Strengthening public awareness on climate change: lesson learned from a youth social movement in Yogyakarta, Indonesia

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Abstract. The awareness of climate change has been recognized as an important key to driving the public to fight against climate change as a global threat. This study focused to examine the role of a youth social movement in strengthening public awareness on climate change. This research employed the descriptive qualitative method. The data were taken through interviews, observation, and documentation. The results showed that the Youth for Climate Change (YfCC) of the Special Region of Yogyakarta has played various important roles to strengthen public awareness on climate change especially by using an educational approach. Unfortunately, their works did not receive appropriate support from the local government.

1. Introduction
Climate change is a real global threat for human civilization sustainability. Climate change is the greatest threat against the future of all human beings in the world, including in Indonesia. Indonesian national law No. 32 of 2009 on Environmental Protection and Management declares this state is on a very vulnerable position regarding climate change impacts. In relation to this, the public awareness of climate change is a crucial and important issue. Public awareness is a valuable capital factor to make people care and start to do something to mitigate the climate change impacts. In fact, it is found that the problem encountered is the lack of the public awareness regarding climate change [1].

Considering such condition, a voluntary youth organization in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia attempts to reinforce the public awareness on climate change. The youths affiliated with this organization call it a social movement of youths to resist climate change. They consciously call themselves “climate rangers”. Their works make a real contribution for a better world [2]. Youths, among others, play a pivotal role to fight climate change [3]. The aim of this research is to describe the role of a youth social movement to strengthen public awareness on climate change.

2. Materials and method
The Youth for Climate Change (YfCC) of the Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia was chosen purposively as a case study. This study used the descriptive qualitative method. Data were gathered by interviews, observation and document studies. The interviews were mainly conducted with the YfCC Yogyakarta members and community members who involved in YfCC activities. A total of 10
competent informants were chosen purposively [4]. Meanwhile, the observation and document studies were used to enrich data. An interactive model throughout the research process was employed to analyse the data. Data analysis involving data collection, data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing and verifying [5]. The results are presented in the descriptive and narrative [6].

![Interactive model of analysis](image)

**Figure 1.** Interactive model of analysis [5]

### 3. Results and discussion

3.1. The history of the youth for climate change (YfCC) of the Special Region of Yogyakarta

The YfCC of the Special Region of Yogyakarta (thereafter called YfCC Yogyakarta) is a voluntary youth organization concerned with climate change. This organization was established on 10 November 2013, and convene the youths at the 18-28 years. Interestingly, YfCC Yogyakarta has arisen earlier than YfCC Indonesia which was established on 28 October 2014. YfCC Yogyakarta was founded by alumni of Youth for Climate Camp 2013 who came from the Special Region of Yogyakarta. The Youth for Climate Camp was held on 1-3 November 2013 in Wiladatika Villa, Cibubur, West Java Province, as the Indonesian National Climate Change Council program.

![The logo of the YfCC Yogyakarta](image)

**Figure 2.** The logo of the YfCC Yogyakarta

Source: YfCC Yogyakarta archive

Indonesian National Climate Change Council was established based on Presidential Decree Number 46 of 2008 having main duty and function related to climate change control. Since its inception, this institution has successfully held four Youth for Climate Camp events during 2011-2014. But the council was dismissed by Presidential Decree Number 16 of 2015 and the programs are integrated into Ministry of Environment and Forestry. In the absence of the council, YfCC Yogyakarta along with YfCC Indonesia as well as regional YfCCs are managed as independent youth social movements to improve public awareness on climate change continuously. Nevertheless, these climate rangers keep working to
reinforce public awareness on climate change. YfCC Yogyakarta is one of the youth groups that still active until today. It, of course, brings a perspective that some youths are care about climate change and taking action to contribute in their local community and the surrounding environment.

3.2. Educational approach as a strategy to strengthen public awareness on climate change

3.2.1. Educational campaign. The educational campaign, according to IPCC [7], is very important to strengthen public awareness on climate change. As a voluntary movement caring about climate change, YfCC Yogyakarta employs two main pathways in conducting an educational campaign: offline and online. The offline educational campaign is conducted by means of disseminating messages and information on climate change through the discussion forum and talk show forum. These forums discuss many issues around climate change by presenting competent speakers. These two forums are intended to both internal (members of YfCC Yogyakarta) and external public (particularly youth generation) in order to have a good understanding and knowledge about important issues related to climate change, such as climate change politics, water, green lifestyle, land, and ecosystem.

Figure 3. Discussion and talk show forum
Source: YfCC Yogyakarta archive

These forums are organized by YfCC Yogyakarta both independently and in collaboration with other communities caring about climate change issue. Information on these forums is also disseminated through social media so that information circulation is distributed more broadly and quickly. Social network is an important social capital [8], and thus the attempt to maximizing it through collaboration is paramount [9]. Therefore, the social network that has been created between YfCC Yogyakarta and other youth communities concerned with the climate change issues should be maintained.

Meanwhile, the online educational campaign is the attempt of strengthening public awareness through online media, particularly by utilizing information and communication technology (ICT) to
disseminate the information about climate change. YfCC Yogyakarta also engages the social media such as Blog, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LINE to reach the broader public, particularly the millennial generation that is familiar with ICT. YfCC Yogyakarta produced attractive various climate change-related information, such as posters and short fact sheets and thus easy to understand. All the materials are intended to invite public awareness on climate change and getting more concerned with the earth. The achievement by YfCC Yogyakarta is clearly in line with Castells [10] which argued that social movement should be able to utilize internet maximally to disseminate its messages to the public.

![Figure 4. Posters and short fact sheets](source: YfCC Yogyakarta archive)

3.2.2 Educational action. In addition to using educational campaign, YfCC Yogyakarta also uses educational action approach. YfCC Yogyakarta understands that the way of strengthening the public’s awareness of climate change is to be a role model by doing real action. An example is an action of cleaning the wastes in Klanduan River, Sleman by collaborating with other communities local youths. This waste cleaning action is conducted in the attempt of celebrating National Waste Awareness Day. Another real action was also by planting mangrove in collaboration with a mangrove-care community, called KeMANGTEER Yogyakarta to reduce the climate change impacts. The location of mangrove planting was at Pasir Mendit Hamlet, Jangkaran Village, Kulon Progo Regency. After planting the mangrove, they also monitor the mangrove growth.
YfCC Yogyakarta also takes educational action in school and community through YfCC Goes to School and YfCC Goes to Village. YfCC Goes to School is an action intended to educate the younger generation, particularly school children, about the urgency of maintaining environment balance to minimize climate change impacts. The school children are taught to love planting the plants and trees earlier. This action, for example, was implemented in SD Negeri (Public Elementary School) Gejayan, Sleman. School children were taught to plant in used-plastic bottles with hydrogel for the purpose of plastic recycle to reduce plastic consumption.

Meanwhile, the YfCC Goes to Village program was carried out by educating the villagers about how to utilize and process organic waste into organic fertilizer. This action, for example, was conducted in Kelingseng Village, Bantul. The villagers were taught how to process organic wastes such as from fruits and vegetables so that can be used as organic fertilizer for farming. This is clearly an important mitigation strategy. Some actions taken by YfCC Yogyakarta are the implementation of UNFCCC’s mandate that should be appreciated [11].

Some lessons learned from YfCC Yogyakarta as a youth social movement concerned with climate change are: first, they do not rely on local government despite of funding difficulties, but they keep on fighting to actualize their idealism as young generation who care about climate change. Moreover, the local government so far is less involved with the communities to discuss about climate change issue and solution. The community is often invited by the local government only for attending some events, which is not effective for climate change education and action.

Figure 5. River waste cleaning action (a) and Mangrove plantation (b)
Source: YfCC Yogyakarta archive
Second, YfCC Yogyakarta along with the surrounding communities who care about climate change has shown the power of collaboration to move collectively. They move together as the manifestation of their awareness of the importance of echoing the awareness of climate change to the public. This collective move in line with what Tarrow [12] and Goodwin and Jasper [13] suggest that cooperation or collaboration is important to do to change some non-ideal aspect of society, in this context the awareness of climate change. Third, one of the important issues that should remain to be implemented, in addition to strengthening the public awareness, is to encourage the public awareness in the forms of real action so that the public will participate directly in reducing the impacts of climate change in the daily life, as asserted by Giddens [14].

4. Conclusion
YfCC Yogyakarta as a youth social movement has played an important role in strengthening the public awareness on climate change among the communities particularly the younger generation. The strategy is using educational approach including educational campaign and educational action by maximizing social network and collaborating with other communities. A close collaboration particularly with local government is important, but in contrary, the attention and support from local government are very minim. Therefore, the local government is expected to be involved more and to maximize the role in supporting youth groups or communities concerned with climate change for a sustainable action. There should be a mutual cooperation among all parties to create a climate-friendly planet for us and the future generation.
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