



**Youth and the Post-2015 Development Agenda: An Analysis of Youth Participation in
Designing the Sustainable Development Goals**

A Research Paper presented by:

Ciata Armah Stevens

(Liberia)

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for obtaining the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Major:

Human Rights, Gender and Conflict Studies: Social Justice Perspective (SJP)

Specialization: **Human Rights**

Members of the Examining Committee:

Professor Dr. Karin Arts

Professor Dr. Jan Pronk

The Hague, The Netherlands

November 2015

Disclaimer:

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

Inquires:

Postal Address
Institute of Social Studies
P.O. Box 29776
2502LT The Hague
The Netherlands

Location:

Kortenaerkade 12
2518 AX The Hague
The Netherlands

Telephone: +31 70 426 0460

Fax: +31 70 426 0799

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
List of Figures & Tables	5
Acronyms	6
Dedication	7
Acknowledgement	7
Abstract	8
Relevance to Development Studies and Human Rights	8
CHAPTER 1 FROM MDGs TO SDGs	
1.1 Introduction	9
1.2 Background	10
1.3 Towards the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda	11
1.4 Questioning Sustainable Development	12
1.5 Statement of the Research Problem	14
1.6 Research Objective and Questions	14
1.7 Defining ‘Youth’	15
1.8 Structure of the Paper	17
CHAPTER 2 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK	
2.1 Youth Participation	17
2.2 The Ladder of Participation	18
2.3 The Participation Disc	19
2.4 The Power Cube	20
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY	
3.1 Generation of Data	21
3.2 Other Sources of Data	22
3.3 Research Participants and Interviews	22
3.4 Data Analysis	23
3.5 Reflexivity	24

CHAPTER 4 EMERGING THEMES & THE ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 Purpose of Participation	25
4.2 Participation as a Means	25
4.3 Participation and Rights	26
4.4 Article 12 UNCRC and the Participation Disc	27
4.5 Context of Participation	29
4.6 Representation & Competence	29
4.7 Identities	32
4.8 Mode and Style of Participation in the SDGs	33
4.9 Participation and Power	36
Concluding Segment	

CHAPTER 5 WRAPPING UP YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN THE SDGs

5.1 Drawing together Participation	39
5.2 Looking Forward	42
5.3 Conclusion	43
References	44
Annex 1 (List of Research Participants)	48
Annex 2 (Interview Questions)	50
Annex 3 (Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development)	51
Annex 4 (List of UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on Post-2015 Development Agenda)	51

List of Figures

Figure 1 Mind Map of the Post-2015 Development Agenda

Figure 2 Roger Hart's Ladder of Participation

Figure 3 Participation Disc

Figure 4 Picture of the General Assembly Hall

Table 1 Snapshot of different definition of Youth

List of Acronyms

CBDR	Common but Differentiated Responsibility
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OWG	Open Working Group
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNDESA	United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMGCY	United Nations Major Group of Children and Youth

Dedication

To my late Dad, Ciapha Africana Stevens Sr., and for my lovely Mom, Gloria Stevens.

And to young people all over the world: Say it even if you are the only voice on record!

Acknowledgements

Jehovah Jireh!

I am eternally grateful to all who helped me make this research project possible. The list is endless, but includes the Government of the Republic of Liberia, especially Ambassador Marjon V. Kamara, and the entire staff of the Permanent Mission of Liberia to the United Nations. Sincere appreciation to Shirley Brownell, Gail Farngalo, Hector Stevens, Jimmy Kiazolu and Reza Sawyer and all my research participants.

This paper would not have been possible without my supervisor, Professor Dr. Karin Arts, and my second reader, Professor Dr. Jan Pronk.

Abstract

In September 2015, Member States of the United Nations adopted the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda. With a mission to leave no one behind, the Agenda includes 17 Goals and 169 Targets that will succeed the Millennium Development Goals in January 2016. Despite progress of the Millennium Development Goals, young people are more likely than their older generation to be marginalized. Today, there are 1.8 billion young people in the world. This study analyses the participation of young people in designing the Sustainable Development Goals. Analysing young people's participation, this research looks at the purpose, context and mode of participation. The research reveals linkages between participation, human rights, identity and power.

Relevance to Development Studies

Youth participation is garnering more literature and attention especially with the increasing population of young people all over the world. This is the first time, in human history that the world is home to 1.8 billion youth and adolescents (UNFPA 2014:1-2). UNFPA also draws attention that 87 percent of 1.8 billion youth--approximately 9 out of 10-- are found in developing countries (UNFPA 2014:3). In Liberia, where I was born and raised, "60 percent of the population is under the age of 35 – many of them war-affected youths of our civil conflict who did not have the opportunity of an education or skill."¹

Additionally, young people (aged 15-24) are almost three times more likely than older segments of the population to be unemployed, underrepresented and excluded in decision-making processes with "less than 2% of parliamentarians around the world in their 20s and only 12 % in their 30s."² In his universal call to action to transform our world beyond 2015, the United Nations Secretary-General affirms that "young people will be the torchbearers of the next sustainable development agenda through 2030" (United Nations General Assembly 2014:3). As torchbearers of the post-2015 development agenda, the need to be a part of "lighting the torch" is important, especially with the huge youth population around the world.

¹ Lecture by Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, "The Role of Peace in Youth Empowerment" at the United Nations University for Peace, San José, Costa Rica Monday, September 30, 2013, p.3, Accessed 7 November 2015

[http://www.emansion.gov.lr/doc/President_Sirleaf_University_Peace_Costa_Rica\(AS%20DELIV_ERED\).pdf](http://www.emansion.gov.lr/doc/President_Sirleaf_University_Peace_Costa_Rica(AS%20DELIV_ERED).pdf)

² Global Partnership for Youth in the Post-2015 Development Agenda(2014), Accessed 6 May 2015

Hence this research aims at deconstructing the intricacies around youth participation in designing the United Nations Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda, with a focus on the framing of the Sustainable Development Goals. Thus, this paper has great development relevance.

Keywords

Youth, Participation, Human Rights, Power, Identity, Sustainable Development Goals, United Nations

CHAPTER 1: FROM MDGs TO SDGs

1.1 Introduction

The idea of participation has grown over the decades as an important factor in development language and application since the 1970s (Hart 2008:407). The notion of youth participation whether described as “youth voice, decision making, empowerment, engagement or participation has become a hot topic” (O’Donoghue et al 2002:15). By the 1990s, participation also appeared as a major concept among international and intergovernmental organizations focused on children (Hart 2008:407). As “hot” as the topic may be, adults and youth, even those with the best intentions, struggle with the meaning of participation and questions like what does participation look like and how does it happen (O’Donoghue et al 2002:15). Even after twenty years since the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child(UNCRC) was adopted, children and youth participation “still remain subjects of discussion and interpretation” (Herbots and Put 2015:154).

In December 2012, I started work at the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Liberia to the United Nations in New York, in the United States, as Special Assistant to the Ambassador on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. My terms of reference included tracking issues at United Nations Headquarters related to the Post-2015 Development Agenda. I had a special focus on the United Nations Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons of which my President, H.E. Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, was a co-chair. One day, I was representing the Liberian delegation in a session and a delegate from the capital (not posted in New York) walked up to me seated in the delegation seat and whispered,

“Can I speak with the real delegate?”

Even though I was a young emerging diplomat, a recent graduate (salutatorian) from the Gabriel L. Dennis Liberian Foreign Service Institute, and had a blue United Nations badge that read “Liberia Adviser” instead of “INTERN”, that delegate sought the “real delegate”. My identity as a young woman and emerging diplomat from a developing country may have prompted the question.

Many, young people confront similar issues. In fact, most of them do not receive a platform to engage and participate. The ones given a space to “participate” often do not appear as “real” from an adult gaze. This research examines, broadly, youth participation in framing the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda. Specifically, I analysed at the participation of youth and its

significance in the designing of the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals. Additionally, this research has teased out the nuances of meaningful participation of youth and how it can contribute to implementation of the SDGs.

1.2 Background

In December 1983, United Nations (UN) General Assembly Resolution 36/161 created a special commission that would report on environment and global problems in the year 2000 and beyond, and make a proposal for sustainable development (United Nations 1987:1). The term “sustainable development” entrenched itself in development discussions after the work of Special Commission known as the “Brundtland Commission” published its Report: *Our Common Future* in 1987.

The Brundtland Commission defined sustainable development as “ensuring that development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (United Nations 1987:24). Additionally, the Commission reported that economic development, natural resources management and protection and social equity and inclusion are integrated and connected (United Nations 1987:24-25).

Twenty-eight years on, “sustainable development” has shaped discussions at the United Nations including the Conference on Environment and Development also known as the Earth Summit, held in 1992, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and in the establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development by the General Assembly, in 1993, to monitor and promote the implementation of the outcomes of the Earth Summit including Agenda 21 (United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs 2015). By 2002, the United Nations World Summit in Johannesburg adopted a Plan of Implementation that advanced the need to mainstream the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainable development in development policies at all levels (United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs 2015).

In 2012, Member States of the United Nations returned to Rio de Janeiro, for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development also known as Rio +20 and agreed on *The Future We Want* outcome document that presented practical and clear measures for implementing sustainable development while addressing new and emerging challenges (United Nations 2012:5). These steps included the creation of a High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development to replace the Commission on Social Development, and the launch of the process to develop the Sustainable Development Goals that will succeed the Millennium Development Goals.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were agreed at the United Nations Millennium Summit in September 2000 when leaders committed their nations to a global partnership to reduce extreme poverty with a deadline of 2015. The eight (8) MDGs work to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality and empower women, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS,

malaria and other diseases, ensure environmental sustainability and develop a global partnership for development.³

The MDGs created a unity of purpose and placed poverty at the top of the international development agenda, pointing the globe towards problems and targets concerning water, sanitation, health education, gender and the environment (Benson 2013:13).

The MDGs omitted several issues including “governance, peace and security, equality and unprecedented demographic change, and minimized the framing of environmental sustainability” (United Nations Development Group 2013:3).

1.3 Towards the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda

The year 2015 is vital to the Member States of the United Nations. It marks the “completion” of the Millennium Development Goals and the transition to a new universal development agenda that will guide the UN development discourse until 2030. On September 25, 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda titled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” that contained 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 Targets that will come into effect on 1 January 2016, replacing the Millennium Development Goals (United Nations Sustainable Development Platform 2015). The Sustainable Development Goals are a new universal set of goals, targets and indicators that Member States of the United Nations and the world will use to transform development agendas and policies over the next 15 years. The Sustainable Development Goals are intended to build on the Millennium Development Goals, to complete unfinished business and to respond to new challenges.

As stated earlier, the adoption of the Rio+20 Outcome Document “The Future We Want” at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in June 2012 called for the establishment of sustainable development goals through an inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process addressing in an equal manner the environmental, social, and economic dimensions of sustainable development and integrating into the United Nations Development Agenda beyond 2015 (United Nations 2012: 47). With this caveat, several processes at the United Nations to design the Post-2015 Development Agenda emerged.

By July 2012, the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, appointed a 27 member High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons⁴ to advise him on the development agenda landscape after 2015. The Panel was co-chaired by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia and Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom, and consisted of leaders from civil society, the private sector and government (United Nations 2014). The High-Level Panel presented its Report to the UN Secretary-General on 30 May 2013, proposing five transformative shifts that would leave no one behind, put sustainable

³ http://www.un.org/en/events/pastevent/millennium_summit.shtml Accessed 20 April 2015

⁴ See Annex for full list of Eminent Persons

development at the core, transform economies for jobs and inclusive growth, build peace and effective transparent and accountable public institution and forge a new global partnership.⁵

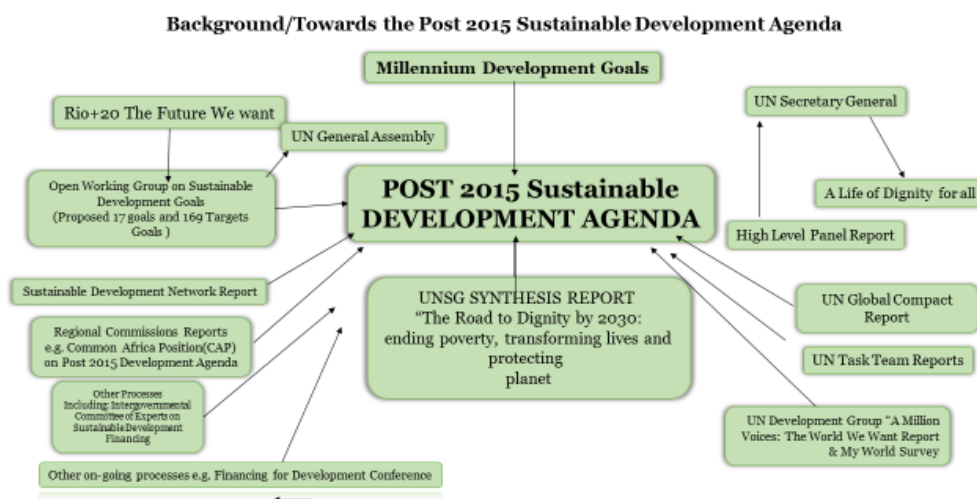
The United Nations General Assembly created the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals in January 2013 tasked with the responsibility of preparing a draft proposal on Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations General Assembly 2014:1). After 13 formal and informal deliberations from March 2013 to July 2014, the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals delivered a Proposal of Sustainable Development Goals and Targets.⁶

Moreover, the United Nations conducted other “conversations” through reports from the United Nations Development Group, “A Million Voices: The World We Want”; the Sustainable Development Solution Network; the United Nations Global Compact; regional commissions; the African Union’s Common African Position (CAP) on the Post-2015 Development Agenda; and the United Nations Task Team on the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda (United Nations SG Report 2014:8-11).

Weaving together these many voices, the Secretary-General presented in December 2014, a synthesis report to the General Assembly titled “The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet” incorporating the full range of valuable inputs available from the many voices from a wide range of stakeholders that have informed the debate on the Post-2015 sustainable development agenda (UNSG Report 2014:1).

With all of these processes running simultaneously, and given my job responsibility, I kept painting in my head, the diagram presented below so that I could understand the different processes.

Figure 1: My mind map of the Post-2015 Development Agenda Process



⁵ United Nations High-Level of Eminent Persons Report May 2013 <http://www.post2015hlp.org/the-report/> Accessed 9 November 2015

⁶ The OWG on SDGs Proposal on Sustainable Development Goals <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgsproposal> Accessed 9 November 2015

1.4 Questioning Sustainable Development

It is critical to consider the fluidity of needs because the needs of the present generation may differ from the needs of the future generation (Redclift 2006:67). Sustainable development in itself, should contribute to helping future generations identify their needs, differently for each generation while considering different cultures (ibid: 67). The Brundtland Commission's definition of sustainable development did not include how needs are defined in different cultures, considering that "sustainable development is necessary for all of us but may be defined differently in terms of each and every culture" (Redclift 2006:67). Thus it is definitely vital to move beyond Brundtland and question whether "development or economic growth is the primary determinant of changing needs, and to what extent does our consciousness of changes in needs influence how they are met" (Redclift 2006:67). This point connects to the notion of "Common but Differentiated Responsibility" (CBDR) indicated in Principle 7 of the Rio+20 Outcome Document. Principle 7 provided the first formulation of the CBDR, and states:

"In view of the different contributions to global environmental degradation, States have common but differentiated responsibilities. The developed countries acknowledge the responsibility that they bear in the international pursuit of sustainable development in view of the pressures their societies place on the global environment and of the technologies and financial resources they command"(United Nations Environment Programme 1992).

On one hand, CBDR denotes to the common and equal responsibility of states to protect common heritage and common resources. On the other hand, CBDR refers to the difference and unevenness across States, including dissimilar "material, social and economic situations; different historical contributions to global environmental problems; and financial, technological and structural capability to tackle those global problems" (Lucia 2012). With recognition of common but differentiated responsibilities, sustainable development will meet the needs of different cultures more effectively.

Redclift has indicated that sustainable development has shifted from the original concern of human needs to that of rights, raising questions about power, distribution and equity (Redclift 2006:72). It is important to note that, over time, sustainable development has become holistic and connects environmental issues with concerns about social justice, governance and equity (Redclift 2006:82). When environmental issues are linked with issues of social justice and equity, sustainable development caters for the needs of the present and safeguards the environment. For example, sustainable mining considers the environment, provides social development and provides revenues.

Sustainable development can be contradictory juxtaposing imperatives of growth and development on the one hand and social economic sustainability on the other (Robinson 2004: 369-370). Robinson introduced his text with a classical problem of Greek mathematics, squaring the circle where the "circle- squarer" derives meaning, "one who attempts the impossible" (Robinson 2004:396). Critics of sustainable development indicate that attempting to achieve sustainable development is tantamount to trying to square a circle and working to achieve the impossible

(Robinson 2004: 370). In critical analysis of the theory and practice of sustainable development, Robinson discusses three criticisms that sustainable development is vague, attracts hypocrites and is likely to foster delusions (Robinson 2004:373). Instead of the term sustainable development, Robinson argued for “sustainability” that is integrative, action-oriented, recognizes the “social construction of sustainable development” and forges partnership with local communities by adding their voices to the conversation (2004:382).

Today, Sustainable Development combines environmental, social, economic dimensions with concerns of peaceful, inclusive societies and justice (United Nations OWG Report 2014:22).

1.5 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

In an emerging global consensus on concrete proposals for target areas on youth in the post-2015 development agenda, young people recognized that even with significant progress made since the Millennium Development Goals were adopted, but they still do not have the opportunities to realize their full potential.⁷

It is important to note, that, as the world moves towards transforming by 2030, considering the development needs of today should not jeopardize the capacity of the future generation to meet their needs. The “future generation” starts with the 1.8 billion young people between ages 10-24” (UNFPA 2014:1). The participation of the future generations in framing the Post-2015 Development Agenda would influence their ability to meet their own needs. According to Article 12, of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), children “capable of forming his or her own views have the right to express those views freely in all matters” affecting them and of course their views should be “given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child” (UNCRC 1989).

It is also reasonable to reiterate the significance of forging partnerships with local communities and bringing them to participate in the conversation of sustainability (Robinson 2004:382), in the context of sustainable development efforts. It is critical to evaluate the participation of young people in designing the Sustainable Development Goals. With the world being home to the largest ever population of youth, it is also possible to reap economic benefits. It is essential to note that these 1.8 billion young people can transition into the labour force, and their successes can shape “development trajectories not only for sub-Saharan Africa and Central Asia, where they represent a high proportion of the population, but for the entire world, given our increasingly interconnectedness and globalized economies” (UNFPA 2014:79).

The success of the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda relies on fulfilling the human rights and meeting the needs of the youth. Societies will prosper or fail depending on the experience of engagement or of alienation, the inclusion or the marginalization of young people.⁸ As the world takes up a new development trend for the next 15 years, the participation of young people

⁷ http://www.un.org/youthenvoy/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/The_Global_Youth_Call.pdf Accessed 20 May 2015

⁸ http://www.un.org/youthenvoy/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/The_Global_Youth_Call.pdf Accessed 20 May 2015

is paramount. Therefore, this research deconstructs the participation of young people in the designing the Sustainable Development Goals.

1.6 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE AND QUESTION

This research analysed young people’s participation in designing the Sustainable Development Goals. This research paper addressed the following main question

- What youth participation contributions were made to the designing of the Sustainable Development Goals, and what lessons can be learned from the experiences involved?

The following sub-questions were explored:

- What is meaningful youth participation?
- How was youth participation practised in the process of designing the SDGs?
- What was the significance of youth participation in designing the Sustainable Development Goals?
- Could the experiences of youth participation in designing the SDGs help to promote youth participation in the implementation of the SDGs?

1.7 DEFINING ‘YOUTH’

In United Nations, in international instruments as well as within Members States, the term “youth” has different meanings. For example, the Secretariat of the United Nations refers to the ages 15-24 as youth and young people, taking into consideration that Member States have different definitions of youth.⁹ For some, the definition of 15-24 is the “official” definition of youth in the United Nations. For example, in an informal chat over coffee on 29 July, 2015 in the UN in New York, with a civil society professional accredited to the United Nations, I was told not to get confused: the “official definition of young people/youth is actually age 15-24.”¹⁰ In my conversation with the United Nations Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, the Envoy stated “...we have one formal definition that is 15-24 that was in the *World Programme of Action for Youth 1995*”¹¹

Table 1: Snapshot of different definitions of youth (UNDESA)¹²

Entity/Instrument/Organization	Age Range	Reference
UN Secretariat/ UNESCO/ILO	Youth 15-24	UN Instruments, Statistics
UN Habitat (Youth Fund)	15-32	Agenda 21

⁹ This table is based on United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, www.esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-definition.pdf Accessed 22 May 2015.

¹⁰ Informal chat with former colleague from civil society *accredited* to the United Nations at café at 9:30 am

¹¹ Interview with the United Nations Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, September 4, 2015 in his office in the North Lawn Building of United Nations Headquarters, New York United States at 11 am.

¹² United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, www.esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-definition.pdf. Accessed 22 May 2015.

UNICEF/WHO/UNFPA	Adolescent 10-19 Youth 15-24	UNFPA
UNICEF/UNCRC	Child until 18	UNICEF
UN Department of Public Information/ NGO Youth Representative Program	15-32	Department of Public Information
African Youth Charter	15-35	African Union 2006 ¹³

With these scattered conceptual definitions within the United Nations, who is a youth and how can this research deal with it as a concept?

The definition of youth is dynamic, varying both physically and socially across cultures (Fussell and Greene 2002:21). According to the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (2015),¹⁴ conceptualizing youth from the perspective of a transition from childhood to adulthood is important. UNESCO also indicates age 15-24 as the more convenient way of defining youth specifically as it relates to education and employment simply because the term “youth” is mostly referring to persons completing required education and entering their first employment.¹⁵ This assertion is problematic, especially in developing countries where age, education and employment are difficult to correlate. Brown and Larson wrote in “the Kaleidoscope of Adolescence,” that youth in some places may include persons from age 10 or so up to 30 or 35 which suggests that one does not deserve the full respect and is not completely mature and responsible until this later age (Brown and Larson 2004:5). In fact, UNESCO also affirmed that that dependency period is prolonged in a young person’s life with high levels of unemployment. Youth is socially constructed with social interpretations (Jones 2009:1). The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs has stated that the age 15-24 age cohort is only used for measuring the needs and providing strategies for “youth” development (UNDESA n. d.:1). “Youth” differs based on different demographic, financial, economic, social and cultural settings.

This study refrains from using age boundaries because it becomes even more problematic to group a cohort of people and not list people who do not fit in any category--too dependent to be an adult and too “old” to be a “youth 15-24”. In Liberia, the age of youth is 15-35¹⁶ as in other parts of the world. With the already technocratic United Nations definitions of “youth” and other authors as indicated, this study will consider youth as a transition and an identity and use the age range of 15-30 to situate arguments within the brackets of UN Conventions and statistics. “Youth” will be used interchangeably with young people throughout the study to refer to transition and identity. For

¹³ African Union(2006) Youth Charter, Accessed 16 May 2015

<<http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Dakar/pdf/AfricanYouthCharter.PDF>>

¹⁴Accessed 16 May 2015, <<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/youth/youth-definition/>>

¹⁵Accessed 16 May 2015 <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/youth/youth-definition/>

¹⁶ African Youth Charter (See footnote 13)

example, according to the UN Envoy for Youth, “youth is about the transitions of life.”¹⁷ He also indicated that he cannot stop working with a group of young people because they are over 30 especially in a country where 35 is still considered youth. He concluded that youth is about “the transitions of education, transitions of independence, transitions of finding jobs, transitions of forming family, and these transitions might not be completed by age 24.”¹⁸ Nonetheless, youth as a transition cannot exist in a vacuum where a full grown, independent person can still stand up and claim “youth” to the marginalization and detriment of persons moving from childhood to adulthood, from dependence to independence.

1.8 STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH PAPER

This paper is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 lays out the introduction and contextual background. Chapter 2 examines some of the analytical underpinnings of the research and analysis (Chapter 4). Chapter 3 looks at the methodology of the research from the selection of techniques, to the reality of applying these methods. Chapter 4 analyses the data using themes and discusses them using the theoretical framework. Chapter 5 summarises the entire paper and looks at how the experiences of youth participation could contribute to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Chapter 2 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

This section critically explores the analytical underpinnings of and concepts used in this paper. The framework dissected will be a foundation for analysing data in Chapter 4. This chapter seeks to show how “youth participation” can be analysed.

2.1 Youth Participation

Participation is generally referred to as “the process of sharing decision which affects one’s life and the life of the community in which one lives” (Hart 1992:5). Roger Hart (1992:6), has asserted that the participation of young people cannot be discussed without taking into consideration power relations and the struggle for equal rights. “Sharing decisions,” as stated by Hart’s definition of participation, is not the same as giving “the views of this child due weight in accordance with age and maturity” (Article 12 UNCRC 1989).

Youth participation has been viewed by Checkoway and Gutierrez as “a process of involving young people in the institutions and decisions that affect their lives” (2008:1). Jason Hart conceptualised participation as empowerment that is aimed at transformation of lives and societies (2008:407). Also looking at youth participation from an empowerment lens, O’Donoghue and others viewed youth participation as a collection or arrangement of activities to “empower adolescents to

¹⁷ Interview with the UN Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, September 4, 2015 in his office in the North Lawn Building of UN Headquarters, New York at 11 am.

¹⁸ Interview with the UN Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth on September 4, 2015 in his office in the North Lawn Building of UN Headquarters, New York at 11 am.

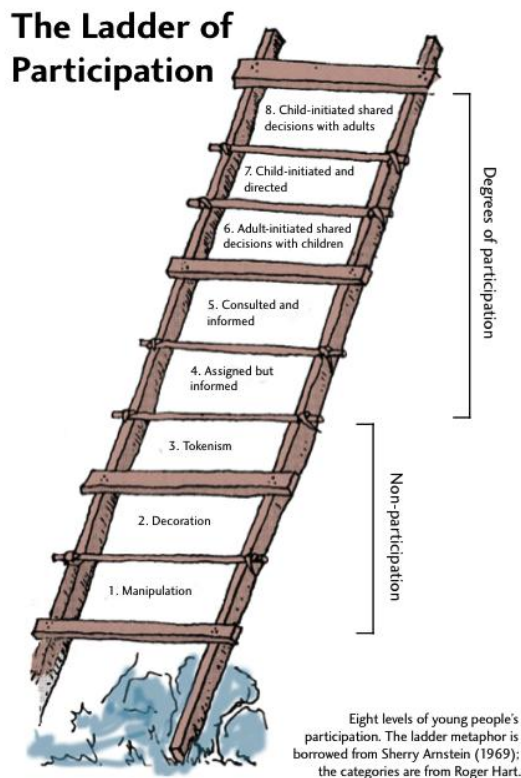
take part in and influence decision making that affects their lives and take action on issues they care about”(2002:16). However, because there is not much evidence and understanding about what participation looks like, how it functions and where it takes place, myths are fuelled around youth participation(O’Donoghue et al 2002:16).

The term participation is broad and has several dimensions but can be organized around three general themes: “access to social, political and economic spheres; decision making within organizations that influence one’s life; and planning and involvement in public action” (2002:16).

2.2 The Ladder of Participation

Back in 1992, Hart adapted Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of citizen participation to fit the participation of children. The rungs of Harts’ ladder of participation were divided into two parts: non-participation and degrees of participation. Non-participation included manipulation, decoration and tokenism. Degrees of participation was on the upper rungs of the ladder including the following categories: assigned but informed; consulted and informed; adult initiated shared decisions with young people; young people initiated and directed; and (the highest rung) young people initiated and shared with adults (Hart 1992:9).

Figure 2. Ladder of Participation



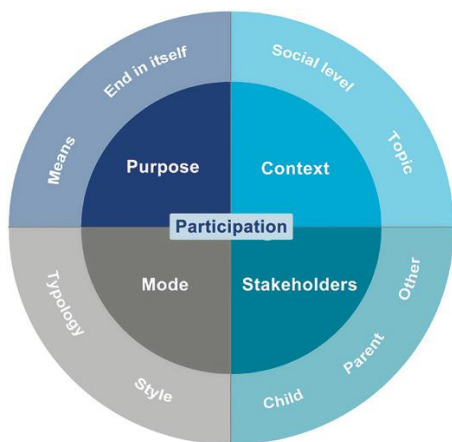
Gary Melton (1993) indicated that the conceptualization of participation in the ladder of participation was vague, superficial (that could be misleading) and brief (1993:265). Writing to clarify and respond to the misinterpretations and debates that the “ladder of participation” generated, Hart

(2008) stepped back from the ladder and discussed its strengths and weaknesses (2008:19). Moreover, Hart explained the purpose and context of the ladder of participation and reviewed some of the misunderstandings and calls for reflection and new models of participation (ibid: 19). Taking heed from the creator of the “normative children’s participation ladder,” this research will ‘step back from the ladder’ and reflect on youth participation in the Sustainable Development Goals using the Participation Disc. However, the parts of the ladder will be tweaked and fitted into the participation disc when typologies of participation will be discussed.

2.3 Participation Disc

Herbots and Put (2015) proposed the participation disc which can be used for critically examining the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as a new framework for understanding participation (2015:154). This does not in any way mean that the participation disc is flawless. However, the participation disc seems like a more flexible and reflexive way of analysing and interpreting participation than using a sharp definition (Herbots and Put 2015:155). For Herbots and Put, children’s participation is complex and cannot be locked up in a tight container of a single definition (2015:156). Perhaps, this is what Brian W. Head wrote about when he wrote about pushing the boundaries of youth participation and seeking more creative options for youth involvement (Head 2011:542). The participation disc helps to connect and dissect different approaches to participation as well as enables the formation of participation across many and varied situations.

Figure 3 (Participation Disc Herbots and Put 2015:167)



Made up of four major parts: purpose, context, stakeholders and mode-- the participation disc asked the why, where, who and how questions of participation (Herbots and Put 2015:156). As a purpose, participation can be a way of reaching a goal or the goal itself (ibid: 156). The context of participation signifies where participation takes place, at which level and the topic discussed (Herbots and Put 2015:158). The stakeholder (who?) component of the disc maps actors and verifies the targeted population of participation (Herbots and Put 2015:159-160). The mode (how?) of participation explains the typologies and styles of participation and raises the question of power, for

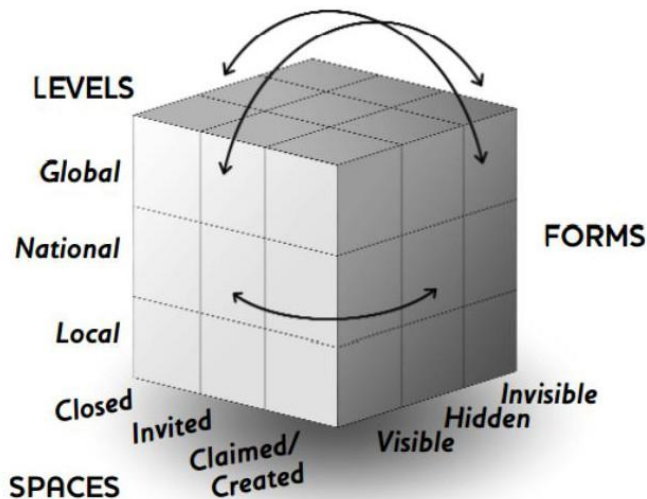
example who has the power to define the objectives or to direct activity (Herbots and Put 2015:163-164).

2.4 The Power Cube

John Gaventa's power cube will be used to complement the discussion of power that inevitably comes up when participation is discussed. For the scope of this research, the discussion and analysis will use the spaces and levels of power.

Gaventa (2006) built his work on the three dimensions of power developed by Steven Luke in 1974, arguing that the three dimensions of power--the ability to influence the making of decisions; capacity to shape the political agenda and prevent decisions from being made; and controlling people's thoughts by the manipulation of their perceptions and preferences (2006:25). Gaventa created a visual power cube to connect and interrelate the spaces, level and forms of power. The power cube assesses the "possibilities of transformative action in various political spaces" and maps the types of power and strategies of challenge (Gaventa 2006:25). The power cube shows power relations that reflect and analyse strategies for change (Gaventa 2006:31). Power can be categorized in three spaces of power (invited, claimed and created) at the local, national and global levels. (Gaventa 2006:25).

Figure 3. The power cube--levels, spaces and forms of power (Gaventa 2006:25)



This chapter presented the analytical framework that will be used to review youth participation in designing the Sustainable Development Goals. This research will tweak parts of Herbots and Put (2015) participation disc that is connected to Roger Hart's ladder of participation, in combination with the spaces and levels of power on John Gaventa's power cube to analyse youth participation in designing the Sustainable Development Goals. In Chapter 4, I will use the connected frameworks to analyse the purpose, context and mode of participation and its linkages to human rights, identities and power.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains the experiences, decisions, observations and techniques used during my field work. As with every research project, deciding the detail of your general research plan is important. The research plan includes consideration of research participants, location, and method of answering your research problem (O'Leary 2010:98).

3.1 Generation of Data

With my prior experience at the Permanent Mission of Liberia to the United Nations, I decided to return and ask some questions about the participation of young people in the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Covering issues related to the Post-2015 Development Agenda for almost two years, my interest in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and countdown to the agreement of the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda by Member States of the United Nations, inspired me to take the opportunity of a research internship at the Permanent Mission of Liberia to the United Nations in New York.

I used informal semi-structured interview to accentuate document analysis and participant observation. Settings of informal interviews are more relaxed and could take place in an office, a bar or restaurant or over coffee (O'Leary 2010:195). Informal means that the location of interviews were not limited to United Nations Headquarters or the Permanent Mission of Liberia. Even with a prepared set of questions, my interviews were semi-structured to enable me the luxury of asking follow-up questions that came up in a document that I had read or a recent statement by a participant. Even though this style of interview deviated from the original plan sometimes (O'Leary 2010:195), this worked in my favour with participants even answering some of my conceptual questions.

As a research intern, I attended meetings at UN Headquarters, notably the International Youth Day Commemoration on 12 August, 2015, and the International Young Leaders Assembly. The ethnographic tool of participant observation deepened my understanding of the feeling of "young people and the United Nations." With reference to my research notes for August 18, 2015, I remembered sitting in the General Assembly Hall and typing on my computer:

"Today is the International Young Leaders Assembly 2015 in the United Nations General Assembly Hall. It is exciting to see young people cue up to take pictures on the podium of the General Assembly--individuals are acting like policy makers and mimicking policy speeches. Group pictures... and the line is endless. Oh, just before I could get in to the hall, I could tell

from the faces of the ushers that they are excited to be at the UN--super wide smiles of young people!”

Before I left New York, I took a picture in the General Assembly Hall several days before the Post-2015 Summit and pretending to be making a serious statement about youth participation! I had to! I wanted to explore the podium from the perspective of young people at the International Young Leaders Assembly and see the United Nations General Assembly Hall from their point of view, from their perspective, from their Facebook pages, “avoiding pre-existing frames of reference or world views” (O’Leary 2010:115).



Figure 4. Picture taken on September 10, 2015, in the United Nations General Assembly Hall by Gail Farngalo, Permanent Mission of Liberia

3.2 Other Sources of Data

Before traveling to New York, I met with the person handling issues related to the Sustainable Development Goals at UNICEF Netherlands, in The Hague, to gather advice for my paper. On another front, I volunteered with the Girls Rights Watch of Plan Nederland by attending planning meetings for a workshop during the Gelijk=Anders Festival at the Parkhuis in Amsterdam. The workshop was held on June 27, 2015, on “Young People, Sustainable Development Goals and Gender” by Plan Nederland, to formulate a one page policy document on Youth, SDGs and Gender. My role along with three other students from the Institute of Social Studies included assistance in planning the workshop and coming up with ideas for other projects. This helped me build a relationship with members of the Girls’ Rights Watch. Some of the youth lobbyists became participants in my research. I could also use the notes taken during the workshop.

In this age of the internet and computers, I decided to get active on Twitter and Facebook as well as follow the hashtags #youth and #SDGs. I also was able to follow an online Google Hangout hosted by one of my interviewees a few days after our interview. It was titled “Sustainable

Development Goals: Making Youth the Driving Force” that was transcribed and used as a source of information.

3.3 Research Participants and Interviews

The participants of this research originally were meant to be major stakeholders including senior diplomats, leaders and young people but once in the field, I focused most on young people given that the research was about youth participation. Participants were purposefully selected. Age was not a selection criterion for research participants however 13 out of 18 participants were ‘youth’. The research participants were contacted and given an abstract of the research and bio-data of the researcher, when invited them to participate in my research.

The interview discussions were in two categories. One set of questions centred on knowledge of the Sustainable Development Goals, youth engagement, benefits of youth participation, barriers to youth participation, etc. The other set of questions asked about how the views of youth were reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals, representation criteria and lessons of youth participation that could be used in future United Nations processes like implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The full set of interview questions can be found in Annex 2 of this paper. Questions were tested at the Institute of Social Studies with a few colleagues in the Master of Arts Program and a Ph.D. candidate, to assess relevance.

For the Google hangout “Sustainable Development Goals: Making Youth the Driving Force,” I could not control questions posed to the participants. However, most of the questions posed were similar to my interview questions.

Given the hectic nature of negotiations and work at the United Nations, my interviews took several forms namely computer-assisted, in-person and informal chats and conversations. Computer-assisted interviews were also received on-line through emails.

3.4 Data Analysis

Interviews were recorded and transcribed. To understand the analysis of interview data, it is important to indicate the diversity of research participants. The first group of participants were students, youth lobbyist, youth ambassador, student assistant and not directly linked to the United Nations processes. Answers from this group of participants showcased their knowledge of the Sustainable Development Goals, engagement of young people in the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda, contributions to the implementation of the SDGs, benefits and challenges of youth participation.

The second group of participants included youth and government leaders not affiliated directly with the United Nations processes but shaping youth leadership and raising awareness at the local, and national levels. These participants discussed the need for the involvement of Young people in decision making, for the contributions of young people to the SDGs, achieving active and responsive youth participation, moving from token to inclusion and participation, preparation of young people to participate and the challenges young people face.

The third group of participants were affiliated directly with the United Nations including the UN Envoy on Youth, the former Chair of the United Nations Department of Public

Information/NGO Youth Representative Program, Attaché to the United Nations and Head of Post-2015 Development Agenda UNICEF. This final group of interviews was transcribed from an online Google hangout hosted by one of my research participants exactly two weeks after my interview with him. Given that the theme of the chat “SDGs: Making Youth the Driving Force,” linked directly to my research and emphasized the role of young people, it was important to utilize some of the information provided. The panel included former member of the UN Major Group of Children and Youth, a current member of the United Nations Foundation staff, a development practitioner and a youth participation advocate.

Data collected from research participants (persons interviewed and other transcribed sources of information) will be arranged into themes and discussed using the analytical framework indicated in Chapter 2. In the application of the Herbots and Puts Participation Disc, this research will discuss Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child using the parts of the Participation Disc as a review mechanism in interpreting and understanding the rights of youth to participate.

3.5 Reflexivity

Once I arrived in New York, I was offered the same desk that I previously used when I served as the Special Assistant on Post-2015 Development Agenda. The same desk but in a different capacity: now as Research Intern from the Institute of Social Studies. Being there helped to build my legitimacy as a researcher and helped me gain the trust of my participants. However, sometimes I had to rephrase interview questions a few times to get participants out of the “United Nations” scripted mode of response.

My multiple identities, as a student of the International Institute of Social Studies and as former Special Assistant to the Ambassador on Post-2015 Development Agenda at the Permanent Mission, put me in a “hot spot.” Hot spot, in the sense that some of my research participants assumed that I knew everything already about the processes and how young people were involved. I had to ask some of my interview questions in different styles and forms. In other instances, participants acted as though I was back to “work” and kept postponing my meeting since I was a “colleague”. The politics of position and interaction was also an advantage. I could get to meet someone because they could trust me as a researcher and talk with me because of my previous position and connection with the Permanent Mission.

With the negotiations of the draft Post-2015 Development Agenda underway, when I finally got to New York. It was a tough period to schedule face-to-face interviews with some of my participants. To fit into their schedules, I replaced some of my face-to-face interviews with computer assisted interviews. I did not deliberately intend to use internet-based methods like following Twitter, Facebook, Google hangouts and Instagram. Every young person cannot come to New York, thus many United Nations Youth events are live tweeted or held via Google hangout and online meetings. I therefore decided to make maximum use of the online platforms.

CHAPTER 4 EMERGING THEMES AND THE PARTICIPATION DISC

This chapter analyses youth participation in designing the United Nations Post-2015 Development Agenda with a focus on the Sustainable Development Goals using the theoretical framework indicated in Chapter 2. From the information gathered from interviews, meetings, social media, and documents, this chapter aims to assess youth participation and its significance in designing the Sustainable Development Goals. As stated earlier, in the data analysis part of Chapter 3, this chapter will discuss the data in four groups and bring them together using the theoretical framework in Chapter 2.

4.1 Purpose of Participation

In the first place, youth participation in designing the Sustainable Development Goals fulfils a purpose. Identifying the purpose for participation essential--why is it done, what will it achieve and what are the benefit(s) (Sinclair 2004:111). However, looking at the mind map (Figure 1), there is no specific or intentional report aimed at getting the voices of young people into the conversation of designing the SDGs. World leaders in the “The Future We Want” Outcome Document emphasized the significance of active participation of young people in decision-making processes because sustainable development deeply affects present and future generations (United Nations 2012:9). The contributions of children and youth are vital to the achievement of sustainable development as well as the need to encourage exchanges of ideas and cohesion between the present and future generations by recognizing their views (United Nations 2012:9). Young people are “the *raison d’être* (the main reason) why we have the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda.”¹⁹ Research participants stated that once the SDGs are adopted, it is time for countries to work on making the Agenda succeed in our respective countries and that involving young people in creating the national vision is critical. One participant stated that national sustainable development councils, national sustainable development planning boards or other body involved in contextualizing the SDGs should have an institutionalized method to include young people. This is a process of looking at, and valuing the inputs of young people as a resource and not as beneficiaries. This is turning the table around and making young people part of finding the solution.

Young people’s participation in the SDGs “is just common sense... If young people are not a part of the SDGs, if they are not consulted, if they are not asked, it is difficult to own it.”²⁰ Participants resounded that the SDGs would be a success only if the “public engagement, communications, social mobilization dimension of the new Agenda include young people to popularize and own the Agenda.”²¹ It is critical to make the SDGs known to the world and the general public, and especially young people. UNICEF intends to use “the World Largest Lesson and

¹⁹ Alipui 2015, personal interview, see Annex 1

²⁰ Alhendawi 2015, personal interview, see annex 1

²¹ Alipui 2015, personal interview, see Annex 1

U-Report to reach and collect the voices of young people all over the world.”²² Participants stated that it is also significant to invest in technology and real time monitoring, ensuring that resources are young people friendly. The Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda, the Financing for Development Document and others are written in a language that young people can use in clubs and schools. Without public engagement and communication strategies and the involvement of young people, the SDGs will be a wasted effort.

4.2 Participation as a Means

Checkoway (2010) emphasized that youth participation taps into their expertise, enables them to exercise their rights as citizens and contributes to a more stable society (2010:340). Youth participation in designing of the Sustainable Development Goals can be arranged based on social, legal and political reasons. Within this purview, research participants were indicative of the ownership and continuity of the Post-2015 Development Agenda. “Youth, as I am, can make a huge difference, raise the next generations, act responsibly and set a good example if they are well informed.”²³ Another participant stated that if policies are made with youth participating it is possible that “these goals are continued by the new generation when they succeed the current position.”²⁴ Quoting from her experience as youth ambassador, another participant stated that “many times adults are overwhelmed by the original, different and great ideas of young people,” even though at times it is against existing and ‘boring’ not working methods that are being used”²⁵ Youth participation can create accountability, ownership and sustainability of programs and projects and bridge intergenerational gap that make transfer of skills easier.²⁶

Participants stressed the importance of youth participation in issues concerning them, such as sustainable development. One participant stated that young people are best suited to talk about issues they face. Their involvement would give them an opportunity to learn and enhance the transfer of skills. Moreover, adults are at a different stage in life and may not be able to understand youth issues like youth themselves and “on issues concerning youth they are not experts, we are.”²⁷ In fact, “in the end we will be the ones left to cope with the remnants of this earth, we should thus be engaged in sustainable development.”²⁸

Participants stated that for young people to be involved in decision making, especially in designing and implementing the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda, authorities should create opportunities for young people’s representation and engagement at all levels of decision making as active partners and not just “tokens”. One participant mentioned that a major task is getting young people interested in decision-making processes. It is important to look to young people to come up with creative and innovative ways to tackle problems. There is also a need to

²² Alipui 2015, personal interview, see Annex 1

²³ Baker 2015, personal interview, see Annex 1

²⁴ Oskam 2015, personal computer-assisted interview, see Annex 1

²⁵ Oskam 2015, personal computer-assisted interview, see Annex 1

²⁶ Mohamed 2015, personal computer-assisted and Skype interview, see Annex 1

²⁷ Oskam 2015, personal computer-assisted interview, see Annex 1

²⁸ Jallow 2015, personal interview, see annex 1

reach out to the hard-to-reach especially in global processes: “If you talk about ensuring preservation of the world--climate change-- if you have young people understanding what climate change means to them, they would be able to tell other young people what they know.”²⁹

4.3 Participation and Rights

Participation is considered as an end in itself (Herbots and Put 2015:158). Participation is not just a right but is important in interpreting and implementing all other rights (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child 2014:1). During the Google hangout, “SDGs: Youth as a Driving Force,” one participant stated that it is important to apply the human rights principle of non-discrimination and inclusion that will enable a lot of young women as well as young men. Young people are rights holders and have to participate in decisions that affect them. “From a human rights perspective, an African Youth Charter exists, an American Youth Charter exists, but there is not a Global Declaration of Youth Rights.”³⁰ However, the World Programme of Action on Youth recognizes young people as rights holders.

Participants in the Google hangout stated that young people should avail themselves as partners, demand rights and offer partnership. One participant in the google hangout discussion indicated that “the world has 1.8 billion young people that did not exist 15 years ago when the MDGs were agreed and thus it is vital to work positively with young women and young men to truly create social transformation.”³¹

Like Roger Hart (1992), Checkoway also stated that youth participation is a right protected by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. He related rights to the fact that “children should have the necessary information about opinions that exist and the consequences of such options so that they can make informed and free decisions” (2010:340). Within the right of young people to participate, comes the right to information that gives young people a chance to make informed and free choices. Availing information to children creates an opportunity to gain skills and confidence and maturity in expressing views and influencing decisions (Checkoway 2011:340). This: “States parties have to ensure that the child receives all necessary information and advice to make a decision in favour of her or his best interests” (UNCRC Committee 2009:6). Participants in my research indicated that, to confront barriers and help young people participate, older generations should ensure that young people are present in every meeting and part of every process and give honest information and education. In addition, a youth-friendly context should be created to motivate young people. Importantly, participants stressed that it is essential to motivate young people as well as give them feedback on how their ideas were incorporated.

Young people are often unaware of things happening around them and only “elite youth are aware of opportunities”³² even though all young people should be given access to information. Without access and availability of information young people are easily apathetic. Participants

²⁹ Fofana 2015, personal interview, see annex 1

³⁰ Ravi 2015, Global Youth Institute, Google hangout, see Annex 1

³¹ Ravi 2015, Global Youth Institute Google hangout, see Annex 1

³² Sonkartara 2015, personal computer assisted interview, see Annex 1

identified that young people should hold governments accountable for implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the SDGs and that access to information is essential in this regard.

4.4 Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and Participation Disc

The word participation does not literally appears is Article 12 of the UNCRC, the right to participate shows up implicitly and indicates that views of children should be given due weight (Article 12). Generally, in other portions of the UNCRC the right to receive information (Article 13 and 17), the right to informed consent (Article 21) and the right of freedom (Herbots and Put 2015:171).Herbots and Put uses the Participation Disc to analyse the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (2015:168). Analysing youth participation in the Sustainable Development Goals, it is logical to highlight their discussion tweaking it to clearly fit the purpose of this paper connecting participation and rights.

Within the UNCRC, Article 12 stands out as the “most well-known participation article that enacts the child’s right to express his/her views freely in matters affecting the child, whereby due weight has to be given to this opinion, and in particular enacting the right to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting him/her” (Herbots and Put 2015:168). It is necessary to quote the article under review directly from the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child (1989):

“1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

2. For this purpose the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.”

In the a dedicated General Comment on this article, the Committee on the Rights of Child stated that the right of all children to be heard is one of the fundamental values of the Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC Committee 2009:3). Along with the right to non-discrimination, the right to life and development, and the primary consideration of the child’s best interests, Article 12 of the CRC establishes not only a right in itself, but should also be considered in the interpretation and implementation of all other rights (ibid:3). It is the obligation of states parties to recognize this right and ensure its implementation by listening to the views of the child and according them due weight (UNCRC Committee 2009:6).

In participation, a child holds the right to express views on matters which have an influence on her or his life, and not only on matters derived from her or his protection or provision (UNCRC Committee 2009 :6). Article 12 of the CRC is both a means and an end in itself, creating the right to

have a voice; as well as interpreting and implementing other rights inscribed in the CRC (UNCRC Committee 2009:3).

The context of participation in Article 12 is very broad and does not limit the child's right to express his/her views with the emphasis that "no age limit should be placed in law and practice to restrict the child's right to be heard" (UNCRC Committee 2009:6). It is also important to stress that participation is voluntary, without obligation or pressure. This also means that, the child still has the right not to exercise this right because expression of views is a choice and not an obligation (UNCRC Committee 2009:6). Most of the time, the opportunity for young people to participate is at the community level with a limited number of participants (UNCRC Committee 2009:25). There have been increasing opportunities for young people's participation to have their voices heard. As with anywhere, at the level of the United Nations Post-2015 Process too, it is important to "safeguard the transparency of representation and counter the risks of manipulation or tokenism" (UNCRC Committee 2009: 25).

Other Frameworks Outlining Rights

It would be incomplete to talk about participation as a right of young people and simply limit the discussion to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which covers young people aged below 18. Concerning young people's right to participation from 18 and above, the United Nations World Programme of Action on Youth echoes that young people in all parts of the world, living in countries at different stages of development and in different socio-economic situations, aspire to full participation in the life of society, as provided in the Charter of the United Nations, including human rights and fundamental freedoms without distinction as to race, sex, language, religion or any other forms of discrimination, as well as participation in decision-making processes (United Nations 2010:5).

4.5 Context of Participation

For youth participation in designing the Sustainable Development Goals, the context does not exist in a vacuum. There were several entry points of participation. Compared with the MDGs that was created by technocrats and experts opinions, the SDGs are unprecedented in the call for participation and outreach. "This process was quite elaborate and unprecedented for the United Nations."³³ The entry points for young people in the SDGs process were the 88 national consultations and 11 thematic consultations that allowed young people to engage. For example, "young people in Latin America were especially enthusiastic in the regional consultations on what they wanted post-2015 because at the end they will be the actors of the agenda."³⁴ Opportunities also emerged with The World We Want website and UNICEF's direct consultation with children. "There would have been even greater opportunity for engaging young people if there had been a deliberate attempt for the processes to collect the voices of young people."³⁵

³³ Alipui 2015, personal interview, see Annex 1

³⁴ Desiree 2015, personal interview, see Annex 1

³⁵ Alipui 2015, personal interview, see Annex 1

One participant stated that participation is an actual investment in empowerment from the household level with relationship with parents, siblings, gender socialization of roles right from the beginning through to interactions at school, in the community. Government budget and an enabling environment for meaningful participation is crucial, but it should “come on top of a baseline from community and family environment especially for girls.”³⁶ Furthermore, the participant added that early investment of government in children and young people would break the intergenerational circle of poverty and disadvantage as well as in building up in systems that will allow the voices of young people in processes of planning, review and discussion in a systemic way.

4.6 Representation and Competence

After having clarified the purpose and context of youth participation in designing the Post-2015 Development Agenda, it is important to look at the representation of young people in these processes, since it is impossible to fill the United Nations Headquarters with 1.8 billion young people. Sinclair (2004:112) highlighted that even with unprecedented growth in participation of young people, there is still a lack of information on who is participating and, more importantly, who is not participating. Research participants not directly linked to the United Nations had different answers about young people’s engagement in the post-2015 process. One participant acknowledged that young people were “heavily involved in the process but commented that being heard is one thing and being taken seriously is another thing.”³⁷ This participant also stated that, when the views of young people are not taken into consideration, “it is a waste of time, energy and resources.”³⁸ In addition, with the opportunity to engage, a participant questioned “to what degree ideas, thoughts and plans of young people were included in the post- 2015 process.”³⁹ Taking the conversation about young people’s engagement in the post-2015 process even further, another participant stated that young people are barely engaged in the process, and the United Nations is using social media as one of the means of engagement. This participant also acknowledged that the world is making considerable progress when it comes to youth participation, however there is a lot of room for improvement.

According to one of my interviewees,⁴⁰ the Major Group of Children and Youth (MGCY) at the United Nations is the official space for youth participation at the United Nations. He said the MGCY at the UN is involved in advocacy and lobbying. As part of UNMGCY’s duties, they participated in the Sustainable Development Goals discussions, pushed for more engagement, priority points, and position papers. The UNMGCY was “created, in 1992, by the 1st Rio Conference when the Major Group system of nine major groups was endorsed.”⁴¹ By January 2012, in the lead-up to the Rio+20 Conference, the UNMGCY got involved with the Sustainable Development Goals process and started being a part of the negotiations along with the other eight

³⁶ Alipui 2015, personal interview, see Annex 1

³⁷ Bropleh 2015, personal interview, see Annex 1

³⁸ Bropleh 2015, personal interview, see Annex 1

³⁹ Sokartara 2015, personal computer-assisted interview, see Annex 1

⁴⁰ Khullar 2015, personal Skype interview, see Annex 1

⁴¹ <http://childrenyouth.org/history/> Accessed 8 November 2015

major groups at the United Nations. Since then, the Group has expanded its mandate and consolidated youth engagement.

However, the UNMGCY triggered raise a lot of questions of “who represents.” According to Sinclair, asking questions of “equal opportunities and representativeness matters” (Sinclair 2004:112). Presenting four answered questions to review youth participation, Checkoway stated that “young people’s participation is uneven” with members of the population with higher income, education and economic status tending to be the most active participants (2010:343). One participant argued that “the vast majority of the youngsters participating in the SDGs are part of an ‘elitist’ group and, for the Netherlands, this means mainly white, highly educated young people from very stable backgrounds.”⁴²

The UNMGCY membership, according to one of my research participants⁴³ who is also an operating partners of the group, is open and accessible to youth organizations that engage at the international level with more than 6,000 members.”⁴⁴ Sinclair stated that different members can participate, depending on the method of participation, access to certain skills, resources, being at a particular location, having a particular level of education or language (Sinclair 2004:112). A participant indicated that “the UNMGCY requires no screening process, anyone can join, but members need to have a certain amount of knowledge of the UN system and how policy processes work. Young people must be age 30 and below or part of a youth-led, youth-serving or child-serving organization.”⁴⁵ The participant also noted that “being present” and active in the UNMGCY is based on a young person’s ability to fund victuals because funding is irregular and ad hoc.

As stated earlier, young people need to have an idea of how United Nations processes work. In my opinion, competence should not be placed in the way of the young people when adults themselves struggle and continue to learn finding their way through the United Nations system. Research participants indicated that young people need to be given the opportunity. “There is no special preparation for participation.”⁴⁶ If you are not given the opportunity, you will not know whether you can participate or not. One participant stated that there are young people who are already participating and young people who need to be taken along to be able to learn processes and participation. “If you say young people are not ready to participate, they will never be ready unless they are given an opportunity to learn.”⁴⁷ She further stated that young people should be given the chance to follow through, do well, make mistakes, fail and learn. Another participant said that young people are equipped to participate but not enough. He stated that young people are able to articulate their views, lobby, advocate and create coalition. There is a need to increase the number of young people involved in global processes lobbying and distributing information to other young people.

⁴² Oskam 2015, personal computer-assisted interview, see Annex 1

⁴³ Khullar 2015, personal Skype interview, see Annex 1

⁴⁴ Khullar 2015, personal Skype interview, see Annex 1

⁴⁵ <http://childreneyouth.org/about/guidelines/> Accessed 8 November 2015

⁴⁶ Fofana 2015, personal interview, see Annex 1

⁴⁷ Fofana 2015, personal interview, see Annex 1

He indicated that young people lack technical training. “There is maybe not enough training in terms of how they really operate in the space provided at the United Nations.”⁴⁸ He further suggested that the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) can play a huge role in training, opening up their knowledge and expertise toward the major groups, especially children and youth, at a reasonable cost. Cross major group training would also equip young people with skills to participate and build cohesion going forward.

The society often constructs youth as lost hope, i.e. demonizes and blames youth for problems in the society, “holding young people account for societal debates without talking with them” (Quijada 2008:207). Quijada argued that, “youth care about the world and seek opportunities to discuss their participation in it” (2008:218). The fight, then, is not to think about what benefits young people but to view the ways in which youth can become active participants, promoting and advocating for other young people and marginalized groups (Quijada 2008:218).

4.7 Identities

Earlier, in Chapter 1, it was indicated that “youth” should be considered in a differentiated manner. Youth is an essential period when a new sense of identity is constructed by separating from family origin and developing through interactions with the society and the environment (Jones 2009:59). People make up their identities by delineating themselves from others and establishing a sense of belonging which interconnected to gender, class and ethnicity (Winker and Degele 2011: 54). Identity can be discussed in two dimensions: personal and social (Sardiello 1998:118). Personal dimension of identity refers to micro level elements including personal attributes, individual autonomy and continuity (Sardiello 1998:119).

Research participants indicated that young people are not a group of homogenous people but are heterogeneous with different issues, needs and challenges. A participant⁴⁹ indicated that she worked with a diverse group of Liberian youth to create a youth perspective on Post-2015. However, she and her team worked to incorporate the diverse views of every segment, including young people with disability, special needs and different sexual orientations, educated, semi-educated and illiterate, to represent the broader society, cognizant of the country’s regional distribution. One participant indicated that young people age out and “age is a demography and transient.”⁵⁰

Considering that the 1.8 billion young people all over the world have different identities, the levels of engagement need to be different with special attention given to most vulnerable groups. “Enhancing the gender perspective is important as well as the diverse perspective of youth with disabilities, indigenous and rural youth.”⁵¹ Another participant noted that engagement at different levels is important because some young people are waiting to be informed or to become aware of what’s going on; others are already informed and may be involved actively; and still others do not

⁴⁸ Coviello 2015, personal phone interview, see Annex 1

⁴⁹ Fofana 2015, personal interview, see Annex 1

⁵⁰ Khullar 2015, Skype interview, see Annex 1

⁵¹ Ravi 2015, transcribed Global Youth Institute Google hangout, see Annex 1

understand the processes but want immediate solutions to problems like unemployment. She indicated that it is the responsibility of the authorities to assess the needs and situation, and to organize young people into groups with strategies to engage youth at different levels. It is recommended to use techniques of participation that adapt to the diversity of young people in order to provide equal access to participation (Herbots and Put 2015:162).

Even within the “official space” of youth participation in designing the Sustainable Development Goals, young people themselves held multiple identities. Jones’ list included age-generational identity, kin-generation identity, immediate-peer group identity, national identity, ethnic identity, gender identity (2009:60). In processes of the Sustainable Development Goals, it is “essential to think about participation of young women, people with disability, people belonging to minority groups, in different regions of the world”⁵² The conversation has to be about young people, including young women and young men from diverse backgrounds including minorities and youth with disabilities. During the Plan Nederland Sustainable Development Goals Workshop during the Gelijk=Anders Festival on June 27, 2015, at the Pakhuis de Zwijger in Amsterdam, one of the motions put forth for discussion was “SDGs should address gender specific problems of all gender identifications rather than only women.”⁵³

Going back to my story in the introduction of this paper, I am considering if my identity as a young person, a woman and an African had anything to do with the question, posed to me “Can I speak to the real delegate?” If I had other identities, would the question have been the same or different?

4.8 Mode and Style of Participation in the SDGs

O’Donoghue et al (2002) cited four myths around youth participation that represent key barriers to meaningful youth participation: “youth participation is accomplished by placing one youth on a board or committee; youth participation means that adults surrender their roles as guides and educators; adults are ready for youth participation; and youth are ready to participate, they just need the opportunity” (2002:20-23). O’Donoghue et al concluded that these myths emphasize the need for an open discussion and analysis around issues of power (2002:23). Herbots and Put classified the mode of participation into different typologies and styles (2015:162). In many different procedures and at different times young people’s participation occurs (Herbots and Put 2015:162). However, Roger Hart’s Ladder of participation (Figure 2) stands out.

Looking at participation of young people in the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda vis-à-vis the Ladder of participation, not as a measuring tape but as a reflection on the process, creates clarity. Research participants echoed that **youth participation** is a long systematic process of engagement rather than an event. “Engaging young people in development is long, hard work, remembering always to engage young people, remembering always to seek their opinions and inputs

⁵² Ravi 2015, Global Youth Institute Google hangout, see Annex 1

⁵³ Girls’ Rights Watch Plan Nederland Workshop 2015, see Annex 1

that feed into development constructs and conceptualizations.”⁵⁴ One participant stated that youth participation is a mind and paradigm shift that creates an automatic reflex to seek young people’s participation. In 2030, clearly “it is not a world where I am going to be a young man. Like me, people crafting the agenda are so old that by 2030 they obviously are not going to be the one shaping the future. Understanding the perspectives and ambitions of young people is essential.”⁵⁵

For “how” young people should be engaged in the post-2015 sustainable development process, participants reiterated the need for “full continual participation”. One participant stated that “young people should be included in every part of the process.”⁵⁶ According to another participant, “it would be prudent not to just discuss our opinion; let us fully participate in the entire process from planning to making the goals and to the execution.”⁵⁷ Another participant stated that participation should “be on a daily basis, instead of a few projects and should become a new lifestyle.”⁵⁸ This means, according to another participant, that young people should not just be heard but “their ideas understood and respected.”⁵⁹ For example, governments and their ministers, should give feedback on how young people’s ideas are considered. She further stressed that “social media is a great tool to include youth in a quick and easy way but I also argue personal contact is important.”⁶⁰ “Youth themselves that are involved in the processes should recruit more youth to join the process.”⁶¹

On “how” can young people contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals, participants expressed that young adults can make contributions towards creating a better world by connecting with one another and communicating issues to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, for example, creating youth working groups. However, being well informed and aware of issues stimulates the contribution of young people. Young people can also contribute by being curious and willing to present themselves as “active partners,” accepting responsibility to spread the word about sustainable development with our friends in schools, colleges and universities to motivate action of other young people. Participants agreed that young people can contribute to making the SDGs popular.

Participants indicated that young people have new original ideas that are vital to ensuring that the SDGs are fulfilled. Furthermore, as key players young people can provide their ideas and manpower, entrepreneur skills and lead their communities. Sustainable development is long term, and eventually the young people today will be the ones to continue the process. One participant stated that “young people have untapped resources and a bigger tool box than any generation before us to solve the problems we have today.”⁶²

⁵⁴ Alipui 2015, personal interview, see Annex 1

⁵⁵ Alipui 2015, personal interview, see Annex 1

⁵⁶ Sokartara 2015, personal computer-assisted interview, see Annex 1

⁵⁷ Mohamed 2015, personal computer-assisted interview, see Annex 1

⁵⁸ Bakker 2015, personal computer-assisted interview, see Annex 1

⁵⁹ Oskam 2015, personal computer-assisted interview, see Annex 1

⁶⁰ Oskam 2015, personal computer-assisted interview, see Annex 1

⁶¹ Jallow 2015, personal interview, see Annex 1

⁶² Monika 2015, personal phone and in-person interview, see Annex 1

Another participant stated that for youth participation to transcend from “token becomes taken,”⁶³ every time young people or youth groups are invited to functions or fill positions of authority as mere tokens, young people should, by their performance, outputs, comportment, demeanor and the quality of their contributions, leave impressions and legacies that elevate their issues in such a way that no one forgets them. The “token opportunity” or “token engagement” then becomes an opportunity and engagement when it is used to demonstrate competence, capacity productivity and creativity. This exemplary finesse leaves an unforgettable and indelible impression that makes it difficult for anyone in authority to ignore them in the future. The same participant stressed that young people need to realize their inherent potential, organize themselves for productive causes and avoid an outcome where they just “hold up placards with words generated most often by others instead of questioning reasonably the necessity for such signs.”⁶⁴ He further stated that if young people must stand up for a cause and hold up signs, it should be signs with words generated out of the convictions of their hearts, contribution to constructive changes in their lives as well as the lives of others so that their participation is considered meaningful. “For young people to be taken seriously, they must first take themselves seriously.”⁶⁵

One participant stated that while youth participation is a good topic, the question really is participation to what degree, on whose terms and to what extent. “If you just bring young people in the room and make them sing a song, that’s not meaningful participation.”⁶⁶ Meaningful participation involves young people as equal stakeholders, and their voices, like other stakeholders, are taken seriously. It is more than saying that young people are participating. “Young people can sing a song and that’s participation, but meaningful participation means being part of the discussions, negotiations and proceedings that are taking place and their views are taken seriously.”⁶⁷

Participation of young people can take different styles, ranging from individual to collective, active to passive and occurring within multiple settings and across multiple levels (Herbots and Puts 2015:166; O’Donoghue et al 2002:18). According to one participant, the Major Group of Children had formal procedures where members of the group reviewed official statements of the group “red flagging” issues they thought more discussion within the major group. The group had rotation of speakers during negotiations and meetings, to avoid “hogging of speaker space”. It is also critical to note that there were people in New York the whole time of the negotiations as well as children and youth monitoring the discussions online. This participant also stated that the UNMGCY maintained good rapport with other major groups and missions accredited to the United Nations that led to great interactions. Moreover, young people involved in the processes can now serve as trainers for other young people, spreading skills and knowledge. Working in partnership to make joint statements with other major during negotiations creates an avenue to sit down at the same level and communicate with the other major groups, including women, parliamentarians, migrants, farm

⁶³ N’Tow 2015, personal computer-assisted interview, see Annex 1

⁶⁴ N’Tow 2015, personal computer-assisted interview, see Annex 1

⁶⁵ N’Tow 2015, personal computer-assisted interview, see Annex 1

⁶⁶ Khullar 2015, personal Skype interview, see Annex 1

⁶⁷ Khullar 2015, personal Skype interview, see Annex 1

workers and business owners. This also fulfills the critical adult roles in giving guidance and showing young people the way to access much needed information and resources (O'Donoghue et al 2002:22).

Technology has played an important role with youth participation in the Sustainable Development Goals. Technology as a way of life is becoming a prominent part of young people's lives. It is possible that their identities, expectations and understandings about the world are shaped and influenced by their engagement with the online world (Beavis 2008:53-54). As indicated earlier, technology helped the UNMGCY statements during negotiations, with the document being placed in a Google document for inputs from young people who were part of the group. This momentum needed to translate to more institutionalized mechanisms to youth participation during implementation of the SDGs. Technology cannot replace offline engagement, but it can help enable and bring in the voices of people digitally into the conversation. Research participants indicated that online participation should not replace in-person participation, but should be used to complement each other.

“The SDGs process, the Post-2015 Development Agenda process also has created some kind of synergies and binding of youth around the world.”⁶⁸ One participant in the Google hangout on “SDGs: Youth as the Driving Force” indicated that the role of technology, especially social media, does change policy conversation. “We need to attend to the texts and spaces of digital media but also to the uses people make of them, as well as to the interplay between these texts, technologies and communities and the way people live their lives”(Beavis 2008:64). Thinking about the role of technology, another participant stated that three words that came to her mind are: Reach, Time and Synergy. Technology spreads information all over the world within seconds and creates a platform for youth movements to rally and work together. Another participant in the Google hangout stated that the current generation is lucky because of access to the internet and social media which could be used to effectively engage their governments.

Limited access to technology poses a hurdle to participation. Participants stated that youth participation is hampered by lack of access to internet communications, technology including level, saturation and broadband coverage. More needs to be done to ensure that every young person can have a voice. Participants agreed that since many young people lack access to internet and the ability to come to New York and participate in negotiations, the challenge is to figure out how to include the voices that are left behind. One participant recognized risks of young people's participation using technology including exposure to abuse, stalkers and pornography.

Participants stressed the importance of establishing multiple partnerships with young people that will operate online and offline.

4.9 Participation and Power

⁶⁸ Ravi 2015, Global Youth Institute Google hangout, see Annex 1

Arranging participation into typologies raise the question of power (Herbots and Put 2015:164). This moves us to the discussion of who has the power to define the parameter of participation. The degree to which power is “handed over to or removed” from adults to young people is important (ibid: 164). This section will consider power in the designing the post-2015 development Agenda, in relations with the levels and spaces of power on the power cube (Figure3).

The power cube represents an imaginary boundary created and shaped by power relations that decides what is possible within the space, who participates with which identities, discourses and interest(Gaventa 2006:26). Looking at the space of power, it is important to examine how the space was created, in who interest and on what terms of engagement (ibid: 26). As a challenge of youth participation, participants indicated that the connotation of youth participation to young people is linked to politics which some young people interpret as “boring and frightening because policy makers will not listen to them anyway.” Listing of barriers to youth participation, research participants stressed power differences, “a perception that young people cannot manage,” pre-conceived notions that young people are not knowledgeable enough. It is also due to time management/responsibilities issues as well as not enough promotion or awareness. In as much as this paper looks directly at participation spaces for young people in the post-2015 Development Agenda, it is important to state that many decision-making spaces consist of a set of actors behind closed doors (Gaventa 2006:26).

Several efforts have being made in youth participation in the United Nations, young people are invited to participate in the process. Gaventa refers this as invited space that moves from being close to ‘open’ (Gaventa 2006:26). As discussed in earlier, the major group system of nine major groups was endorsed to contribute to the negotiations of the sustainable development goals. The UNMGCY was invited to the space to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals processes. One participant, directly involved with the group stated that “the UNMGCY was given a space, a lot of space and we made use of that space.”⁶⁹ He indicated for the post-2015 processes, the views of young people were taken seriously and made an impact on the SDGs even though some views were not considered because member states and facilitators had different ideas. Like many advocacy battles, “you’ll win some and you compromise other advocacy battles. He added that, some of the issues in the SDGs because of UNMGCY and joint advocacy with other groups across the spectrum and across the processes.”⁷⁰ Another Participant stressed that participation become more meaningful, when young people are respectfully invited to engage in decision making for their valuable contributions and not token representatives used to fill quotas. This means their presence and contributions are more meaningful with their views incorporated in final outputs of such engagements. Additionally, young people are responsible to ensure meaningful participation by balancing in their contributions with objectivity in articulation and analysis of issues.

Claimed/Created spaces refers to spaces that are “claimed by less powerful actors from or against the power holders, or created more autonomously by them” (Gaventa 2006:27). Young

⁶⁹ Khullar 2015, personal skype interview, see annex 1

⁷⁰ Khullar 2015, personal skype interview, see annex 1

people should ask questions and engage in the processes. One participant cautioned that “if they do not call young people on the table, young people should create their own table--- create your voice and they will listen to you.”⁷¹ A participant connected with the UNMGCY stated that as an invited group, the UNMGCY sometimes created their own space within the Post-2015 Process by pushing and advocating for more space. Recalling times when the UNMGCY claimed and created space during the Post-2015 Development Agenda negotiations, he indicated that the modalities during Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, “ we had own seats, self-nominated speakers and decided what we did.” As the post-2015 process agreement drew near, there were different modalities including a steering committee concept, more bureaucracy that required more people to do what had originally been done with a few people in the OWG process. “Major actors tried to cut-off major groups but we remained aggressive and created our own space pushing a lot and managed to change the modalities of the post-2015 process to the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals”⁷² The UNMGCY as the ‘official space’ for young people participation at the United Nations also confronts a lot of stigma. “Challenges exist but young people have to get over it by being professional, proficient in what they are saying and doing.”⁷³ Young people are not productive but request for space and the need to be listened to. Young people need to use space they are given to talk about their opinions on a lot of issues. “Some people do not take young people very seriously but when young people speak in the language they understand, a language that keeps them shocked then it works.”⁷⁴ Young people should not just limit their opinions to youth employment/empowerment and education. The spaces of power are dynamic and changes over time with closing and opening with struggles for legitimacy, transformation and resistance (Gaventa 2006:27). As the spaces develop, there is a need for different skills, strategies and resources (ibid: 27). Young people participating in the UN process are unpaid and voluntary. Additionally, the UN is a very difficult it is not a youth friendly and it takes a while for young people to get entrenched in the system. “Young people even the very smart get lost and confused.”⁷⁵ He further noted that it is essential to find more dedicated young people willing to participate. Youth is transient and because participation in the UNMGCY unpaid, young people cannot spend all their money if they have any at all, participating in UN processes. Young people are often discouraged and demotivated. Participants directly involved in UN processes indicated that institutionalizing young people engagement is not just giving them a space but also giving them official position and space that is paid and adequately supported. Within United Nations, the MGCY looks forward to replicating youth participation procedures from the OWG on SDGs in other processes at the United Nations including the Financing for Development negotiations. For example, the MGCY had their own seats, self-nominated speakers and made their own decisions of what to do. “We’ve asked for

⁷¹ Fofana 2015, personal interview, see annex 1

⁷² Khullar 2015, personal Skype interview, see annex 1

⁷³ Khullar 2015, personal Skype interview, see annex 1

⁷⁴ Khullar 2015, personal Skype interview, see annex 1

⁷⁵ Khullar 2015, personal Skype interview, see Annex 1

the same modalities from the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals if we are asked if we have a list of requirements to engage.”⁷⁶

The levels of power, local, national and global, should be considered as flexible categories (Gaventa 2006:28). Youth participation in the SDGs are on the global level. However, research participants stated that participation at the global level does not start at the United Nations Headquarters. Linking global and local levels is essential because “participation in the United Nations does not start in New York.”⁷⁷ It starts with the country level and moves on to the regional level and then to the global level. At the national level, young people need to be informed about governance structures and a space needs to be created for them to partake in governance as articulated by the 1995 World Program of Action on Youth. For example, “youth participation was part of Financing for Development Document, in August for the first time and document included a strong focus on youth.”⁷⁸ Participation should start with working with young people in smaller close knitted local level that will translate into national, regional and global levels. Giving young people the opportunity to air their voice, dream and aspirations and taken seriously is vital.

In decision making at all levels, young people must create an image of themselves that is enviable and of quality at the local, national and global levels to be able to erase the perception that young people are problematic and deviants. Participants believed that negative perceptions of young people should be countered with young people who are anxious, motivated and ready to creatively, actively and independently improve their communities. This requires also the initiative of young people to identify way in which they can contribute to development of their communities especially in civil engagement and community service. Young people must also be aware of the potential in their number to influence processes in their favor. One participant working at the national level stated that, many young people are qualified to vote but refuse to register to cast their ballots. On the other hand those who are registered to vote, vote based on popularity and or dislike instead of what the candidates can offer. This overshadows the true voices of youth, disempower them rather than empower young people at critical and pivotal time s in progressive developmental processes. It is a “numbers game” and the numbers are compelling. Lack of engagement with young people to solve problems will in a long run hinder the ability to solve problems. Governments need to make specific attempts to get young people to participate. With all the dynamic nature of the levels of participation, young people face the challenge of where and how to engage. The interrelationship between the levels is important to create vertical links across the levels of participation (Gaventa 2006:28). Another participant indicated the term “Glocal, meaning creating synergies between the local to global, and global to local.”⁷⁹

This chapter discussed youth participation in designing the Sustainable Development Goals using Herbots and Puts (2015) participation disc’s purpose, context, mode and style. The different

⁷⁶ Khullar 2015, personal Skype interview, see Annex 1

⁷⁷ Alhendawi 2015, personal interview, see Annex 1

⁷⁸ Alhendawi 2015, personal interview, see Annex 1

⁷⁹ Ravi 2015, Global Youth Institute Google hangout, Annex 1

themes that emerged including rights, representation, identity, and power would be ‘drawn together’ in subsequent chapter.

Chapter 5 WRAPPING UP YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN THE SDGs

This paper has raised more questions than answers about youth participation in designing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This chapter focuses on threading together all the answers and questions discussed in the last four chapters of this paper.

5.1 Drawing together Youth Participation

Using Hart’s ladder of participation as a foundation and considering other typologies, Herbots and Puts come up with initiation, information, consultation, engagement and decision as forms in which participation can be distinguished (2015:165).

Among the research participants who were not directly involved with United Nations processes, knowledge of the Sustainable Development Goals was mixed. One participant did not know about the topic and had unclear information delineating the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals and the Millennium Development Goals. However, most of the participants in this group had considerable information about the SDGs and could list ‘subjects’ covered. Another participant stated that SDGs “are new goals and are a continuation of the MDGs and strive more strongly to create a better world considering subjects of gender equality, fighting poverty and creating a more sustainable environment.”⁸⁰ A female participant indicated that the SDGs “are aimed at promoting inclusive development and reducing negative effects on the environment.”⁸¹ It is worth noting that a participant could indicate that “we really did not meet the Millennium Development Goals...we did not reach our target so the new SDGs is like a continuation.”⁸²

There was a consensus among participants on awareness and clear roles of young participation into the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda. Participants indicated that for young people to be prepared to contribute, they needed awareness, critical education, clear-cut information on the SDGs, its purpose and how young people can contribute. For instance, a participant stated that information and awareness “could be easier if some of the policy documents or issues are simplified...I am not trying to overlook young people but sometimes these documents need to be youth-friendly.”⁸³ This also means breaking some of the difficult texts into different modes of communication so that young people can disseminate the information to others. Another participant indicated that the participation of young people can contribute more if seminars and information sessions are held to enhance the skills of young people. They need empowerment through education because if they are skilled, they will impact their communities, their countries and the world. There should be deliberate avenues of awareness aimed at recruiting youth to participate. Referring to them

⁸⁰ Oskam 2015, personal computer-assisted interview, see Annex 1

⁸¹ Sonkartara 2015, personal computer-assisted interview, see Annex 1

⁸² Bropleh 2015, personal interview, see Annex 1

⁸³ Bropleh 2015, personal interview, see annex 1

as current leaders in training, one participant stressed the need to invite young people to every stage of development policies discussions, including preparation and implementation, instead of simply informing or telling them about policies. Participants opted for obligatory youth participation and government investment in education and enforcement of gender equality.

One of the four priority areas for the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth is participation.⁸⁴ "We were mandated to increase youth participation in UN processes, mandated with advocacy in youth issues at a time where everything has a youth angle and also building more partnership around youth, and we have been really active."⁸⁵ Strengthening youth participation in the United Nations would mean streamlining to make it easier for young people to engage. "Youth participation in the United Nations is very broken and ad hoc."⁸⁶ Although youth participation is becoming institutionalized, streamlining different youth process would make youth participation more accessible and inclusive. The UN system has started streamlining with the Inter-Agency Network and the office of the Envoy on Youth, but there is a lot more to do in terms of communications and coordination within UN agencies and entities. One participant suggested that the United Nations dedicate resources to youth participation. During the celebration of International Youth Day on August 12, 2015, in the Economic and Social Council Chamber, at United Nations Headquarters, a participant asked the panel⁸⁷ about the feasibility of a youth think tank at the UN. However, one of the panellists indicated that avenues for participation already exist within the United Nations. As a follow-up to this answer, I asked the panellist, in a personal interview, and his response was: "It is necessary to think of new avenues of youth participation, only if we think existing ones outlived their utility and they haven't. Avenues for youth engagement in the UN are just beginning to come of age."⁸⁸ The MGCY, Youth Envoy office, youth advisory panels and advisory boards already started working on a system-wide level. There is still a long way to go to connect ad hoc youth processes. As stated earlier, there is a need for greater streamlining and coordination, as well as for providing resources and funding. It is important to strengthen existing structures without trying to create new youth sectors within the UN.

Involving young people should take place right at the beginning of UN processes from planning to designing and implementing. "Young people should not be seen as an offshoot of the main planning but need to be involved right at conceptual stages."⁸⁹ With the level of complexities of the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda, it requires a broader alliance of partners. It is essential to establish an enabling environment that sets the agenda for youth participation. "Young people are not barriers of progress, they are stakeholders and their voices have to be taken seriously."⁹⁰ There is a need to shift the mentality from catering to young people as beneficiaries to supporting and investing in them as strategic partners and offering them what they need to do also. This entails

⁸⁴ Envoy Work Plan <<http://www.un.org/youthenvoy/workplan/>> Accessed 8 November 2015

⁸⁵ Alhendawi 2015, personal interview, see Annex 1

⁸⁶ Khullar 2015, personal Skype interview, see Annex 1

⁸⁷ International Youth Day 2015 Commemoration, Panel Two: The Power of Youth as Global Citizens

⁸⁸ Khullar 2015, personal Skype interview, annex 1

⁸⁹ Alipui 2015, personal interview, annex 1

⁹⁰ Khullar 2015, personal Skype interview, see annex 1

supporting young people, creating jobs, tackling some of their challenges and “expanding the voluntary work because young people could offer millions of hours in voluntary work that could expedite the implementation of the SDGs.”⁹¹

A slogan of the Major Group of Children and Youth is: “Nothing about us without us.”⁹² Young people must be ready to engage their governments, advocate for change, and contribute to achieving the SDGs. One participant stated the need to adopt “the principle PIA -- Participation, Inclusion and Accountability.”⁹³ The principle of inclusion considers gender equality and diversity, ensuring that every single person is included. Young people should hold their governments accountable. “In the MY World Survey, young people made a clear correlation between impact on their livelihood and accountability.”⁹⁴

“It is essential to deliberately ensure that the principles of youth participation -- honesty, transparent participation, voluntary participation, inclusive participation, protective participation, action-oriented participation and accountable participation -- are fundamental to the process of implementation of SDGs.”⁹⁵ At the national level, young people should get involved and learn about national development plans and begin the conversation. Young people should feel comfortable to use their capacity to mobilize their peers and communities. “Young people digest their national development plan and agenda and engage the government.”⁹⁶ As a matter of importance, young people must be ready to learn about the Sustainable Development Goals and Targets. Participation of young people should continue in the implementation and review process of the SDGs. The outcome of participation is rooted in the continuing process of dialogue. However, young people cannot participate without being fundamentally present (Herbots and Puts 2015:158).

Sometimes young people perceive the United Nations as too big to participate. “Young people view the UN as this big grand organization that’s confusing and they can never be able to participate because they don’t feel they are not good enough.”⁹⁷ This self-doubt tends to hinder youth participation in United Nations processes. The ability to be physically present at these discussions is a challenge. “For the first time the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Panama arranged for young people to attend the General Assembly during the Post-2015 Summit and that is unprecedented.”⁹⁸ Participation should not end there.

There are risks of young people’s participation. For example, “it takes children and young people away from being young people, especially when it is done in a way that is exploitative of young people put in the spotlight for just visuals and optics.”⁹⁹ In my mind, there are questions about the 193 young people holding lanterns at the opening of the Post-2015 Summit at United

⁹¹ Alhendawi 2015, personal interview, see Annex 1

⁹² Coviello 2015, personal phone interview, see annex 1

⁹³ Ravi 2015, Global Youth Institute Google hangout, see annex 1

⁹⁴ Ravi 2015, Global Youth Institute Google hangout, see annex 1

⁹⁵ Ravi 2015, Global Youth Institute Google hangout, see annex 1

⁹⁶ Ayodele 2015, Global Youth Institute google hangout, see annex 1

⁹⁷ Coviello 2015, personal phone interview, see Annex 1

⁹⁸ Ceden Rengifo 2015, personal interview, see Annex 1

⁹⁹ Alipui 2015, personal interview, see Annex 1

Nations Headquarters on September 25, 2015.¹⁰⁰ Amongst the 193 young people on the balcony of the General Assembly Hall were the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth and Nobel Laureate Malala Yousafzai who spoke on behalf of the group. What was the significance of these 193 young people? Was it for optics and visuals? I hope that the 193 young people took their lanterns back home to the 193 countries and will continue to raise them and participate in achieving the SDGs.

5.2 Looking Forward

Young people can contribute to implementation of the SDGs by identifying what is important to them as individuals. This means young people should have a connection to a Goal or a Target they care about. They should also look at the SDGs as interconnected. For instance, “when you think about water issues, you should not just be looking at one Goal but its connection to health and poverty.”¹⁰¹ There is also a possibility to lobby with their local government and take over these issues, localizing them. Actual action happens at the local level and young people can help to localize the SDGs, domesticating them to their own local situations. “The role of children and young people is spectacular, young people are agents of change; the reason for the SDGs in 2030. They will be the ones in charge and thrive, live and survive; for them to play a meaningful role there must be deliberate investments in their development.”¹⁰² Youth participation in implementing the SDGs is fundamental and only guarantee for the success and completion of the SDGs. For simple reasons, “let’s take a country like India with 800 million people under 35 years and there you clearly cannot implement the SDGs without them because their overall indicator will be determined by what happens in this country.”¹⁰³ Most pressing issues like education, teenage pregnancy, water and sanitation, outlined in the SDGs, cannot be achieved without the engagement of young people. Like the previous example of India, with 800 million people under 35 years old, “if you were considering this huge population of people only as beneficiaries, not partners, then you will need another India to be able to meet the needs.”¹⁰⁴ It is simple math that you cannot just cater for 800 million people because they are too many to be beneficiaries. Truly engaging with them would meet their needs and implement the SDGs.

There are many different ways in which young people can participate meaningfully, and the SDGs offer a huge opportunity for them to take ownership of the process despite the UN bureaucracy. “One of the strengths of this youth generation is taking the vision of the UN and implementing them outside of the United Nations.”¹⁰⁵ National government should learn to engage young people in the different phases of the development agenda -- planning, designing implementing and reviewing.

To be a driver of the implementation of the SDGs, it is important that we create bottom-up mechanisms that will walk the talk of youth participation. One participant stated that the “United

¹⁰⁰<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2015/09/malala-yousafzai-urges-world-leaders-at-un-to-promise-safe-quality-education-for-every-child/> accessed 8 November 2015

¹⁰¹ Coviello 2015, personal phone interview, see Annex 1

¹⁰² Alipui 2015, personal interview, see Annex 1

¹⁰³ Alhendawi 2015, personal interview, see Annex 1

¹⁰⁴ Alhendawi 2015, personal interview, see Annex 1

¹⁰⁵ Amy 2015, personal interview, see Annex 1

Nations stopped looking at youth from very passive beneficiaries and recipients of development assistance and looked at young people as partners for development.”¹⁰⁶ Governments need to create enabling environments for young people. In order to ensure that a young person influences the village development, plan or hold the municipal organizations and the budget to account, young people should be involved in budgeting conversations, investments and finances on youth development.

5.3 Conclusion

Starting off this paper with my own story of “youth participation”, I have given a background on the post-2015 process by painting a background of a very complex process. Chapter 1 problematizes sustainable development from different authors and the definition of youth. Chapter 2 presents the Herbots and Puts Participation Disc linked with Roger Hart’s Ladder of participation and the spaces and level power on the Gaventa Power cube as analytical framework. The methodology and research procedures are discussed in Chapter 3. Using the Participation Disc to reflect on participation, Chapter 4 analyses youth participation in the SDGs, highlighting the purpose, context and mode of participation. Themes of rights, power, identity and representation come up as linked to youth participation.

As seen throughout this paper, there was not an intentional and deliberate attempt to get the voices of young people in the Post-2015 Development Agenda. There was not a particular process or report specifically geared towards listening to what young people want in 2015. In one of my informal chats, it was said that young people are already involved so there is no need to have a separate forum to include them or else everyone will begin asking for their share of the pie. Young people had education and employment covered in the discussions. However, young people participation should not be limited to education and employment. Young people created a space by participating in the processes with all their might and turning up in numbers to participate in the My World Survey. Within the negotiations corridors of the United Nations, the MGCY stepped up and pushed for young people all over the world.

It is important to laud the efforts of the United Nations in recognizing the need for a UN Youth Envoy, the Major Group of Children and Youth and the Inter-Agency Youth Network. However, meaningful participation is only possible through coordinated and systemic youth participation. This also means creating a “youth-friendly” United Nations by removing barriers and bureaucracy. For example, creating UN documents in youth-friendly language.

Youth participation is paramount to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Currently, the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda does not have a clear plan outlined for how youth can be included implementation. There are still millions of young people who did not participate in designing the Sustainable Development Goals due to lack of information and access to technology.

Meaningful participation means supporting and investing in young people at the local, national and global levels recognizing and treating young people as partners. Meaningful participation is more

¹⁰⁶ Olimar 2015, Global Youth Institute google hangout, see Annex 1

than young people attending an event in UN Headquarters. Rather, it is process of mind and paradigm shift that takes long, hard work, remembering to always include young people.

References

- African Union (2006) 'Youth Charter' Accessed 16 May 2015, <http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Dakar/pdf/AfricanYouthCharter.PDF>
- Beavis, C., (2008), 'New Textual Worlds Young People and Computer Games' in Youth Moves identities and education in global perspective ed. Nadine Dolby and Fazal Rizvi, Routledge, USA, pp. 53-66.
- Benson, E., (2013), 'Post-2015 International Development Goals, Who wants what and why,' Issue Paper June, International institute for Environment and Development, London.
- Brown, B. B., R. W. Larson and T. S. Saraswathi (2002) 'The World's Youth: Adolescence in eight regions of the globe,' Cambridge University Press, London
- Checkoway, B. (2011), 'What is Youth Participation?' Children and Youth Services Review 33(2): 340-345
- Checkoway, B. N. and L.M. Gutierrez (2008) "Youth Participation and Community Change," Journal of Community Change, Routledge, London pp.1-9.
- Fussel, E and M. E. Greene (2002) 'Demographic Trends Affecting Youth around the World' in B.B. Brown et al, 'The World's Youth: Adolescence in eight regions of the globe,' Cambridge University Press, London pp. 21-60.
- Gaventa, J. (2006) 'Finding Spaces for Change: A Power Analysis,' IDS Bulletin 37(6): 23-33.
- Global Partnership for Youth in the Post-2015 Development Agenda (2014), Accessed 6 May 2015 http://www.un.org/youthenvoy/wpcontent/uploads/2014/09/The_Global_Youth_Call.pdf
- Hart, J. (2008), 'Children's Participation and International Development: Attending to the Political,' International Journal of Children's Rights, Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden pp.404-418
- Hart, R. A. (1992) 'Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship,' Innocenti Essay 4, UNICEF, Florence.
- Hart, R. A. (2008), 'Stepping Back from "The Ladder": Reflections on a Model of Participatory Work with Children' in A. Reid et al, Participation and Learning, New York: Springer, pp.19-31.
- Head, B. (2011), 'Why not ask them? Mapping and promoting Youth Participation,' Children and Youth Services Review, No. 33 pp.541-547.
- Herbots, K and J. Put (2015), "The Participation Disc: A concept Analysis of (a) Child ('s Right to) Participation, Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden No. 23, pp. 154-188

http://www.un.org/en/events/pastevent/millennium_summit.shtml Accessed 20 April 2015

Jones, G. (2009), 'Youth,' Polity Press, Cambridge, UK

Lecture by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, 'The Role of Peace in Youth Empowerment' at the United Nations University for Peace San José, Costa Rica Monday, September 30, 2013

[http://www.emansion.gov.lr/doc/President_Sirleaf_University_Peace_Costa_Rica\(AS%20DELIVERED\).pdf](http://www.emansion.gov.lr/doc/President_Sirleaf_University_Peace_Costa_Rica(AS%20DELIVERED).pdf)

Lucia, V. (2012), 'Common but differentiated responsibility,' Accessed 6 November 2015 <<http://www.eoearth.org/view/article/151320>>, The Encyclopedia of Earth

Melton, G. (1993) 'Book Reviews: Roger Hart, Children Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship (UNICEF, International Child Development Child Development Center, Florence, Italy, 1992),' in the International Journal of Children Rights Book Reviews 1:249-279, pp. 263-266.

O'Donoghue, J.L., B. Kirshner, and M. McLaughlin (2002) "Introduction: moving Youth Participation Forward," New Directions for Youth Development, N0.96, Wiley Periodicals Inc. pp.15-26

O'Leary, Z. (2010), 'The Essential Guide to Doing Your Research Project,' Sage, Great Britain.

Quijada, D.A., (2008), 'Marginalization, Identity formation and Empowerment Youth's struggle for self and Social Justice' in Youth Moves identities and education in global perspective ed. Nadine Dolby and Fazal Rizvi, Routledge, USA, pp. 207-220

Redclift, M. R. (2006) 'Sustainable Development (1987-2005)-an oxymoron comes of age' Horizontes Antropologicos, Porto Alegre 12 (25): 65-84.

Robinson. J. (2004) 'Squaring the circle? Some thoughts on the idea of Sustainable Development,' Science Direct Ecological Economics 48(2004), pp. 369-384.

Sardiello, R., (1998) 'Identity and Status Stratification in Deadhead subculture' in Youth Culture Identity in a postmodern world ed. Jonathon S. Epstein, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, UK, pp.118-147

Sinclair, R., (2004) 'Participation in Practice: Making it Meaningful, Effective and Sustainable,' Children and Society 18(2), pp. 106-118.

Thomas, N., (2007) 'Towards a Theory of Children's Participation,' International Journal of Children's Rights 15(2), pp.199-218.

United Nations (1987), 'DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECO~OMIC CO-OPERATION: ENVIRONMENT' Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, General Assembly (A/42/427), United Nations Headquarter, New York, United States

United Nations (1989) 'The Convention on the Rights of the Child' Accessed 16 May 2015 <<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>>

United Nations (2000) 'Millennium Summit of the United Nations' accessed 20 April 2015 <http://www.un.org/en/development/devagenda/millennium.shtml>

United Nations (2010) ‘Guide to Youth Delegates’ Accessed 16 May 2015
<<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/nyin/documents/delegate-guide.pdf>>

United Nations (2010), ‘World Programme of Action on Youth’ Accessed 19 May 2015 <<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/nyin/documents/wpay2010.pdf>>

United Nations (2012) ‘Report of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, June 20-22’ (A/CONF.216/16),

United Nations (2012) ‘The Future We Want,’ (A/RES/66/288), Accessed 18 June 2015
<<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N11/476/10/PDF/N1147610.pdf?OpenElement>> New York, United States

United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2014), ‘Working methods for the participation of children in the reporting process of the Committee on the Rights of the Child,’ United Nations

United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comments No.12 (2009) ‘The right of the Child to be heard,’ CRC/C/GC/12.

United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (n. d.) ‘Definition of Youth’ Accessed 16 May 2015 <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youthdefinition.pdf>.

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform (2015), Accessed 20 April 2015
<<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/owg.html>>

United Nations Development Group (2013), ‘The Global Conversation Begins: Emerging views for a new development Agenda,’ United States of America

United Nations Environment Programme (1992) ‘Rio Declaration on Environment and Development,’ Accessed 6 November 2015
<http://www.unep.org/Documents.multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=78&ArticleID=1163>

United Nations General Assembly (2014) ‘Report of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals,’ United Nations Headquarters, New York, United States of America

United Nations Millennium Declaration (2000) Accessed 20 April 2015,
<<http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>>

United Nations Population Fund (2014), ‘The Power of 1.8 billion Adolescents, Youth and Transformation of the Future: state of the World Population 2014’ Accessed 20 May 2015
<http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/EN-SWOP14-Report_FINAL-web.pdf>

United Nations Population Fund (2014), Accessed 20 April 2015
www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/.../EN-Swop14-Report_Final-web.pdf

* Adopted by the Committee at its sixty-sixth session (26 May–13 June 2014).

United Nations Press (2015) Accessed 16 October 2015
 <<http://www.un.org/press/en/2015/ga11688.doc.htm> >

United Nations Secretary General Report (2014), ‘The Road to Dignity by 2030: ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet’ (A/69/700), United Nations Headquarter, New York, United States.

United Nations (2014), ‘The Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on Post-2015 Development Agenda’ Accessed 7 May 2015
<http://www.un.org/sg/management/hlppost2015.shtml>

United Nations (2015), ‘Sustainable Development Platform,’ Accessed 13 October 2015
 <<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/intergovernmental>>

Winker, G. and N. Degele (2011), ‘[Intersectionality as multi-level analysis: Dealing with social inequality](#)’, *European Journal of Women’s Studies*, 18(1), 51–66

Annex 1 (List of Research Participants)

Research Participants					
Group 1 Participants (no direct link to the UN)					
No.	Name	Position	Date & Mode of Interview	Mode of recording	Location of Interview
1.	Oskam (female)	Girls Rights Watch/ Youth Ambassadors of The Hague	Computer Assisted Interview	Digitally	Netherlands
2.	Mohammed (female)	MA Student	Computer Assisted Interview Skype follow-up	Digitally	Mombasa, Kenya Queens, New York
3.	Sokartara (female)	Plan Nederland, Girls Rights Watch Youth Lobbyist	Computer Assisted Interview	Digitally	Netherlands
4	Bropleh (Male)	Student @ the City University Of New York	In-person interview July 31,2015	Manually and digitally during the interview	Famous Nathan Pennsylvania Station New York
5	Bakker (female)	PLAN Nederland/Student Assistant Vrije Univeriteit Diversity Department	Computer Assisted	digitally	Netherlands
6	Jallow	Secretary	In-person July 30, 2015	Manual notes during interview	Permanent Mission of Liberia to

					United Nations
Group 2 Participants (indirectly supports to the UN)					
7.	N'Tow (male)	Deputy Minister for Youth Republic of Liberia	Computer Assisted Interview	Digitally	Liberia—New York
8.	Fofana (female)	Chaired Liberian Youth Common Position of Post-2015 Graduate Student American University	In-Person Interview August 4,2015	Manually and digitally during the interview	Home of Kula Baltimore, Maryland USA
Group 3 Participants (directly involved in UN Processes)					
9	Coviello (male)		Phone Interview July 25,2015	Manually and digitally during the interview	Ohio, United States Queens, New York
10.	Amy & Monika (females)	United States United Nations Association	In-person and Phone Interview August 6,2015	Manually and digitally during the interview	United Nations Foundation Office New York, USA
11.	Khullar (male)	Major Group of Children and Youth Organizing Partner	Phone Interview August 20,2015	Manually and digitally during the interview	New York, United States
12.	Cedeno Rengifo (female)	Attaché, Permanent Mission of Panama to UN	In-person interview September 3, 2015	Manually and digitally during the interview	Permanent Mission of Panama to United Nations
14.	Nicholas Alipui (male)	Director and Senior Adviser on Post-2015 Development Agenda at UNICEF	In-person Interview August 28, 2015	Manually and digitally during the interview	UNICEF Office New York USA
15.	Alhendawi (male)	UN Secretary-General Envoy on Youth	In-person Interview September 4,2015	Manually and digitally during the interview	Youth Envoy Office North Lawn Building UN Headquarter New York USA
16.	Jones (female)	Director and UN Representative New York Save the Children 777 United Nations Plaza	In-person chat August 13,2015	Manually during the interview	Conference Room Save the Children Office New

		#3A, New York, NY 10017			York United States
17.	Cardinal (female)	Save the Children New York	Informal chat July 29,2015	Manually during the chat	Penny Lane Café New York, USA
18.	Poulsen (male)	Minister Counselor at the European Union Observer Mission to the United Nation	Informal Chat	Manual notes after the chat	Le Pain Quotidien New, York USA

<p>Group Four Participants (Google Hangout hosted by the Global Institute for Youth titled “SDGs: Making Youth the Driving Force”) August 18, 2015</p> <p><https://plus.google.com/u/0/hangouts/onair/watch?hid=hoaevent/cllruq5dglboi3fldutslrj594s&ytl=kwGVChY6Z9A&wpsrc=yta></p>		
	Name	Participants
1.	Coviello (host) ¹⁰⁷	Board Member of Global institute for Youth Former Chair NGO Youth Representative UN Department of Public Information Youth Representative Program Former policy analyst intern at the UN Division for Sustainable Development
2.	Andrea	Staff of the Post-2015 Team, United Nations Foundation
3.	Ayodele	Development practitioner, Nigeria
4.	Ravi	Advisor to the Deputy Executive Director of United Nations Women
5.	Olimar	Policy Coordinator for International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX)

Annex 2: Interview Questions

1. What do you know about the Sustainable Development Goals being discussed by the Member States of the United Nations?
2. In your opinion, how are young people engaged in the process?
3. How do you think young people should be involved in the process?

¹⁰⁷ one of my interviewees interviewed on July 25, 2015

4. What would be some of the benefits of youth participation?
5. Why do you think it is important for youth to be involved in issues concerning them?
6. What is your opinion about youth participation?
7. In your opinion, how can young people contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals?
8. In your own words, what are challenges that stop young people from participating?
9. What do you think should be done to help young people participate?
10. How were the views of young people reflected in the Proposal for Sustainable Development Goals prepared by Open Working Group on SDGs?
11. How can youth participation contribute to implementation of the SDGs?
12. Could you comment on the selection criteria for young representation in these processes?
13. How would one ensure the gender balance in youth representation in these processes?
14. How do you think youth engagement can be strengthened?
15. How could the voices of young people without access to internet be represented?
16. In your opinion, what lessons of youth participation in framing the Proposed Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals can be used in the future UN Processes?
17. Any final Comment?
18. How do think youth participation will contribute to fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals?
19. How can youth be prepared to contribute to the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals?
20. As a young person, is there anything in particular that you would like to see in the Sustainable Development Goals?

Annex 3: Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld> Accessed 9 November 2015

Annex 4: List of the Members of the UN Secretary General High Level Panel on Post-2015
<http://www.post2015hlp.org/the-panel/> Accessed 9 November 2015

Names
1.H.E. Mr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, President of Indonesia, Co-Chair
2. H.E. Ms. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia, Co-chair
3. H.E. Mr. David Cameron, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Co-chair

4. Amina J. Mohammed, ex officio
5. Gisela Alonso, Cuba
6. Fulbert Amoussouga Gero, Benin
7. Abhijit Banerjee, India
8. Gunilla Carlsson, Sweden
9. Patricia Espinosa, Mexico
10. Maria Angela Holguin, Colombia
11. Naoto Kan, Japan
12. Tawakkol Karman, Yemen
13. Sung-Hwan Kim, Republic of Korea
14. Horst Köhler, Germany
15. Graça Machel, Mozambique
16. Betty Maina, Kenya
17. Elvira Nabiullina, Russian Federation
18. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Nigeria
19. Andris Piebalgs, Latvia
20. Emilia Pires, Timor-Leste
21. John Podesta, United States of America
22. Paul Polman, Netherlands
23. Her Majesty Queen Rania of Jordan, Jordan

24. Jean-Michel Severino, France
25. Izabella Teixeira, Brazil
26. Kadir Topbas, Turkey
27. Yingfan Wang, China

