

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of the Study

Art exhibitions are increasingly gaining recognition as a tool for diplomacy in the recent decade, and they have been proven to show benefits such as increasing empathy and understanding between nations. This has been the case for art exhibitions that showcase artworks presenting strong cultural influences (Erdem, 2024; Mazin, 2022). Indonesia has employed art exhibitions as an official and intentional tool for cultural diplomacy to increase its soft power (Cohen, 2019; Nursita & Sahide, 2018), but the government in the present day tends to prioritize exchange programs such as *Darmasiswa* (an exchange program for foreigners by the Ministry of Culture) and *Beasiswa Seni dan Budaya Indonesia* (similar exchange program from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). This thesis will explore the role of non-governmental organizations that specialize in the arts, that to this day is still understudied.

At the same time, the development of contemporary art in Indonesia can be seen in the recent decades, as evidenced by the emergence of various contemporary art exhibitions in Indonesia. In Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia, for example, there are Art Jakarta and Art Moments. Held annually, both are known to be market-focused, though they are still open for the public. Jakarta Biennale, organized by the Jakarta Arts Council (*Dewan Kesenian Jakarta*) presents a different format. Other than being held once every two years,

sometimes with longer intervals depending on their situation, Jakarta Biennale offers a more academic approach to the arts.

In the Special Region of Yogyakarta, over 500 kilometers away from Jakarta, the contemporary art world is also brimming with innovative exhibitions. Iskandar (2015) noted that compared to Bandung whose art scene is born from the Dutch's need for educating their artists, "the art scene in Yogyakarta was born from nationalist ideas due to the city's position as the center of revolution at that time". Yogyakarta is also known to be the birthplace and residency of many renowned artists, young, old, and deceased. Currently, the art scene manifests in museums, galleries, and art exhibitions such as Biennale Jogja and ARTJOG. Similar to Jakarta Biennale, Biennale Jogja is also held every two years or more with an emphasis on academic approaches to the arts such as through international symposiums for art practitioners.

ARTJOG, compared to the other exhibitions that have been mentioned, may look similar on the outside as a contemporary art exhibition. Though the art exhibition is their main event, it is not standalone. They have multiple supporting events such as a series of performance shows in a festival format, and they also conduct roadshows with partnering organizations. ARTJOG also poses a number of advantages over other art exhibitions of its caliber. The first being the aspect of time, where ARTJOG opens its exhibition annually with a runtime of two months. This allows more flexibility for the public who are planning to visit ARTJOG compared to other notable art exhibitions in Indonesia, namely Art Jakarta and Art Moments, that open their exhibition for a week or less. ARTJOG also differs from

the biennale format that is held every two years. The second being the accessibility of the exhibition. ARTJOG strives to make their exhibitions as accessible as possible, providing ways for differently-abled persons to enjoy the exhibition, which can be seen from the “Love ARTJOG” initiative. Finally, in addition to being artists-first-market-second, ARTJOG always has a unique theme for each year, responding to the current socio-political conditions of Indonesia. The themes become a guide for the artists to create artworks that are not only relevant to the theme but also critical towards current issues.

The unique mode of exhibiting various forms of arts drew this research to study ARTJOG as its study case. This thesis will look into ARTJOG art exhibition as its study case to uncover the roles of art exhibitions of its scale, explore the paradox of being local but “international”, and how ARTJOG can support the arts and cultural diplomacy agenda of Indonesia and complement existing programs by facilitating exchange between local and international artists, and showcase artworks that promote Indonesian culture. Hopefully, this thesis can encourage an increase of prioritization for art exhibitions as a tool for diplomacy, alongside existing national efforts that prioritizes

## **1.2. Research Problem**

Based on the research background and the goals of this research, the main question that will be answered in this research then can be concluded as: how does ARTJOG facilitate the arts and cultural diplomacy?

### **1.3. Objectives of the Research**

This research is motivated by two objectives: general and specific. First, this research has the general objective of explaining the links between art in international relations, in particular art exhibitions in the realm of diplomacy. The second and specific objective is answering the research question and explaining how ARTJOG facilitates the arts and cultural diplomacy, and how it contributes to the existing arts and cultural diplomacy agenda of Indonesia.

### **1.4. The Advantage of the Research**

This research seeks to contribute academically to the intersection of arts and international relations, by explaining how art exhibitions can contribute to the arts and cultural diplomacy agenda of Indonesia. This study will address the research gap in the field, such as how understudied it is for private organizations in global south countries to contribute to the implementation of arts and cultural diplomacy agenda. By centering the study on a privately organized art exhibition in Indonesia, this thesis will uncover new perspectives in global south and non-governmental diplomacy efforts. It is hoped that this thesis can also contribute practically towards further recognition of private organizations by the government and the betterment of management of art exhibitions as a formidable tool for diplomacy.

### **1.5. Theoretical Framework**

This section will lay down the literature review used in this research, and explain the theoretical frameworks that will be the basis of this research.

### 1.5.1. Literature Review

Within the realm of diplomacy, arts can form a reciprocal relationship with diplomats (Neumann, 2018). Diplomats may use the arts as a tool to convey diplomatic messages, while also attempting to “aestheticize” politics with it. The process of aestheticizing politics may create ambiance and a scene that is favorable to the process of diplomacy. Arts presented in diplomatic settings can also be profitable for the artists who created the pieces, while supporting its main goal: to voice what cannot be said through speech. Diplomacy and the arts can mutually uplift each other to promote their legitimacy. While this literature provided a solid foundation for arts diplomacy, it is still limited to the literal use of arts for diplomacy.

The next literature explored the potential of art diplomacy in reshaping perceptions of nations and fostering cross-cultural understanding (Erdem, 2024). The author, who is both an artist and diplomat, conducted an art-based ethnographic research in holding a contemporary art exhibition in Norway showcasing cultural artworks of Türkiye. By analyzing the changes in participants’ perception before and after seeing the exhibition, it is discovered that the exhibition helped shift what the participants previously thought about Türkiye. The event, which exhibited Türkiye diverse cultural landscape, helped challenge preconceived notions and stereotypes thought by the participants. This case study fortifies how art exhibitions can foster intercultural connections through empathy in engaging with the artworks presented. However, further study is needed for contexts different to the study case.

Grincheva (2024) provided a comprehensive overview on cultural diplomacy by mapping out relevant literature indexed by Scopus. The study revealed existing gaps in understanding actors of cultural diplomacy, where cultural diplomacy is defined traditionally as a government-led cultural or artistic exchange activity with a strong foreign policy agenda and objectives (Clarke 2014). Grincheva further pointed out that in the “new stream of diplomacy scholarship places the key emphasis not necessarily on diplomatic actors such as governments, but on the desirable outcomes of diplomatic activities (Goff 2013)”. This literature reveals the need for further study in non-governmental actors of cultural diplomacy, especially in non-western perspective and post-cold war era; as the scholarship is oversaturated in that setting.

Regarding Indonesia’s case of cultural diplomacy, Viartasiwi et al. (2021) provided a thorough review of the potentials and challenges of the cultural diplomacy of Indonesia. One of the challenges is that Indonesia is culturally diverse, unlike South Korea that is homogenous (which allows the country to create a strong nation brand). The findings of the study then suggests that Indonesia cannot rely on certain cultures to be considered as a national identity. Rather than focusing on what culture to present as the nation’s branding, it is suggested that the cultural diplomacy of Indonesia should focus on the diversity itself, as written on the national motto of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*.

ARTJOG has been a subject to several researches in the past with different focus. Mainly, as ARTJOG is an art exhibition, most literature will talk about ARTJOG in a fine arts or arts management context. A similar study has been done

regarding ARTJOG and diplomacy (Dzaky, 2021), focusing on how the local government of the Special Region of Yogyakarta utilizes ARTJOG as a tool for cultural diplomacy, in order to promote Yogyakarta as a cultural city. The research highlighted the government of Yogyakarta as the main actor of diplomacy, cooperating with ARTJOG to pursue its regional interest. While the findings are valuable, the research still has not explored the potentials of ARTJOG as a non-governmental actor—not just a mere tool—in contributing to the national arts and cultural diplomacy agenda, especially from specific themes and artworks that showcases not only Yogyakarta culture but Indonesian culture as a whole.

To this day, scholarship regarding art exhibitions and its role in cultural diplomacy is limited. In order to unlock the best practices regarding arts and cultural diplomacy, much more attention and cooperation is needed by experts in both fields. Flamini's concluding idea in "The Art of Diplomacy" (2014) seems to be universally applicable as to why cultural diplomacy is important: we need to have (and master) various tools in our arsenal to maximize our reach in diplomatic efforts, including arts and cultural sectors.

#### 1.5.2. Arts and Cultural Diplomacy

While cultural diplomacy and arts diplomacy can be talked about separately, this thesis will talk about the two interconnectedly. This is due to Indonesia's cultural diplomacy agenda, in which the arts are difficult to separate from culture, as the arts from Indonesian traditional culture are frequently used to promote the national interest (Cohen, 2019; Nursita & Sahide, 2018)—which counts as cultural diplomacy efforts. Meanwhile, the arts that will be talked about

in this thesis are contemporary art in an art exhibition context, which usually counts as high culture (Neumann, 2018).

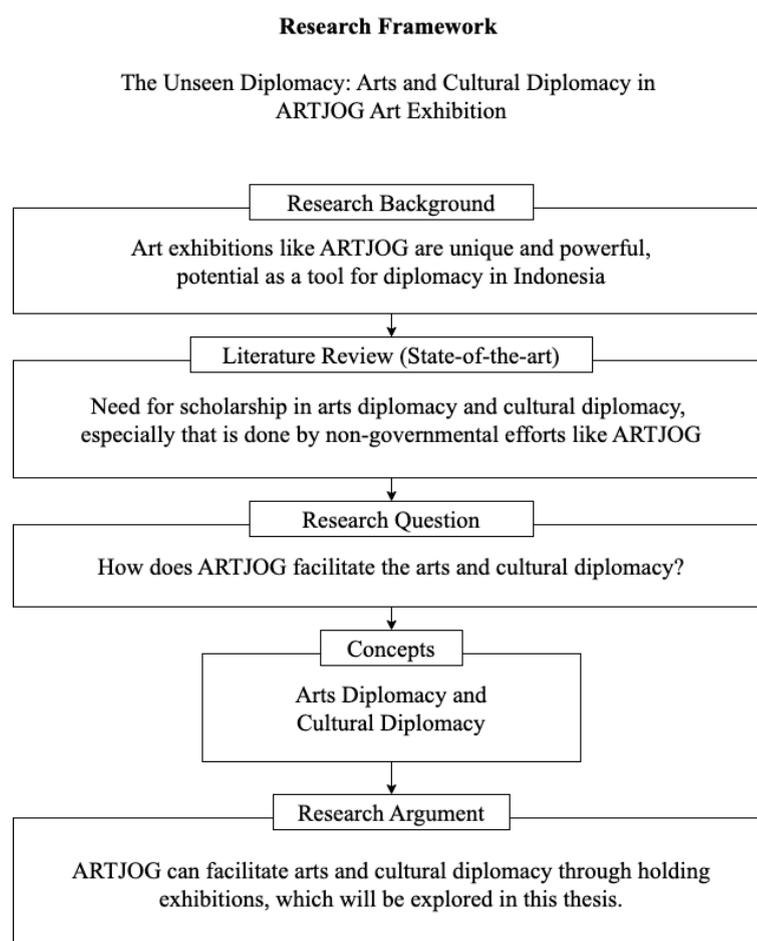
Contemporary art—along with other genres of paintings—as high culture in diplomacy have been used to ease communications between diplomats and create supporting ambience for diplomatic meetings, and the artwork itself has been used to campaign certain interests of concerned parties in diplomatic settings. Artworks presented by the diplomats can also help artists to gain recognition (Neumann in Constantinou et al., 2016, p. 117), therefore the arts and the diplomats can form a mutually beneficial relationship. Although, the instances that were described in Neumann are more applicable in global north relations. This thesis explores contemporary art in a global south setting.

While the arts diplomacy is easier to see, in which we see the use of arts in diplomacy, cultural diplomacy on the other hand has been a subject of debate and is arguably more complex and harder to define. Some have argued that cultural diplomacy is exclusive to state processes, but Goff in Snow & Cull (2020) mentioned:

Milton Cummings's famous definition shifts the emphasis somewhat. He says that, "cultural diplomacy is the exchange of ideas, information, art, and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understanding," (p. 31)

The definition referenced above interprets cultural diplomacy as what is exchanged in it rather than who practices it. Rather than limiting cultural diplomacy as something only as a government—or state—practice, Cummings's

definition opens up cultural diplomacy as a practice that the public and non-government organizations can do. This thesis departs from this notion that cultural diplomacy can be done by entities outside of the government and with art as part of cultural exchange between countries.



**Figure 1.1** Research Framework

### 1.6. Operationalization of the Concept

This section will clarify the used concepts that the research is based on, referring to the previously formulated theoretical framework. The defined concepts will then be operationalized with concrete variables and indicators.

### 1.6.1. Conceptual Definition

This section will help define the concepts that are used in this research in a concrete manner.

#### 1. Arts Diplomacy

Based on the theoretical framework, arts diplomacy will be defined in this thesis as the involvement of the arts in various forms in diplomacy. This thesis will talk about ARTJOG as a private non-governmental organization that practices arts diplomacy through contemporary art, and the government of Indonesia that officially practices arts diplomacy through promotion of traditional forms of arts.

#### 2. Cultural Diplomacy

The definition of cultural diplomacy will be derived from the definitions in the theoretical framework, which will be defined as the practice of exchanging aspects of culture between nations, including the arts. Cultural diplomacy will not be limited to who is practicing it but rather what is exchanged.

### 1.6.2. Operationalization of Defined Concepts

This section rationalizes the aforementioned key concepts with concrete variables and the operationalization. This table is also utilized as a guide for the data collection process.

**Table 1.1. Operationalization of Concepts**

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Concept</b>	<b>Variables</b>	<b>Operationalization/Indicators</b>
Arts Diplomacy	The artworks that are exhibited	Artworks exhibited in the event by the participating artists, curated by the organizers

	The message behind the artworks	What are the meaning and intentions of the artists behind the artworks that are exhibited?
Cultural Diplomacy	Aspects of culture	What aspects/ideas are exchanged?
	Owners of culture	Whose cultures are included in the exchange?

### 1.7. Research Arguments

Based on the state-of-the-art and available literature and theories, it can be said that ARTJOG can facilitate arts and cultural diplomacy through holding exhibitions, which will be explored in this thesis.

### 1.8. Research Methods

To answer the research question in explaining to what extent arts and cultural diplomacy is practiced in ARTJOG and how it contributes to the implementation of arts and cultural diplomacy agenda of Indonesia, this research will be conducted through qualitative methods that will be detailed in this section.

#### 1.8.1. Research Type

In regards to definitions of the two research types, quantitative and qualitative, this research will refer to Punch (1998, p. 4) defined quantitative research as empirical research where the data are in the form of numbers, whereas qualitative research is empirical research where the data are not in the form of numbers. As the data for this research is in non-numerical forms, qualitative research methods are chosen to help answer the research question. In addition, qualitative research helps this research to answer open-ended questions such as "how" and "why" (Cleland, 2017, p. 63).

As for the approach, this research is conducted with descriptive methods, in which the purpose is to describe individuals, events, or conditions by studying them as they are with data collection methods such as survey and observation (Siedlecki, 2020, p. 1). This research will use said data collection methods, which will be described in later sections. By using descriptive research methods, this research describes to what extent ARTJOG contributes to the arts and cultural diplomacy agenda of Indonesia.

#### 1.8.2. Research Site

This research will involve deskwork in the form of literature review and analyses, and fieldwork in the form of on-site observation. As elaborated by Blaxter (2006, p. 64), deskwork does not require the researcher to do on-field research, while fieldwork requires the researcher to go out to collect data. Initial preliminary research was conducted in-person in the ARTJOG 2024 art exhibition to observe the structure of the exhibition, in Jogja National Museum, Jl. Prof. DR. Ki Amri Yahya No.1, Pakuncen, Wirobrajan, Kota Yogyakarta, Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta, Indonesia. This preliminary research involving a direct observation on the exhibition was done on August 25, 2024.

After the preliminary research and a thorough literature review, an interview process was arranged to answer the research question. The interview was conducted as on-site work in the location where the ARTJOG headquarters is located. This allowed for a flexible process of conversation, especially concerning the organization and managing of the exhibition. This process helped the research gather primary data required in the analytical process, in a deskwork manner. The

interview process was held in PT. ARTJOG MATRA NUSANTARA (Formerly PT. Heri Pemas Manajemen), Jl. Sonosewu Baru RW.DK.X No.234, RT.06, Sanggrahan, Ngestiharjo, Kec. Kasihan, Kabupaten Bantul, Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The interview was done on 19 March 2025, at 13.00 - 14.00 (GMT +7).

#### 1.8.3. Research Subject

This thesis will focus on PT ARTJOG as the subject of this research, as this research will explore how PT ARTJOG (the organizer) facilitates arts and cultural diplomacy through ARTJOG Art Exhibition (the medium of diplomacy).

#### 1.8.4. Data Type

Punch (1998) stated that “empirical research involves data, and data are of two main types: quantitative data, in the form of numbers, and qualitative data, not in the form of numbers.” Derived from the variables elaborated in the variables section, this research will use qualitative data, such as textual data that will be acquired through interview and observation notes. This research will also examine non-numerical and non-textual data containing pictures in “the artworks” variable.

#### 1.8.5. Data Source

This research mainly employs primary data supplemented by secondary data. Primary sources provide direct or firsthand evidence about events, objects or persons (Munck, Møller, and Skaaning, 2020, p. 339); that in this research was obtained from the interview process and official documents. Secondary data,

which may come as interpretation and analysis of events, was obtained from mass media articles and opinion of the public regarding the event.

#### 1.8.6. Data Collection Technique

The techniques in which the primary data was collected in this research consisted of interview and observation. The interview method involves questioning or discussing issues with people, while the observation method involves the researcher in watching, recording and analysing events of interest. (Blaxter, 2006, pp. 172, 178). The primary data was collected through an in-depth interview process with the co-owner and director of ARTJOG, Heri Pemas. One of the main aspects of interviewing is choosing the interview respondents (Punch, 1998, p. 180), which are chosen based on the research focus. Heri Pemas is the respondent that can best describe the organization and management of ARTJOG, thus helping this research understand to what extent ARTJOG contributes to the agenda of arts and cultural diplomacy in Indonesia.

Additionally, primary data on Indonesia's efforts in cultural diplomacy were retrieved from the information office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, in the form of a document containing the answers to the questions for the research. Other primary data concerning the Ministry of Education and Culture were retrieved through the official website. Secondary data such as mass media articles and opinion of the public regarding the event were acquired from accessible online platforms.

#### 1.8.7. Data Analysis and Interpretation

To answer the research question, an analysis process was done towards textual and visual data, acquired from interview and observation. The textual data was processed through a document analysis process. Derived from Bowen (2009, p. 32), document analysis involves skimming, reading, and interpretation. This process combines several data analysis methods, that are content analysis and thematic analysis. Content analysis is the process of compiling information into categories that correlates to the research question. This process was done by categorizing the diplomacy that is happening in the study case of ARTJOG with the chosen concepts. Thematic analysis process involves a recognition of patterns within the data. This process was done in recognizing the patterns of Indonesia's arts and cultural diplomacy agenda.

#### 1.8.8. Data Quality (Goodness Criteria)

The quality of data is measured with criteria from Lincoln and Guba (1985), which encompasses 1) credibility, 2) transferability, 3) dependability, and 4) confirmability. Credibility signifies that the findings are assured to be as exactly studied. Transferability indicates that the findings can be applied in other contexts. Dependability shows that the findings are consistent and could be repeated. Confirmability shows that the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest—therefore the researcher must strive to be as neutral as possible.