



Bumping into the ‘Glass ceiling’ of Child Participation in Development: Child Forums in Indonesia

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Disclaimer:

This document represents part of the author's study programme while at the Institute of Social Studies. The views stated therein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Institute.

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List of Acronyms

CFC	: Child Friendly City
FAN	: <i>Forum Anak National</i>
FAS	: <i>Forum Anak Surakarta</i>
FGD	: Focus Group Discussion
<i>Musrenbang</i>	: <i>Musyawarah Perencanaan Pembangunan</i>
MWECP	: Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection
NGOs	: Non Governmental Organisations
UNCRC	: United Nations of Convention of the Right of the Child

Glossary

<i>Forum Anak National</i>	: National Child Forum
<i>Forum Anak Surakarta</i>	: Surakarta Child Forum
<i>Komnas Anak</i>	: National Commission on Child Protection
<i>Kecamatan</i>	: Sub- District
<i>Kelurahan/ Kampung</i>	: Villages
<i>Musyawarah Perencanaan Pembangunan</i>	: Development Planning Meeting
<i>Ramadhan</i>	: One of the most important months in Indonesia. It is the time for the majority of Muslims to fast during daylight hours.
<i>Suara Anak Indonesia</i>	: The Voices of Indonesian Children

Abstract

In an effort to fulfil international children's right standards on child participation, the Indonesian government provides Child Forums, top-down spaces for child participation in development. The Child Forums have been established, managed, and evaluated based on adult's dominant perspectives and goals without put serious concern about children perspectives. This research explores how children understand and experience the space of Child Forums. While the government and NGOs direct child participation into top ladder of participation, the children themselves use Child Forums to experience being a child and to shape their abilities for the future. Further, I examine how Child Forums are used by stakeholders to maintain the status quo of 'good' children. In the end, this paper attempts to bring together different perspectives and interest of child participation in Indonesia to deal with unexplored perspectives of children. These children's perspectives are explained through analysing the 'glass ceiling' between a childhood space and another space where adults intervene.

Keywords

Child Participation, Indonesia, Development Planning, Child Forum, Childhood.

Part One: Setting the Context

In 2011, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection in Indonesia recommended involving Child Forums in the annual *Musyawarah Perencanaan Pembangunan/Musrenbang*/National Development Planning Meeting to further child participation in development processes. Child Forums would function as spaces for children to express their views and as opportunities for children to be involved in development planning by delivering their proposal in *Musrenbang*. The Child Forums were designed to enable children to participate at all *Musrenbang* levels, from local to national. Nevertheless, my fieldwork with both Surakarta and National Child Forums revealed political and cultural challenges to the fulfilment of this goal. Further, the children's expectations of Child Forums are different than those written in policy documents.

I argue that Child Forums are explicitly divided into two spaces by a 'glass ceiling': 'childhood spaces' where children own their space with activities with peers; and 'adult spaces' for their formal participation, in which adults intervene. As a result, children in Child Forums define and experience participation not by focusing on the development planning process but more simply, through participation in peer groups, family, and school. In practice, kids do not really want to push against the glass ceiling of participation because they enjoy staying within their own autonomous space rather than being in adult-controlled spaces. This is because the way adult stakeholders control public space within Child Forums profoundly affects children's different abilities to participate in them, and in development planning.

To develop this argument, this research is divided into three parts: setting the context; exploring the participation spaces; and conclusion. Part One explains the rationale for this research through the context of the Indonesian policy system, continuing by analysing children's perspectives on the practices in Part Two, and then concluding with an assessment of the limitations of meaningful child participation in development planning in Part Three. Part One consists of two chapters: Chapter 1 sets the context of this study and Chapter 2 examines Indonesian system of child participation in development within Child Forums.

Chapter 1: Participation as Child Rights: Child Forum in Indonesia

The concept of child participation in Indonesia tends to adopt the global discourse of participation as a child right. Following this, participation is increasingly being seen as a means to development strategy in obtaining individual and collective rights, and the emergence of Child Forums is one of the strategies to raise child participation in development.

This chapter examines the historical context of children's rights in Indonesia and how child participation is sometimes contradictorily understood and constructed in society. Discrepancies in child forum's development planning participation led to my research objective, namely to understand how children view their participation in Child Forums in order to suggest how national policy might better reflect their concerns. This chapter explains the methodology I used to gather children's perspectives using a multi-sited ethnography approach.

The Rise of Child Participation in Indonesia

Indonesia has made significant progress in implementing children's rights in the past two decades. When I was a child (1990s), I never heard about children's rights. I was taught that teachers and parents were always right, and sometimes (physical) punishment was an accepted way to discipline children. In my culture, Javanese, to obey 'whatever' adults command is considered respect. Javanese includes terms like '*guru = digugu lan ditiru*' which means 'teacher = (one who is) to be obeyed and imitated'. Although Indonesia ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) on 5 September 1990, the government did not fully accept all the articles, and put a reservation on seven articles of CRC¹ by stating that it would only apply them so far as they conformed with its Constitution (UNTC. 2015).

I was born and grew up in the New Order under Soeharto's regime when all students were supposed to memorize every article of the 1945 National Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, containing citizens' rights and responsibilities. However, only very few of us know what children's rights are stated in the UNCRC. After the reformation in May 1998, child protection became the most important children's right for the government, NGOs, and society: the National Commission on Child Protection was established in October 1998, followed by the release of National Regulation no.23/2002 about Child Protection.

In 2005, the Government of Indonesia decided to withdraw its reservations from the ratification of the UNCRC and began to place concern on child participation (UNTC. 2015). Following this, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (MWECP) of Indonesia drew on the UNCRC to establish Ministerial Regulation No. 3 & 4/ 2011 on Child Participation in Development in order to support child participation rights. The government mandated the establishment of Child Forums in order to promote child participation in development through seats for children on the *Musrenbang* at all government levels (KPPPA 2014). The purpose of Child Forums is thus to provide space for children to participate and promote children's rights. Consequently, there are 32 Child Forums at the provincial level and hundreds at the municipality, district, and sub- district/village levels.

¹ There are seven articles of UNCRC reserved by government of Indonesia : article 1, 14, 16,17, 21, 22, and 29.

- *Conceptualising Participation and Childhood*

The rise of child participation in Indonesia was highly influenced by the UNCRC, which assigned the state as duty bearer to fulfil child participation rights (Bruyere 2010, Lansdown 2005, Hart 2008, Roche 1999, Skelton 2007). Although participation in policy decisions is not actually a right enshrined in the CRC (Cheney 2014: 18-19), but participation has become popular as an essential principle of children's rights globally, intensively campaigned as part of the '3Ps', the other two being provision and protection (Skelton 2007: 165). Nevertheless, the UNCRC participation concept has been criticized as normative and Westernized (Mannion 2007: 407, Lund 2007: 134, Skelton 2007: 169). This concept has become a global measurement of participation and adopted by many countries, neglecting the specific different needs of children.

In Indonesia, the term participation originated with state democracy and development (Ennew and Hastadewi 2004: 129), so when it comes to children, it firstly emerged in formal areas supervised by adult stakeholders. The Ministerial Regulation of MWECP No 3/2011, Article 1 clearly defines child participation only as,

“...the involvement of the children below 18 years old *in the decision making process affecting them*. Their involvement should be conscious with correct understanding and common interest of the children, *which allows them to benefit from the decision*” (translated and emphasized by author) (KPPPA 2011: 3).

Child participation in development is seen as the involvement of children in their relationship with adults and the state through formal participation. As “*..the fundamental right of citizenship*” (Hart and UNICEF 1992: 5), such participation can help children contribute to neighbourhood development. However, this understanding suggests that participation ends when access to formal self-expression is fulfilled, while ignoring the concept of child participation within family and peer groups (Lund 2007, Mannion 2007, White and Choudhury 2007).

I argue that the definition of child participation needs to be re-contextualized to meet the needs of Indonesian children. Lund stated that there is no single lens to view participation, as it “relates to many dimensions and processes. It may be an end and a means, it may be passive or active, inclusive or exclusive, forced or voluntary; it may be an enabling and liberating force and thus empower, or it may be a restrictive force and disempower” (2007: 145). Although the stated aim of Child Forums is to prepare children to be good citizens in the future, children are diverse, and children may be using these forums to fulfil their needs to play and develop friendships. It is therefore necessary to focus on what participation means for children as ‘present’ active participants and understanding participation concept broadly, not limited to the provision for children's rights, but also participation to give space for childhood (Lund 2007, Mannion 2007, White and Choudhury 2007).

As a space for participation, the Child Forum may contribute to institutionalising certain constructions of childhood. Ivar Frønes (1994: 150) defined institutionalisation of childhood as a process by which organised arrangements influence children's lives and organise their days. Childhood is now acknowledged as socially constructed and no longer limited to a common natural biological life phase (Pufall and Unsworth 2004: 18); rather, it must be seen as a “social and cultural phrasing of the early part of the life course” (James and James 2001: 27). In this case, child participation could be part of constructing and influencing local notions of childhood and adult-child relations. James, Jenks, and Prout (in James and James 2001: 28-29) suggested that from the structural perspective, the social space for childhood is marked out in society and seen as a constant component of all social structures. By having children participate in Child Forums and development planning activities initiated by adults, public authorities direct

childhood, thereby reproducing 'good' intergenerational social relations rooted in the need for social control.

- *What is missing?*

In practice, there is gap between the concepts of child participation and the power of children in influencing decisions affecting them. Child participation in Indonesia is defined by policy documents made by adults as children's involvement in the decision making process (KPPPA 2011: 3), but the document also quotes views on child participation by children themselves, including "joining activities", "running an event", "contributing to problem solving", and "giving opinion". None of those views matches the main discourse on the involvement of children in decision-making processes.

Since the beginning, children have been absent in defining their participation. Children are seen as lacking capacities, so genuine child participation in development is doubtful. I often heard the idiom from adults "all adults have had childhood experiences but no children have already had adults experiences" during my fieldwork. This view sometimes discouraged the children from expressing their views and opinions because they assumed they would be discounted. Adults thought children needed guidance and training to express their aspirations 'properly'. However, when the children's views are absent, the children's best interests are also missing in creating the best model of participation for them.

Likewise, while the goal of child forums is to empower children to influence policy, there are disparities and uneven participation. First, there are active forums with a wide array of programmes for children—from music, sports, and arts to discussions about children's rights, organizational and leadership training, and conferences—that already benefit from their seat in *Musrenbang* and channel ideas that inform government programmes. But there are also "empty" forums in other parts of Indonesia where there are either fewer activities or the children just come as guests of adult organizers. These differences clearly create a discrepancy at the participation level. Second, the national policy creates child forums as spaces for participation, but how the children use these spaces is still in question. How about children's perspectives? Who has the ownership of these spaces, and whose agenda is addressed in these spaces? I wanted to research this to find the factors that encourage children to join a child forum, and their expectations of their participation in that forum, in order to understand the discrepancy.

Looking for Children's Perspectives and Experiences

The main purpose of this research is to bring together different narratives of child participation and question the current framing in the context of Indonesia to deal with unexplored perspectives of children on participation. Many different arguments attempt to understand child participation as being essential for the best interest of the child (Franks 2011, Roche 1999, Bruyere 2010, Lansdown 2005). However, it all comes from adults; children are not involved in the process of conceptualizing child participation. Therefore, this research is an attempt to fill the gaps in existing studies on child participation dominated by adults' views. Moreover, it also tries to examine the ownership of child forums as a space for participation based on children's experiences. The ultimate objective is to increase what children view as important in their space for participation.

From those objectives, I based my research on my main question, “*How do the children understand their participation within Child Forums?*” Further, how is child participation understood/defined by children in Child Forums vis-à-vis the dominant perceptions of child participation in the society? How do children experience their participation in child forums? What motivates children to participate?

By exploring the children’s experiences in child forums, the right of children to participate and the broader notion of children’s agency can be examined, since the children can explain what kind and level of participation they desire. Moreover, understanding children’s motivations and perceived benefits of their involvement in child forums will help maximize their space for participation, providing an understanding of different angles of child participation rather than from the global notion of child participation.

Doing Multi-sited Research with Children

This research is based on qualitative multi-sited ethnography. I chose this method to observe children’s holistic interaction and gain a deeper understanding of their agency in their own settings. Qualitative methods are important to child-centred research because they organize inquiry around children’s meanings, experiences, and worldviews (Clark 2010) and an ethnographic approach is used because it is one of the useful methods in exploring the social worlds of children (Emond 2005: 124). Furthermore, it provides broader information through an open-ended approach (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 3) that places my research problem within relevant settings that in turn shape children’s consciousness and practices of participation in Child Forums. However, since I spent one and a half months for fieldwork, I only use ethnography as an approach or guiding framework. The use of the multi-sited ethnographic approach in my research is to validate the multiple settings chosen, in particular because the two settings of *Forum Anak Surakarta* (FAS)/ Surakarta Child Forums and *Forum Anak Nasional* (FAN)/ National Child Forums are connected in terms of hierarchy and coordination (Hannerz 2003: 206). Moreover, this research puts more emphasis on what children do and say (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 8) about their participation in the Child Forums.

I started pre-fieldwork in spring 2015 in order to formulate my research problems into research questions and design (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 24). I began to collect information about Child Forums through online observation (Facebook, Instagram, and the Child Forum’s Web Page) and mapped the activities and networks. Continuing this, I spent approximately six weeks looking at primary data from FAS and moved to the FAN to see child perspectives through mixed methods. I did purposive sampling and choose FAS in local level. I choose this Child Forum based on the data from MWECP, which reported it to as one of the best and most active Child Forums in the country; one already using the space in the policy-making process through their seats on the *Musrenbang*. Choosing an active Child Forum was important in my research because it helped me to see the dynamics and to understand children’s experiences when involved in the development-planning process. During my fieldwork, I did observation, took some photographs, and arranged Focus Group Discussions (FGD) about the dynamics within this Child Forum and the relations among actors. I only did two formal interviews—one with FAS’s child facilitator and one with an official from MWEPCP—but I also did many informal interviews with children during my fieldwork in the National Child Forum.

- Conducting the Fieldwork: from Local to National

From Local

I conducted fieldwork at the FAS in July 2015 and FAN in early August 2015. I arrived in Surakarta at the beginning of July and started by spending a month building relationships with approximately 28 FAS members from 12–18 years old and observing their interactions, both through verbal communication and social media. Moreover, because the relationship between researcher and participants “is key to the collection of ‘good’, rich and reliable data” (Pole 2007: 67), I had to position myself and situate my knowledge in the local and cultural context in this space to build the connection.

Before I arrived, I imagined that I might have difficulties becoming part of the group and visiting other Child Forums on a lower level, for instance, in the *kecamatan*/sub-district or *kelurahan*/*kampung*/village. Then I realised that as a researcher, I needed to have an open mind and prepare to be surprised in ethnography orientation (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 41). In fact, everything that happened exceeded my expectations. FAS committees and the local government welcomed me in activities in Child Forums at the sub-district level and as a guest at some activities organised by the government. Moreover, I got access to join an online group of child facilitators on instant messenger. I attended several activities, such as *Ramadhan*² road shows in three districts, the National Children’s Day campaign, and capacity building and internal meetings with the government about the establishment of child radio in Surakarta.

However, I realised that I might meet different children in various sub-districts each day and it would be challenging for me to gain informed consent from every child. Every Child Forum in sub-districts consists of around 15-20 participants, and I just visited them once. I worked with a child facilitator who was also an ex-member of FAS to help me formulate the best way to get the children’s consent. She told me that none of the few researchers who had come to FAS had ever asked about formal consent, but the children did not notice either. It made me wonder how the previous researchers had come to the Child Forum, but I kept saying that I needed the children’s consent for my research. Informed consent is important not only as an ethical consideration for research with children, but also to give respect for the children’s sense of control and agency (Greene and Hogan 2005: 13). After my next discussion with the ex-FAS committee member, she agreed to provide a space for me to introduce myself and explain what I was doing for my research, so I obtained verbal informed consent in all visits to sub-district-level Child Forums. At the same time, for children who were involved in the FGD process, I used a paper informed consent because I interacted with them over time. I shared the informed consent form in the first meeting for FGD preparation so they could discuss it with their parents first. Since it was voluntary, we agreed that if they understood and were available, they could sign and join the FGD process, but if they did not feel comfortable, they could leave the process anytime.

The FGD process

The FGD process took most of my time during my stay in Surakarta because it consisted of preparation with FAS committees, the FGD activities, and evaluation together with data confirmation (see Table 1). I used FGD because in research with children, this process helped to encourage children to express their ideas in a safe peer environment and minimised the power imbalance between adult and child that emerge in personal interviews (Hennessy and Heary

² *Ramadhan* is one of the most important months in Indonesia. It is the time for the majority of Muslims to fast during daylight hours.

2005: 237 -238). I planned FGD together with some of the FAS committees and facilitators. The children are around 13-18 years old and the facilitators are ex-members of FAS, aged above 18 years old³. At first, I was nervous, wondering how many of them would attend the FGD because the place was quite far from the city centre. It was such a relief when they started to come even though there was a risk that they would be a bit tired because we had to start and finish late.

Table 1. FGD process in Surakarta Child Forums

	FGD Preparation	FGD	FGD Evaluation	Challenges
Number of participants	2 children 2 facilitators	17 children 4 facilitators	18 children 6 facilitators	It was a voluntary process and few people came to the preparation.
Process	Discussion to mapping children's preferences on methods based on their experience	- Short role play about what participation is by facilitators and children, then children asked to find sticky notes (Figure 1) and write down their views about participation. - Children and facilitators divided into four groups and each group asked to draw several hats (Figure 1) where in each hat they wrote their activities, motivations, feelings and hopes within their participation in the Child Forum. It continued by drawing rivers of life (Figure 2) describing their experience within the Child Forum so far. - It ended by discussion about the drawing and feedback about the process.	- Share the copy of FGD's results with each child -Data confirmation	The time constraint in evaluation process made it difficult to do further analysis together with the children.
Results	Decide methods for FGD: short role play by facilitators and asked children to do more drawing and writing.	The FGD's results compiled on paper by me helped by one facilitator. We analysed it and prepared some questions about the results for FGD's evaluation.	The analysis of FGD's result.	-

In FGDs, the children described the forum activities they had done so far and shared their participation experiences by drawing and writing (Figure 1 and Figure 2). After sharing and discussion, the facilitator and I compiled the results and made a copy for all of the FGD's attendances. We tried to analyse the findings together with them in the evaluation meetings, but the time constraints made data confirmation the only possible way to understand the findings. At the end of my stay there, the Ramadhan holiday had ended, so having more than two hours of activities with children during school days was not possible because they already busy with school activities.

³ At the time, most of facilitators' were 17-18 years old and just finished their role in FAS.

Figure 1 FGD result: The Participation Note and Drawing Hats in Different Colours

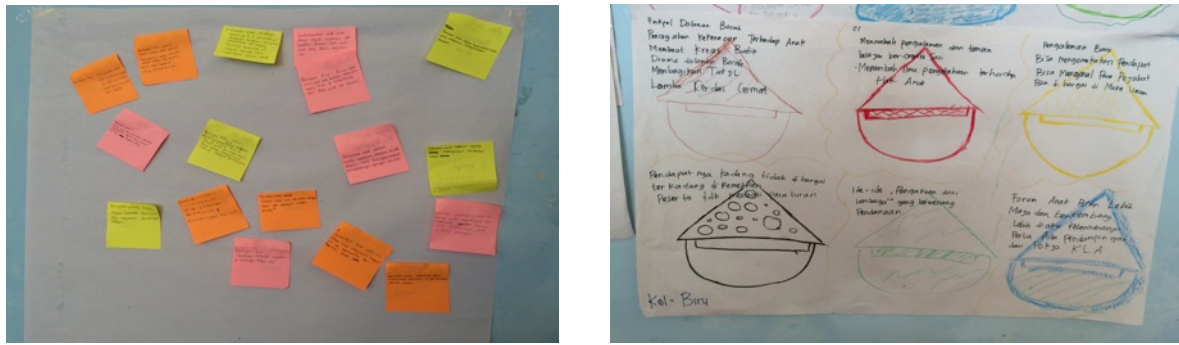


Figure 2 FGD results. The River of Life: Experience within Child Forum - FAS



Although I did the FGD to see children perspectives in FAS, observations and informal discussions were valuable as well. I observed and did many of short talks with children and adults when I attended Child Forum’s activities. I only used a voice recorder in the FGD process and in an in-depth interview with one of the facilitators. For the other activities, I just wrote in my notebook and on my smartphone. Nevertheless, it was difficult to write everything, especially when I had informal discussions, such as lunch/dinner conversation, and informal talks on the way back home in the car and on the motorcycle. In such situations, I wrote and drew in my journal after the activities when I got to my room.

To National Level

In early August, after a month in Surakarta, I flew back to Jakarta to coordinate with the MWECP about my attendance at FAN on August 8th -10th 2015 in Bogor and the Celebration of National Children Day on August 11th 2015 at the Presidential Palace. MWECP’s official said there would be around 500 participants from all provinces in Indonesia, and it would be difficult for me to introduce my research during the activities because of the rapid schedule. Therefore, I decided to join the briefing of the liaison officer for the conference the day before to introduce my self and my research as well as to observe the preparation of the conference. All the liaison officers are young, around 17-23 years old, and they are part of FAN committees and ex-child forums committees from all around this country who are now becoming national child facilitators. During the conference, I conducted observation of interactions between all the child forums in Indonesia and informal interviews with random participants. I took photos and made voice recordings of the Minister of MWECP’s speech and several speakers at the conference as well as the President’s speech at National Celebration of National Children Day, but it was hard to record any personal conversation since it was very crowded and noisy. I therefore took quick notes on my smartphone during the day to make it.

Although I was able to converse with several children and adults, the interesting part was when I was able to observe all the processes in the formulation of *Suara Anak Indonesia* / 'The Voices of Indonesian Children', a document of children's declarations. In this process, all guardians were sent to another room to join a session for adults and left the children with only the liaison officers. I felt excited to see the process, but on the other hand, I had to keep my distance since I was an adult and I did not want to deface the spaces and privacy (Bengtsson 2014: 732). Consequently, I observed the process and interviewed one of the participants in-depth after the formulation. After the process was done, I also interviewed Deputy Assistant of Child Participation of MEWCP for their reflections on the practice of involving children in the decision-making process and the reasons why it was suggested that children participate in it.

- Positionality and Reflexivity: "So, What Do You Think About It?"

The use of the ethnographic approach in my fieldwork made me think about my positionality in this research. I placed myself as a member of the setting by being part of the Child Forum and collected the data through relational processes that created insightful qualitative analyses (Bengtsson 2014: 734). During that time, I positioned myself within children space to establish 'normal' social relation and build trust (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 89). In practice, I have to admit that it was challenging to balance my position, especially when the engagement with the child forums members was getting stronger and they saw me as someone who had more knowledge and experience. Many times, at the end of child activities, either the children or facilitator asked me, "So, what do you think about it?" or "How should we improve our participation?". On one hand, I had to give some answers as I observed the whole process, but on the other, who am I to give suggestions about ideal participation when I am still doing research about that? Here I realised that my position as an insider brought dilemmas (Ng 2011: 446). My position gave advantages because understanding from within brings me the natural environment and same landscape of power (Rose 1997: 312). However, Molland (2013: 303) reminds me that researchers have to make sense of the research data from an outsider's perspective. My knowledge was situated, and it might have influenced my data collection (Rose 1997: 313).

I situated my knowledge as a young female Javanese-Indonesian researcher who studies abroad within two research fields: a nearly homogeneous environment in one city and a more heterogeneous one at a national level. Despite my previous experiences working with children, the similarity of the cultural background with children in Surakarta made it easier for me to get access to their space. I used the local language and adapted with their 'young habits' and slang so they were more open to sharing their stories. Since they knew I was young and not part of the government and NGOs' staff, I felt that they treated me similarly to the other child facilitator, and they were interested in getting my story of studying abroad. When I came to the national level with children from 33 provinces with different cultural backgrounds, using my positionality and situating my knowledge was important to "produce non-overgeneralizing knowledge" (Rose 1997: 315) in my research.

While the children's views are centrally situated within the research, there is a tendency that the dominant construct remains an adult-centred interpretation. For that reason, I thought that the space for participating in the research should be created by the children themselves through FGDs. Ultimately, the main purpose of this research is to provide information about child perspectives and experiences within child forums. Therefore, my role as a reflexive ethnographic researcher may contribute to producing social understanding within the research.

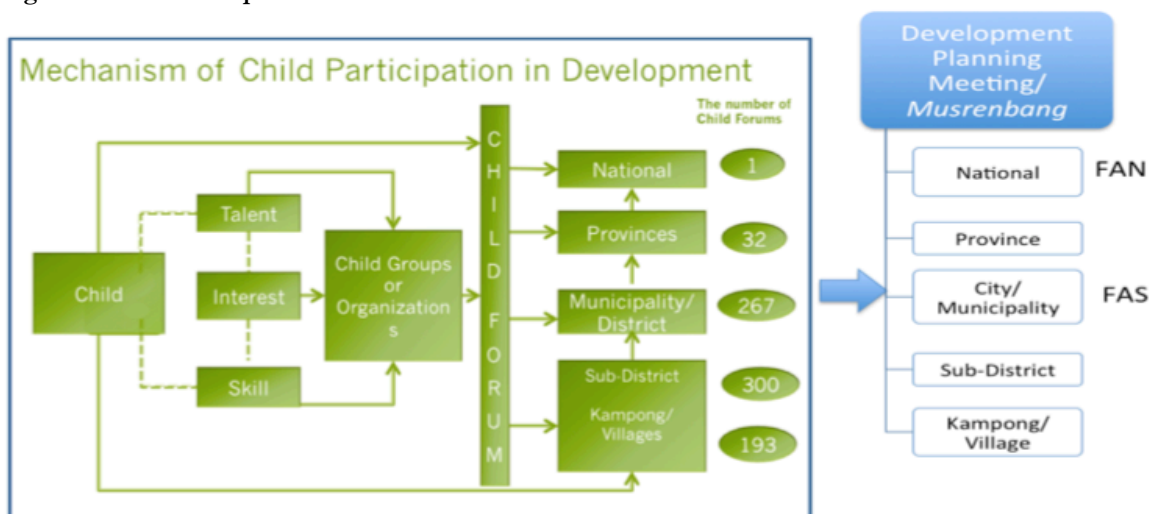
Chapter 2: Taking the Child Forum System to Development

Before exploring the findings on my fieldwork in Part Two, I find it is necessary to understand how the Child Forum system is designed and its relationship with the context of development planning in Indonesia. In this chapter, I begin with the story of how Child Forums works and how the system invites children to be involved in the development planning system. Following this, I elaborate the implementation of these systems at the local level, using the case of the FAS as a space for child participation.

Involving Children within Child Forum in the Development Planning Meeting

In practice, the Child Forum system, in providing meaningful participation space in the development, needs some improvements to fit the *Musrenbang* system. At first, Child Forums in Indonesia were set up informally at the sub-district and *kampong* levels by the group of people and NGOs who concerned about children's issues. One example is FAS in Central Java that was initiated in 2005 and established in 2006. However, those Child Forums were not connected, they were separated and had their different activities based on the group or NGO's agenda. Child Forums became formalised under the government system after the Ministerial Regulation No. 3/2011 on Child Participation in Development stipulated that Child Forums were a necessary space for children's participation in the development process (KPPPA 2011). By definition, a Child Forum is "an organisation or social institution that is used as a space for participation for children below 18 years old where the members are representatives from children's groups or children's activities groups who managed by the children and guided by the government as a medium to listen to and fulfil children's aspirations, voices, opinions, wishes, and needs in the development process" (translated by author)(KPPPA 2014: 9-10) or simply defined as 'space for participation in development'. The government formed Child Forums at every level, as shown by the hierarchy flow system in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3 Child Participation Mechanism and the Number of Child Forums 2015



Source: KPPPA, 2014 (translated by author)

The Child Forums system in Figure 3 shows that the flow of the establishment of Child Forums designed from the bottom level. In the guidelines (KPPPA 2014), FAN's members are representatives from all provincial Child Forums that were unified from representatives of municipality Child Forums, and so on. However, the implementation processes are not the same in every area and on every level. The recent updates by MWECP show that there are non-linear numbers of Child Forums from the lowest level that should be the largest and become less and less on their way to the top. This year, there are 32 Province Child Forums, 267 *Kabupaten/Kota* (Municipality) Child Forums, 300 *Kecamatan* (Sub-District) Child Forums, and 193 *Kelurahan/Kampung* (Villages) Child Forums⁴. The numbers clearly prove that the process of the establishment of Child Forums is not bottom-up, but top-bottom. Ideally, Child Forums are formed from children's groups that already exist, but there is a misunderstanding about the establishment process. To reach the target of increasing the numbers of Child Forums, many areas just create it as one new organisation from the municipality/district and then go down to sub-district and kampung/villages.

Yet the role of Child Forums in development is already regulated, through the involvement of Child Forums in *Musrenbang* in accordance with their level. *Musrenbang* is the Development Planning Meeting that is attended by all sectorial government institutions for planning activities and more importantly, the budget. The children from Kampung Child Forums may arrange their needs/problems and discuss it in a pre- *Musrenbang* before the results are delivered in Kampung/village's *Musrenbang*. Then, the process will continue until the *Musrenbang* at the national level, and at the end of each process, all decisions made related to children's proposals should be informed back to the children and monitored and evaluated in post-*Musrenbang* (KPPPA 2013: 125).

Figure 4 The Requirements of Children to be involved in *Musrenbang*

<p>The Requirements of Children to be Involved in Musrenbang:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aged 13-18 years old - Be able to communicate well - Be able to convey the proposed children's aspirations in the Musrenbang - The children do not reinforced to join full process of Musrenbang, they can stay only on the delivery of the proposed children's aspirations - The children should be accompanied by adult/child facilitator - Informed Consent - Elected by Child Forum's member/ any other child representative - Have permission from parent. <p>Source: (KPPPA, 2014: 29, translated by author)</p>

Although Child Forums may be seen as a great way to deliver children's expressions and involve children in the development process, not every child can participate. The government set several requirements to select representatives to get a seat on a *Musrenbang* (see Figure 4). The first three elements are related to age and skill while the others talk about consent and the election process. In general, the standards for children to participate in the meeting were set without being concerned about the diversity of the children in Indonesia. Take for example, the age requirement: it is only based on chronological age, which cannot determine the common ability of every child in the country (Pufall and Unsworth 2004). Allied to that, Scott (1998: 80) refers to the use of chronological age in policy papers as a form of '*state simplification*' whereby the state uses aggregate facts as standardised facts for distribution. The age requirements are made so only older children can be involved and raised the question about the interests of younger children,

⁴ The data was presented in one session of FAN's discussion with MWECP. The presentation's title is '*Peran Forum Anak dalam Pembangunan*' / 'The Role of the Child in Development', presented by Lenny N Rosalin, Deputy of Child Growth Department in MWECP, Bogor, 9/8/2015.

whether they are included in the proposal, and if so, is it from the younger children themselves or determined by the perspective of older children?

Besides, the requirements emphasise a 'good' quality of representative, and as a result, only 'the best' children will get the opportunities to participate. Franks (2011: 7) and Lunds (2007: 140-141) remind us that generalization about child participation as rights could be a restrictive force that potentially create marginalization and exploitation. In fact, there are big differences between culture and development in West and East Indonesia, and between city and village, that lead to difference skills and competences among children. I explain more the details about how the representatives are chosen in Part Two, but below I firstly analyse how the system works in the local level through FAS.

The Implementation on the Local Level: Surakarta Child Forum/ FAS

Surakarta implemented the Child Forum's system in the city at a sub-district level and involved Child Forums in *Musrenbang* according to its level. This year, besides FAS in city level, Surakarta has five Child Forums at the sub-district level and around 51 Child Forums at the '*kampung*'/village level that have received a decree from the municipality. The FAS committee consists of 25 children aged 13-18 years old, but mostly senior high school students. The committee is elected from five districts: each of the districts sent two representatives to become the FAS committee, and they will stay there for two years before new committees are formed. Hence, related to the system, there is significant progress in FAS that may be seen as a result of their involvement in development that displayed by the identity of being a member of FAS. However, in the practice, the gender issues and the power relationship within FAS mean that meaningful participation in this space has to be questioned.

Surakarta is the third biggest city in Central Java and 164.459 children live there (Bapermas 2015: 19). This city is one of the pilot projects of the Child-Friendly City (CFC) in Indonesia, and last August received the Nindya Award⁵ of CFC. FAS was formed in 2006 but became formalised after the Surakarta Major Regulation no 3/2013 about Child Participation in Development for Surakarta children was established (Bappeda Surakarta 2013). The regulation developed as the Surakarta commitment to be a CFC in Indonesia, so they adapted the regulation about participation in development locally. At the municipality level, FAS is recommended as one of the best child forums in Indonesia by the MWECP. However, the title of best Child Forum arose from fulfilling of indicators that are mostly quantitative. I found that the city tried to increase the number of Child Forums in all sub-districts and *kampung*, neglecting the importance of capacity building by the government in the lower level to provide proper space for child participation in their *Musrenbang*.

On the other hand, I noted that FAS has become engaged with children as an identity for the members. One of the children told me that FAS is the most active Child Forum in Indonesia in social media, especially on Twitter. They shared their activities through social media and asked all members to upload their activity with the hashtag #FASdanAKU (FAS and Me). Moreover, when I joined the FAS presentation, the presenter, who was ex-FAS, was proud have been part of FAS and told me all the benefits that she got from being a member. By joining FAS, she got the opportunities to visit another city, even another country, and she also encouraged other children to join child forums to get more confidence and many opportunities and networks for their future.

⁵ At least there are five stages of KLA, from the lowest are '*Pratama*', '*Madya*', '*Nindya*', '*Utama*' and the highest is '*Kota Layak Anak*' or Child Friendly City.

The children’s involvement in Child Forums is already part of their identity, and they also used it in their relationships to peers as well as adults. I realise that when I joined the seminar and capacity building for children in city hall, they introduced themselves by their name and then the name of their Child Forum as part of their identity:

“Hi, My Name is.... and I am from.... District Child Forum, I want to ask about.....” or when I hear one facilitator answer the phone from unknown *“Hello, who is this? I am a facilitator of Child Forums here, Are you a Child Forum member?”*

Despite FAS being significant for children’s identity, I found that the space is feminized by number and there is inconsistency in the power relations within FAS. Carole Leathwood and Barbara Read (2009: 10) points out that regardless linked to transformation, when ‘feminine’ values and practices are influence the way of life in an society; feminisation is also a cultural change process “whereby women are seen to be increasing their numbers in relation to men”. If we look at the composition of children in Surakarta, the total number of boys is higher than girls, but it contrasts with the Child Forums representatives, where the girls are significantly dominant in this space. Table 2 below compares the number of boys to girls in Surakarta to those involved in Child Forums. The coordinator of FAS is a girl, and the representatives on the broader forum at the upper Child Forum are girls as well. There are only four boys who participate in FAS committees compared to 21 girls, and the pattern continues at the sub-district and *kampung* level. From my observation during my stay with FAS, I saw that the girls are more active in discussions and the decision-making process than boys. The girls are more confident expressing their views to adults while boys tend to be quieter. Then, how are boy’s voices can represented?

Table 2. The number of Children in Surakarta

	Boys	Girls	Total
Children in Surakarta	84.249	80.210	164.459
Surakarta Child Forum/ FAS	4	21	25
Child Forum in Sub-District (<i>Kecamatan</i>) Level	29	41	70
Child Forum in Kampong (<i>Kelurahan</i>) Level	280	386	666

Source: Compilation of Surakarta Mayor Decision Letter of Child Forums, from Municipality to Kampong Levels, 2015

In the FGD evaluation, I asked the reasons for this trend, and they provided various explanations. The girls teased the boys and said that they are careless, but in a formal forum, the boys explained that most of their friends study in vocational school and are busy with practice, so they do not have time to participate in Child Forums. During an informal talk with a boy from FAS, he told me that most of his friends choose to spend their time with football or dating rather than joining an organisation like the Child Forums. The answers raised my additional questions: When boys have alternative activities outside of Child Forums, what activities do girls have outside it? Are Child Forums beneficial for both boys and girls? Is it space for girls who like to liberate themselves from household activities, or are they a chance for girls to participate in public space?

These facts made me remember the male patronage culture in Indonesia. In Javanese culture, people tended to see female’s participation in public space as “normal, acceptable, polite feminine behaviour”, but it was compatible with notions of ideal motherhood (Silvey 2003: 345). In this case, the greater interest of girls in children’s rights may correspond with female roles as children’s caregivers. Further, Anwar (2004) states that Indonesian society is very hierarchical. Male domination as decision-makers in the family constructs patriarchal values that infuse within organisations. Although the involvement of girls in FAS has positive impacts in increasing these

girls confidence and opening more chances for girls in public spaces, their participation is 'directed'. Prior to the 1980s, the female participants in any organisation were either established "as auxiliaries to the parent or directed by the state" (Anwar 2004: 107-108), and I wonder if that it continued in FAS. FAS become part of governmentality process where it started as government's invited space and has been legitimised with promises for positive activities. Thus, it is easier for parents to give permission for girls to be involved with Child Forums, since they are secured spaces for females, rather than giving permission for girls to play football.

Aside from the gender issues, I noticed a certain level of governmentality in how FAS operated and the power relations within it. Governmentality is a concept developed by Foucault that is concerned with power and popularity as an art of governing. It is defined as the "conduct of conduct", which is "the attempt to shape human conduct by calculated means" (Li 2007: 275). This concept explains the government's rationality in expanding the welfare of society. However, it is not limited only to government, but it also might include attempts by other parties such as NGOs and parents, who are able to use their invisible power so people are not necessarily aware of how their behaviour is being led (ibid).

I found an inconsistency of power relations within FAS. When I came to FAS at the beginning of July 2015, one of the child facilitators told me that the FAS is an independent Child Forum and not intervened in by adults. They told me that the FAS have its authority, and all activities come from children's ideas. They showed me their activities, such as breaking fast together during Ramadhan, plays about children rights, and other activities initiated from children to children. FAS also maintained their relationship with Child Forums at the sub-district and *kampung* levels by arranging visits to strengthen organisation and socialisation about children's rights in each area. I was able to join three activities in three different sub-districts, and all those activities were prepared, held, and evaluated by the children themselves. But they only needed to report the activities and the use of the money to the government when the activities ended. Hence, in practice, I observed that FAS really depends on the municipality/city government to approve their activities and expenditures. Although the FAS may freely manage their activities, they also has to join the activities designed for them, such as capacity building from government, children celebrations, *Musrenbang*, and any other meetings related to child policy. By creating FAS as a space for influencing children to be good citizens while the children themselves are unaware of this, children's 'independent' participation is basically reproducing government goals (Li 2007).

Besides the government, NGOs and people who are concerned about children's issues play a significant role in their interaction with the Child Forums. On July 23rd 2015, I got a chance to join the National Children Day Celebration in front of Surakarta city hall. When I arrived, I was told that this was a collaboration event from two local NGOs. The children were told to be present there, and they were asked to do children's rights campaigns by sharing balloons with other children who passed on the street. When the activities started, the adults asked children to stand and bringing children's rights balloons, directed them to sing several songs under the blazing sun, and applauded when the City Mayor gave speech to the press promising the establishment of child radio and the fulfilment of children's rights (Figure 5). Since this was close to the mayoral election, I consider that there is a possibility that all the promises could have been part of a strategy to win the election campaign without having a real concern to children interest.

Figure 5 Children on Children's Rights Campaign in front of Surakarta city hall.

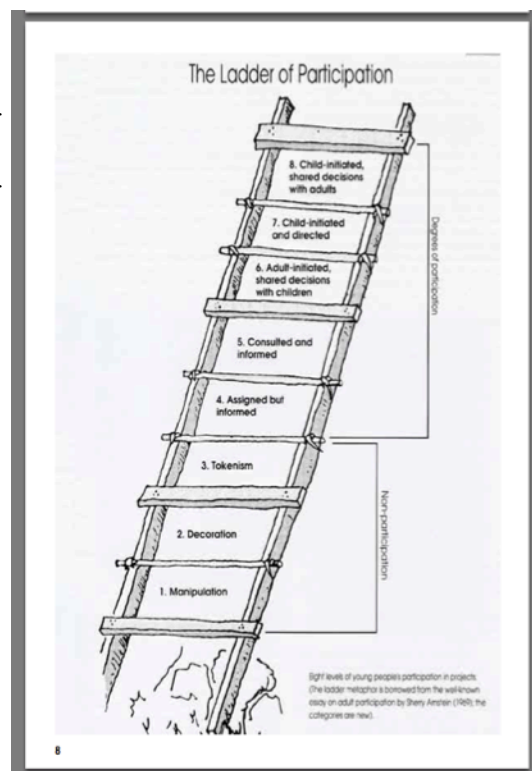
Source: Personal Documentation (23/07/2015)



In fact, I found many children did not understand what being held at that time. In the event, many journalists from newspaper, radio, and television attended and stories appeared on television and in local newspapers the following day. One of the children came to me after being interviewed by the media. She said she was nervous because it was her first time being interviewed and she did not know what to answer. Randomly, I also asked other children at random about the 'children's rights' balloons and posters that they wrote and shared such as 'Right to be breastfed', 'Rights to have education', 'Right to have a name', 'Equality of rights', 'Right to Eat', and many other taglines; whether they understood it. The answers surprised me because they told me that they were made to come and did the activities the night before without knowing the meaning of it.

Figure 6 Roger Hart's Ladder of Participation (Hart, R 1997)

From my knowledge, I can easily say that the children are used as a decoration by the NGOs and the media, while their participation in development tends to be tokenistic. Ministerial Regulation of MWECP No.3/2011 about child participation in development refers to Roger Hart's (1997) 'ladder of participation' (KPPPA 2011: 27), which clearly sets the same standards and goals of meaningful participation (Figure 6). It consists of eight steps with non-participation elements in the three first steps and the other five degrees of participation in the higher steps. The non-participation elements in the first steps are manipulation, decoration, and tokenism. Manipulation and decoration are the lowest degrees when children are used to participating but have no understanding of the activities and their actions (Hart 1997), just like what happened with the FAS celebration at city hall. Similar to that, tokenism is also categorised as non-participation because although children apparently give their voice, in practice they have no freedom about their way of delivering it as well as limited chances to formulate their opinions.



Franks (2011: 17) criticised that this ladder is more hierarchical and apparently tends to drive children to participate at the top level—without considering the different needs and fields of child participation. Hart's ladder is criticized, as it is showing the imbalanced power of the relationship between children and adults. Furthermore, Hart's degrees only set the common standard of child participation and are less aware of the diversity of children. Children with various backgrounds might choose varying goals of their participation. Moses (2008) emphasizes that the steps seem to ignore the differences in children's power and goals. In fact, the children in the campaigns are happy and enjoyed their 'non-participation' activity. This relates to my previous points about the meaning of becoming members of FAS. When I asked the children about their feelings, they said that they enjoyed the campaigns although it made them exhausted when they had to wait and stand sweating under the sun. In that activity, they met their friends, took pictures, and uploaded them to their social media. They also claimed the campaign as their activities. They were excited to see themselves on television and in the newspaper.

By joining FAS, a childhood experience is created through relationships with peers. Children build their friendship with peers and then create their own relations and social worlds. In this space, children not only secure their peer societies from the demands of adult society but are also engaged in identifying common social problems and a plan of action (Cassell 2002). In the next chapter, the critical approach of a child as an agent will be applied to analyse the way children express themselves and as tools to answer the question about the dilemma of child agency, especially in how far childhood experiences have to deal with the concept of participation imposed by dominant perspectives in this space.

Part Two: Exploring the Participation Spaces

The chapters in part two provide a detailed analysis of my findings when exploring the participation spaces with children. I portray the children's perspectives through their experiences in Child Forums, both locally and nationally, and link it with child participation in relation to development. It is apparent that children tend to enjoy their space in Child Forums even though the space is often dominated by adult interventions. In the practice, the role of children in development planning becomes main concern among the government and the other adult actors, while children seem to less care about this.

Chapter 3 explores children's conceptualisation within Child Forums and how they experience the space in their childhood. It considers how children see participation compared to the dominant perspectives of participation that come both from policy and government perspectives. Chapter 4 analyses the power relations and political interests in Child Forums. It specifically examines the relation between institutions engaged with Child Forums and how they have influenced the ability of children to participate through the formulation of the Voices of Indonesian Children.

Chapter 3: How Do Children See What They Do?

To understand the importance of Child Forums for children, in this chapter I present the children's perspectives about child participation and how they experience in this space compared to the dominant understanding of child participation within Child Forums. In practice, the children have different priorities when viewing their participation because they tend to see it as a way to get personal benefits and identify themselves or be identified as good children.

Defining Child Participation in the Child Forums: Dominant Perspectives

The discourses around participation are difficult to define since there are many different interpretations. However, in the context of Child Forums, there are two main dominant perspectives from adults to explain participation: first, as to fulfil children's rights; and second, to protect children by involving them in positive activities within Child Forums.

- Fulfilling Children's Rights and Achieving Meaningful Participation

In the case of Child Forums, space for child participation has been created to fulfil participation as a right of children as stated in the UNCRC, mainly in Article 12. In fact, the government of Indonesia is establishing regulations and forming Child Forums at all government levels as a response to fulfilling children's rights to participate (KPPPA 2011: 11). Barbara Woodhouse (2004, 2010) divided these rights into 'dignity-based' or 'capacity-based'; and 'need-based'. Child participation is categorised as part of dignity-based rights that include "life, identity, expression, association and privacy" (Pufall and Unsworth 2004: 12) and capacity-based rights such as children's agency and creativity (Hagerman 2010: 66). Both of those categories of rights put children's views as important rights to be attended to and applied to the decisions affecting them.

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, the goal of the Indonesian government is to achieve meaningful participation in reference to Roger Hart's 'ladder of participation' (Figure 6). The top five stages act as a target of meaningful participation that will be achieved when children have an understanding of the intentions of the activities, the actors and the decision-makers on issues and start to voluntarily have meaningful roles. These stages help to inform adults that even if they are still taking a role in designing the activities, they should at least inform children about the process, treat children's views seriously and share decisions with children. The top of the ladder is the highest degree of participation, when children are able to initiate, design and manage their initiatives and then share the decisions with adults. However, in practice, this 'ladder' seems to only provide a normative framework as guidelines for stakeholders, leading towards the 'higher' participation setting, disregarding children's goals for participation.

According to Ansell (2005: 235), child participation is important to governments because it can be used as an education for active citizenship. So it becomes crucial to fulfil child participation fulfilling to achieve the top ladder of participation. This is embodied through the involvement of child forums in *Musrenbang* as the tool to empower children to demand their rights and to contribute to their society. This strategy is in accordance with Sinclair (2004: 114), who mentions two steps to achieve meaningful participation: first, giving more children chances to influence decisions and second, helping children to have an impact on decision-making processes. Hence, by involving children in *Musrenbang*, the government can claim that they already provide space for meaningful participation regardless of whether it is meaningful for children.

- Space for Reproducing the Status Quo

Furthermore, child participation within Child Forums is used as one approach to reproduce the status quo, to maintain children's behaviour for positive results. One official from the MWECP explained that Child Forums direct children to positive activities to sway children from negative behaviour,⁶ related to what Bessant (2003: 92) called 'securing the pathways' of young people. Research shows that the child growth period is the best opportunity to develop a child's intellectual, mental, social and spiritual foundation, or what human rights describe as 'evolving capacities of the child' (Lansdown 2005: 1, UNICEF 2009: 19). Similarly, Bruyere (2010: 205), Hickey and Mohan (2005: 237), and Hart (2008: 407) noted that child participation is necessary since participation could be defined as 'empowering', oriented towards the transformation of lives and societies. Continuing this, Smith (2009: 256-257) divides the intervention of adults in childhood into two categories: the justice model and the welfare model. In contrast with the welfare model, the justice model is directed by specific goals and sees the children from a 'responsibilisation' perspective (Bessant 2003: 88). In the Child Forums, the government's intervention throughout childhood reflects Smith's welfare model in which children are seen as 'trouble' or 'youth at risk'.

In the end, these adult dominant perspectives positioned children as the object in practicing child participation whereas children are not the object, but are social actors in their own right (Christensen and Prout 2002: 480). Therefore, I argue that exploring children's experiences and understandings of participation is necessary to increase their agency in their participation.

Children's Perspectives: The Needs for Participation in Family and School

Compared to the policy documents, children define participation more simply. They state participation to be their chance to express their agency and they feel it is necessary to start at home and then go to development planning as the last priority. In FGD with children from FAS, I invited them to plan what kind of FGD they preferred, and evaluated the results at the end of FGD. They did a role-play with their facilitator and then wrote in sticky notes what participation means to them on sticky notes. There were 21 answers that can be summed up to four answer categories, which explain participation as: the involvement in activities or Child Forum activities; a way to speak up and express their views and aspirations; joining organisations; and being involved in the rule-making process.

"Child Participation is to speak up bravely about what we want and to show our aspirations" (FGD sticky notes, 24/7/2015).

"Child Participation is when children can be involved in activities that are also organised by themselves, so they can propose everything that they want" (FGD sticky notes, 24/7/2015).

"Child Participation is the involvement of children in all activities, at home, school, and in the neighbourhood, both expressing aspirations and doing activities" (FGD sticky notes, 24/7/2015).

I was surprised that they wrote from their own understanding even though many times the policy version defined that, participation in development has been socialised. I thought they would copy the definition from the policy since most of the children had never heard of participation before they joined Child Forums or child rights campaigns by other institutions. It shows that children are active agent who able to express their own views.

⁶ Personal interview with official from MWECP, 13/8/2015

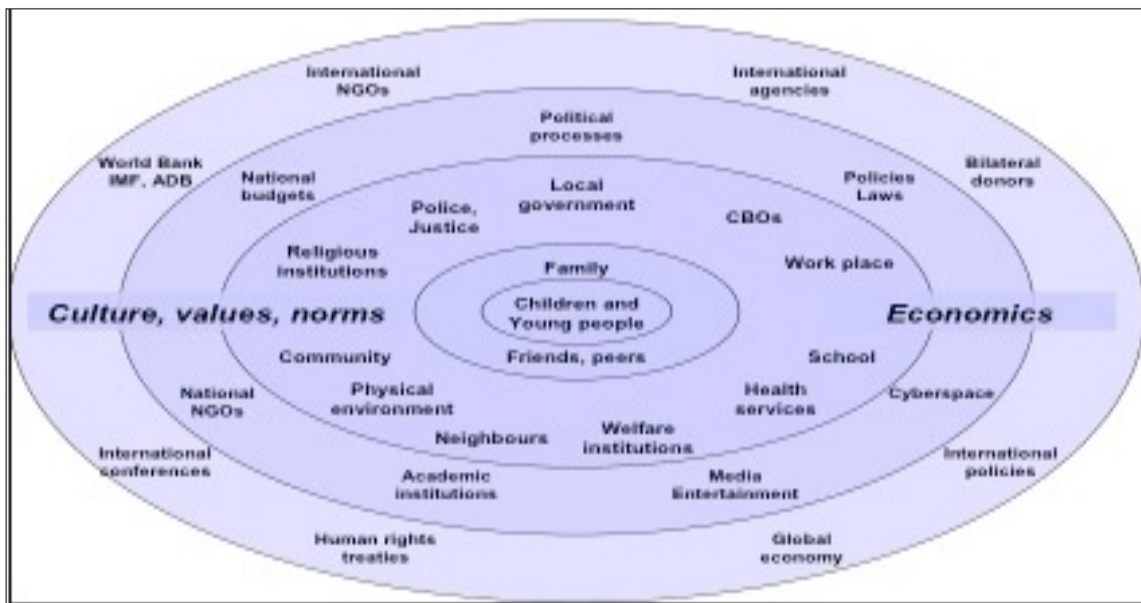
However, based on FGD results, none of children defined participation as their rights or contributions to development planning. In the discussion, the children's explained that they need participation more in family, school, and child forum, rather than in *Musrenbang*. All children's agreed that participation in the family, school, and child forums was important. Meanwhile, when it came to the participation in *Musrenbang*, only a few children left. Some of them had never even heard about *Musrenbang* because only a few children from Child Forums have the privilege to sit in that 'space for development planning'.

"I attended 'Musrenbang', but was just present and listening; that's all" (a girl from FAS who attended *Musrenbang* once⁷, 24/7/2015).

"In my first experience, I just came and listened, but at the next Musrenbang, the adults started to ask our opinions. However, I was still afraid to talk first. I was afraid if I said something wrong" (a girl from FAS who attended *Musrenbang* four times⁸, 24/7/2015).

Moses (2008: 337) notices that the world directs child participation's empowerment to formal participation, but in practice, the children need more space to participate in their closest circles, families, schools and their peer groups. When I asked why, they said that the child issues mostly emerge in the nearest environment, such as family and school. They also believed that their participation in child forums would help them fight against child abuse and violence in their inner circles (FGD notes, 24/7/2015). Yet their family and the school never taught them about participation rights or their involvement in development.

Figure 7 Settings for child and youth participation.



Source: Rajani (2001: 15) in (Unicef. 2005)

I argue that the idea of participation is handed down to children by many kinds of training and capacity building sessions around participation, but adults in families and schools are not trained to treat children with a participatory approach. If we look at participation settings for children (Figure 7), this suggests that participation should start with children in their own families and then spread out into the neighbourhoods, schools and finally government and global institutions. In the Indonesian context, Macfarland (1994: 206) claimed that Indonesian families have strong

⁷ Discussion in FGD, 2015

⁸ ibid

influence on social change related to national development. This definition suits children's preferences, according to the FGD results. As children grow up, their capacities to communicate and to take part in their families and communities evolve through participatory practice. The participation process does not only create a space for fulfilling children's rights, but it also functions as a space to build relationships between children and adults. In contrast, the mainstream idea of child participation started from the global notion in the UNCRC and went down to the national government with the idea of 'participation in development'. Therefore, a missing link has prevailed: children can participate in the public area, but not in their own families and schools.

Nonetheless, the children did not care about the results of *Musrenbang*. They just want to be listened to and respected and to make adults aware that the Child Forums exist and are important for children. The meaning of participation for children is ways to express themselves, to show that they are active human beings in their circles rather than only being 'citizens'. One of the girls said that although she did not enjoy the process, she still got some benefits from being in a *Musrenbang*:

"I was bored at that meeting, but later I was also excited. I was bored because it took a long time, with too many agendas being talked about and it all dominated by adults. However, I was also excited to be there so I knew what happened in my sub-district, for example, now I know that in our area we have 'sanggar keroncong' (traditional music clubs), which that I never realised before" (a girl, representative of FAN, 24/8/2015).

I found that when the children were involved in *Musrenbang*, most of them only listened, but for children with more experiences are encouraged to speak even though they often have too much doubt to express their opinions. Their position in *Musrenbang* is to represent Child Forums, but only two to six seats are provided for children compared to tens to hundreds for adults. I suggested that those settings discourage the children from speaking because they feel pressure from the adults, especially because they live in the Javanese culture where it is impolite to interrupt adult meetings or conversation. Although the dominant perspective around sending children to *Musrenbang* is to involve the children in the decision-making process, in practice every child has their own perspectives and purposes linked to participation. They do not come with universal motives, but different ones, and so they aim for various degrees of participation. This contradicts Roger Hart's classifications on participation ladders that only set the common standard for child participation and are less aware of the diversity of children.

In the *Musrenbang*, the children displayed their agency openly but kept their voice under control. Although they sit in the meeting, they do not have the power to demand if their proposal is not accepted. They have to accept all decisions or try to propose again the following year. There are dominant factors affecting children's abilities to participate: childhood identity, which includes how they feel about themselves, what they think about the perspectives of others, and what another person might think about them (Hart 1997: 30-32, Cheney 2007: 254). Knowing that all adults in *Musrenbang* are officials who should be respected and thinking they might either recognise children attendance or ignore it strains children's intellectual ability to analyse the situation and may thereby reduce their participation.

Looking for Personal Benefits

By gaining deeper perspectives from children, I realise that the importance of Child Forums for them is not to reach development goals, but the personal benefits they will get from such spaces. The children tend to join Child Forums because of their desires to receive personal advantages

rather than to achieve meaningful participation. In FGD with FAS, the children were divided into four groups of four to five children, and they discussed what motivated them to participate in the Child Forums by drawing and writing. There were many answers, but between the groups, there were four similar points: (1) They want to build (new) relationships with other children as well as with the government; (2) they want to get more knowledge about children's rights; (3) they want to get experience; and (4) they wish to learn organisational skills.

The children are interested in Child Forums mainly because they are inspired by experiences of other children who have already benefited from the spaces. They told me that at first, the community leader invited them to join the activities and formed Child Forum committees at the local level. However, after they were socialised about children's rights and met the other kids, they continued by building friendships, planning activities and promoting this space to other children. They like to have new friends, so they tried to invite more children to be involved in this space. According to Hart (1997), friendship is necessary to share similar interests and abilities and to understand the personalities of other people. The children learn from the earlier members of the Child Forums, who shared their experiences and the benefits from this space. Furthermore, Checkoway (1995) added that participation could provide experiential education and skills development. This matched with the children's answers that by being involved in the Child Forums, they became more confident to talk in front of adults, gained a lot of experiences, and linked with key people in the government institution and NGOs.

The Child Forums as spaces to get those benefits attract children to experience their childhood and to show their agency in a social environment. Agency itself refers to children's actions that affect their social world (Pufall and Unsworth 2004: 9) and is a term to acknowledge to children that they are self-determining actors. Ermibayer and Mische (1998: 963) further define agency as "a temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (habits), and also oriented toward the future (imagining alternative possibilities) and toward the present (contextualising past habits and future projects while in the moment)". Related to these concepts, the children are aware that their experience in a Child Forum as an organisational body will provide benefits for their future, so they want to develop their ability and exercise their skill in this space. This is similar to the concept of agency that is defined as the capabilities of children formed through social interaction and receptiveness within their environments and constitutes to a large extent the foundation of a human being's development (Pufall and Unsworth 2004, Biggeri et al. 2011: 4)

Despite the common benefits above, I found that there are several answers that differ in each FGD group related to childhood and identity, such as to made aware of children's rights, to become familiar with new places, to make use of their spare time, to be famous in the media (newspaper and television), to have 'selfies' with famous people and to get food and transport fees. I realise that although the children in FAS come from a relatively homogenous background, they differ and took their own motives into the Child Forums. This condition contrasts with the popular premise that childhood is socially constructed by collective senses (Smith 2009: 154-155, Alanen 1988: 63, Pufall and Unsworth 2004: 18). In this view, how we see and treat the children naturally forms children's experiences of being children and also shapes their behaviour and involvement with adult spaces. In contrast, James and James (2001) viewed that "children are not only shaped by culture but also help to shape it" (2001: 30). Although childhood is intended to be constructed by the government in the Child Forums, the children are not totally shaped by that. The motives and personal benefits from children's interactions with their peers and adults within the child forums also form their experiences of being a child as well as shaping their childhood.

“We do ‘good’ participation, not participation in the wrong way”

During my fieldwork, both in FAS and FAN, I felt the enthusiasm from children when they told me about what they had done in their Child Forums. I asked some children what they had done, and they explained with excitement about their activities related to children’s rights, such as campaigns, capacity building, children day’s celebrations, child festival, theatre, child mini-congresses, and other cultural and educational activities for children. They proudly said that those activities come from their ideas and that they organise them as ‘from children to children’ activities. They put all their activities on social media (Figure 8) and use social media as a tool to make the Child Forums well known and attract other children to join their activities. They felt lucky to have joined the Child Forums since they are now more confident to talk and they have more experiences than to other children.

Figure 8 Screenshots of Child Forum's Social Media.



Source: Instagram @forumanaknasional and Twitter @ForumAnakID

I joined their social media platforms, and I found that all the posts were inspiring because they shared positive activities to encourage awareness about children’s rights. Besides, they use social media as a way to communicate and connect with other child forums at local levels. At an FAN event, I got a chance to talk with one girl, and she said,

“Child Participation is like join the activities such as in the Child Forum, the right and good participation. Some of our friends also do participation but in the wrong way, they joined gangs and do bad things?” (a girl at FAN, 10/8/2015).

Her friends confirmed that by saying that in the National Child Forum they could meet high-achieving children from all around Indonesia. However, most of the time, only ‘good’ children who sit on child forum committees are able to do those positive activities. The issues of good representatives are dominant in this space, so to get recognition and benefits from child forums, they have to compete by having good participation within this space.

From their answers, I was curious to gain a deeper understanding of the children’s backgrounds within the Child Forums. Who are they? Why do they separate ‘the good participation’ from ‘the bad participation’?

- Good Participation, Good Children

I noticed that providing good and positive participation is important since child participation in Child Forums is an essential component to building a good childhood. Nejati (2013: 411) believed that child participation becomes “the frontiers and catalysts of positive social changes”. Head (2011: 545-546) also emphasised that experiencing positive participation is worthwhile process “where individuals possess basic skills and confidence, and where social learning occurs for broad groups of participants”. In line with that, Ansell (2005: 226) explained that seeing children’s participation from a universal children’s right’s perspectives produce a universal standard measurement of ‘good childhood’. The official from MWECP⁹ confirmed that one function of Child Forums is as a space for prevention from negative risks. By participating in the child forums with positive activities, the children will escape from the danger of rebellion and get away from negative behaviour such as child prostitution, drugs, criminals and any other exploitation and violence.

In Child Forum, I found that the participants are the children who already on the ‘good’ track, and for cases like in Surakarta with the CFC pilot project, the children involved tend to have better access to the fulfilment of children’s rights. Suddenly, I remember my first visit to the sub-district Child Forum in Surakarta. It was during *Ramadhan*’s breaking fast roadshow and the activities that the children in that forum were role-plays related to child issues in education. They played a role as students who found street children out of school, and as child forum members, they tried to push the children to get back to the school by reporting it to the government to get it followed up. I realised that they treated out-of-school children differently, as ‘children with problems’. At the end of the session, there was one girl who asked, ‘Why we have to push those children back to school? What if ‘do not go to school’ is their choice?’ By that time, I realised that none of those children at that time were out of school. To check, I asked for the attendance list, and I found that all of the children were students. Then I started to ask about their background, and I found that they were also homogenous in terms of their culture (Javanese), their level of education (junior and senior high school students) and their relation with the ‘community elites’ (if they received an invitation letter to join the child forum).

The issue of representatives also comes up at higher levels: provincial and national. Since Indonesia has a representative democracy as its form of government, child forums also apply representatives in their systems. The idea of this system is that representatives would carry the views of their peers (Wyness 2001: 210). Ideally, children should be elected by other children as their representatives, to express issues identified, investigated and discussed with these other kids at the local level. However, the local government, not the children themselves, elected most of the children. Hart (1997: 16) emphasised not pretending that selection by adults already represents other children. Through these processes, the opportunities were more available to the active children who displayed good behaviour and achievement, both academically and non-academically, or who have a connection with government officials.

“We were selected at province level by the government based on some requirements, below 18 years old, active in Child Forums and with a good academic record or another achievement” (one of FAN’s representatives, 10/8/2015).

⁹ Personal Interview with official from MWECP, 13/8/2015

- *Involving Good Children, Excluding others?*

Therefore, are the children that are involved in the forums really representing the children from their areas? Ennew and Hastadewi (2004: 70) view representation issues in these kinds of meetings as dilemmas between selection, competition, and election. Unconsciously, Child Forums build a wall among children and become an exclusive space. The Child Forums becomes one indicator of active children, so if you are not in the Child Forums, you do not have special qualities equal to those of the children who are actively involved in the spaces. The stakeholders seem to reward normativity and training to uphold the status quo through the governmentality process, such as involving and maintaining good children in the Child Forums in order to be role models and produce good childhood. Implicitly, the Child Forums already put '(children who want to be) good active children' as an unwritten requirement. The children themselves could separate which children are active in the Child Forums and which are not. I asked one facilitator about her brother, who did not join the Child Forum, and she answered, "*He is more quiet and passive, and he does not like activities like this*". It raised an additional question: How can the children's proposals represent every child in *Musrenbang* if only 'good' children dominate this space?

"The involvement of Child Forums in Musrenbang is important. Child Forums are organisations tied up with the government, so if we are not involved in Musrenbang, how do we know about the development of child issue? I thought that Musrenbang is only about how we get funding for our activities, but from Musrenbang, we can compare with other institutions, and determine whether Child Forums become a priority or not" (Child Forum representative, FAN, 10/8/2015).

Musrenbang are one space to understand what happens in certain areas, but when only 'good children' formulate the issues, how can the children's problems be solved in broader areas? Head (2011) reminds us of an important point that should be of crucial consideration for stakeholders when inviting children to participate. He points out, "When already- confident young people are more likely to become involved, the vulnerable or hard-to-reach groups may be overlooked" (Head 2011: 546). Furthermore, regardless of degrees and fields of participation, it is vital to lift up socio-political, economic, gender, cultural and environment dimensions (Hart 2008: 413), in particular, regarding who can participate and what kind of participation that is.

It may be true that a proposal in a *Musrenbang* was established as a result of a Child Forum meeting, but such proposals are mostly activities for them as a 'good children' community, such as a budget for internal Child Forums, children rights' socialisation and social charity¹⁰. The marginalised children such as street children, working children, disabled children, and child prostitutes are still there, living in marginalised space, without any spaces to sound their concerns or ask for better facilities from the government. As a result, children are also excluded from the opportunities for participation in terms of social constraints because of their poor and marginalized condition (Lund 2007: 140). This condition results from the fact that some children are living in poverty, marginalised by gender, ethnicity, culture or disability or simply unable to access information about local opportunities, while in fact it is precisely, those children are the most vulnerable group that need to be heard and involved in policy decisions that target them.

¹⁰ Personal interview with child facilitator, 26/7/2015. She gave data about the compilation of the Child Forum's proposal in Surakarta's *Musrenbang* from 2011-2014.

Chapter 4: From Ground to Top: Layers of Complexity

I noticed how the children see their spaces within Child Forums as not only constructed by their own motives and perspectives, but also a result of the complexity between stakeholders. There are many interests in the Child Forums, both from the government and NGOs, and it happens on all levels, from local to national. In this chapter, I link the analyses of the children's involvement in the Child Forums with the power relations between institutions engaged in child forums, from the ground level in FAS to the national level in FAN. At the national level, the complexity of child forums as spaces for participation in development will be examined by analysing the formulation process of the 'Voices of Indonesian Children'.

Ticking the Box: 'Imagined' Child-Friendly Cities, Friendly for Whom?

Children's attendance in all decision planning affecting their lives has been used as an indicator of achieving child participation, regardless of whether it is 'meaningful' or not. In Indonesia, child participation within Child Forums is an important strategy for the government to fulfil children's rights collectively or as a state simplification to control the children. There are around 85 million children in Indonesia and by establishing Child Forums; it is easier to fulfil their rights through policy and development (personal interview with official from MWECP, 13/8/2015). Consequently, the participation of children in development planning is crucial for the government to claim that the policy results already match with the children's needs. This is one of the governmentality processes, as it is the government strategy to produce active citizenship by "educating desires and configuring habits, aspirations and beliefs" (Li 2007: 275) in children by establishing Child Forums.

However, the complexity of child participation within the Child Forums started from the local level that linked to the idea of implementation of child-friendly cities/CFCs. Indonesian government designed the CFC programme as one of their national programmes and gives annual rewards to any provinces and cities able to fulfil all criteria of CFCs. Consequently, Surakarta, as one of the pilot projects, has to put in a lot of effort to make the city a CFC. Many of the child facilities are built to create child-friendly areas such as children's radio as a space for expression and infrastructures for children as their physical spaces. They also established Child Forums in all (sub)-districts and involved them in *Musrenbang*. With those facilities, they claimed that the city had already become child-friendly space as children's problems had decreased and the participation level of children was higher than in the other areas. However, are these friendly spaces actually friendly for children? Two cases in Surakarta below portray that the city fails to provide child-friendly spaces in anything but a name:

Case 1: Facilities for Child Forums

To build child-friendly areas, there were many facilities constructed and provided for children through child forums. The government proudly set priorities for child forums by providing secretariat and trainings. Unfortunately, in FAS, the facilities were given from the local government to children and ignored the children's own aspirations. First, the FAS secretariat office was built in a location that is difficult to access since it is quite far from the city centre. I got a chance to visit that place, and I found the rooms were unmanaged with much dust as a result of rarely being used. The children preferred to have the meetings in the member's house, on the street or at the park. Second, FAS has completed many pieces of training to build children's capacities for participation. They taught how to participate in adults' space, how to talk

with adults, and manners by which to do advocacy (a personal interview with one of FAS's facilitator, 26/7/2015). However, the training was scheduled and decided by adults who did not know how to talk and listen to children.

Case 2: The establishment of the Children Radio Channel

To create a friendly space for children, the government is told to involve children in all planning meetings related to the decisions that affect them. Hence, when I joined the meeting about planning to create a children's radio, I saw the attendance of FAS as tokenism. The children were invited to the meeting, but they were not the ones who initiated the radio since it was not what they proposed to the government. The idea came from the government to provide space for children's expression, and although the concept was still at the assessment stage, officials stated that radio should be established. On that day, the officials decided to put the radio on an 'AM' channel, even though that was unpopular among people. In that meeting, there were 16 adults and only one child present. The only child asked a technical question at the end of the meeting and the government official responded by saying, 'what are you learning at school?' All people laughed since they saw it was a joke, but it also reflected that the official tried to blame the child for not understanding.

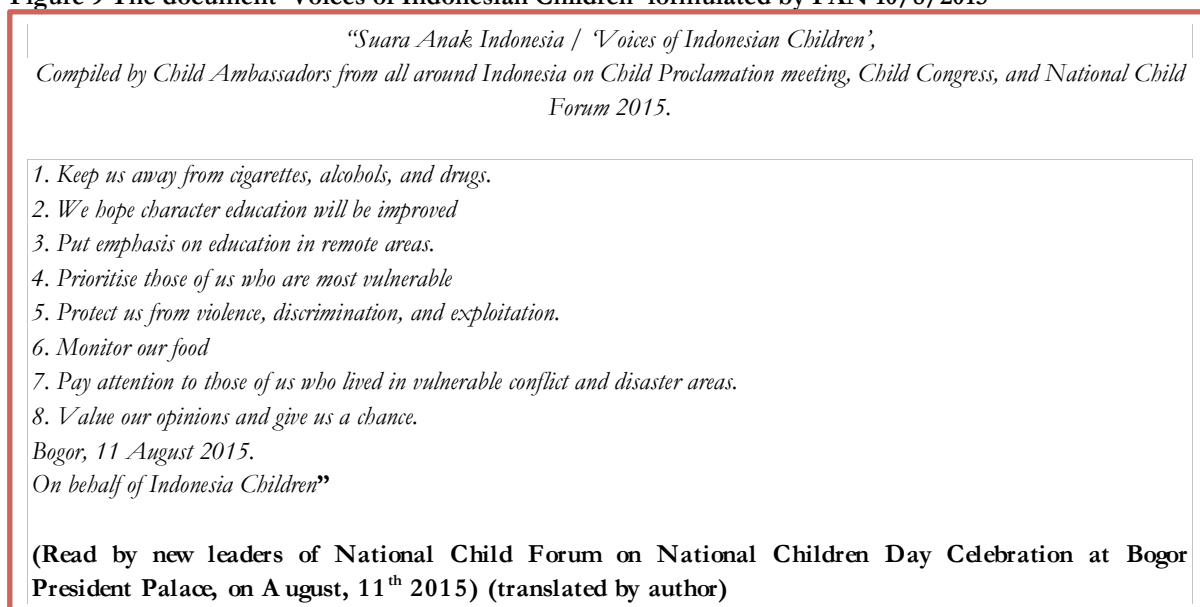
From those cases, I argue that the implementation of child-friendly cities tends to accommodate government interest and forgets the main goals, which is to be friendly to children. The first case illustrates that the activities are still limited to physical aspects and there is less concern to create friendly environments for children. The stakeholders gave facilities to children in order to 'tick the boxes' of CFC indicators, but do not consider whether they are in the best interests of the children. Furthermore, the adults tend to give space for children as unequal players in policy-making processes by implicitly limiting their participation. They demand that children behave respectfully, but there is no willingness and commitment from the government to give practical effects to their participation (Bessant 2003: 92).

Hence, in the second case, although the government invited children into the planning meeting, they treated the children in the same way they treated the other adults. This aligned with Head's (2011: 545) views that most of the time involving children in formal participation spaces tends to be "top-down, patronizing, tokenistic or unappreciative" of the children's real interest. By giving tokenistic friendly spaces, children's agency can go unrecognised by adults, who sometimes make the children doubt their abilities to use their agency appropriately. Pufall and Unsworth (2004: 9) stated that children themselves act as social actors and agents in various ways based on their competencies, but the agency of children needs recognition and safe, friendly spaces to be nourished. Furthermore, the government needs to recognise the agency of children in designing CFCs as well as their participation in development planning to reach meaningful participation. McNeish and Newman (as cited in Sinclair 2004: 114) suggested four elements to attain meaningful participation, which are "addressing attitudinal barriers, creating more participatory structures and processes, achieving inclusive participation, and motivating young people to be involved". Since CFCs have become the main target of the city, these elements of meaningful participation within child forums have lost priority compared to CFC indicators, and most of the stakeholders neglected the goals of promoting youth participation in community planning.

Contesting the Genuine ‘Voices of Indonesian Children’

In 2015, FAN representatives formulated the document, ‘Suara Anak Indonesia’ or the ‘Voices of Indonesian Children’ (Figure 9) for the first time. This document consisting of eight points was claimed to be ‘on behalf of Indonesian Children’ and was read in front of the President of the Republic of Indonesia.

Figure 9 The document 'Voices of Indonesian Children' formulated by FAN 10/8/2015



However, this was not the only ‘Voices of Indonesian Children’ that claimed to represent the Indonesian children’s views. A day before FAN, on August 8th, 2015, the Children’s Congress already established their declaration of the ‘Voices of Indonesian Children’ (see Annex 1). The Children’s Congress is a national child conference organised annually by the National Commission on Child Protection/*Komnas Anak*, which is an independent government body outside the MWECP. *Komnas Anak* has been actively working for the fulfilment of child rights since 1998, and every year since 2004 the Children’s Congress drafts its ‘Voices’ document, even though it is often not taken seriously by the government (Ennew and Hastadewi 2004). This year, the Congress’s version of ‘Voices’ consists of 11 points demanding the government to fulfil their rights, and in the closing of that event, the Minister of MWECP¹¹ promised to deliver children’s ‘Voices’ to the President.

The government doubts that the ‘Voices’ documents from the Children’s Congress are genuinely from the children, because the discourses tend to be ‘against’ the government:

“Voices of Indonesian Children from Children Congress were not genuinely from the children. It was almost impossible if the children used the discourses that against the government because the children are also part of the government. Therefore the words such as forced, appealed, and invoked are not the words of children” (personal interview with officials, 13/8/2015).

In response to that, FAN formulated their own ‘Voices’ and delivered it to the President on the National Children’s Day Celebration. The children in FAN were asked to formulate a new ‘genuine’ version of ‘Voices’. The kids asked to send one representative from each province to draft the Voices within an hour. There were 32 children from 32 provinces who sat in a circle

¹¹ In Children Congress 2015, Minister of MWECP was invited to attend and give speech in the Congress’s closing ceremony.

downstairs while the other children saw the process from upstairs (Figure 10). The space downstairs was specifically for children, and no adults were allowed to intervene. They started by choosing their leader and secretary and divide themselves into several teams as shown in the table below:

Table 3 The Formation of Formulation Teams of 'Indonesian Children Voices'

The Children Teams on Children Voices Formulation (1 leader, 1 secretary)					
Topic	Education	Protection	Health	Social environment	Special protection
Members of teams	8	6	7	3	6

In this space, the issue of child participation was not popular among children; there was more concern over other issues, in particular about education, health, and protection (Table 3). At first, they almost had participation as the sixth topic in formulation teams since I saw one girl stand and shout, “Here participation, here, anyone join me?” She kept shouting with her hands up, although the other children had already formed teams and started to discuss. In the end, I saw one facilitator approach her and ask her to join one of the other teams since she was alone (field notes, 9/8/2015).



Figure 10 The process of formulation of 'The Voices of Indonesian Children'.

The representatives sat in the circle, while the other children could see the process from upstairs. Source: Personal Documentation 9/8/2015

After the draft was finished, the leader read it in front of all the children before they were separated into another room to discuss the wording for the final version. I did not attend because that space was only for children and two child facilitators, so I interviewed one of the children after they finished. She told me that the process was quite hard, with many debates, but in the end, ‘Voices’ was fully created by the children. *“We arranged respectful sentences, so it will not offend the government, she said, we tried to make the best words”* (a 15-year-old girl, member of formulation team of ‘The Voices of Indonesian Children’, 10/8/2015).

At the end, it was FAN’s version of ‘Voices’ that was read in front of all the children and became the climax of the National Child Forum activities after it was delivered to the President. At that moment, there was great applause from all participants cheering the ‘Voices’. In the President’s

speech, he only told a short story about the palace and then made some quiz for the children and distributed bicycles as gifts, without giving any response related to the ‘Voices. However, when I randomly asked for their impressions about the activities within FAN and the President’s response to their ‘Voices’, all of these children gave me positive answers.

*“All activities were fun, except now I am so exhausted! I learned many things about children’s rights, and I am so happy to be here, at the President’s Palace. I am so happy to meet the President and other people who I had only seen on TV”.*¹²

*“I am happy because we can deliver our Voices to the President. About his response, I think it is normal. All points need to be processed so we just have to wait”.*¹³

*“I was a bit disappointed because the President did not give a direct response but at least he listened and I believe he will follow up the voices of the children”.*¹⁴

Children in the National Child Forum did not feel upset; they were happy with the activities during FAN. They prepared many things before coming to FAN, especially for their traditional performances that attracted the most attention. Moreover, most of them were so excited to be in the Palace, and they competed with each other to get ‘selfies’ with the President and other famous people at the Palace. They were less aware of the President’s responses.

In contrast to positive responses from children in FAN, the leader of *Komnas Anak* criticised the response of the President at the event that ignored the ‘Voices’ and other children’s issues.¹⁵ Following that, an online petition signed by 669 supporters came out indicating the disappointment of the participants of the Children’s Congress:

“Mr President, it is the time you may listen to the Voices of Indonesian Children”
petition on change.org, August, 12th 2015 (Afnan. 2015)

That petition explained that they were not only disappointed by the President’s responses but also upset because they expected that their version of ‘Voices’ would be read in front of the President, not FAN’s version.

In spite of everything, both the Children’s Congress and FAN claimed their ‘Voices’ to be ‘on behalf of Indonesian Children’. But which voices are truly on behalf of the Indonesian children?

Acting in a Contradictory Manner

In the case of ‘Voices of Indonesian Children’ 2015, the stakeholders behind FAN and Children’s Congress have been acting in contradictory manner by tried to co-opt the ‘Voices’ for their own agenda. Actually, there is already clear distinction between the functions of both institutions. Ministerial Regulation on Child Participation no 3/2011 already distinguished between the goals of the National Child Forum and Children’s Congress. The Child Forums are directed to development planning in *Musrenbang* and FAN is held to provide capacity building for

¹² Short talks with FAN participants, 13/08/2015

¹³ Short talks with FAN participants, 15/08/2015

¹⁴ *ibid*

¹⁵ The criticisms about the President’s response come from the leader of *Komnas Anak*, *Aries Merdeka Sirait*, published in some media on August 11th-12th 2015. Besides the petition at change.org, this news was also published in the national newspaper *Kompas*, on August 11th 2015.

<http://nasional.kompas.com/read/2015/08/11/14555161/Arist.Merdeka.Kritik.Cara.Jokowi.Peringati.Hari.Anak>

child participation in development, whereas only the Children's Congress can result in such as 'Voices' declaration.

However, Indonesian children formulated both of the 'Voices', yet the children were not treated on the basis of their best interest, but for the political interests of both institutions, *Komnas Anak* and MWECP. This incident indicates that children are used by mainstream children's rights activists as tools for demanding rights from the government, while they are also used by the government as proof that the government has already done its job when it comes to children's rights. The 'Voices' may come genuinely from children, but the children actually did not initiate it. Furthermore, Hart (1997: 16) emphasised that such conferences are not intended to encourage genuine participation, but just to convince the government and NGOs to treat participation seriously.

Beside the case of 'Voices', the idea of participation was contradicted by the practice during the FAN 2015. FAN is one moment that provides space for children from all around Indonesia to meet the national government. In this event, children could ask anything directly to the government, but with more than 500 participants, only a few of them got the chance to do so. During the dialogue session, most of the children asked questions related to children's issues in their provinces, such as education, sexual violence, bullying, street children and many other issues. However, there was a boy asking about the children's position in political spaces:

"I want to ask, in the future, what would the government do with child participation, which is often used as a political elements?" (a question from one of FAN's representatives).

"Actually children are not allowed to be involved in politics because as the children's rights make clear, it is about the right to play, right to go to school, and right to participate with free expression, but not in political areas. It is wrong" (the answer from the Minister).

In this space, child participation is one strategy for managing the children rather than improving their democratic participation. If the children are not allowed to be involved in the political arena, why are they given space for participation in development planning and given a chance to deliver their voices to the government? Cockburn (2001: 13) states 'participation in the decision-making process represents a broadening and deepening of democratic development and governance'. In addition to that, Pateman (as cited in Bessant 2003) points out that participation is a central idea of the liberal democratic tradition. Therefore, children's involvement in development planning cannot be separated from political areas.

Nevertheless, I found that children in FAN believe that the government will follow up with their 'Voices', but it is up to the government when and how. The children as if they are demanding something, but will agree with whatever the results are. The important things from their participation in FAN are that they can have fun, learn more knowledge, and gain experience with children from all around the country. Implicitly, these responses explain how child participation in their inner circles, such as in families and schools, may influence their ability to participate in the formal space, such as in government and society. Checkoway (1995: 137) believes that "young people are socialised into a subservient orientation where an acceptance of the adult monopoly in the family or in society is transferred to community planning". When children are used to obeying adult's roles and decisions in the family, this culture will transfer to their response to government decisions and responses. The stakeholders tend to push the children to participate in the formal area by their participation in development planning and society, whereas space for participation in their internal spaces such as at home and school are not provided.

I argue that the stakeholders act in a contradictory manner by providing spaces with fences around them. The government involved children in development planning meetings, but the adults involved in these meetings were not equipped with a proper understanding of child participation. In practice, the government provides guidelines for child participation, but there is no requirement for policy makers to provide friendly spaces for children and follow up on their voices (Bessant 2003). Instead of including them in the real planning process, the government tends to keep children in mind by allowing them to be present at meetings (Checkoway et al. 1995). Related to that, Ennew and Hasnawati (2004: 158) declare that: “being seen and heard by people who have not previously been exposed to children’s participation may in the long run foster a place at the table for children”

Part Three: The “Glass ceiling”: Child Forum’s Participation in Development

In this research I have argued that from the children’s perspectives, participation in Child Forums is understood as a space to exercise their agency in their ‘childhood spaces’ and for their own benefits rather than to contribute to development planning processes. In part one, I discussed the system of child forums and its implementation both locally and nationally. Following that, in part two, I analysed views from children related to their participation in development and its challenges when they have to face interventions from adults. Here, I conclude by showing the limitations of meaningful child participation in development planning through the analogy of a ‘glass ceiling’.

By definition, a glass ceiling means an “unseen, yet unbreakable barrier that keeps minorities (and women) from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder, regardless of their qualification or achievements” (Cotter et al. 2001: 656). Within Child Forums, the glass ceiling appeared as unseen barrier between two spaces created by children to express their agency both in: ‘childhood’ spaces, where they owned the space for their genuine participation with their peers; and ‘adult’ spaces, where they allowed adults to intervene. Although most of the children in the Child Forums are ‘good’ children’s representatives, their participation was trapped under the glass ceiling. When their participation comes to the ‘adult’ space, the children hit a ‘glass-ceiling’ of participation in development that limits them from achieving meaningful participation. There are two reasons why children are failing to break the glass ceiling and bumping into it. First, kids are not really motivated to push against the glass ceiling; and second, stakeholders try to maintain the existence of the glass ceiling.

1. Children have their own priorities

Child Forums are important for child participation, but in practice, the children view the space differently with their own lenses. In the ‘childhood’ space, the children make use of Child Forums as a place for experience and constructing their childhood, to form an identity as a good child, and as a way to gain personal benefits as well as the fulfilment of children’s rights. Although their privilege of being members of Child Forums cannot cover the fact that it excludes other children, these ‘selected’ children want to prove that they have agency and they can do something. As long as they can express their aspirations and ‘literally’ be listened to by adults, they think that they are already achieving meaningful participation. Also, they view their participation in the development process such as in development planning as lower priority. The children enjoy the participation with peers more than participation in the development area.

Nevertheless, although it is a lower priority, the children were also satisfied with their participation in the Child Forums’ development activities. The children were proud of their roles in delivering the proposal to *Musrenbang* and formulating the ‘Voices’ of children to be read in front of the President of Indonesia. They put themselves as active agents and what they do in this space is to obtain personal benefits that will be useful for their future, such as experience and networking with adult stakeholders. In other words, the children put their own standards and interests in this space. They demand their rights, but when it comes to adult intervention, they accept the decisions made for them, and show understanding of the bureaucratic process.

2. *The stakeholders are upholding the glass ceiling*

The dominant perspective set a standard for meaningful participation based on adults' conceptual findings, such as Roger Hart's ladder of participation (1997), Sinclair's definitions (2004) and other researcher concepts. But in implementation, stakeholders uphold the glass ceiling and do not really allow the children to achieve meaningful participation. This is because the main objective of stakeholders is to control the childhood of the young generation, not to give children a meaningful role in development. Linked with that, many children's rights' activists try to push the government to increase the participation level in the policymaking process. Unfortunately, this allows the children to be utilised as political tools by other institutions, for instance, the case of 'Voices of Indonesian Children 2015'. Both the Congress and Forums claimed in resulting genuine 'Voices', whereas the children themselves were more concerned with the personal advantages gained from those two events than the responses and impacts of their 'Voices'.

Child Forums thus serve as an example of governmentality, where the State influences children to reproduce the status quo by creating 'good' future citizens in an invited space that is legitimised with positive activities. In addition, by performing and behaving well, the children help the government to reduce the possibility of 'youth at risk'. Besides, the culture of patriarchal roles in the family influenced participation in formal areas. When children grow up without participation space in their family and school, the children are used to obey adult's decision and it affects children's behaviour in broader area. For instance, in '*Musrenbang*', the participation space is provided; but the children limit their participation by following adult's control and decision. This was the inevitable result of providing participation spaces that jumped to formal participation before being concerned with the main area of participation, namely family and school.

Envisioning Meaningful Participation for Children

Since children's participation in development within Child Forum is bumping into the 'glass ceiling', I suggest that the ladders or stages of meaningful participation should not be the main goals of child participation. I acknowledged the efforts of stakeholders in providing spaces for child participation in development and how they have started to become aware of the participation issue. However, the important concern in participation is how young people have a meaningful actual impact (Checkoway and Gutierrez 2006: 6). Looking back to the standardisation of meaningful participation, it was designed and used by adults, neglecting its meaning for children.

I realise it is impossible to eliminate adult intervention, but to make child participation have actual impacts, it necessary for adults to limits their control within children's participation spaces. In the Child Forums, I saw that the adults tend to control the space by giving children opportunities to participate without developing equal partnership. It is true that children benefited from their participation in Child Forums, such as increasing self-esteem and gaining experience, but the only benefits were individual ones. As a group, Child Forums do not really impact children outside the space since the views delivered to the government only produce and accommodate the interests of 'good' children.

This piece of research into the participation space of Child Forums in Indonesia contributes to enrich the study of participation spaces from children's perspectives. The way children

understand participation can guide stakeholders to provide less tokenistic spaces by involving children in conceptualising participation, how far they want and are able to participate, what kind of participation they need, and how they would like to achieve it. However, this process also needs stakeholders' understanding and an emphasis on taking children's views seriously. Likewise, I suggest that the critical aspect should be strengthened among stakeholders to work together in shattering the glass ceiling. The stakeholders should put best interest of children as first priority instead of concern on their own institution interest.

Most importantly, children said they have a greater need for participation in their family and school rather than in development planning. It made me curious about how children experience participation in their closest circles. This research was about trying to raise the participation issue in development, but further research on child participation in family and school in the Indonesian context could enrich this study.

It is a long process to envision meaningful participation for children, but giving adults and stakeholders awareness about children's perspectives may result in better participation for children and greater contribution from the children to their peers and society.

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Appendix

Appendix 1 The Voices of Indonesian Children 2015 - formulated by Children Congress

The Voice of Indonesian Children formulated by Indonesian Children Congress XIII/2015, in Batu, East Java, 8 August 2015:

1. To achieve child-friendly Indonesia, We are Indonesian Children, encourage families, communities and state to unite joint action to break the chain against violence to children and to oppose all forms of violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect and discrimination;
2. We, Indonesian Children, appeal to the President of the Republic of Indonesia for the realization of Presidential Instruction No. 05 Year 2014 concerning the National Movement against Sexual Violence to Children in all regions in Indonesia;
3. We, Indonesian Children, appeal to the government to implement equitable participation and distribution of children's aspirations across Indonesia without discrimination;
4. We, Indonesian Children, appeal to the government to explicitly protect and give socialisation on a child-friendly media and the role of communities to improve children's protection in each region.
5. We are Indonesian Children, appeal the firmness of Indonesian Government to establish educational curriculum that fits the needs and conditions (readiness) of child-friendly education, particularly in border areas;
6. We, Indonesian Children, appeal to the government to make equalization and optimization of health care facilities, including increased knowledge of reproductive rights of children and adolescents in each region;
7. We, Indonesian Children, appeal to the government to doing equal distribution and maximizing the development of media information and telecommunications infrastructure that friendly to children, and encourage community participation to disseminate about child-friendly media information in every region;
8. We, Indonesian Children, appeal to governments, communities, families to make efforts for early detection of child abuse and seek rehabilitation and reintegration of children, both victims and / or child perpetrators of violence against children by establishing Social Protection Homes for Children (RPSAs) and the Institute for Development of Special Children (LPKA) in each region;
9. We, Indonesian Children, appeal to government to issue and set policy that everyone should be an example to children in order to support the mental revolution movement for the advancement of the nation and the state;
10. We, Indonesian Children, appeal to every local government level I & II in Indonesia to issue a Regional Policy on Child Protection which includes strengthening the participation rights of children, particularly in the Development Plan Meeting in the region must consider the views of the child;
11. We, Indonesian Children urge the government to immediately reinforce the regulatory policies related to tobacco control and keep us from the dangers of drugs as well as the realization of the provisions of the concrete form of regulation for the sake of future generations better.

On Behalf of Indonesian Children 2015:

Ambassador Child Education
Ambassador Child Health
Children Ambassador Special Protection Areas
Children ambassador participation Sector
Ambassador Children Affairs and Communications network

Source: Official Facebook Page of *Komnas Anak*

(https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=10155822195020328&id=129063155327), translated by author