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Cimahi's Parallel Diplomacy in Developing Cultural Tourism in Kampung Adat Cireundeu

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Abstract: This article examines how parallel diplomacy is practiced by the Cimahi City Government in developing tourism in Kampung Adat Cireundeu, a traditional village in West Java. In contemporary international relations, subnational actors and local communities increasingly engage in international activities to pursue their regional interests. Despite its cultural potential, tourism development in Kampung Adat Cireundeu still faces challenges related to promotion and limited international exposure. This research aims to analyze the forms of parallel diplomacy and to examine the roles of governmental and societal actors in supporting tourism development. The research employs a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews with 6 key informants from government officials, indigenous community members, tourism actors, and visitors, supported by document analysis and digital research. The findings show that parallel diplomacy in Cimahi remains at an early stage and mainly occurs through exploratory interactions rather than formal international cooperation. Meanwhile, the indigenous community of Kampung Adat Cireundeu facilitates international interaction through cultural tourism activities, highlighting the importance of collaboration between local governments and community actors. These findings imply the need for stronger institutional support and strategic collaboration to enhance international exposure and sustainable tourism development.

Keywords: Parallel Diplomacy, Cultural Tourism, Cimahi City, Kampung Adat Cireundeu, Subnational Actors.

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the dynamics of international relations have increasingly involved actors beyond the traditional state level. Globalization, decentralization, and the expansion of information flows have enabled subnational governments and non-state actors to participate more actively in cross-border interactions that were previously dominated by national governments (Hocking, 1993; Keating, 1999). As a result, diplomacy is no longer conducted exclusively by central governments, but increasingly takes place across multiple levels of governance involving regional authorities and societal actors (Duchacek, 1984; Hocking, 1993). The growing presence of non-state actors such as multinational corporations, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and

subnational entities has therefore created opportunities for the emergence of new diplomatic practices, including parallel diplomacy carried out by local governments to pursue regional interests (Dermawan et al., 2024).

One concept that helps explain this transformation is parallel diplomacy, often discussed in the broader literature as paradiplomacy. Parallel diplomacy emerged in response to the need for closer collaboration between central and regional governments in addressing global challenges (Aldecoa & Keating, 1999). It refers to the involvement of subnational governments in international interactions to pursue local interests, strengthen regional identity, and expand cooperation beyond national borders (Cornago, 2010; Kuznetsov, 2015). Rather than competing with central governments, these practices often complement national diplomacy by strengthening regional capacities and international networks based on local potential. In practice, parallel diplomacy also increasingly involves societal actors, including local communities, cultural institutions, and tourism stakeholders who contribute to promoting regional identity and local potential to broader audiences (Cornago, 2010).

Within this evolving landscape of parallel diplomacy, tourism has emerged as one of the strategic sectors through which subnational actors conduct international engagement. Tourism functions not only as an economic driver that generates income and employment but also as an instrument for promoting cultural identity and facilitating cross-cultural interaction (Cerisola & Panzera, 2024). Through tourism promotion, regions and cities are able to showcase their cultural heritage, local traditions, and regional identity to wider international audiences. Globally, the tourism sector has experienced significant growth, with international tourist arrivals reaching approximately 1.4 billion in 2024, marking a strong recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic (UNWTO, 2025). Consequently, tourism increasingly operates as a form of soft power that enables regions and cities to project their cultural heritage and identity within global networks.

Indonesia possesses significant potential in cultural tourism due to its diverse cultural heritage and rich local traditions across regions. One example of such cultural tourism potential is Kampung Adat Cireundeu, located in Cimahi City, West Java. This traditional village is known as a community that continues to preserve the cultural values of Sunda Wiwitan while maintaining traditional practices passed down through generations. One distinctive feature of the Cireundeu community is their long-standing tradition of consuming cassava rice (*rasi*) as their primary staple food, a practice maintained for more than a century that reflects both cultural identity and food resilience within the community (Disbudparpora Kota Cimahi, 2024). These characteristics position Kampung Adat Cireundeu as a unique cultural tourism destination with strong development potential.

Recognizing this potential, the Cimahi City Government has implemented several initiatives aimed at developing tourism while preserving local cultural heritage. These initiatives include the organization of cultural events such as the Cireundeu Festival, the promotion of cultural tourism activities, and the formal recognition of the Cireundeu community as part of the Customary Law Community or commonly known as *Kesatuan Masyarakat Hukum Adat* (JDIH Kota Cimahi, 2024). Nevertheless, tourism development in Kampung Adat Cireundeu still faces several challenges. Tourism accessibility, infrastructure, and destination promotion remain limited, while promotional efforts are largely concentrated at the local and regional levels. As a result, the international exposure of the village's cultural tourism potential to the global public remains relatively limited.

Previous studies have examined parallel diplomacy in various contexts. Research by Alam and Sudirman (2020) and Dermawan et al. (2020) explored paradiplomacy practices in Bandung City through sister city cooperation and halal tourism promotion. Meanwhile, Faishal and Yulianti (2024) analyzed paradiplomacy conducted by the West Java Provincial Government through sister province cooperation in economic and educational sectors. These

studies demonstrate that subnational governments can actively engage in international engagement through cross-border cooperation mechanisms. However, much of the existing literature tends to emphasize institutionalized forms of cooperation, such as sister city or sister province agreements, rather than examining how diplomacy can be implemented through local communities and tourism initiatives.

At the same time, several studies have examined tourism development in Kampung Adat Cireundeu from different perspectives. Pratama et al. (2021) analyzed sustainable tourism development strategies using a SWOT approach, while Kadiyono et al. (2022) explored the potential of community-based ecotourism to improve local economic development. Although these studies provide valuable insights into tourism management and community participation, they primarily focus on economic potential and tourism planning rather than analyzing tourism development from the perspective of international engagement or diplomatic strategies.

Despite the growing body of literature on paradiplomacy and tourism development, limited attention has been given to how parallel diplomacy operates in medium-sized cities and how collaboration between subnational governments and societal actors contributes to cultural tourism development. Existing studies on paradiplomacy tend to emphasize formal governmental cooperation, while research on Kampung Adat Cireundeu focuses primarily on cultural preservation or tourism management. Consequently, there remains a significant research gap in understanding how parallel diplomacy can function as a strategy for promoting cultural tourism through collaboration between local governments and community actors.

Addressing this gap, this article examines how the Cimahi City Government implements parallel diplomacy in developing cultural tourism in Kampung Adat Cireundeu. The analysis focuses on identifying the forms of parallel diplomacy initiatives carried out by the local government and examining the roles of both governmental and societal actors involved in tourism development. By analyzing these dynamics, this research seeks to contribute to the growing academic discussion on parallel diplomacy by highlighting how collaborative governance between local governments and local community as societal actors can function as a strategy for promoting cultural tourism destinations.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative research design to analyze the implementation of parallel diplomacy conducted by the Cimahi City Government in developing tourism in Kampung Adat Cireundeu. A qualitative approach is appropriate because it allows the researcher to explore interactions, processes, and collaborations between local governments and societal actors involved in cultural tourism development (Lamont, 2015). The research was conducted at the Cimahi City Government Office and in Kampung Adat Cireundeu, Cimahi City, West Java, between November 2025 and February 2026. The site was selected because it represents a cultural tourism destination where local cultural preservation intersects with tourism development initiatives by the local government.

This research uses both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with 6 key informants, who were directly involved in tourism development activities in Kampung Adat Cireundeu. The informants included representatives of the Cimahi City Government, the Regional Secretariat's Cooperation Division, the Department of Culture, Tourism, Youth and Sports (Disbudparpora), members of the Cireundeu indigenous community, tourism actors, and visitors. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, based on their involvement and knowledge related to tourism development and cultural activities in the village. Secondary data were collected from government documents, policy reports, academic journal articles, books, and relevant online publications related to parallel diplomacy and cultural tourism development. Data collection

techniques included semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and digital research, which provided additional information regarding tourism promotion and local cultural initiatives.

The collected data were analyzed using deductive qualitative thematic analysis techniques, including data reduction, data categorization, and interpretation to identify patterns of interaction, collaboration and strategies related to the implementation of parallel diplomacy in tourism development. To enhance the credibility and validity of the findings, this research applied data triangulation by comparing information obtained from different informants and multiple data sources, including interviews, official documents, and digital materials. This supports the argument of Lamont (2015) that the triangulation process allowed the researcher to verify the consistency of information and strengthen the reliability of the research findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Actors in Cimahi's Parallel Diplomacy

The development of contemporary international relations demonstrates that diplomatic actors are no longer limited to nation states, but also involve subnational governments and societal actors (Hocking, 1993). In this context, local governments may act as subnational actors, while local communities and cultural communities can function as societal actors in parallel diplomacy practices (Duchacek, 1984). This phenomenon is commonly known as parallel diplomacy, which describes the involvement of subnational governments and non-state actors in international relations activities to promote their regional interests in economic, cultural, or social sectors (Cornago, 2010).

In the case of Cimahi City, the local government has the potential to function as the subnational actor to engage in international cooperation as part of regional development strategies. Nevertheless, the findings of this research indicate that the Cimahi City government has not yet established formal cooperation with foreign local governments, such as sister city partnerships or other structured intergovernmental collaborations. One of the main factors contributing to this situation is the complex administrative procedures required for international cooperation at the local level. According to information from the Cooperation Division of the Cimahi City Government, international cooperation must go through several stages of approval and coordination with the central government before formal agreements can be implemented. Under ideal conditions, the process can take a minimum of six months if all requirements have been met by both parties.

Despite the absence of formal agreements, several forms of interaction with international actors have occurred in Cimahi. For instance, the Cimahi City Government has received visits from representatives from Japan to explore potential cooperation in regional financial management through the Regional Financial Management Agency (BPKD). Communication has also occurred with stakeholders from the Netherlands regarding potential cooperation in certain sectors, including cultural and tourism cooperation. However, these interactions have not yet developed into formal cooperation due to institutional readiness constraints and the absence of sustained follow-up from the parties involved. These findings help explain how parallel diplomacy practices may emerge in Cimahi despite the absence of formal international cooperation.

While the role of the local government as a subnational actor remains relatively limited, the community in Kampung Adat Cireundeu demonstrates a more active dynamic at the societal level. The indigenous community actively promotes their cultural traditions through cultural tourism activities which indirectly creates a space for interaction between the local community and the global public. Through these activities, the community participates in building cross-border interactions and contributes to promoting local cultural identity to international audiences. In the literature on international relations, non-state actors such as local

communities often play a role in expanding international networks through cultural exchange and cross-border social interaction (Arts et al., 2001).

As a cultural tourism destination, Kampung Adat Cireundeu offers various activities that highlight local cultural values, such as cassava-based food (rasi) consumption practices, traditional art performances, and educational activities about the local wisdom of indigenous peoples. Through these activities, indigenous peoples seek to introduce their cultural identity to visitors, both domestic and foreign tourists. In tourism studies, practices such as these are often categorized as cultural tourism (Richards, 2018), which are tourism activities that allow tourists to learn about the culture, traditions, and local heritage of a community. International interaction in Kampung Adat Cireundeu also occurs through cooperation with various educational institutions and foreign organizations. One example is the three-year cooperation program with Erasmus, which involves students from various European countries to live and study the local culture in the area. In addition, visits by international students facilitated by educational institutions in Indonesia also help expand the international network of Kampung Adat Cireundeu.

From the perspective of parallel diplomacy, this finding shows that international engagement at the local level does not always originate from government initiatives. Instead, societal actors such as local communities may also contribute to expanding international networks through cultural interaction and tourism activities. Kampung Adat Cireundeu serves as a space for cultural interaction that enables the exchange of values, knowledge, and experiences between local communities and international actors. These activities demonstrate how local communities can become part of the dynamics of international relations through community-based cultural diplomacy practices. In this context, Kampung Adat Cireundeu can be understood as a societal actor that complements the limited role of the local government in conducting parallel diplomacy.

Institutional and Regulatory Framework of Local Diplomacy in Cimahi

The implementation of foreign relations by local governments in Indonesia is strongly influenced by the national regulatory frameworks governing regional cooperation with foreign entities. One of the primary legal foundations regulating such cooperation is the Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 25 of 2020, which outlines the Procedures for Regional Cooperation with Foreign Local Governments and International Institutions. This regulation requires local governments to complete several administrative steps before establishing international cooperation, including preparing initiation documents, coordinating with relevant ministries, and drafting formal agreements such as Letters of Intent (LoI) or Memoranda of Understanding (MoU).

Within the Cimahi City Government, the responsibility for facilitating cooperation initiatives falls under the Regional Secretariat's Cooperation Division. This unit acts primarily as a facilitator that identifies potential cooperation opportunities and connects sectoral agencies with potential partners. In practice, cooperation initiatives generally originate from sectoral agencies that act as the leading sectors in their respective policy areas, while the Cooperation Division plays a liaison role in coordinating or bridging the gap between the regional government and potential cooperation partners.

Nevertheless, the institutional capacity of Cimahi in conducting international cooperation remains limited. One of the main obstacles identified in this research is the absence of a specialized institutional unit specifically to manage international cooperation. Currently, the Cooperation Division still handles multiple forms of cooperation simultaneously, including domestic inter-regional cooperation, partnerships with private entities, and international cooperation. This institutional arrangement limits the ability of the local government to focus on developing long-term international engagement strategies. This indicates that Cimahi's

parallel diplomacy capacity remains limited due to institutional constraints and administrative complexity, which restrict the ability of the local government to develop sustained international cooperation.

Similar institutional limitations are also visible in the tourism sector. Based on interviews conducted with officials from the Department of Culture, Tourism, Youth and Sports (Disbudparpora), the tourism sector in Cimahi operates within a relatively small institutional structure. As a result, both human resources and institutional capacity for developing tourism promotion remain limited. This condition also affects the local government's ability to design broader tourism promotion strategies, including international tourism promotion. In addition, the orientation of regional development policies also influences the direction of Cimahi City's international relations. Consequently, international tourism promotion has not yet become a primary policy priority. Interviews with Disbudparpora indicate that the focus of tourism development in Cimahi City is still directed at increasing domestic tourist visits, while foreign tourists are not their top priority in regional tourism development strategies. These findings indicate that the implementation of parallel diplomacy at the local level is influenced not only by regulatory frameworks but also by the institutional capacity of local governments.

Forms of Parallel Diplomacy Activities in Cimahi

Based on the results of the research, the practice of parallel diplomacy in Cimahi can be identified through several forms of international interaction involving both governmental and societal actors. However, these activities are generally still exploratory and have not been institutionalized within formal local diplomacy policies. This condition shows that Cimahi's involvement in international relations is still in its early stages and mostly takes place through limited interaction with external actors. One form of such interaction involves exploratory meetings and exploring opportunities with potential foreign partners. As previously mentioned, the Cimahi City Government has conducted initial discussions with representatives from Japan and the Netherlands regarding possible cooperation in financial management and tourism development. Although these interactions created opportunities for international engagement, they have not yet resulted in formal agreements.

In addition to government-to-government relations, parallel diplomacy in Cimahi City also takes place through relations with non-governmental organizations and the international community. For example, the Cimahi City Government has interacted with a Netherlands heritage foundation responsible for managing the Kerkhof military cemetery in Cimahi. Through this communication, the local government explored opportunities for cooperation in managing and developing the historical tourism potential related to the site. This interaction shows that international relations at the local level do not always take place through formal mechanisms between governments, but also through networks of community organizations and non-governmental institutions that act as societal actors building cross-border cooperation.

Another important dimension of international interaction also occurs through people-to-people contact. Based on the interview results, some forms of these interactions involve academic institutions, local communities, and economic actors. These activities show that international relations at the local level can be built through networks of communities, academics, and local economic actors who have connections with international actors.

To clarify the forms of parallel diplomacy practices, the findings of this research can be classified into several categories of activities, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Typology of Parallel Diplomacy Activities in Cimahi City

Type of Activity	Actors Involved	Form of Interaction	International Partner
Exploratory diplomatic meetings	Cimahi City Government	Initial discussions on potential cooperation	Japan
Cultural and heritage cooperation	Local government and heritage institutions	Management and development of historical tourism sites	Netherlands heritage foundation
Academic exchange	Universities and research institutions	Student exchange and research collaboration	Erasmus academic exchange program and foreign universities
People-to-people interaction	Local community and local businesses	International visits and cross-border economic activities	International visitors and partner institutions

Source: Researcher, 2026

This typology demonstrates that parallel diplomacy activities in Cimahi do not only take place through formal government channels, but also through various forms of informal interaction involving community actors, educational institutions, and international organizations. This is in line with the nature of parallel diplomacy, which in many cases develops gradually through informal international interactions and networks before evolving into more institutionalized cooperation in the form of formal agreements between local governments (Tavares, 2016).

Cultural Tourism in Kampung Adat Cireundeu as a Form of Parallel Diplomacy

Kampung Adat Cireundeu plays a strategic position in the development of tourism in Cimahi, particularly as a representation of local cultural identity that attracts visitors. The local government recognizes the village as one of the main cultural potentials that can be developed to strengthen Cimahi’s tourism identity. In the regional tourism development strategy, Kampung Adat Cireundeu is even positioned as one of the important elements in building the cultural tourism identity of Cimahi City, especially in the South Cimahi area, which focuses on the development of tourism based on the culture of the local community.

As a cultural tourism destination, Kampung Adat Cireundeu offers tourism activities that allow visitors to experience the traditional lifestyle of the indigenous community. These activities include traditional ceremonies, cultural art performances, and educational programs that introduce visitors to the local wisdom of indigenous communities. One of the most distinctive cultural features of the community is their continued practice of consuming rasi (cassava rice) as a staple food, which has been maintained for generations and represents both cultural identity and food resilience. Through these cultural tourism activities, the community not only strives to preserve the traditions inherited from their ancestors, but also introduces local cultural values to the wider community.

Tourism activities in Kampung Adat Cireundeu also create opportunities for cross-cultural interaction with international visitors. According to the interview findings, the village has received several visits from foreign tourists, researchers, and international students from various countries. One form of international interaction that has taken place is a cooperation program with Erasmus, which involved students from several European countries staying temporarily in the village area and learning about the local culture directly from the community. Visits by international students through cooperation with universities in Indonesia have also expanded the traditional village’s international network.

Aside from academic visit programs, international interaction also occurs through cultural experience-based tourism activities. Foreign visitors who come to Kampung Adat Cireundeu do not only play the role of passive tourists, but are also directly involved in various cultural activities of the community. Some of the activities that are often carried out include staying with local communities (homestays), participating in the daily activities of the community, and learning about the traditional cassava-based food processing process. These activities enable the exchange of experiences and knowledge between local communities and international visitors, representing a form of people-to-people diplomacy and facilitating cultural exchange.

The active involvement of the local community in these tourism activities reflects a participatory tourism model. In practice, members of the indigenous community contribute an active role mainly as tour guides, cultural performers, homestay providers, and MSME actors in various tourist activities managed by community-based tourism organizations such as tourism awareness groups or commonly known as *Kelompok Sadar Wisata (Pokdarwis)*. This participatory model ensures that tourism development remains closely connected to local cultural values.

Thus, from the perspective of parallel diplomacy, tourism activities in Kampung Adat Cireundeu not only serve as a means of preserving local culture, but also as a forum for international interaction at the community level. Although they are not formally designed as diplomatic initiatives by the local government, various cultural tourism activities involving international actors show that local communities can play an important role in building cross-border relations through cultural interaction and tourism. In this context, cultural tourism in Kampung Adat Cireundeu can be understood as a form of community-based parallel diplomacy, in which local communities indirectly contribute to introducing the cultural identity of the region to the global public.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that the practice of parallel diplomacy in Cimahi remains in an early stage of development. While the local government has initiated several forms of international interaction, these activities have not yet developed into institutionalized diplomatic programs. Institutional limitations, regulatory complexity, and the absence of explicit international engagement strategies have constrained the ability of the city government to actively pursue formal international cooperation. At the same time, societal actors, particularly the indigenous community of Kampung Adat Cireundeu have played an important role in facilitating international interaction through cultural tourism activities. Through these activities, local communities indirectly contribute to promoting regional cultural identity and expanding cross-border cultural networks.

These findings suggest that the development of parallel diplomacy in Cimahi depends not only on government initiatives but also on the active participation of societal actors. Strengthening collaboration between local governments and community actors may therefore become an important strategy for enhancing the role of subnational regions in international engagement.

CONCLUSION

This study analyzes how parallel diplomacy is practiced by the Cimahi City Government and explores the role of Kampung Adat Cireundeu in supporting international engagement through cultural tourism. The findings show that the practice of parallel diplomacy in Cimahi remains at an early stage and largely takes place through exploratory interactions rather than formal cooperation with foreign local governments. Institutional limitations, regulatory procedures, and the absence of a dedicated unit for international cooperation have constrained the city government's capacity to develop sustained international partnerships. Despite these limitations, the research highlights the important contribution of societal actors, particularly

the indigenous community of Kampung Adat Cireundeu, which plays a significant role in facilitating international interaction through cultural tourism activities. Through visits by foreign tourists, researchers, and students, the indigenous community creates opportunities for cross-cultural exchange while indirectly promoting local cultural values to international audiences. These findings suggest that the development of parallel diplomacy at the local level does not rely solely on government initiatives but can also emerge through community-based cultural interaction and tourism networks. Therefore, strengthening collaboration between local governments and societal actors is essential to enhance the capacity of subnational regions in international engagement while promoting local cultural heritage as part of regional development strategies. In addition, strengthening institutional capacity, developing more targeted international tourism promotion strategies, and increasing government support for community-based and cultural tourism initiatives can enhance the role of local communities in parallel diplomacy and expand global exposure of local cultural heritage.

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