandings were deeply asserted to other foreign lands. The understandings could be seen into two
major aspects of interaction. First is about fixed identity as examined in cultural adaptations. The existence of RBI reflects both major and minor culture of Indonesia, which are put in local, national, and global efforts. These fixed aspects strengthen Indonesian identity as a sovereign country with its much sovereign culture too. By promoting this culture, overseas, Indonesian identity is known not only as kind of differentiation among other countries but also strengthened in its own cultural unique identifications.

Second is about dynamic socialization of culture, which sees globalization as enabler for culture to go abroad. At this point, globalization is a wide opportunity for not only already-known Indonesian culture but also rarely known ones. Dynamic socialization of RBI should see other particularities on its singularity rather than merely put major culture promotion as main purpose. Established major Indonesian culture such as batik and angklung should also enhance other underestimated culture such as Papuan and Timorese traditional weavings. This action is needed to strengthen cultural values among Indonesian culture by taking advantages in flexibility that globalization has been provided.

Both above major aspects of interactions examine systems and actors on culture, which actually are so intersubjective and interpersonal. Those aspects relate culture as capital which could be seen as people's habit in everyday life. As explained by Bordieu, habit as cultural capital relates to what are lived and understood by people through lifestyles, cultural attitude, world's cosmologic view, potential or practical social competence, and chances or life expectancies (Bordieu in Smith and Riley, 2009:132). Those relations are defined in culture so that cultural promotion also could examine all of them beside fixed artifacts of culture. It is because culture is so mobile, liquid, and plural that social constructions may include cultural understandings.
Moreover, Bordieu also relates culture in such a 'field' that has meanings between individual and system, practice and intellectual, and major and minor interactions (Bordieu in Smith and Riley, 2009:132). That 'field' reflects culture as things which always tend to reproduce the objective structures of which they are the product.

For Bauman, culture is so liquid in bridging differences especially when culture is seen as equal praxis in everyday life (Bauman in Elliot and Lemert, 2014:351). While hard politic's diplomacy play role in realizing hard national interests, RBI could play as soft one which could be interpretant for its own language. Culture as language in RBI should always be seen as unlimited interactions because human beings in its cultural aspects are those who involve themselves in dialogues among different atmospheres. Therefore, exploring culture in RBI could always shape such contextual possibility rather than come to final certainty.

**CONCLUSION**

Indonesia's cultural strategy should be highlighted as the main concern in its foreign policy. Through RBI, not only cultural awareness will be intensified, but also to emancipate the lesser-known cultural entities. With this cultural emancipation, economic emancipation is also expected to occur in everyday life of ethnic communities in Indonesia. RBI's activities can go beyond merely cultural diplomacy, but also to improve the interaction of Indonesian culture, from generally known to the smallest elements, to be able to interact freely in the international arena.

Cultural elements will improve together with cultural actors, to interact with foreign cultures. From this interaction, new discourses about Indonesian culture can be formed. RBI should be a comfortable home for cultural interaction between nations. Cultural interaction will result in cultural evolution that will ultimately enrich and deepen the cultural understanding and awareness.
RBI must be operated under the light of idea where acceptance of Indonesian culture abroad by other cultural communities could be realized through measurable programs. If RBI continues to work in this corridor, the RBI can become the center of Indonesian cultural studies abroad and support the Government in terms of diplomacy with other countries. For this reason, the Government of Indonesia should pay more attention to RBI through the coordination of related ministries to support its programs. Therefore, the number of RBI abroad can continue to grow along side with the development of cultural strategy and provide benefits to the people of Indonesia, both in the fields of culture, economics, and other fields.

REFERENCES