



**Urban Youth, Marginalization and Mass
Organization: Involvement in The Betawi
Brotherhood Forum in Jakarta**

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Table of Contents

List of Tables and Figures	5
Abstract	6
Chapter 1 SETTING THE CONTEXT: URBAN YOUTH IN POST-NEW ORDER INDONESIA	10
1.1. Jakarta's Youth	10
1.2. Dispersed Power in Post New Order Era	11
1.3. Jakarta, Betawi and The Betawi Brotherhood Forum	14
1.5. Research Objectives and Question	17
1.5.1. Research Objectives	17
1.5.2. Research Questions	17
1.6. Methodology	17
1.7. Conducting the Fieldwork	19
1.8. Research Limitations	21
Chapter 2 YOUTH AND THE URBAN CONTEXT: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	23
2.1. Being Urban Youth	23
2.2. Constructing Identity: Masculinity and Ethnicity	25
Chapter 3 THE BETAWI BROTHERHOOD FORUM: MOVEMENT IN PARADOX	27
3.1. The Organization	27
3.1.1. 'Imagined' Indigenous Community	27
3.1.2. Patronized Hierarchy and Command System	30
3.1.3. Acting in Paradox	32
3.2. Looking Through Their Life Histories	34
Chapter 4 BEING URBAN YOUTH: LAYERS OF COMPLEXITIES	38
4.1. Us, Betawi, Against Them	38
4.2. Young, Male, but Restrained	40
4.3. Seeking a Way Out: From the Informal to the Illicit	43
4.4. FBR: The Great Remedy?	45
4.5. Islamic Revival	47
Chapter 5 CONCLUSION: AGENCY FROM THE MARGINALIZED	49
BIBLIOGRAPHY	52

List of Tables and Figures

Figures	Page
Figure 1: Gardu 172, one of the Gardus of FBR located in Kampung Lio, Klender	28
Figure 2: The map of Eastern Jakarta	33
Figure 3: The District of Cakung Barat	36

List of Acronyms

Acronyms	Name
DKI	Daerah Khusus Ibukota – Specialized Capital Area
FBR	Forum Betawi Rempug – Betawi Brotherhood Forum
GDP	Gross National Product
IKB	Ikatan Keluarga Betawi – Betawi Family League
UPC	Urban Poor Consorsium

Abstract

In the whole discussion on children and youth, we are exposed on seeing youth as a social construct. The meaning of being youth is not determined by age category, but by the cultural and social factors within the context they live in. This research scrutinize Indonesia's youth in one of the most dynamic urban cities: Jakarta. Its peculiar characteristic as the centre of government and business activities does not always bring prosperity for its dwellers. With problems of migration, poverty and inequality, Jakarta becomes one of the most challenging places to live in, including for its youth. Based on the life history of four male youths, the research presents how structural inequalities marginalized Jakarta's middle-lower youth. They are being isolated from social institutions such as education and employment, which also serves as the main elements of transition towards adulthood. For them, their identity as an ethnic Betawi and young male exacerbates their state of exclusion. However, the means to overcome such exclusion emerged during the post-New Order era along with the establishment of various ethnic or religious based organizations. One of them is the controversial Betawi Brotherhood Forum. The incoherence between the Islamic values and their mission of Betawi revival with the acts of thuggery they perform has placed this organization in the centre of Jakarta's urban dynamic. But through its coverage of the informal and formal employment, even the illicit sphere, the young members of FBR find possibilities to acquire income. In other words, their involvement in FBR helps them to overcome their marginalization and catalyze their transition towards adulthood. It also facilitates them to fulfil the construction of being youth. Nevertheless, this research shows how young urban people are not only victims of structural conditions but also agents within the harsh urban context.

Relevance to Development Studies

Within the developmental projects in Indonesia, youth are often undermined, voiceless and often considered as unimportant. This research tries to place this youth on the centre of Indonesian context: the urban Jakarta and post-New Order Indonesia. It also

scrutinizes how young people are marginalized in this context and how they are actively finding ways to overcome the problems created by it.

Keywords

Youth, urban, Indonesia, identity, ethnicity, masculinity, marginalization, Islam

Chapter 1

SETTING THE CONTEXT: URBAN YOUTH IN POST-NEW ORDER INDONESIA

This paper is about the involvement of urban youth of Jakarta in a controversial ‘mass organization’. The controversy lies in the contrast between the organization’s stated objectives and its activities. Although some of their activities can be categorized as religious or social, others are seen as forms of thuggery. Within the context of post-New Order Indonesia, the emergence of such mass organizations based on ethnicity or religiosity is widespread. One interesting aspect of this phenomenon is that the members mostly consist of young people. Using the life histories of four male youths, this study tries to discover the background and the impact of their involvement upon their lives. It also attempts to place their involvement in the broader issue of youth marginalization, construction and identity within urban context.

To begin with, this chapter will describe the broader setting where these youth live. It contains a short explanation of young people in urban Jakarta, the wider social-political dimension of post-New Order era and a description of the Betawi Brotherhood Forum.

1.1. Jakarta’s Youth

Boeck & Honwana (2005: 4) adopt Durham’s concept of youth as ‘a relational concept situated in a dynamic context, a social landscape of power, knowledge, rights, and cultural notions of agency and personhood’. In this case, the meaning of being youth is highly influenced by the context where they live. Third world cities are one of those contexts. As Evans (2002: 1) stated, the large cities of the Third World are becoming ‘world cities’, increasingly important nodes in the financial and productive networks of the global economy, but they are not providing livelihoods and healthy habitats for ordinary people. They also have distinct characteristics which Wirth (in Clark, 1996:104) identified as large size, dense population concentration, and a heterogeneous social mix.

For the young people who live in the cities, the urban dynamics provides a peculiar challenge. Tienda & Wilson (2002: 269) argue that in industrialized countries,

economic restructuring has accentuated the economic marginalization and social isolation of inner-city youth. As a consequence of these macroeconomic trends, the divide between the middle class and the poor has widened in both developed and developing countries, particularly in urban areas, where the effects of economic restructuring on social differentiation are most acute. Moreover, Tienda & Wilson emphasize that young people are both agents and victims of social and economic transformations that rearrange their life options because they must not only master the major developmental tasks during adolescence, but also find their place in an order that is in constant flux.

Jakarta, is one of those industrialized cities which Forbes (2004: 268) identify as one of the 'world cities': a centre of finance and administration, and also Indonesia's gateway to the global economy. Likewise, he stated that Jakarta's rapid and chaotic growth has created an urban fabric of complexity and contrast which has been impossible to service or manage in a comprehensive or effective way. Based on the National Socio-Economic Survey (Susenas) in the middle of 2006 (BPS-Statistics DKI Jakarta Provincial Office, 2007: 55), the population of DKI Jakarta Province was 8.96 million. The area of DKI Jakarta is only 661.52 km², hence the population density reached 13.5 thousand/km², and it became the densest region in Indonesia. Over one million of that population are young people aged 25-29 years old (ibid: 62). However, in 2008, The Ministry of Youth and Sports recorded at least 19.5% young people are unemployed from a total number of 10.01 million unemployed people in Jakarta¹. Even within this condition, the city remains a key symbol in Indonesia, is regarded with genuine affection by many of its inhabitants, and is still a magnet for migrants from across the archipelago (Forbes, 2004: 268). Based on these conditions, Jakarta's youth are living in a highly dynamic city with issues of poverty, density and migration. Although they constitute the largest number of Jakarta's population, they remain invisible and voiceless.

1.2. Dispersed Power in Post New Order Era

The rapid changes of urban cities such as Jakarta are related to the broader social and political conditions of the nation. Throughout history, Indonesia has been going

¹ <http://www.detikfinance.com/read/2008/06/11/162820/954509/4/195-juta-pemuda-menganggur>

through many challenges upon its economy, political democracy and socio-cultural sphere. During the New Order regime (1966-1998), Indonesia was subjected to authoritarianism practices with the presidency and military holding the largest power. The downfall of this regime was triggered by a severe economic crisis and followed by Suharto's resignation from the presidency. The crisis led to an increased poverty rate, from a value of 15% at the onset of the crisis in mid-1997 to a highest point of 33% at the end of 1998 (Mancini, 2005: 14). In 1998, real GDP fell by nearly 14% in 1998, while inflation rose to 78%. However, this figure clouds the much higher increase of food prices (ibid.). Related to employment, the formal wage sector has been hit most severely by the crisis. Hourly wages in the formal sector fell on average by around 40% across the country, but with some interesting differences across age groups and type of locality (ibid.). Smith et al. (2002 in Mancini, 2005: 15) find the wage fall was particularly large among young workers, both males and females. Moreover, the wage fall for low-skilled formal sector workers in urban areas was significantly higher than in rural areas (ibid.).

Besides the crisis, the collapse of the regime also resulted in a contestation upon Indonesia's democracy. Schulte Nordholt (2002: 3) argues that the monetary and political crises have set in motion a complex of interrelated processes, the outcome of which cannot easily be predicted. Within this context the concept of civil society and its relationship with democratisation is contested, while economic recovery is slow and uneven and the reorientation of the economy in the post-conglomerate era is still open to debate. He continues by stating that a variety of interest groups – in the army, in the business circles and in political parties – try to gain influence by positioning themselves in promising positions, seeking strategic alliances either in the entourage of the president or in opposition to her/him. Based on Schulte Nordholt statement, it seems that the post-New Order era is mainly characterized by a pattern of dispersed power centres which revolve around other forces besides the presidency and the military.

This also serves as the background for the emergence of diverse ethnic or religious based organizations who try to gain influence, though not always within the army, business circles or political parties. However, their existence reflects a paradox because of the form of vigilantism or para-militarism (see Wilson, 2005) they demonstrate besides expressions of religious belief or ethnic identity. Often, these two

factors are intertwined, resulting in vigilantist and para-militarist acts based on religiosity or ethnicity. In order to achieve a comprehensive understanding of these characteristics, we need to look into Indonesia's history and apprehend how they are being reproduced and modified over time.

Indonesia has a rooted culture of alliances between state and criminal actors, which is also a common phenomenon in other parts of the world. Cribb (1991:2), for example, explains how gangsters cooperated with left-wing nationalists during the national revolution in Indonesia (1945-1949) or were employed in the 1982 general election campaign as participants in rallies, bully boys and occasional agents' provocateurs. Moreover, he stated that "rarely, however, was such an engagement stable, and with the ebb and flow of state authority, the status, power and independence of such figures rose and fell. To this day, relations between gangsters and the state have oscillated between these poles of recruitment and suppression" (ibid: 1-2). During the New Order period, which was characterized by a strong patron-client network, this relationship also existed. As stated by Wilson (2006: 267), the military concept of 'total people's defence and security' "justified the use of civilian groups and youth organizations, which were often merely fronts for criminal gangs, as proxies by the state apparatus".

After the collapse of the New Order era, the use of criminal gangs or actors as state proxies changed in two ways. Firstly, the enforcement partnerships that existed between the state and criminal gangs fragmented and have been replaced by sets of shifting contractual arrangements with political parties, members of the political and economic elite, local officials, business people, and other interest groups (Wilson, 2006: 270). Secondly, the actors within such relationships are not limited any more to criminal gangs. With the emergence of various interest groups, new ethnic and religious based organizations have replaced the function of the gangs that used to be state proxies. This does not mean that they are equal with criminal gangs. However, along with their activities as religious or ethnic mass organizations, there are some similarities with illicit activities that were executed by state proxy gangs throughout history. Some of these ethnic mass organizations which emerged in the post- New Order period were established in Jakarta.

1.3. Jakarta, Betawi and The Betawi Brotherhood Forum

Being a large city and the capital of Indonesia, mixed ethnicity is one of the main characteristics of Jakarta. Since the colonial period, Jakarta has been the centre of ethnic mixing and hybrid culture. By early in the nineteenth century, it was possible to recognise a distinct Batavian² ethnic group, the orang Betawi (people of Batavia), largely eastern Indonesia in ethnic origin, Muslim in their religious affiliation though not renowned for their piety, and speaking a dialect of Malay heavily influenced by Balinese, Hokkien and other languages (Cribb, 1991: 12). However, the politics of colonialism tended to exclude the Betawi of Jakarta. As Cribb (ibid:13) notes, “education, government office and military command were the prerogatives of Europeans until the beginning of the twentieth century, while economic power was shared between Europeans and Chinese. Even when the colonial system began to open to Indonesians in the early twentieth century, the positions available in Batavia went largely to members of extra-regional elites, not to Batavians”. This exclusion was maintained after the colonial era throughout the New Order period, as Brown & Wilson (2007: 16) stated: “their mixed ancestry, their migrant status, and their origins as a product of colonial rule, meant that the Betawi were initially not treated as ethnically authentic by Soeharto’s New Order regime”. Moreover, this group has been experiencing a loss of faith in the state’s ability to deliver economic patronage and a loss of faith in its capacity to promote the development of national community (ibid: 11).

This historical background is precisely the reason for the formation of FBR. Its establishment was triggered by an ethnic conflict in 2001, between the Madurese (one of Indonesia's ethnic group from the island of Madura) and the Betawi. The conflict emerged due to intensified criminal activities by the Madurese in the urban *kampung* (neighbourhood) of Pedaengan, Cakung Barat, Eastern Jakarta. FBR consists of people from different background and age category, but almost all members of FBR are males aged between 20 and 40 years old, 50% whom are unemployed (Brown & Wilson, 2007: 9). As stated in their handbook, FBR’s role is to provide an institution for the struggle of Betawi rights and goals (Widyanto, 2005: 46). Nevertheless, they also stated the forming

² During the Colonial period, Jakarta is known as Batavia.

of 'The Real Owner Island' of Jakarta as one of their mission (ibid.)³. The Betawi Brotherhood Forum itself is not the only Betawi organization, but is the largest in terms of members (in 2001, FBR claimed to have 1.7 million members in Jakarta⁴) and power. FBR has a strong political relationship with Jakarta's governor, Sutiyoso, and contributed to the re-election of Sutiyoso as the governor of Jakarta for the 2002-2007 period (Widyanto, 2005: 54). FBR's activities involve religious activities (such as Quranic recitation) and social activities (i.e. collecting donation for orphanage or demonstrations on certain social-cultural issues). Another role of this organization is aimed at gaining employment for its largely blue-collar, unemployed members from the middle and lower-class citizens of Jakarta. With a firm hold over the informal economy, FBR provides local *ojek* motorbike chauffeurs who join FBR with interest-free loans to assist them in buying their own motorbikes, for example (Wilson, 2006 :276). They also offer its members other economic initiatives as well, e.g., screen-printing workshops and food stall cooperatives (ibid.).

On the other hand, FBR's effort to gain their 'original' place in Jakarta often involves acts of coercion, intimidation and violence. For example, in 2007, FBR was involved in violent dispute against another Betawi organization, IKB, over 'informal taxation' of street vendors, causing death of two of their members and hurting several others⁵. Another example is the violent land dispute with the Madurese in 2003, in Eastern Jakarta⁶. However, the most significant incident which gained public attention happened in 2002 when FBR attacked peaceful demonstrators outside the Indonesian Human Rights Commission (IHRC). The demonstrators were members of the UPC which had just left a meeting in which they sought IHRC's support in upholding the decision of the Jakarta district court that the Jakarta administration led by Sutiyoso had unlawfully evicted and arrested pedicab drivers, buskers, street vendors and street children (Wilson, 2006: 278). Media commentators, however, along with UPC leader saw the action as

³ These mission and role statements are translated from Bahasa Indonesia by the author of this paper. However, the term 'The Real Owner Island' is the original term that is used in the FBR handbook.

⁴ <http://www.gatra.com/2006-06-20/artikel.php?id=95557>

⁵ <http://www.detiknews.com/index.php/detik.read/tahun/2007/bulan/05/tgl/22/time/140656/idnews/783420/ikanal/10>

⁶ The land that was struggled for is a parking area, which is a large source of income for both groups. <http://www.korantempo.com/news/2002/7/16/Metropolitan/47.html>

evidence that FBR was on the payroll of Sutiyoso, who was the object of the UPC protest (ibid.). Other cases of gang fighting, violent demonstrations or forced illegal taxations were also recorded by the media as FBR's actions. Moreover, coercion and intimidation are used against those who contradict Islamic values, which is also the rooted value of FBR. These violent acts lie in the belief that the Betawi, with their claimed status as the original ethnic group of Jakarta, should be prioritized in the city's development. By re-identifying themselves as the 'indigenous' ethnic group in Jakarta and as pious Moslems, FBR are claiming their part to enjoy the fruits of development that have been dominated (according to them) by migrants from other ethnic groups. Furthermore, FBR actions, often exposed by the media, lead Jakarta's society to see them as group of thugs and demand the authority to 'secure' them.

There are several interpretations of what kind of organization FBR really is. Wilson (2006: 275) sees FBR as "the new vigilantes combine the pragmatic self-interest and reliance on violence of the *preman* (thugs) with a justificatory moral ideology". Similarly, Widyanto (2005: 129) view "FBR as a *preman* organization which uses the symbol of Betawi ethnicity". However, it seems that FBR has a dual function for the urban dwellers of Jakarta. For the middle and lower-class Jakartans, they offer 'alternative solutions' through informal channels on problems of unemployment and poverty. On the other hand, for the local elites of Jakarta (for example local politicians and businessman), they serve as cronies who do the 'dirty work'. The historical alliance with state actors and the culture of collective violence are adopted by FBR as a means to achieve their goals, either for the middle and lower class Betawi of Jakarta or for the local elites.

This brings us to two starting points of this research. Firstly, FBR is one of the most controversial organizations in Jakarta during the post-New Order period, but also an influential one for the urban dwellers. Secondly, among the various members of FBR, most of them are young people. Why are young people of Jakarta attracted to become FBR members? What are their expectations from the involvement? How does being young in the urban context such as Jakarta relate to their involvement? These are some of the questions that are raised in this study. Overall, it will scrutinize the complexities and dynamics that lead young people to participate in the Betawi Brotherhood Forum.

1.5. Research Objectives and Question

1.5.1. Research Objectives

1. to explore the factors that lead to urban youth's involvement in a controversial mass organization
2. To examine the expectations and benefits that they gain through their involvement
3. to explore the meaning of being young in urban context such as Jakarta

1.5.2. Research Questions

Main research questions:

How does the life in urban context affects youth's involvement in a controversial 'mass organization'?

Sub-Questions:

1. Who are the youth involved in FBR?
2. What are the motivations for youth's involvement in FBR?
3. How does their identity as Betawi and Muslim relate to their involvement?
4. What are the benefits they gain from their involvement in FBR?
5. What are their expectations from their involvement in FBR?

1.6. Methodology

FBR is not the only Betawi organization in Jakarta that is geared towards Betawi revival, but it is the most highlighted one. As stated before, in terms of numbers, FBR claimed to have 1.7 million members in Jakarta⁷ in 2001, most of them are dispersed in the sub-district level. They are also highly controversial, because of their coercive acts and militaristic character on one hand, and on the other, for their 'success stories' in bringing Betawi to the forefront of Jakarta's development. For these reasons, I chose FBR as a unique organization to be scrutinized in order to understand the lives of urban youth in Jakarta.

⁷ <http://www.gatra.com/2006-06-20/artikel.php?id=95557>

This brings us to the second point of the methodology in this research. Within the development discourse on Jakarta, less attention has been paid towards our youth. Who are the youth, what are the challenges they face in urban context, what are the effects of Jakarta's rapid development upon them? – are some questions that remain unanswered. Although more than one million of Jakarta's citizens are young people aged 25-29, they seem to become invisible in the city's developmental projects and discourse. The patriarchal and the hierarchical structure in Indonesian society also contribute to make the young people unnoticed. FBR shares these characteristics, leaving those who are lower-level members and younger remain unheard. This became my intention: to bring youth voices in the urban context to the surface.

In order to execute that intention, I use the life history method which has been acknowledged for its humanising and empowering functions (Kakuru & Paradza, 2007: 288). For the young people of Jakarta, life history can help us to understand their views and how they valued certain situations or events. It is also an effective way to understand the broader context in which these youth lives and the influence upon their life. As Cole & Knowles stated (2001: 11):

“... life history inquiry is about gaining insight into broader human condition by coming to know and understand the experiences of other humans. ... It is about understanding the relationship, the complex interaction, between life and context, self and place.”

Although the life history method is based on stories of individuals, their meaning extend beyond the individuality. In relation to the young members of FBR, I tried to place their stories in a broader urban context, without undermining their perceptions or thoughts. It is also an effort to capture the social, political and cultural changes that these young people have been going through.

In order to answer the research questions, I collected two kinds of data:

1. Secondary Data

In order to understand the context of urban Jakarta and the Betawi community, I conducted a literature study on these two issues. I also look into the FBR's handbook, Statute and regulations to have a broad understanding on the organization's vision, mission, structure and programmes.

2. Primary Data, consists of:

- Interview with regional commander(s) of FBR

The purpose of this interview is to achieve a concrete understanding on FBR's role in Betawi society and their influence in the lives of urban people in Jakarta. Through the regional commander(s), I obtained information about the Betawi community, programmes and daily activities of FBR, characteristic of their members, organization structure and hierarchies (especially in the regional level), challenges on the field, involvement of youth and also on the image of FBR that has been portrayed by the media. By comparing this with secondary data, I explore the consistencies or inconsistencies between the formal construction of the organization and the concrete situation.

- Life history interview of youth members of FBR

I conducted life history interview of four male youths, who are actively involved in FBR. The life history interview focused on three main life stages of the interviewee: the childhood, youth and the future adulthood. In each of these stages, I asked questions around six large themes: family, education, peers, identity, economy and politics. For the last theme, the focus is on their involvement in FBR.

Regarding selection techniques, I used the snowballing or chain sampling, which Ritchie et.al (2003: 94) explains as:

“an approach which involves asking people who have already been interviewed to identify other people they know who fit the selection criteria. It is a particularly useful approach for dispersed and small populations, and where the key selection criteria are characteristics which might not be widely disclosed by individuals or which are too sensitive for a screening interview”

1.7. Conducting the Fieldwork

As an urban middle class woman and a postgraduate student of a foreign university, I do not know any of FBR members or ways to gain access to the organization. All I had was two friends who know the Betawi community quite well, and who became my key access to FBR members. It was a great advantage for me, because trust building with the interviewees were easier, knowing that we have a mutual friend. One of my key accesses was a local citizen in the sub-district of Cakung Barat and the

other worked together with one of the Betawi citizen in the sub-district of Klender and Kampung Lio. These sub-districts in Eastern Jakarta became my research area for almost one month (from mid of July 2008 until early August 2008), which I limit afterwards in only the sub-districts of Cakung Barat and Kampung Lio.

The first interview I conducted was a one and a half hour group interview, with 6 of FBR participants (all male, around 30-55 years old); one of them was the head of Gardu 04 in Klender. From them, I had a clearer understanding about how FBR operates in the sub-district level. However, it was a failure to start snowballing for the young FBR members through these men. With a strong hierarchical relation in the organization, the leader and other members did not lead me to the younger members, thinking that they have limited knowledge about FBR and recommended me to go directly to the central command. Although I have explained repeatedly about my research topic, they were still reluctant to introduce me with their young members. Another reason that they expressed to me is the worry that these young members will give the ‘wrong information’ about FBR. In the end, searching for the young members of FBR in this sub-district has reached a dead end.

Therefore, in the sub-district of Cakung Barat, I did not go through the FBR leaders. As a local citizen of the sub-district, I asked my friend to introduce me to his old friends who are now members of FBR. It was easy to get along with them, because they are quite close to my key access. In the other sub-district, Kampung Lio, my first meeting with the young members of FBR happened during their Gardu’s anniversary. With a musical stage and large crowds, I became a disturbance of their enjoyment. I ended up enjoying the event with them, without forgetting to collect their contact numbers. Overall, the interviewees in this research are four male young members of FBR with different age, education and employment background: Dede (19) is the youngest, Yono is 22 years old, Adi is 26 years old, and Rudy is 32 years old⁸. For each interviewee, a minimum of one hour interview was conducted and a minimum of two meetings with each of them were arranged.

⁸ All the names of the interviewees in this research are pseudonyms.

Relying to my key access, it was difficult to control the age category. But the main difficulty for me was to overcome my own worries and fears upon these members and became in the 'same level' as them. Exposed to media report upon FBR, I develop a certain image about them and the things they can do. I was really careful with the way I behaved and talked. However, after experiencing their openness, the worries gradually disappeared. But then another challenge emerged from my identity as a master's student from a Dutch university. When I introduced myself to two of the FBR members in Klender, I explained where I studied. They were surprised and said, "You must be rich". I argued that I was supported by a scholarship because of my financial limitations. Then the two men continued, "Even if you do not pay by yourself, you're still not the same as us"⁹. Their statement struck me, showing that they realized our different class background. Fully conscious of this situation, I tried to minimize this gap and create a relaxed situation for them to share their stories. However, since this incident, I decided to explain that I am a master's student from the University of Indonesia, majoring in developmental studies. I have two strong reasons for this decision. Firstly, during the group interview in Klender, there were some jokes about me as a 'euro source' that might fund FBR's activities although they did not stated this directly, nor asked for interview compensation. It did not affect the quality of information which I attain, but the whole interview process was not a relaxed situation. Secondly, I was cautious of the long-term effect of the 'euro source' image. Knowing their means of fund raising, they might consider me as one of the potential sources. This possibility may not happen, but I chose to maintain a certain degree of distance with the organization even after I finished my study. I also realized that my decision can face ethical problems, but I think it is necessary to prevent any type of involvement with FBR.

1.8. Research Limitations

The primary data of this research is mainly based on the information attained from FBR. Though this is a controversial organization, I did not have enough time and resources to explore the controversies from primary sources. For example, the

⁹ Research Journal Klender, 11 August 2008.

information about their controversial means of providing security services was only gathered from the FBR members themselves. I was not able to collect information from the other side, which will probably present different version of the story. To overcome this limitation, I used secondary data from the media and other academic works on FBR.

Chapter 2

YOUTH AND THE URBAN CONTEXT: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter provides a theoretical framework as a tool to guide the identification of research questions, the content of interviews, and the analysis of information obtained in the fieldwork. As this study is about youth in urban context, I will present some of the frameworks related to it, such as marginalization and identity.

2.1. Being Urban Youth

De Boeck & Honwana (2005: 4) stated that definitions and notions of children and youth cannot be simply based on biology or chronological age. Nonetheless, they continue to argue that social and cultural variables as gender, religion, class, responsibilities, expectations, race and ethnicity play important parts in defining who are regarded or consider themselves as children or youth – and the ways young persons are perceived do not necessarily coincide with their self-definitions. The process of transition between childhood and youth and the period when youth ends and adulthood begins are not the same everywhere; they vary across and within societies and cultures over time. Therefore, based on this conception, urban cities with its distinctive social and cultural dynamics influence the unique experience of its youth.

Cities provide distinctive characteristics that result in certain dynamics for their dwellers. As Clark (1996: 100) stated, cities are different in physical, social and economic terms. They offer their residents a far wider range of options and opportunities and enable them to engage in many more interests and activities than are possible in rural areas. Moreover, he argues that ‘urban’ is a descriptive label which is used to describe both a particular type of place and a set of distinctive patterns of association, values and behaviour. However, cities do not only offer modernity, but also several problems. One of them is the increasing inequality within and between cities of different sizes and economic specializations (Davis, 2006: 7). Davis (2006: 19) also emphasize that instead of cities of light soaring toward heaven, much of the twenty-first-century urban world squats in squalor, surrounded by pollution, excrement, and decay.

Consequently, the young people who live in urban context are affected in certain ways. Tienda & Wilson (2002: 17) explains that many of the hardships associated with rural poverty and underdevelopment can be alleviated in urban areas, but that rapid social transformation in cities can enhance the problems of normative youth development. As global economic restructuring alters the socio-political and cultural landscape of nation states, governments encounter formidable challenges in satisfying the social and developmental needs of their youth (ibid: 4). The number of urban youth experiencing extreme poverty, inadequate nutrition, lack of access to education, premature entry into the labour market, and involvement in antisocial and illegal activities continues to grow (ibid: 17-18).

Moreover, they (2002: 13) continue to argue that poor urban youth are systematically more isolated from mainstream social institutions (such as schools and job opportunities) that inculcate social norms of responsibility. In many cases, youth are powerless: their right to be self determinant is denied, they do not have direct access to the general forms of power and resources in society, and they do not have a voice in the decision making processes upon their lives. Within this condition of inequality, youth are systematically being marginalized, though the causes, process and effects might differ. Wyn and White (1997: 123-124) explain marginalisation of young people as the disenfranchisement from the major institutions and material benefits of consumer society. In particular, they are being subjected to the dual processes of disconnection from institutions revolving around production, consumption and community life, and the social and psychological experiences of disempowerment accompanying this disconnection. Nonetheless, how societal resources are structurally allocated has a profound effect on how young people live their lives.

One of the reasons behind this marginalization of youth is the neoliberal ascendancy. As Comaroff & Comaroff (2005: 27) argues, the marginalization of young people, at least in its present-day form, may be a very general structural consequence of the rise of neoliberal capitalism. Nevertheless, they continue by stating that as the frenzied expansion of the free market runs up against the demise of the welfare state, a process that manifests itself is an ever widening gulf between rich and poor, the commonwealth of all but a few sovereign polities has been drastically eroded (ibid: 20).

In the upshot, most are unable to sustain previous levels of social services and benefits, to afford the cost of infrastructural reproduction, or to underwrite a labour market in which there is regular or secure employment in any abundance (ibid). Patterns of polarization and exclusion, among youth and across the age spectrum at large, are ever more palpable in these neoliberal times (ibid: 21). However, neoliberalism and the process of marginalization do not constitute equal effects among youth. There is an interrelation between class, ethnicity and gender that makes some youth more vulnerable than others.

2.2. Constructing Identity: Masculinity and Ethnicity

To search for a meaning of being youth in urban areas conveys the notion of identity. As Castells (2004: 6) explains, identity is the process of construction of meaning on the basis of a cultural attribute, or a related set of cultural attributes, that is given priority over other sources of meaning. Identities can also be originated from dominant institutions, they become identities only when and if social actors internalize them, and construct their meaning around this internalization (ibid:7). Moreover, Castells argue that from a sociological perspective, all identities are constructed. The real issue is how, from what, by whom, and for what. The construction of identities uses building materials from history, from geography, from biology, from productive and reproductive institutions, from collective memory and from personal fantasies, from power apparatuses and religious revelations. But individuals, social groups, and societies process all these materials, and rearrange their meaning, according to social determinations and cultural project that are rooted in their social structure, and in their space/ time framework. In general terms, who constructs collective identity, and for what, largely determines the symbolic content of this identity, and its meaning for those identifying with it or placing themselves outside of it (ibid.).

There are numbers of factors that form the identity of an individual. Two of them – which will be discussed widely in this research – are gender and ethnicity. For gender, the social construction perspective is considered useful in this research. This view argues that gender is not fixed in advance of social interaction, but is constructed in interaction (Connell, 1995: 35). They are concerned with public conventions about masculinity, but

rather than treat these as pre-existing norms which are passively internalized and enacted, they explore the making and remaking of conventions in social practice itself (ibid). Nevertheless, the construction of gender influences what is considered as feminine and masculine. Furthermore, Connell (1995: 68-70) explains different definitions of masculinity, but the most relevant one in here is the normative definition. In brief, normative definition sees masculinity as what men ought to be (ibid: 70). It treats masculinity precisely as a social norm for the behaviour of men. However, masculinity can not be seen independently. As O'Donnel & Sharpe (2000: 2) stated, class and ethnicity are widely acknowledge as major influences on the formation of masculinities. Furthermore, the way an age group is socialised and organised in society also affects gender expectations and identities (ibid: 10). This is rather evidently the case in relation to young people, who are subject to a relatively high level of social control and socialisation, not least in gender and sexual matters. Class, ethnicity, age and gender do not interact in any formulaic or wholly predictable way. For O'Donnel & Sharpe (ibid), the social construction of identity means that people make their own class, ethnic, gender and other identities, but that they do so in circumstances that constrain them and influence them in certain directions.

Ethnicity, like gender, is another factor which shapes the identity of individuals and collectives. Fulcher& Scott (2003: 202) stated that ethnic groups are defined by their sense of sharing a distinct culture that can be traced back to the historical or territorial origins of the group. Ethnic group build an 'imagined community' (B. Anderson, 1983 in Fulcher& Scott, 2003: 202), an image of themselves as a collectivity. The solidarity and group consciousness of an ethnic group are organized around this idea of origin and cultural history. However, Castells (2004: 63) provides a critical view of ethnicity by stating that ethnicity becomes the foundation for defensive trenches, then territorialized in local communities, or even gangs, defending their turf. Between cultural communes and self-defence territorial units, ethnic roots are twisted, divided, reprocessed, mixed, differentially stigmatized, or rewarded, according to a new logic of informationalization/globalization of cultures and economies that makes symbolic composites of blurred identities (ibid.).

Chapter 3

THE BETAWI BROTHERHOOD FORUM: MOVEMENT IN PARADOX

This chapter discusses the main features of FBR. Besides describing their mission, structure and activities, it also depicts the culture of FBR, which is surrounded by issues of ethnicity, patronized hierarchy and thuggery. Based on the literature study of this organization and the interviews of local leaders, this chapter tries to analyze critically FBR's actual role and function. Emphasis on incoherence or contradictions between stated goals and activities with the actual actions and experiences in the field is dominant. Moreover, due to its complexity, I could not provide a single definition of FBR, but rather described the contradictions or complexities that I found from the fieldwork and literature study. A critical knowledge of FBR is important before we scrutinize the lives of their young members. By analyzing the organization carefully, it will be easier to understand where and how the young members play their roles and the benefits they gain from their involvement.

3.1. The Organization

3.1.1. 'Imagined' Indigenous Community

Established in 29 July 2001, The Betawi Brotherhood Forum (FBR) has a main purpose: the resurgence of the Betawi in Jakarta. As stated in their vision, FBR aims to 'build a Betawi society which is harmonious, united, creative, innovative, and loyal; based on a pure faith upon Allah Subhanahu Wata'ala and the responsibility in order to form an equitable and prosperous society which is blessed by Him'. This vision was interpreted into seven missions of FBR, one of them is to enhance the quality of Betawi human resources through training, education and job distribution. Another mission is to increase the participation of Betawi in all aspects of life¹⁰. According to them, there is a need to bring themselves (as the 'indigenous' ethnic group of Jakarta) to the forefront because of marginalization processes arising from the urban development of Jakarta. As the FBR members stated: "Before, Betawi have large land plots. But now, those lands

¹⁰ As stated in FBR Statute and rules of association (2002).

have been occupied by the factories. Others [non-Betawi] can work there, but not us. All we got is the noise and pollution”¹¹. The resurgencel atmosphere can also be seen by looking at FBR’s history. In 2001, a conflict erupted between two ethnicities (the Madurese and Betawi) in the urban village of Pedaengan, Cakung Barat, Eastern Jakarta. It emerged due to intensified criminal acts conducted by the Madurese, from robbery to murder¹². From this incident, the Betawi in Cakung Barat felt the need to gather their powers, work together for their own security and strive to reclaim their rights in their ‘own land’. It was a Muslim clergy, named Fadloli el Muhiir who took the initiatives and formed FBR.

However, from all the interviews conducted, they stated that FBR members are not limited to Betawi or Moslems, but also other people from different ethnicities and religion that support the Betawinese struggles. As the FBR members in Klender explain:

“The main purpose of FBR is to unite different people, to help each other and not only limited to the Moslems. In FBR there are Christians, Buddhists, Kong Hu Cu... It is also not limited to Betawi. There are even Borneo and Madura people. Any migrants who respect us, will be respected”.

When I asked about the idea of unification, they explain:

“There was a meeting across religion in Senayan this year. A similar one was also held in the central command office. Those five religions asked for protection from FBR. They are afraid, for example the Christians, that something bad will happen to them. The leaders of those five religions are close to our central commander. So they asked for protection, security.”

It seems that non-Betawi Moslem’s involvement are motivated not because of their concerns upon the exclusion of Betawi, but rather for their own advantage of security and protection. A similar situation also happened when I visited the area of Paseban in Eastern Jakarta. One of the dwellers told me about her Chinese cousin who joined FBR because of the need for security upon his shop in the area¹³. The shop was in FBR’s operational district, and he spent some amount of money for their ‘security service’.

Based on these statements, the relationship between Betawi and non-Betawi Moslem members of FBR is not based on the same solicitude of Betawi marginalization. The latter group exists because of their own needs of protection and security. Even more,

¹¹ Interview with the head Gardu 04 in Klender, Eastern Jakarta and its five members (12 July 2008).

¹² This information was retained from the FBR members.

¹³ Research Journal of Paseban, 1 August 2008.

this beneficial relationship seems to blur the exclusivity of FBR as a mass organization based on ethnicity. Looking to their mission statements and history, this organization seems to be operating for the interest of the Betawi. However, by accepting non-Betawi Moslem members even just as a potential source of fund, the whole idea of ‘Betawi’ needs to be questioned. Does ethnicity matters anymore when it comes to funds?

One of the young members of FBR from Cakung Barat, Adi, explained to me about his own understanding on the origins of Betawi:

“A friend of mine lent me a book about Betawi... from a research; they say that we originated from slavery. Until now, I am not very sure why they call this Betawi from the first place. But from that research, we basically are the first ethnic group to live here, and then we tended to mix with others. Like our cultural products, was a mix between the natives and Chinese. ... Well, I compare it with other areas such as Serang or Banten... the people there were not natives. They were warriors, from Cirebon and surrounding areas. The Dutch confine them there, so they live there, have children and develop a distinctive language and culture.”

From his statement, I continued to ask about the indigeneity of the Betawi. He replied, “I believe we **are** the natives”.

This belief of nativeness is the driving force for almost all FBR’s goals and activities. They even claim themselves as ‘the real owner island’¹⁴ of Jakarta. Even though they realized their origins spring from mixed ethnicity, the belief of indigeneity is still held firmly. Indigenous, in their interpretation, is not based on a distinguishable historical and cultural root, but on the experience of exclusion and marginalization. In this case, their ethnic indigeneity seems constructed and imagined. FBR tends to construct the questionable Betawi ethnicity as a distinctive and definite ‘indigenous’ ethnicity of Jakarta. However, this certainty seems unimportant when it comes to funding. This brings us to the assumption that perhaps there is another underlying motive for FBR besides ethnic revival, which is more closely related to economic and political factor. I will discuss these points in the following sections.

¹⁴ This phrase (whose exact meaning is unclear) is used in English in FBR document.

3.1.2. Patronized Hierarchy and Command System

FBR's structure consists of two main levels: the central command, and the sub-district levels. The highest command lies in the hand of FBR's chairman, Fadloli el Muhir, who sits in the central command. He is a Moslem clergy, but also a centre of attention in Jakarta's politics. This 47 years old man was a member of the Supreme Advisory Council in 1998 and aiming to be a member of the municipal council of Jakarta in the upcoming 2009 election. Nevertheless, he also had a close relationship with Suharto's son who became the main financial contributor for his Islamic school (which later became one of FBR's assets). Besides the son of Suharto, Fadloli had shown a close connection with the previous governor of Jakarta, Sutiyoso. With these connections and status, Fadloli is highly respected among FBR members.

In the central command, Fadloli works with assistance of a co-chairman and a treasurer. Parallel with the central command, are the surveillance team (*tim wara wiri*) and the investigation team (*tim idik-idik*). While the surveillance team operates to



Figure 1
Gardu 172, one of the Gardus of
FBR located in Kampung Lio,
Klender

maintain peaceful relationships among members or between levels within the organization and with other organizations, the investigation team works as an intelligence service for Fadloli (Widyanto, 2005: 49). The lowest level in the structure is the sub-district level, which is more common by the name of Gardu¹⁵. Each Gardu has their own chairman, deputy and treasurer, with a minimum member of 100. To differentiate each Gardus, there are numbers attached to each of them. For example, Gardu 04 refers to an FBR group in the sub-district of Klender, Gardu 042 refers to the sub-district of Cakung Barat, and so on.

In the central and each sub district level, there is an advisory board, which works as a consultant or advisor in the decision or policy making in each level

¹⁵ Gardu in Indonesian means a guard post. However, the use of this word in the context of FBR has evolved. It does not only refer to a place, but also to a certain level in the structure.

(Widyanto, 2005: 47). Furthermore, to link the central and sub district level, a provincial coordinator is appointed directly by Fadli himself. There are five such coordinators, representing the five regencies of Jakarta. However, when FBR expanded their membership to commuter middle-cities (*kotamadya*) of Jakarta, such as Bekasi or Depok, new coordinators were appointed.

To be a member of FBR is not difficult. Their statute and rules of regulation stated that FBR members are ‘every Betawi, Moslem¹⁶ and had reached puberty, who expressed their willingness and ability to obey the rules of regulation of FBR’. In order to become a legal member of FBR a person has to be inaugurated in an event which is lead by Fadli himself. During this event, they have to declare a pledge, consisting of nine points. The first two are: 1) Obedience to Allah and His Prophet; and 2) Obedience to the leader of FBR, rules and regulation, and also the code of conduct of FBR. Also on this event, they will be given FBR’s uniform according to their *Gardus* and a membership card. A small amount of money is needed from the members in order to purchase those two utilities.

The member’s stated obedience also express their willingness to execute commands from their superior. As the FBR leader of Klender explained:

“...the members have to obey their Gardu’s chairman. The Gardu’s chairmen have to listen to their provincial coordinator, and they have to obey the central command. The mechanism is... we can not say ‘later’ or ‘hold on’. It is a must, and should be instantly.”

Seeing their structure and the chain of command, it is clear that FBR is a highly hierarchical organization, with the central command holding the largest power. From these explanations, FBR reflects a highly patronage system, where the chairman is the decision maker for major-collective activities. It is also dominated by militaristic atmosphere, which lies in the obedience and elements in the structure, such as *Gardus*, surveillance team, and the investigation team.

¹⁶ On the contrary, the fieldwork showed that FBR members are not limited to Betawi and Moslems, as discussed in the previous chapter.

3.1.3. Acting in Paradox

In FBR Statute and rules of association, they stated themselves as a mass organization based on Islamic principles. I will go through these two stated characteristics critically based on the interviews. As a mass organization, FBR has routine activities and an independent funding system. Monthly activities, such as Quranic recitation or Islamic lectures, are held independently in each level. Besides these routine ones, there are numbers of eventual collective activities, such as anniversaries of Gardus and FBR, demonstrations or political campaigns.

In order to support those activities, FBR has two major ways of fund raising. First, is through monthly contribution from its members. Second, which is usually larger in amount, is through ‘security services’ and political campaigns. For the campaigns, the FBR leader from Klender explains the mechanism:

*“Parties will remember the people only during campaigns. When they are elected, they will forget about us. So, when they still consider about us, go ahead... get some money from them. In order to support our members. ... If there is a political party that needs FBR, willing to **buy**... for example, some Rupiahs per head... then our chairman will gather all FBR members. In the end, they don’t even know if we really chose them or not.”*

By this description, the members are fully conscious of their function for the political parties. The way he used the word ‘buy’ implies that the members are just being used for the parties’ needs of supportive voters. Moreover, they do not object with this strategy of money politics, because they see it as an opportunity to gain income.

Another means, the ‘security services’, is targeted towards middle sized and large companies which operate in FBR’s areas. As the FBR members of Klender explain:

“... We help to protect. When there is someone who owns a business... the shop is quite good... not some small shops... we ask for donations. Every weekend, we monitor it, just to avoid unexpected things. So every month... depends on their willingness, we don’t force them. If they want to give 5000, 10000 Rupiahs, we can not force to ask more.”

It is clear from this description that FBR offers security services in order to gain income for their Gardu’s operational cost and the needs of its members. However, another interesting fact related with FBR’s security service was raised by Widyanto (2005: 95). Quoting a case in Kompas daily newspaper, he explains a case of ‘security service’ where FBR members sent a letter to several companies, requesting routine donations for their

operational costs. The donations will be considered as a form of participation from businessmen for the Betawi community. At the end of the letter, they stated that they will do something to uncooperative businessman. Apparently, FBR's effort to promote their 'security services' is not always acceptable as described by the Klender members. It involves acts of intimidation and coercion. The 'security service' is not only limited to shop owners, but also to public transport drivers. Adi, the young FBR member from Cakung Barat, said that the inter-city buses which go through the freeway have to pay a certain amount of monthly fee to his Gardu. There is someone who is mandated to collect those fees, as appointed by the Gardu's chairman. Those buses are targeted, because they use to gather their passengers at the freeway entrance, which is also the district of Gardu 042 Cakung Barat.

There is several numbers of criminal cases recorded by the media as FBR's doings. Violent dispute with other Betawi organization or other ethnic group, and violent acts towards peaceful demonstrators are some cases that I mentioned in chapter one. Based on these acts, FBR is seen as a thug organization, as Widyanto (2005: 129) stated: "the mechanisms of taxation and violent acts conducted by FBR members do not differ from those done by thugs in the present day". Ethnicity, for Widyanto, is only used as a symbol. In other words, although FBR claim their organization as a mass organization based on Islamic principles and for the revival of Betawi, the mechanisms that they implemented do not reflect them. The coercive taxation, the violent acts, and their role in money politics during election are definitely not activities of a usual ethnic mass organization.

This brings us to the second feature of FBR: the Islamic principles. During my interview with FBR members in Klender, they stated that because their leader was a Moslem clergy, there will be severe sanctions for the members who act against Islamic values, such as drinking alcohol. However, my scepticism on their values emerged during my first acquaintance with the FBR members of Kampung Lio. They were celebrating their Gardu's third anniversary with a music stage and large number of audiences when I met them. When I was introducing myself to the Gardu's chairman, I saw a group of men sitting on the ground, drinking cheap wine. Some of their faces were red, while others were talking and laughing. This is when my first confusion on the Islamic values of FBR

emerged¹⁷. From this experience, I can see that FBR is not a puritan organization. Their statements (at least the ones in their Statutes and rules of association) do not fit with their behaviour in the field. As an organization, FBR is full of contradictions: claim to be an ethnic mass organization but perform acts of thuggery; Islamic but act in opposite ways with Islam.

We can see that FBR is not an easy organization to define. It is not a democratic organization due to its centralized and patronized culture. It is also a paradoxical organization because of the contradictions between their acts with the stated vision and mission. Nonetheless, all of these peculiar characteristics of FBR are justified in the construction of ethnicity – the marginalized Betawi. Knowing these peculiarities opens the gateway for us to understand the dynamic of their young members. It is actually through the paradoxes that the opportunities for the urban youth emerge.

3.2. Looking Through Their Life Histories

Up to this point, we have certain understanding of FBR which is perhaps, more complex than the common image held by society. Their idea of ‘indigenous’ Betawi seems imagined and constructed; their operations reflect a certain degree of thuggery; their structure and mechanism implies militaristic and patronage culture; and the implementation of their principles need to be questioned. Yet in these complex characteristics, their membership is mostly dominated by young men between 20 to 40 years old.

This is an interesting fact to consider. FBR is definitely not a youth organization, or a form of youth subculture. It is a controversial ‘mass organization’ formed by a political figure of Jakarta. The culture of FBR is militaristic and patronizing, which leaves limited space for democracy or youth participation. One of the young men in this research gave an example on how these characteristics affect the behaviour towards their young members:

“Before, there was a football match organized by FBR. To raise the fund... there are rich Betawi people, but this is the business of the older [FBR] people. Us, the

¹⁷ Research Journal, 30 June 2008.

younger ones, only think about playing and eating. About the fund, we don't really think about it. Our job is just to prepare equipments for the match. It's usual for the young men to take orders....”

However, those young men are still the largest number composing FBR's member. Why, then, are they still motivated to join FBR? What do they expect with their involvement? What benefits can they gain from their involvement in this organization? The best way to answer these questions is by looking through the life histories of FBR's youth. By looking at experiences throughout their lifetime, we can understand how the urban and structural changes affected their life and FBR's role in those changes. There are four young men in this research with different occupation, background and experiences in FBR. Three of them are residence of Kampung Lio while the other domiciles in the sub-district of Cakung Barat.

Adi, 26 years old, is the oldest of four children in the family. For generations, his family has been living in the sub-district of Cakung Barat, Eastern Jakarta. The economic condition of his family has forced Adi to work right after he finished his vocational school in mechanic around 1999¹⁸. Before working in his current job as a mechanic, Adi had tried several occupations, such as factory worker and small entrepreneur. He realizes that as the oldest son, he has the responsibility to help his parents and support the education of his siblings.

Adi was one of the young people who experienced the horrific moment of conflict between the Betawi and Madurese in 2001 at the neighbouring sub-district, Pedaengan. At that time, Adi and several other



Figure 2
The map of Eastern Jakarta

¹⁸ Most of the interviewees do not remember the exact time of their graduation. The years stated in this paper are the estimated time of their completion.

young men was ordered to guard their own area. Long before the conflict erupted, he had heard stories and seen the criminal acts which were perpetrated by the Madurese. Moreover, after it ended, Adi decided to join FBR in order to secure his neighbourhood.

Down in the southern side of Cakung, lies a district named Klender. In the sub-district of Kampung Lio, live Dede, Irvan and Rudy, three young men who are also active members of FBR. Dede, 19 years old, live with his father, step mother and two younger brothers. His older brother lives in Bulak, another sub-district in Klender. Due to the economic condition in his family, Dede was not able to continue his study after finishing junior high school around 2003. After a year without employment, his brother in law helped him to work in an iron factory. However, it did not last long. The long working period of 12 hours everyday had led Dede into exhaustion. He started to be absent for one or two days without informing his supervisor. After a month, Dede was fired and became unemployed until now.

Similar to Dede, Yono is a 22 years old young man and unemployed. He lives in Kampung Lio with both his parents and his younger sister, while his older brother works in Cibitung, an area in the suburb of Jakarta. He finished his elementary education around 1998, but was not able to finish his junior high school. Although he had already entered the classes, the school fee was too high for his parents, not to mention the fees that needed to be paid for his older brother and younger sister. Since he left school, Yono has tried to find employment, but was not fortunate enough to find a permanent one. The only long period of work he had done was in a furniture factory. However, after six months of work, the factory closed down due to the death of its owner. For Yono, it is difficult to find a stable job. As he said, "It's hard for me to work only with a certificate from elementary school. Others have higher education or networks in the factory".

From all the three young men in Kampung Lio, perhaps Rudy is more fortunate than his two friends in terms of employment. This 32 years old man has been working for three years as a security guard in one of the factories near Kampung Lio. After his graduation from high school in 1995, he worked in the informal sector, doing almost anything that can give him an income, such as scouring and cementing. The longest period of work that he had was an assistant truck driver for five years. However, he quit the job thinking that there is no future in it. A new hope for employment rose when a

friend of Rudy's was employed as a security in a nearby factory through FBR. When Gardu no. 127 in his neighbourhood was established, he instantly joined FBR, hoping that he can get a job through it. Through connection from his friend and negotiation by FBR to the factory, Rudy was selected as a security guard.

Chapter 4

BEING URBAN YOUTH: LAYERS OF COMPLEXITIES

This chapter is build based on the life history interviews of the young FBR members, which focuses on three main points. Firstly, their life histories reflected the local problems in the area. Secondly, it also shows how their identity as Betawi male youth in an urban city interrelates with the experiences of structural marginalization. The final part of this chapter will show the strategies to overcome the exclusion and to succeed in the transition towards adulthood. Furthermore, it will also discuss the role of FBR in facilitating it.

4.1. *Us, Betawi, Against Them*



Figure 3
The District of Cakung Barat

To begin with, it is important to understand how the identity of these young men is constructed. Ethnicity, besides age and gender, is a dominant factor that constitutes their identity. All of the young men in this research live in middle-lower class residences, with mix ethnicities. Those ethnicities from different parts of Indonesia came here with a hope to participate in the dynamic economic activity of Jakarta.

However, as migrants, they face a predominant problem of land. This is the case which emerges in Cakung Barat, as Adi explains:

“... And they feel that this land belongs to God, so they are free, they can do anything they can. ... this country is regulated by law, we have area borders. This is my land. But sometimes they occupy the land, without any legal procedures. There are many wild shacks in here... it started from there. Without realizing it, they built semi permanent houses, then permanent ones, and it became their property. But when the native arrives, oh... this is still my area. They don't get along, and they fight. Perhaps if other tribes behave like that, it is also possible to end up in a conflict.”

As an industrial area, the residence of Cakung Barat consists mainly of workers from surrounding factories and companies, who are mostly migrants from other regions outside Jakarta. Adi, is one of the young men who witness the changes of his area due to

increased numbers of migrants in Jakarta. He continued sharing his memories of childhood by describing the decreased size of a football field in that area. Although some of that area was occupied by a furniture factory, the first thing that reduced it was the housing of migrants.

Similar with Cakung Barat, Kampung Lio also shares a characteristic of mixed ethnicities and a problem of land. The prominent problem in this area began in 1986, when large part of the land in Kampung Lio were bought by a company, named PT. JIP, who manages all small factories in the surrounding area. Rudy, a 3rd grade student at that time, remembered this event quite well. His mother sold their property to the expansion project of PT. JIP, though this decision had to forced Rudy and his family to move into their current home which belongs to his grandmother. Other dwellers also sold their land easily, due to the guarantee by the company that they would be recruited as employees in those factories. Contrary to the assurance, there were no residents employed after their removal.

This industrial incident in Kampung Lio enforces the dwellers, especially their young people, into unemployment. Moreover, not being able to work in the factory that drove them to move away, leads them into resentment. This was obvious in Yono's statement:

"... this neighbourhood is not considered. It [PT. JIP] is nearby, only from here to there. So it's very near. Should we only receive the pollution, or their garbage? We don't want those things. In here we are just daydreaming, polluted, while the company enjoys its work, collect money and visit their hometown."

The incident leaves this young man to feel excluded and trifling. This condition is then related to their ethnicity, the fact that they are Betawi who are the 'indigenous' people of Jakarta. Dede expressed such situation:

"We [the Betawi] are always treated as unimportant. We don't like that... how come the natives lose to the migrants?"

Dede pointed that as a Betawi, they are disadvantage. Another experience from Adi showed that more than being disadvantaged, Betawi became victims of criminal acts:

"Usually it is quiet at this hour, it's when they [the thieves] work. Five people came in, just carry the stuff like that. Nobody dared to scream. ... before, it was even worse. There, near the football field, there used to be buffalos. Surprisingly, they cut the flesh, leaving only the skeletons. The flesh just disappeared like that."

... *We were not sure... but from the information we got, there were witnesses who can described the thief. It points to them [Madurese], who lived near the market.*"

For these men, the feelings of disadvantage, unimportant and victimized are the main features of being Betawi. Their ethnic identity is constructed based on their experience of marginalization (that is crystallized by the problem of land and criminal acts) which creates a consciousness as us, the Betawi, and them, the migrants. Moreover, their uncomfortable experience reflected the belief that they are the indigenous people of Jakarta. It is not just "us, the Betawi against them, the migrants" but "us, the '**natives**', against them, the migrants". This consciousness is the background for their 'movement' to reclaim their place in society. It is a 'defensive trenches to defend their turf', using the words of Castells (2004). However, as I showed in the previous chapter, the distinction between us and them is not perfectly clear. By accepting members from other ethnicities, FBR seems to blur their interpretation of being 'natives' and their struggle.

4.2. Young, Male, but Restrained

Being young is marked by two conspicuous elements: education and employment. The common perception sees young people who have finished their studies as labour forces ready to enter the world of work. But what if things do not operate smoothly as it is perceived? What happens when young people are forced to leave schools and enter the labour market prematurely? Moreover, what should they do if employment opportunities are limited?

All the young men in this research experienced hardships to finish their education. Poor financial condition or large family members who need support are some of the reasons for terminating education. For Adi, it was a struggle to finish his vocational school after his father ended the work in the National Electric Company. With the limited income in his family, Adi chose not to continue his study to higher levels of education in order for his younger brothers and sister to remain in school. A similar situation happened to Rudy, where his father had to stop working as a *bemo*¹⁹ driver and led them

¹⁹ Bemo is a traditional public transportation operating in certain areas in Jakarta. However, this type of transportation has slowly become extinct with the emergence of other type of public transports, such as busses or small public automobiles.

with no money to continue his education. To finish his high school, Rudy was supported by his relative, but when he finished, he decided not to bother anyone else to support his life.

The economic crisis in 1997-1998 exacerbated this condition. “All the prices were high. I went here and there just to have something to eat”, said Rudy when I asked him about the crisis. With a 78% of inflation in 1998, the middle-lower class society in Indonesia had to struggle to stay alive. As Adi expressed, “It is okay for me at that time just to eat rice and salt”. Nevertheless, to survive in this economic hardship, families need to rearrange their expenses, and sometimes sacrifices are needed. One of the strategies taken was to cut off educational expenses. On the other hand, neoliberal policy prescription that was adopted during that time has forced the Indonesian government to reduce their expenditure on public health and education. As a result, education expenses such as public school’s enrolment fees, books, transportation fees, are high and beyond reach of the middle-lower classes. Yono is one of those who have to quit his education because of the monetary crisis:

“My parents did not work, how do I pay for school fees? The fee itself was expensive, even in a public school. So that was it, I quit. Once, my teacher visited me at home. He said that I should not worry about those fees. How can I? Even if I did not have to pay the fees, how should I buy the books? Where do I get the money for that?”

For Yono, high education enrolment fee was not the only burden on his family’s income. Other costs were also unbearable in during the time of crisis and even until now.

When these young men could not continue their education, they are left with no other choices besides working. Some of these men work to fulfil their own needs, because they realize that they could not rely anymore on their parents for financial support. Others work to help their parents and eventually became the backbone of the family’s economy. In the case of Adi, he is very aware of his role as the eldest child in the family:

“I know that I am not a perfect person. But I still think... I don’t want my brothers and sisters to end up like me. So I do as much as I could to find work. If I have some [money], I gave it to them... at least I try to put education as the top priority”

However, finding formal employment is not as easy as it is imagined. For someone like Yono, with an elementary certificate, the formal economy has no place for him. “Everywhere I go, they said that there are no vacant positions for me”, he said. In this case, we can see how these young men became victims of the vicious cycle of low education and unemployment. It is difficult for them to meet the standardized image of a youth whilst being systematically marginalized from the education and employment system.

The process of exclusion does not only affect their state of being youth, but also the state of being masculine. Dede, after the recorded interview, told me about his unfortunate love life. His relationship with his previous girlfriend was not approved by the girl’s parents because Dede was unemployed. There was an incident involving verbal dispute and physical violence with the girl’s father because Dede and his girlfriend still wants to maintain their relationship²⁰. Compare to Dede’s experience, Yono’s love life seems more fortunate. He shares about his relationship with a Javanese girl who also lives in Kampung Lio. They are planning to get married, but financial problem is impeding the execution of their plan. Nevertheless, the girl’s parents live in a village outside Jakarta, so there will be more expenses needed. These stories showed that the inability to access employment also affects the state of being masculine. The way society judges them as masculine or not depends on their employment status. Moreover, the experience of exclusion hinders these young men to achieve their goals to build sexual relationship. From their stories of sexual relationship, we can see how gender and age interrelates. Being male youth has placed these young men in a certain position that needs to be reached.

It is not easy for these young men to be confronted with the social construction of male youth. Based on this construction, proper education and employment are basic requirements for men in their age. On the contrary, the life history of Adi, Dede, Yono and Rudy showed that those requirements are difficult to achieve. Urban structural conditions, such as poverty, lack of employment opportunities, seem to place these youth

²⁰ Field notes, 31 July 2008

on the margins. Their transition process to adulthood is prolonged because of this structural marginalization from education and employment.

4.3. Seeking a Way Out: From the Informal to the Illicit

When access to formal employment is limited, youth are forced to enter other spheres of employment. One of them is the informal sector. Since childhood, all the men in this research have done small informal economy activities. Dede and Yono, for example, sold newspapers in the mosque during Friday prayers, while Rudy gathered pieces of woods and sold them to a small charcoal factory. They use the income they made for snacks, transportation fee to school, stationeries and books. This encounter with the informal sphere is maintained until they finished their school years and even until now, such as the experience of Yono:

“... I’ll do any work: dumping woods, garbage, debris... we’ll do it because there are all there is. It’s not everyday. If there is no work, then we just hang around. If I want to smoke, I have many friends... I just ask them. Sometimes I wash motorcycles. Not bad... I can get Rp.3000 for one motorcycle. If there is a motorcycle I can use, I’ll be a motorcycle chauffeur and take some passengers.”

Yono’s statement shows that he is being structurally excluded from the formal labour system. The only option that is left is the informal sector. Rudy also went through a similar experience of work after he finished high school:

“Straight after I finished my high school, I performed all kinds of work. Every time somebody said, ‘Hey, there’s this work...’, I’ll just go along... as long as I got some money. Once, I used to mix cement, scouring. I did everything, as long as I can buy cigarettes and snacks.... But the longest job I ever had was with a truck delivery. I joined the truck delivery. I became the navigator for the truck driver. It was about five years.”

These experiences showed that the formal employment system fails to incorporate these young men with limited educational backgrounds. Along with their past experience of work in the informal sphere, the failure of formal employment system have forced them to stay in that domain, even after their studies has ended.

Due to the urgent need of income, these youth are just a step away from illegal activities. Adi was the only young man in this research who was very blunt about his past

experience on illicit activity. His description began when I asked him about his work in the informal sphere:

“Once I worked as an informal passenger recruiter near the freeway. I think it was in my junior high... maybe 9th grade. Because at that time the freeway is still new. And the food stalls are not so many like today. [...] there are many teenagers who also worked that way. So that’s the way I looked for additional income. My education, for example books... I just asked to my mother. If it was not enough, I would just find the rest outside.”

The mechanism of passenger recruiter is not legal in Indonesia – at least by law. By recruiting some passengers, the person will receive some amount of money based on the number of people he or she has succeeded to gather. In many cases, public transport drivers complained about the existence of these passenger recruiter because there will be extra expenses for these drivers, which also mean lesser income for them.

Then Adi continued about his informal working experience, but this time it was definitely an illicit one. This type of activity also began during the same year:

“Besides recruiting passengers... well... I used to be a bit of a thug. ... I didn’t work in my base. I worked outside, sometimes in Priok or Semper²¹ or Bekasi²². I tried to be unknown. ... at first I did not do it, I tried to hang on, just enjoy things the way they are. But because I like to hang around and my friends were rascals, so... slowly I started to drink and use drugs. When we needed money, we’re frustrated, then in groups... two or three people, we went. That’s it. Sometimes we feel lazy to go to school; we will go somewhere and hang around. Then we just do it... thugging, got some money, and went home. That’s it.”

Although both of Adi’s acts are considered illicit, they implied a survival strategy taken consciously by this young man. It also reflects how the historical culture of thuggery is being reproduced and maintain, performed by younger generations in nowadays urban Jakarta.

Based on these men’s experiences in employment, it is clear that they are excluded from the whole formal employment system. In this situation, they are forced to find other means in order to obtain income for themselves. All of the men in this research have done different types of informal economic activities. With the small (and sometimes quite large) sums of money that they gathered, they can be considered as ‘independent’ to a certain degree. However, it is strange that even when these men can be seen as

²¹ Tanjung Priok (or Priok) and Semper are districts in Northern Jakarta.

²² Bekasi is a suburban area in the eastern side of Jakarta.

economically independent, they are still not considered as 'adults'. It seems that the informal sphere is not considered as a significant element on reaching the state of adulthood and therefore, to be adult means to enter the formal employment system. So, for these men, working in the informal sector is only to continue their lives in Jakarta, but it does not have any contribution upon their status as adults.

4.4. FBR: The Great Remedy?

FBR emerges in situations where exclusion and marginalization prevail, offering something that other organization could not do. Gardu 127 in Kampung Lio, for example, has certain channels to nearby factories and companies. Besides lobbying them to fund FBR's activities, they also negotiate with those companies to recruit FBR members in return of their security to operate in the area. Of course, their members have to undergo the same selection processes applied for every candidate. This was the main motivation for Rudy to become a member of FBR. At first, he knew FBR from his friend, who is a member of Gardu 114. Amazed by his successful attainment of employment through FBR, Rudy immediately decided to join the organization when it was established in his own neighbourhood. Fortunately, he was employed as a security guard in one of the factories and has been working there for three years. For him, this is a promising job compare to the informal work that he has done. The main reason is the regular salary that he receives, unlike the income from informal sphere which is often unpredictable.

Dede presents a different story from Rudy. His first encounter with FBR began when he worked as an informal labour for PT. JIP. Through FBR, he, Yono and several other young men were recruited to cut down the trees surrounding PT. JIP. They were paid Rp. 100.000 for each tree, and they can also sell the woods. "It was a good offer", add Yono, who also participate in FBR in order to achieve employment. Since then, Dede joined FBR with an expectation for other kinds of work, especially in the formal sector. Moreover, obtaining occupation is not just a matter of gaining income, as Dede told me:

"There was a dispute with my friends... it's a small problem. All of them were already working. I'm the only one who stays here. That's why I joined FBR... so I have something to do. What happened before... young people of my age, mock me. 'Why should we spend our time with the unemployed?', they said. I feel really underestimated. My friends left me... four people who are already working.

Before, we use to hang around together. Now, they can find their own income, they can do everything they want, they left me just like that. That's why I joined FBR. Rather than doing nothing, just sleep and eat... even my father underestimates me. Now, it's better. People don't underestimate me that much. If they do, or they mock me, I'll ask them to fight me."

Dede has shown that work means a lot more than just income, but it is also highly related to respect and honour. From his involvement through FBR, his opportunities became wider, although still revolves around the informal sector. Not only opportunity, but also a feeling of independence, as he stated:

"Before, I always eat at home. Ever since I joined this [FBR], I always eat outside. Now, I'm more independent, at least for my own meals. Sometimes, I just complain to the Gardu's chairman, and then he bought me some meals".

Through their involvement with FBR, these young men have experienced significant changes in their lives: from gaining formal employment to achieving a feeling of respect and independence.

While employment serves as the main reason for the three young men of Kampung Lio to join FBR, Adi has a different reason. Past involvements in gang fighting and living in a risky neighbourhood leads Adi to highly prioritize the sense of security. When I asked him about his motivation to be a member of FBR, he instantly said, "I want this neighbourhood to be safe". Then he continues to explain how FBR takes part in securing the neighbourhood:

"... because the men in our civil defence force are not enough, so FBR assists to guard this neighbourhood. And with those new handy talkies... so each RT and RW²³ has one of those, including our FBR members. So our coordination is fast. If there is any incident somewhere, we just go there. So those young migrants or whoever, if they want to do any illicit activities, we would know in advance. So it's important, there are many advantages. Not to mention the sense of security... there were lots of robberies before, but now it's gone. Alhamdulillah."

Although Adi was never inaugurated as a formal member of FBR, he is involved in most of their activities. One of them was the gang fighting in the sub-district of Semper and Ujung Kranggan. It was the surveillance team that contacted his Gardu to add some men on the area in order to enhance the power of their masses. Adi left immediately with other members of FBR, though he was not sure about the cause of the fight. Some people said

²³ RT (Rukun Tetangga) and RW (Rukun Warga) are two lower level official units that exist in each sub-district. Rukun Tetangga is a neighborhood association or administrative units, while Rukun Warga is the administrative unit at the near-to-lowest level in a city.

that competition for parking area was the main cause, but others said it was about land. He described the situation as follows:

“It was like a gang fight in school, but this one is worse. And it’s the residents... it means more masses. ... The police were more supportive to the other side. Perhaps they have more funds, so they can ‘treat’ the police. In the context of security, they provide delicacies or money for the police. The bosses are quite wealthy. So the police tend to secure them. For me, because I feel my brothers there were oppressed, so I helped. That’s all.”

From his story, Adi has shown an interesting feature in urban setting: the failure of security system, which lies in two forms. First, in the lowest level of settlements, the system is inadequate, at least in terms of numbers. Second, even if the numbers are adequate, it tends to protect those who can give high benefits for the security officers themselves. In this case, the protection system may not work for those who are the most downtrodden. However, in order to maintain their lives, they have to develop their own security system. Adi finds FBR serves this kind of function, where the involvement in it results in a sense of security for him. It is also a means for young people to develop certain contribution to the collective and society.

Up to this point, we can see how FBR plays the role for its young members, and how they are benefiting from their participation. Being young men who are systematically marginalized from the education and employment system, they face many obstacles to reach the constructed state of adulthood. FBR seems to be able to help these youth to overcome those obstacles. Through their lobbies with the surrounding factories (which sometimes involves intimidation, according to various sources), FBR facilitates the transition of employment from the informal to the formal one. It also creates a sense of honour, respect and independence. Overall, with their own way of contributing to society, FBR seems to fill the structural failure of certain aspects in Jakarta, such as employment and security.

4.5. Islamic Revival

In the previous chapter, I discuss religiosity as one of the paradoxes of FBR. While Islamic values seem to dominate this organization (at least in the organization’s documents), it was not a high influence on the local level. The young men’s life histories

also reflect a similar impression. They described themselves not as diligent Moslems because they usually missed the ritual prayers or Islamic preaching. Yono's statement, for example, implies another aspect of the depth of Islamic values:

“When there are religious activities, we should be there. At least two or three people. Because they have this list of participants. So they will know which Gardu is present and not. If they realize that we are not there, our Gardu will receive an admonition, and it will bring shame to us.”

Therefore, their motivation to join religious activities is not based on their religious belief, but rather for the sake of their Gardus.

Their identity as Moslem is expressed when certain incident threatens their religion. Rudy joined the demonstration to support the banning of Ahmadiyah, a 'deviant' interpretation of Islam:

“They claim themselves as Islam, but they have other prophets beside Muhammad. While in Islam, Muhammad is our last prophet. That is what Kyai Fadloli rejects. If they don't claim themselves as Islam, that is okay. I also reject them. My last prophet is Muhammad... I'm still learning about this. Although before I don't care, but when it comes to these kinds of cases, I will support”.

From their stories about religiosity, it seems that there is a discrepancy between Islam as a belief and Islam as a collective identity. Their acts by the name of FBR are not based on their belief – not on a transcendence relationship between an individual and their God, or a religious belief. It rests more on the collective identity as Islam. Attending religious gatherings or demonstrations are acts which try to protect their identities as collectives.

Through all the interviews, the motives of these young men to join FBR do not stem from religious norms, but from the notion of security and employment. Although they joined FBR religious activities, such as Quranic recitation or religious preaches, but these are not the incentives that they expected from their involvement. Furthermore, other activities that they followed (for example, negotiations with factories or gang fighting) were not on the bases of religiosity, but more on social and economic motives. This is an important aspect that can challenge the broad understanding from the media which portrays FBR as a fundamentalist religious group.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION: AGENCY FROM THE MARGINALIZED

This study is a concrete example on how the notion of youth goes beyond biological or age category. The meaning of youth, apparently, is highly related to education and employment. How an individual is perceived as youth or adult depends on their success in those two domains. However, it is also clear in this study that the urban context, such as Jakarta, affected youth's achievement in it. Jakarta urban dynamics are marked by its large population, which mostly constitute by migrants. It also faces the problem of land, unemployment, poverty and inequality, making these youth as vulnerable beings.

The young people of Jakarta are confronted with the atrocities in the city. Poverty has hampered them to obtain a proper education level and quality. Higher education, for most of these young men, is a distant dream. This limited education background confines them from entering the world of formal employment. Moreover, this vicious cycle of low education background and employment opportunities influence how society (and the youth themselves) constructs the meaning of being young. Based on this construction, the middle-lower class young men in this research no longer fit in the common notion of youth. They had ended their education and yet, they are still left out from the formal labour system. Their transition to adulthood is prolonged and they seem to be 'out of place'.

Being marginalized as youth, these young men develop an identity as the excluded. Yet age is not the only dominant factor constructing their identity; ethnicity and gender also play a crucial role. Their identity as the ethnic Betawi is basically constructed by their experience of marginalization. Within Jakarta's problem of land and migration, and the prevalent competition based on ethnicity, these youth develop an identity as 'the natives' who should be the priority to enjoy Jakarta's resources. On the other hand, youth's marginalization from social institutions does not only affect their state of being young, but also the state of being masculine. To be masculine in a society means that there are several expectations attached to a male person, such as being the

head of a future household. Limitations of these youth's education and income resulted in a perception that they are not capable enough to build a family and to be the head of it.

However, within this state of isolation and exclusion, these young men do not passively surrender to the situation. They have taken advantage of the wide informal sector within the city, and even to some extent, the illicit one. When the New Order government collapses, possibilities for these youth became larger. The emergence of interest groups, such as the Betawi Brotherhood Forum (FBR), has facilitated them in many ways. FBR itself is a complex organization to define. It is not a youth organization, not a mass organization based on ethnicity and Islam (as they claim to be), not a fundamentalist group, not a group of thugs or mafia, but to some degree they share similar characteristics with each of those type. Yet it still attracts Jakarta's youth to be a part of FBR, although the mechanism in it leaves limited room for youth's participation. From this study, the factors that endorsed youth's involvement in FBR is not highly related to religious values but more to the economic and social factors, and the construction of being youth. Furthermore, it is through these controversial acts that FBR plays a significant role in replacing the failed social institutions which do not incorporate Jakarta's youth.

Within the failed system of government security forces, for example, to some degree FBR provides a sense of security for the local dwellers, including the youth. But the most significant role of FBR for their youth members is in the possibilities of income generation. Some of them revolve in the informal sphere, but others are part of FBR's illicit activities, such as informal taxation and political parties' paid voters. Another important role of FBR arises from their lobbies with surrounding companies and factories. In this way, FBR accelerates youth's involvement into formal employment and facilitates the transition from informal employment to the formal one.

Formal employment for these youth is not merely about receiving income, but also serves as the marker of transition to adulthood. The youth in this research have shown how formal labour is closely related to the feeling of independence, pride and honour. In other words, their identities which are constructed mainly from their marginalization experiences are modified through their acquaintance with formal employment domain. The young men in this research are using FBR as a means to

overcome their isolation as urban male youth, and therefore, catalyze their transition to adulthood. Moreover, it also facilitates them to fulfil the construction of being masculine.

This research implies the importance to understand certain context in order to apprehend a controversial phenomenon such as FBR. To conclude, I want to emphasize that this study is not aimed to justify the existence of FBR. However, it has shown that urban youths, facing serious challenges from urban problems, are not only victims of the structural condition, but also agents who are constantly searching for solutions of their marginalization. FBR, for these youths, is one of them.

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