Value of the street: an inquiry of children placemaking in Warakas, North Jakarta

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Abstract. People are occupying the street. That’s the everyday practice in Warakas, a neighborhood in North Jakarta, Indonesia. It is not only as a path to connect each part of the neighborhood but also as a place for the people to socialize to interact with each other, including space for children to play. Children see the street as their playground, an accessible space in front of their houses for them to play with their friends. There’s shifting in the way they see that particular space into the place they called playground, and that shifting involves a process called placemaking, a changing the space into the place they value, the place for them. Creating attachment to the particular space, that gives a sense of belonging of the place. This paper will try to observe and interrogate the process of children placemaking in the street of Warakas. We will conduct this research, by doing in site observation to begin the research, and participant observation with children. Mapping, taking visual notes, and pictures of the neighborhood and children activities on the street to understand the way children occupy and add value to the street, the place for them to play.

1. Introduction

Children playing on the street, this is the everyday in Warakas, a small neighborhood in North Jakarta with a strong bond among their residents. They play despite the nagging they get from their parents for playing on the street, an outdoor environment that offers possible danger. This phenomenon leads us to do the research, an observation to understand how children see and occupy the street in Warakas. Using placemaking as an approach to understanding the shifting, the changing of space, the 4 to 5-meter space in front of houses, to something the children called a place for them to play.

Placemaking is “…the act of seeking out and attributing value to places” [9] consist of “…daily act of renovating, maintaining, and representing the places that sustain us…” [10]. Placemaking is a process, and the result is not only any place but a place with value [9] a place with meaning [1], a place for us [10]. The use of -ing as Schneekloth & Shibley [10] said means that this process consists of acts from the subject to a particular space and these acts are our way in changing, and seeking the value of a space [9]. Placemaking is a process of turning space to place, and as mentioned above, not an ordinary place. Therefore, understanding of space and place is important in talking about placemaking.

People live in a space, a container with all object in it [1] though in its progress, it is not only a container, but can be generated by our activities [1] making it more abstract and belonged to the particular subject of mind [1]. We live in a space, there is a “double involvement of individual and institution we create a society at the same time as we created by it [1]. It shapes us at the same time we shape it and the space itself, bringing our characteristic into it. Placemaking consists of
how we perceived a space. Suppose that this space is a maze, we can’t see the beginning and the end of it; we can’t see how it connected. We can only absorb what surround us; this is where placemaking happen, how the physical space and its arrangement perceived by us and affect the way we see and perceive space [1]. So, space and its elements are shaping the way we see and perceive space.

Space is considered as something dynamic and abstract, while place seen as something more fixed, and has its characteristic [1]. As mentioned, above it also has its value [9]. Loq & Altman (1992) explained that the way we value the place can lead to creating a place attachment, bring out a sense of belonging to it [3]. We attach because we value the place. Placemaking is a process of changing space into place, a place we value that can lead to creating a place attachment within us. At the same time, this place attachment can also affect us in the process of placemaking [3] there is a double involvement among them. This change the idea of place that is more constant and fixed [1] to be more dynamic and complex, because it is not only any place, there is value and attachment that created by many things in the process of placemaking, this complexity also come in the form of emotional attachment to the place.

Understanding the idea of placemaking is to understand the process of the place created by it, which in its process affected by some factors, how we see the space by how it is arranged the elements in it [1] also to see it by the subject attachment, shaped by their knowledge of the place and the presence of others [3]. The process will also be affected by the subject who did the placemaking, and in this context, it is children with range 6 – 12 years old.

Children are playing on the street, that’s the phenomenon we get in Warakas, along with the fact that parents are nagging them for playing outside. They are being overlooked as Whitzman [4] said they are also part of urban dwellers that has rights in public spaces. This condition of children being overlooked in public space, leads to planners creating private parks for children to play, too private with fences surrounding them, making it not accessible for children to easily play in it [5]. It is easier for them to play in their neighborhood, the sidewalks alongside road it is easy to access and giving them the opportunity to play in it [5]. But then again, this leads to parental anxiety of outdoor spaces, saying it is dangerous for children to play in it [6]; [8]; [5]; [7]. Although, the outdoor environment giving them more freedom and more opportunity for children to explore.

Placemaking is a process of turning space to place, and it depends on what are the needs, what kind of space that they want to achieve. So, to understand children placemaking, we need to understand children’s characteristics and needs. Children in this age of 6 – 12 years old like to explore, they like to do active body activities and exploring, getting to know their surroundings. Having them restricted to play outside is not helping them in their development moreover, the fenced park not helping in fulfilling their needs. They need an active space, for them to explore and leash out their imagination then, how the street answers these needs in placemaking by children in Warakas. Creating them a place to play, a sense of belonging to the street.

2. Method
Leading this research by doing a site observation. In site observation in Warakas, North Jakarta as the chosen neighborhood in which children lives and occupy street as a place for them to play—doing an observation, including participatory observation on their activities, mapping where and how they play, also how the surrounding place of their playground— following this observation by taking visual notes, photos, and mapping of their activities and the surrounding space. These methods will be used to break down how children see and occupy space in their placemaking on the street of Warakas.

3. Results and Discussions
“Street has always been a great place to play”, said a 25-year-old man from Warakas. His childhood memories revolve around him, playing on the street with his friends. The phenomenon
of children playing outdoor is relevant until now, given the fact that children still play on the street of Warakas.

Warakas is a small neighborhood in North Jakarta, with a density of 49.014 people/km² and its total population of 53,347 people living in a total area of 1,884 km² [2]. Having grid as its structure, and named each row using numbers from 1 to 21 for the vertical lines, and Warakas I to Warakas IV for the horizontal lines, and the area between the intersected lines represent blocks which later named as RT as one small community. One block represented by gates in both of its ends which having their own identity different from one another. The community has a strong bond among their resident, giving them pride of their community.

![Figure 1. Spots where children play.](https://googlemaps.com/ and personal data)

These are some spots that we found and recognized as a place where children play on the street. The activities are diverse from talking, walking, until playing, and how big their group play varies from two people until 8 to 10 people gather in the same space. There is also a bigger group of children playing soccer or traditional games that require more people. These activities happen on the street; the same space for passing vehicles. They play at sidewalks but then occupy the whole street and need to step aside if there is a passing vehicle. The bigger the road with more vehicle may pass, we found fewer children playing in it. However, the smaller the road the higher the intensity of children playing on the street. The number of the passing vehicle affect the intensity of children playing on the street. From these potential streets, we choose one street in Warakas for deeper observation, and that is Warakas C gang 15.
Defining space of children placemaking and elements in it. Figure 3 shows children playing on the street in front of Warung, small retail owned by local. This warung provides an open facade, creating a visual connection from people inside the warung and outside, which among them are children who are playing. This warung owned by local, it also provides a little space in front of it, which usually used by mothers to sit and talks and doing social interaction with one another. These activities by people in front of warung create a more lively environment. The presence of people and the open facade of warung create natural surveillance for children who are playing on the street. Creating safety not by having fences surrounding the playground but by having eyes on the street.

The 4 to 5-meter space offers many opportunities for children to play in it. Asphalt is the material of the ground it, solid enough for children to be able to run on it, and its texture creating friction so it is not slippery for them to run around on it. There are electricity poles at the sidereads with 10 meters intervals from one another. This vertical element used by children as their spot to gather. The beginning of their play and the end of it. This vertical element used as their assembly point for them and their friends, creating companionship and answer their tendency to play in group.

The presence of friends and family affect the place attachment of one to a particular place. This attachment leads to the need for companionship in playing for children. This neighborhood is a one block area with a road separating houses that are oriented to it. The street is accessible for all, especially for children to play on it. They occupy the street, a 4 to 5-meter area in front of their houses as their place to play so it is accessible for children in this area to play; making them choose this street over parks because of the accessibility factor of it. These two aspects create a place knowledge for the child, and as mentioned above, place knowledge can lead to place attachment, which can affect the process of placemaking.

4. Conclusions
Placemaking is affected by some aspects; one of them is place attachment. Place attachment may come in the form of emotional aspect from having a family or friends present in the space, which also can be generated by having eyes on the street in that space; creating natural surveillance. The presence of others not only as emotional support for the child but also giving them safety, not in a physical form of things protecting them from danger. The space and the elements in it can also affect the way children see space, not only by the functional effects of it but also by how children
interpret it. Children companion is also important because children want to play and explore and they want to do it not alone but with their friends, so having a companion is a factor that lures children to come out and play.

Placemaking an act of turning space into place, giving street as space and children as the subject who does it. They occupy, injecting their behavior into space which result in them seeing the particular street to the place they value as the playground, a place for them to play, a place for them.

Acknowledgment
We thank Mama Siti, Ridho, Sari, Zidan, Bapak Yanto for their availability to be interviewed and providing data for this research. We also thank the Directorate Research and Community Engagement (DRPM) Universitas Indonesia for their financial support for this research and publication under the scheme of PITTA B Grant, 2019.

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