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To cite this article: G P Rochman and D Hudalah 2020 *J. Phys.: Conf. Ser.* **1469** 012032

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How does leadership factors spur the success of sister city cooperation?

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Abstract. Some scholar indicated the leadership factors contribute to the success of sister city cooperation. However, research on the extent of its contribution is still limited. To fill this gap, an investigation of leadership factors was carried out through in-depth interviews with key actors who played a role and were directly involved during the process of sister city cooperation. This study examines the mechanism of local leaders which succeeded in building and implementing sister city cooperation to solve city problems. We found that local leaders designed sister city project or activities according to local needs and characteristics by involving academics and local communities, maintained and developed cooperation consistently and continuously by forming sister city management team, and encouraged community collective action to implement sister city cooperation through direct communication and incentives. The results of this study enrich the knowledge of leadership roles in city management and provide lesson learned for leaders of cities in the world.

1. Introduction

Globalization and decentralization challenged local governments to improve global competitiveness and be more responsive to local needs through sister city cooperation [1,2]. Sister city cooperation is a long-term relationship between two or more communities in at least two countries through exchange and learning of technology, resources, and knowledge [3,4]. This cooperation was developing in Europe cities in 1950 and transformed from a friendly relationship to promote peace through cultural exchange into an international cooperation network that leads to economic development [2,5–8]. In addition, the sister city cooperation has eroded the difference between central and local government and also provides opportunities for local governments becomes players in the international arena [5,9]. Local government implemented sister city cooperation to meet city needs and build good governance [2,4]. The long-term purpose of this cooperation is making better urban living conditions based on the similarity of the economic, cultural and historical characteristics of cities [2,4,5].

Some scholar stated that the success of the sister city relationship was promote by leadership which was interpreted as ability leaders to manage and influence city government institutions to support sister city relations [2,5]. In other perspectives, leadership is seen as the ability to encourage community collective actions by reflecting mutual goals [10]. The breadth of community participation, both groups, organizations, and the business sector strengthen the sister city relationship which leads to continued



cooperation [6,11]. Some examples of successful community-based sister cities, including Cape Town (South Africa) and Aachen (Germany), Honolulu (Hawaii) and Hue (Vietnam), and Surabaya (Indonesia) and Kitakyushu (Japan) [11,12]. The success of this cooperation promotes good governance by strengthening local government, increasing community capacity, and providing urban [12-15].

There have been macro studies about leadership on successful sister city cooperation at the city level. However, there is not yet study that explained how leadership factors spur the success of sister city cooperation. Therefore, this research investigates a success sister city cooperation process influenced by leadership factors. This study explores leadership factor in the process of Surabaya sister city cooperation which received international recognition as one of the cities succeed to engage communities building a sustainable city by sister city cooperation. This study enriches the literature on urban management through understanding of leadership effect in the process of the success of sister city cooperation thus becomes learning for local leaders.

2. Methods

To explore the leadership factor that spurs the success of sister city cooperation, we used qualitative research methods in which case studies in Surabaya as a best practice sister city in Indonesia. Exploration employed an in-depth interview with key informants in which selected based on criteria (purposive), namely those who play roles and interact during the process of sister city cooperation, both government, the private sector, academics, and civil society. Furthermore, the informants were selected based on recommendations from previous informants who met the criteria and connected in the cooperation (snowball) until saturated information. Informations were obtained from 12 key informants, including key actors in the city government of Surabaya (i.e. in the Foreign Cooperation Section under the City Government Secretariat, City Planning and Development Agency, Environment Agency), key actors at Pusdakota (environmental community), environmental cadres, academics and city experts, key actor in the Beattle company (Japan) and Pelindo company in Surabaya. In the analysis, we first sort the relevant data and clarify information obtained from different sources. Then, the analysis continued by investigating the mechanism of leadership factors that spurs the success of sister city cooperation using coding process.

3. Results and discussion

Surabaya is a center of trade, business, and industry in Indonesia. Surabaya began sister city cooperation based on Indonesian diplomatic relations with some countries since 1992. Until 2017, Surabaya already had seven partner which inaugurated on the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Sister City Cooperation, namely Seattle - USA (1992), Busan - Korea (1994), Kochi - Japan (1997), Guangzhou - China (2005), Xiamen, China (2006), Varna - Bulgaria (2010), and Kitakyushu - Japan (2012). In the agreement, there were 8 sectors collaborated by Surabaya Government with its partner cities i.e. education, culture, trade, industry, youth and sports, environment, health, and transportation.

Surabaya sister city cooperation showed success. The cooperation realized on various projects and activities towards improvement and city development, as seen in Figure 1. In the education and cultural sector, cooperation implemented through knowledge and cultural exchange activities, such as training activities, seminars, school visits, educational scholarships, and annual cultural festivals. This cooperations appears to increase knowledge and skills of Surabaya government officials and communities who involved in the activities as well as increase tourism market and local culture competitiveness to the international level. Moreover, in the environmental sector, this cooperation contributed to reduce municipal waste by transfer of knowledge and technology from partners, such as compost baskets (called Takakura Home Method), waste sorting tools in Super Depo Suterejo, and water waste treatment plants. As can be seen in the figure 1.



Source: Foreign Cooperation Subdivision (a); Surabaya City Planning Agency (b), 2013

Figure 1. Implemetation of sister city surabaya such as culture festival and waste sorting tools.

Leadership factor of the mayor of Surabaya, Risma, influenced the success of Surabaya's sister city cooperation. The leadership which meant as an ability to manage and influence the staff, community, city government institutions, encouraged collective action to support sister city activities. This is in line with Villers who stated that the success of the sister city relationship was supported by good management skills as well as strong and committed leadership [5]. Furthermore, the extent to which leadership contributes to the success of sister city Surabaya cooperation is described as follows.

3.1. *Leaders sensitivity to local needs*

Mayor of Surabaya had an important role in choosing partners and deciding on projects / collaborative activities. Risma decided a collaborative project in which appropriated with characteristics of local communities. Sensitivity to cultural differences and awareness of the complexity of interactions between parties led to successful collaboration [16]. The collaborative project and technology transferred to Surabaya was simple, easy, and encourages community empowerment. Thus, activities could last long without depending on partner cities.

In the process, Risma's engaged academics from Institute of Technology Sepuluh November and relevant community organizations (i.e. Pusdakota) routinely to identify city problems, local needs, and alternative solution. This process had become a joint learning so that a sense of ownership of the city increased and local government strengthened. This is in line with Villers that explained learning process as result of implementation phase of cooperation towards cooperation capabilities [5]. These conditions appears to increase high-level implementation of cooperation that lead to long term relation. Moreover, Risma and her staff made yearly studies and evaluations of sister city cooperation for determining the continuity of cooperation wherein the consideration was cost efficiency, cooperation effectiveness, and accordance partners potential with the city needs and characteristics of local communities. Adequate financial resources and management quality spurs partners trust that leads to mutual relations and successful cooperation [2,5,16]. Therefore, such management guaranteed the better implementation of sister city cooperation.

3.2. *The ability of leaders innovation*

Managing effective sister city cooperation was influenced by local leaders ability [2,17] Mayor of Surabaya, Risma, was able to developed cooperation project continuously which led to solve a city problem. Surabaya City Government and Kitakyushu City - Japan collaborated to reduce municipal waste in Surabaya. Initially, Surabaya government applied compost baskets technology at the household level, and then continued with build waste sorting plant at the city level and developed liquid waste processing installation. Regardless sister city cooperation, Risma's also developed Bank Sampah Programs which also aims to reduce municipal waste. By this program, the community got extra money through collecting inorganic waste i.e plastic, cans, and paper, and then sold it to Bank Sampah which

manage by environmental cadres. In the process, Risma's had formed environmental cadres and collaborated with garbage processing companies. Thus, the ability of leaders on developing cooperation project and program ideas, led not only to successful cooperation [5], but also to overcome a city problem which were the goals of long-term cooperation.

Futhermore, Risma's innovated in the management of sister city cooperation through formalized an international cooperation work unit within the government structure, namely the foreign cooperation unit under the regional secretariat. This work unit played an important role in maintaining relationships and facilitating realization of cooperation which appears to increase long-term cooperation. There were staff who focus on managing sister city cooperation relationships and were supported by adequate financial capabilities and quality management leading to successful collaboration [2,5,16]. In line with Gomes's statement [16], this work unit also conducted open and routine communication with partner cities, both formally through meetings and official letters, as well as informally via telephone, e-mail, and messages. In addition, this unit also ensured the distribution of stakeholder responsibilities clearly, both time, tasks and costs. Thus, building cooperation agreements was easier as well as relation between two cities was closer. Consequently, coordination amongst government actors, local communities, and partner cities was better so that increased implementation of sister city cooperation.

3.3. *The ability of leaders communication skill*

Surabaya's sister city cooperation involved not only among both cities governments, but also legislative bodies, private companies, universities and schools, NGOs, and media in the city of Surabaya. Their level of participation varied as can be seen in table 1. On one hands, some actors built new sister city cooperation with the same or equal actor in partner cities. In other hands, some actors just participated in a project or sister city activities or supported government programs by budgeting or promoting of sister city activities. Broad community participation led to successful cooperation [2]. These conditions are driven by the mayor who encouraged and facilitated the collaboration of communities with partner cities. Risma's provided collaboration space such as meetings, workshops, seminars, competitions, exhibitions and festivals, in which joined stakeholders.

Table 1. Participation of actors in surabaya sister city cooperation.

Actors	Level Participation
Governments	
a. Regional Representative Assembly	Monitoring sister city activities Making new sister city cooperation with representative assembly of partners.
b. City Planning Agency	Coordinating sister city activities involving many regional work unit
c. Regional Work Unit	Technical implementation of collaborative activities / projects in their fields
Non - Governments	
a. Non-Government Organization/NGO	Conducting cooperation activities in the field of environment Advocating community needs Educating and empowering communities
b. Companies	Conducting cooperation activities in the fields of trade, business and industry
c. University/School	Conducting collaborative activities in the field of education as experts
d. Media	Promoting the activities of the Surabaya city government

As mayor of Surabaya, Risma's designed sister city activities/projeect not only to solve the city problems but also to empower the communities. The government facilitated and accompanied the collaboration

process between local communities with partners. Risma's and her staff built and maintained interaction as well as communicated with potential stakeholders to build a mutual goals.

Leaders action which reflecting mutual goals spur community participation thus strengthen relations between the two cities [2,10]. Moreover, the government held annual international cultural festivals and various competitions towards encouraged public participation. Annual international cultural festivals which known as Cross Culture Festival involved actors both of cities. This festivals purposed to show and promote cultural and potential tourism. The public competition also held by government which involved media and private companies. To increase public participation, the government employed incentives likes gifts or grants, and involved funding from corporate social responsibility. Thus, the communication capabilities of leaders were able to encourage collective action and maximized the utilization of resources owned by the city that lead to the success of relationships.

4. Conclusions

Successful sister city cooperation contributed to the improvement and management of the city. This study found leadership factors influence design of collaborative project or activities so as accordance with local characteristics. Regarding with that, leader's sensitivity to cultural differences and awareness of the complexity of interactions between parties leads to high implementation of cooperation [16]. Meanwhile, leadership factors affected the effectiveness of collaboration [5]. It was spurred by leader's innovation ability in which develop collaborative project continuously and formalize the work unit that manages sister city cooperation. Other than that, leadership factors encouraged communities collective action and then expanding community participation thus strengthen relations between the two cities [2,10,16]. Good communication skills and role models as leaders facilitated the process. Therefore, leadership factors that spur successful collaboration emphasized leader sensitivity to local needs and characteristics, leader's communication skills and innovation ability in ideas and management, starting from planning, implementing and evaluating cooperation projects. Thus, these leadership factors was a lesson learn that might be duplicated by cities in the world that build sister city cooperation as a city management strategy.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank the Ministry of Research and Technology for the funding support of this research.

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