Economic and Cultural Partnership Opportunities between Kupang and Chiba Cities through Sister City Cooperation

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ABSTRACT

The Kupang city government has officially proposed a sister city partnership with Chiba, Japan, through representatives of the Japanese government in Bali. This cooperation involves the governments of Kupang City and Chiba City in enhancing economic and cultural cooperation between the two, with the aim of increasing cooperation in trade, investment, and culture, as well as increasing cooperation in education, technology, and infrastructure. This research identifies Chiba as an ideal partner for Kupang, given their various economic and cultural similarities and complementary potentials. By employing qualitative research methods, this study comprehensively examined the prospective advantages of the sister-city relationship. The findings revealed significant opportunities for both cities, including the establishment of an international trade route between Kupang and Chiba and the creation of a central institution dedicated to the research and preservation of their cultures. Based on these insights, the study recommends that the city governments of Kupang and Chiba initiate negotiations and formalize their sister city cooperation, as the anticipated benefits would substantially enhance the development and prosperity of both cities.

Keywords: Sister City Cooperation, Economic Opportunities, Cultural Exchange, Kupang-Chiba Partnership, International Trade Route

ABSTRAK


Kata Kunci: Kerjasama Sister City, Peluang Ekonomi, Pertukaran Budaya, Kemitraan Kupang-Chiba, Rute Perdagangan Internasional
1. Introduction

Kupang is the largest city on the island of Timor and serves as the capital of East Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia. Geographically, Kupang is bordered by Kupang Regency and Kupang Bay (Setyaningrum, 2022). Its strategic coastal location has made Kupang a pivotal economic hub, designated as a priority area for National Activity Centers (PKN). The city functions as a center for national and international trade, industrial activities, and maritime transportation development, thereby establishing its potential to become a global maritime axis (Evelina & Barus, 2021). Additionally, as the provincial capital, Kupang is a vital center for arts and culture, boasting five significant cultural heritage sites, including two Japanese war relics. The local government prioritizes the development of traditional arts, cultural festivals, exhibitions, and performances (Top News NTT, 2023).

To enhance these potentials, the Kupang city government has proposed a Sister City partnership with Japan through the Japanese Consulate General in Denpasar, Bali (Pemkot Kupang, n.d.). The prospective partner city must share similar economic and cultural characteristics to ensure mutual benefits. Chiba, the capital city of Chiba Prefecture in Japan, emerges as a fitting candidate. Strategically located on the Tokyo Bay coast, Chiba has undergone a significant transformation into a modern industrial city, attracting major industries and developing a productive port. This evolution has propelled Chiba into one of the metropolitan areas of Tokyo, fostering a dynamic economy and society. The city has also initiated numerous projects to revitalize and promote its arts and culture through exhibitions, festivals, and performances, achieving substantial growth in these areas (Chiba City, 2023).

Chiba is a shining example for Kupang because of its great dedication to environmental sustainability and smart city innovations, in addition to its strong economic development and cultural efforts. By adopting green technologies, encouraging the use of renewable energy, and improving public transit, the city has greatly decreased its carbon footprint and is now in line with international sustainability targets. Moreover, Chiba's emphasis on using technology to raise urban living standards through digital government and smart infrastructure can offer Kupang insightful information and chances for cooperation. Kupang can benefit from state-of-the-art methods for urban development, environmental management, and technology integration by partnering with Chiba through a Sister City relationship. This will create a mutually beneficial exchange that will support the goals of both cities for sustainable growth and cultural enrichment.

Previous research underscores the benefits of Sister City collaborations. Faridatul Mu’arofa Fauzia’s study on the Sister City partnership between Surabaya and Kitakyushu highlights the positive impacts of the post-Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 2012, renewed in 2016. The partnership, focusing on “Surabaya Green City,” led to significant environmental improvements, including reduced heat, minimized land degradation, enhanced water management, reduced air pollution, and the development of eco-tourism, earning Surabaya the International Award for Urban Innovation in 2018 (Fauzia, 2021). Similarly, Fezrin Ingrit Debora Nainggolan et al.'s research on the Sister City partnership between Medan and Ichikawa, Japan, emphasizes the mutual cultural and educational benefits. Initiated in 1989 with a focus on education, the "Youth
Exchange program facilitated cultural immersion and knowledge exchange, enhancing international cultural understanding, problem-solving skills, and competitive character education (Nainggolan et al., 2022).

Considering the economic and cultural interests of both Kupang and Chiba, as well as the successful precedents set by other Indonesian cities with Japanese counterparts, this research aims to explore the potential for economic and cultural collaboration between Kupang and Chiba through a Sister City partnership. The study focuses on analyzing the opportunities and benefits that such cooperation can bring to both cities.

2. Theory

2.1. Paradiplomacy

Paradiplomacy, a nuanced aspect of international relations, empowers subnational entities, such as cities or regions, to engage in foreign diplomacy autonomously. This practice not only complements but also enriches traditional state-led diplomacy by incorporating localized perspectives and interests. Paradiplomacy is deeply intertwined with processes of decentralization and democratization, which facilitate greater local autonomy and citizen involvement in governance. By enabling local governments to pursue international partnerships independently, paradiplomacy helps to democratize foreign policy and bring it closer to the people. This engagement fosters a sense of ownership and direct involvement in global issues, enhancing the relevance and responsiveness of foreign policy at the local level (Chatterji & Saha, 2017).

One of the primary functions of paradiplomacy is economic development. Local governments can leverage their unique assets and competitive advantages to attract foreign investments and international businesses. These investments can stimulate local economies by creating jobs, enhancing infrastructure, and fostering innovation. Additionally, paradiplomacy opens new markets for local products and services, thereby boosting exports and contributing to economic diversification. For instance, a city might establish trade agreements with a foreign counterpart to facilitate the exchange of goods and services, thus creating a new export market for local businesses. By establishing and nurturing these economic ties, cities can mitigate the risks associated with economic volatility and dependency on domestic markets (Lecours, 2008).

Paradiplomacy also encompasses multisectoral cooperation, which includes cultural, educational, technological, and environmental initiatives. Cultural exchanges, for example, can enhance mutual understanding and appreciation between different communities, fostering a sense of global solidarity. Educational partnerships, such as student and faculty exchanges, joint research projects, and collaborative academic programs, can enhance the quality of education and promote cross-cultural learning. Technological cooperation can facilitate the transfer of knowledge and expertise, driving innovation and development. Environmental collaborations can address transboundary challenges, such as climate change and pollution, through shared strategies and solutions. By engaging in multisectoral cooperation, cities can pool resources, share best practices, and jointly tackle common challenges, leading to more sustainable and inclusive development (Chatterji & Saha, 2017).
Political influence is another critical function of paradiplomacy. Subnational governments can use their international engagements to shape the policies and behaviors of other regions. This influence can be exerted through formal agreements, collaborative projects, and advocacy efforts. For instance, a city might partner with a foreign counterpart to promote human rights, environmental sustainability, or social justice, thereby setting a precedent for other cities to follow. Paradiplomacy allows cities to project their values and priorities on the global stage, contributing to the formation of international norms and standards. Furthermore, establishing paradiplomatic relationships with developed countries can yield significant benefits for regions in developing nations.

2.2. Sister City

Sister City theory, or twin cities, explains the concept of partnerships between cities in different countries to strengthen cultural, economic, and social ties. The idea was first proposed by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1956 through the People-to-People program. Eisenhower initiated this concept as part of the people's diplomacy efforts to promote international peace and understanding after World War II (HAIKAL, 2015).

The sister city concept is based on the principle that direct contact between people in different cities can enhance mutual understanding and international cooperation. This cooperation involves various aspects, such as cultural exchanges, educational programs, environmental projects, and economic and technological cooperation. Cities that partner as sister cities often organize reciprocal visits, cultural exhibitions, and student exchange programs aimed at enriching their citizens' experience and knowledge of different cultures and social systems.

This theory emphasizes the importance of interpersonal relationships and direct experience in building friendships and global understanding. With sister cities, it is hoped that a closer and more harmonious relationship can be created between countries in the world. It is also often a platform for sharing solutions to common problems, such as climate change, urbanization, and sustainable development. Through the cooperation and dialog initiated by sister city partnerships, cities around the world can share solutions to common problems, such as climate change, urbanization, and sustainable development (Rolf D. Cremer, Anne De Bruin, Ann Dupuis, 2003).

The notion of sister city alliances emphasizes how important it is to develop human connections and practical experiences in order to create friendships and a better understanding of the world. Sister city initiatives seek to break down barriers of distance and culture by establishing personal links between the people of two communities, promoting respect and understanding. These connections are fostered by a variety of endeavors, including cooperative environmental projects, student exchange programs, combined business partnerships, and cultural exchanges. These exchanges help individuals become more culturally aware while also creating enduring personal and professional relationships. This bottom-up approach to diplomacy offers a grassroots level of engagement that can be more influential and personal than typical government-to-government exchanges. In the end, these connections can contribute to a more
connected and peaceful world by helping people from diverse backgrounds understand and empathize with one another on a deeper level (Antara, 2012).

Sister-city relationships are also useful for giving cities a forum to work together on issues like urbanization, climate change, and sustainable development. Cities may accelerate the implementation of innovative solutions by learning from one another’s triumphs and failures through the exchange of experiences and best practices. A city that has effectively established a program utilizing renewable energy sources, for example, can impart its knowledge and tactics to a sister city that may be confronting comparable energy-related issues.

Initiatives for infrastructure development and urban planning can also gain from the collective wisdom of places that have successfully managed the challenges posed by growing urbanization. In addition to improving each city's ability to handle its problems, this cooperative strategy helps the world reach its goals for sustainable development. Furthermore, cooperative research and development initiatives that can result in economic expansion and technological improvements are frequently a part of sister city programs. Sister cities can take on collaborative projects that may be out of the grasp of a single city by combining their resources and knowledge (Campbell, 2015). Together, these efforts improve the worldwide network of supportive and interconnected urban communities and increase cities' resilience and adaptation to global issues. These collaborations help cities develop into more creative, inclusive, and sustainable places to live, which benefits both locals and the global community in the long run.

3. Research Method

The qualitative methodology was employed in this research to provide a descriptive and comprehensive analysis of the interests, potentials, and actions of the subjects under study. Qualitative research is particularly suited for this type of inquiry as it allows for an in-depth understanding of complex phenomena within their contextual settings (Creswell, 2014). Data collection for this study was conducted through secondary research methods, specifically literature review. Secondary research involves the analysis of existing data collected by others, such as books, scholarly articles, and credible news media sources. This approach is advantageous as it allows the researcher to gather a wide range of information without the time and resource constraints associated with primary data collection (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2016).

This literature review method involved systematically identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing the available literature on the topic. This includes reviewing theoretical frameworks, empirical studies, and case studies related to paradiplomacy and Sister City partnerships. By analyzing existing research, this study aims to draw comprehensive insights and identify patterns and trends relevant to the economic and cultural cooperation between Kupang and Chiba (Booth, Sutton, & Papaioannou, 2016).

The data collected from the literature was then critically analyzed and interpreted to address the research objectives. This process included categorizing and coding the data to identify key themes and relationships. Descriptive analysis techniques were used to present the findings in a coherent and structured manner, facilitating a deeper understanding of the subject matter (Bryman, 2016).
By relying on secondary data, this research benefitted from the breadth and depth of information previously gathered by other researchers and institutions. This method ensured a robust and comprehensive analysis while adhering to the ethical considerations of research, such as proper citation and acknowledgment of original sources (Silverman, 2013). This qualitative approach, underpinned by a rigorous literature review, provided a solid foundation for analyzing the potential economic and cultural cooperation between Kupang and Chiba through a Sister City partnership.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Economic and Cultural Context of Kupang City

After a long historical journey, the Indonesian government transformed the Level II Regional Municipality of Kupang into Kota Kupang in 1996 through legislation. Today, Kota Kupang serves as the capital of East Nusa Tenggara Province (Ensiklopedia, 2015). In 2023, Kota Kupang had a population of 482,195, spread over an area of 180.27 square kilometers, which includes six districts and 51 sub-districts. The city’s average temperatures in 2022 ranged from 25.8°C to 28.8°C (BPS Kota Kupang, 2023).

Geographically, Kota Kupang is bordered by Kupang Regency to the south and east, the Semau Strait to the west, and Kupang Bay to the north (BPK RI, n.d.). Kota Kupang boasts the largest economy in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT). The city’s mission to enhance its economic competitiveness includes fostering private sector involvement (Kupang Makmur) with goals to improve the prosperity of its residents, develop competitive tourism, and create a favorable investment climate supported by efficient, transparent licensing services (Esaunggul, 2020). Key economic sectors include education services (15.4%), wholesale and retail trade and motor vehicle repair (14.89%), construction (14.78%), information and communication (13.34%), and transportation and warehousing (7.46%) (Purwanto, 2021). Post-COVID-19, the city focuses on revitalizing its economy by supporting local citizens and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) through various policies and programs aimed at economic growth (Pemkot Kupang, 2020).

One of Kupang’s economic strategies is Local Economic Development (LED), which supports sustainable development through the synergy of local environmental, social, and economic efforts. The city’s programs include Community Economic Empowerment (PEM), which provides interest-free, short-term capital assistance to individuals and groups engaged in productive economic activities such as agriculture, livestock, fisheries, industry, and trade. Strategic economic areas identified by the city government include the Old City Area, Pasir Panjang and Kelapa Lima, Namosain Port and Tourism Area, Tenau Port, Alak Industrial and Warehousing Area, and Oesapa and Lasiana Beach Areas. Each of these areas has specific development plans focusing on enhancing infrastructure and promoting economic activities (Esaunggul, 2020).

As the cultural center of NTT, Kota Kupang aspires to become a city of art and culture tourism. The city’s mission includes building accountable, professional, and transparent human resources in culture and tourism, developing cultural and tourism products to support local and regional income, and increasing community participation in...
cultural and tourism development and promotion (Manoe et al., 2017). Kupang is home to numerous tangible cultural heritages, such as historical sites, cultural heritage structures, and artifacts, as well as intangible cultural heritages, including traditional dances, languages, and songs. In 2023, Kupang had 65 tangible cultural heritage objects and 42 intangible cultural heritages, including traditional dances, oral traditions, and customs (Hoi, 2023).

Efforts to preserve local culture include human resource development, institutional and cultural apparatus training, and raising awareness about the importance of preserving the city's cultural heritage. Kupang has around 60 art studios and cultural communities, and the city plans to update cultural heritage data in 2024, covering customs, languages, manuscripts, oral traditions, arts, traditional games, rituals, traditional technologies, sports, and cultural heritage sites (Top News NTT, 2023). The city also hosts various festivals and cultural exhibitions, such as the Kupang Doldolu Arts and Culture Festival in July 2023, featuring performances, exhibitions, and SME expos, and the Eastern Indonesia Forum Area (KTI) Festival, showcasing cultural performances and innovations (Pemkot Kupang, 2023; Yayasan BaKTI, 2023).

4.2. Economic and Cultural Context of Chiba City

Chiba City was officially established in 1921 and designated as a key city by the Japanese government in 1992. As of 2023, Chiba had a population of 979,142 and covered an area of 272.08 square kilometers, comprising six districts. The city experiences a moderate climate with fertile soil, averaging 16.3°C annually. Strategically located approximately 40 kilometers from central Tokyo, Chiba serves as a major port city in the Kanto region, playing a crucial role in Japan's maritime activities (Chiba City, 2023). Since 2013, the Japanese government has designated ten National Strategic Special Zones to stimulate economic growth and improve the business climate. Chiba is part of the Tokyo zone, recognized as a hub for international business and innovation (National Strategic Special Zones, 2020). Chiba's economic development goals focus on creating a self-sufficient, creative city with a dynamic and bustling industrial sector. The central business district, New Makuhari City for education and innovation, Sub-Urban Soga for urban functions like housing and parks, and Chuo Port/District Shinko for food, manufacturing, and transportation industries are key economic drivers. Chiba Port, one of Japan's largest, is strategically located to support various industries, including steel, oil refining, and chemicals, further cementing its status as an industrial powerhouse (Chiba City, 2023).

To promote economic growth, Chiba City leverages the Chiba City Industrial Promotion Foundation, which supports business activities, investment, business succession, and continuity. The foundation offers subsidies for business establishment and rent, targeting small and medium-sized enterprises and foreign companies. By 2022, Chiba aimed to attract 31,015 businesses employing 450,000 workers (JETRO, 2022). These initiatives demonstrate Chiba's commitment to fostering a robust economic environment that encourages innovation and international business. Chiba City also has a comprehensive plan for preserving its cultural heritage. The city has initiated courses to introduce residents to existing cultural assets and their historical significance (Chiba City, 2023). Chiba's cultural heritage includes nationally designated historic sites, natural monuments, traditional paintings, and swords. In addition, there are provincial and city-
designated cultural assets such as historic sites, ancient documents, and sculptures. The city operates several museums, including the Kasori Shell Mound and Local Museum, and a cultural property research center that oversees approximately 1,300 ruins (Chiba City, 2023).

Chiba City hosts various traditional performing arts and festivals, maintaining 13 ongoing performances and festivals as of 2016 (Chiba City, 2016). The city provides numerous cultural venues such as halls, galleries, and cultural centers for public access, supporting the preservation and transmission of local culture and arts. These venues serve as platforms for both preserving traditional arts and promoting contemporary cultural expressions, ensuring that the city's cultural life remains vibrant and dynamic.

Chiba's strategic initiatives in both economic and cultural development underscore its role as a key player in Japan's broader regional strategy. The city's blend of robust industrial activity and rich cultural heritage creates a unique environment where economic growth and cultural preservation go hand in hand. The city's approach to economic development, emphasizing innovation, international business, and local enterprise support, is complemented by its dedication to preserving and promoting its cultural heritage. This dual focus not only enhances Chiba's attractiveness as a place to do business but also as a city that values and nurtures its cultural identity. The continuous efforts to promote economic growth through supportive policies and infrastructure development, coupled with the initiatives to preserve and promote cultural heritage, position Chiba as a model for balanced urban development. This balanced approach ensures that as Chiba grows and modernizes, it remains connected to its historical roots and cultural traditions, providing a comprehensive environment for both residents and businesses. Through these strategic efforts, Chiba City exemplifies how urban centers can thrive by integrating economic ambitions with cultural stewardship, fostering a well-rounded and sustainable urban future.

4.3. Sister City Opportunities

The potential for economic and cultural collaboration between Kupang and Chiba through a Sister City partnership is promising, offering significant mutual benefits grounded in their historical, economic, and cultural ties. Both Kupang and Chiba are coastal cities with strategic ports that are crucial for national and international trade, positioning them as natural partners in leveraging maritime connectivity. The shared historical context and rich cultural heritage of both cities further enhance their potential for beneficial collaboration (Sister Cities International, n.d.).

Economic opportunities abound in establishing an international trade route between Chiba and Tenau ports. This route could significantly boost exports and imports, expand economic markets, and foster new business ventures, creating a robust economic corridor between Indonesia and Japan. By aligning Kupang's and Chiba's programs for SME development, a "UMKM Exchange" program could be initiated. This program would facilitate business training and support exchanges, stimulating economic growth and innovation in both cities. Such a synergistic approach would leverage each city’s strengths, fostering an entrepreneurial ecosystem that encourages new ventures and cross-border trade (JETRO, 2022).
The fisheries industry presents another area ripe for cooperation. Both cities could benefit from developing fish processing industries, which would enhance local employment and facilitate technological exchange. This collaboration could lead to the establishment of joint processing facilities and research centers focused on sustainable fishing practices, thereby increasing the efficiency and output of the fisheries sector. Additionally, these industries could become significant export contributors, further solidifying the economic ties between Kupang and Chiba (Chiba City, 2023). Joint tourism development programs could also be highly beneficial. By promoting their coastal attractions and cultural sites, Kupang and Chiba could enhance their tourism industries. Coordinated marketing efforts and shared tourism initiatives could attract more international tourists, driving economic growth in both cities. Collaborative projects such as tour packages, cultural exchange programs, and joint festivals could showcase the unique heritage and natural beauty of each city, making them more appealing to global travelers (Pemkot Kupang, 2023).

Cultural cooperation could be significantly enhanced by establishing a joint cultural research and preservation center, leveraging Chiba's expertise in preserving historical sites and cultural assets. This center could facilitate the revitalization of cultural heritage sites in both cities and involve universities and organizations in cultural education. Collaborative efforts in research and preservation would not only safeguard cultural heritage but also promote cross-cultural understanding and academic exchanges (Chiba City, 2023). Another potential project is the creation of Indonesian-Japan museums in both cities to showcase their rich cultural heritage. These museums could promote cross-cultural understanding and offer economic benefits through increased tourism. Exhibitions highlighting the historical and cultural connections between Kupang and Chiba would attract visitors and scholars alike, fostering a deeper appreciation of their shared heritage. Additionally, these museums could serve as venues for cultural festivals, workshops, and educational programs, further enhancing their role in cultural preservation and education (Manoe et al., 2017).
An annual joint cultural festival could significantly enhance cultural exchange, promoting local arts and crafts while boosting the local economy by involving SMEs. Such a festival would provide a platform for artists, craftsmen, and performers from both cities to showcase their talents, facilitating cultural dialogue and mutual appreciation. This event could also include business expos and trade fairs, offering local entrepreneur opportunities to expand their markets and forge new partnerships. The economic impact of such festivals would be substantial, attracting tourists and generating revenue for local businesses (Top News NTT, 2023).

In summary, the framework of paradiplomacy and Sister City relationships provides a robust foundation for analyzing the potential economic and cultural cooperation between Kupang and Chiba. This partnership highlights the numerous opportunities and benefits that such collaboration could bring, from enhanced trade and economic growth to enriched cultural exchange and preservation. By building on their shared strengths and fostering mutual understanding, Kupang and Chiba can create a dynamic and sustainable partnership that benefits both cities and their residents.

5. Conclusion

Kota Kupang and Chiba City possess considerable economic and cultural potential that warrants further development. Establishing a Sister City partnership is an effective pathway to enhance and expand the economic and cultural landscapes of both cities. Both cities meet the criteria for such a partnership, given their strategic geographical locations, shared economic and cultural interests, and historical connections. In pursuit of their economic and cultural visions, various policies and programs have already been implemented. However, to fully realize their potential, collaborative efforts between the two cities are essential.

A Sister City partnership between Kota Kupang and Chiba City would unlock numerous economic opportunities. These include the establishment of an international trade route between Kupang and Chiba ports, the implementation of a "UMKM Exchange" program to support SMEs, and the development of fisheries and tourism industries. Additionally, cultural cooperation could be significantly enhanced through
initiatives such as the creation of a joint cultural research and preservation center, the establishment of Indonesian-Japan museums in both cities, and the organization of an annual joint cultural festival. Such a partnership would require careful planning and adherence to regulations and agreements by the respective city governments. By working together, Kota Kupang and Chiba City can leverage their shared strengths and mutual interests to achieve significant economic and cultural advancements. The benefits of this collaboration would be substantial, contributing to the sustainable development and prosperity of both cities.

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