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# Activists' heterodox beliefs in fostering urban environmental education in Indonesia

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## ABSTRACT

It has been widely recognized that environmental activists' agency is shaped by their knowledge, childhood upbringing, exposure to environmental campaigns and projects. Deploying the sociological concept of "heterodoxy", this study aims to explore young activists' counter-beliefs against the dominant discourse of neoliberal urban development, which intrinsically motivated them to develop alternative environmental education for primary school students in Bandung City, Indonesia. By employing in-depth interviews that focus on significant life experiences, the present study reveals that activists' nonconforming beliefs were formed through their childhood experiences with nature, their objections to today's environmentally-unfriendly development, and the failure of formal education to foster children's interest in the environment. From the activists' point of view, the development of Bandung City in Indonesia has become more neoliberal, with less regard for environmental conservation.

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## Introduction

Urban sustainability relies on the alignment of the agency of actors and the ecosystem, which involves an array of concepts such as an urban forest. When these elements are affected by irresponsible development, actors and urban activists exert power by advocating remedial action (Harris et al., 2018). The present article investigates activists' underlying subjectivities and identifies the factors that drive them to sustain environmental education for future urban residents and children. This eco-education has emerged as a response to massive environmental destruction in Bandung, and it has implemented comprehensive programs, involving coursework for children in Bandung City to explore recent environmental problems and provide solutions for their generation. Bandung is a metropolitan city in West Java, Indonesia, that suffers urban forest privatization, extreme annual flooding, and waste management problems (Damanhuri et al., 2009). Through their environmental education programme, the activists hope to instill pro-environmental sentiments in citizens by investing in artworks and the socialization of children. Activists' work discussed in the

present article reveals a “dissident narrative” (Li, 2016, p. 501), which was inspired by the failure of the municipal government to create a profoundly sustainable urban environment. Their individualized capital is a formidable force at the grassroots level, which fosters social changes and civic commitments (Martínez et al., 2012, p. 475). To the best of the authors’ knowledge, the significant trajectories of Indonesian environmental activists shaping their decisions in establishing a movement organization focusing on children’s education have largely not been studied. 40

Through ethnographic interviews with five young environmental activists aged 25–30 years, this study explores the lived experiences that led them to develop an environmental education organization. Analysis of their narratives is underpinned by the sociological concepts of “heterodoxy” and ‘orthodoxy’, notions that French philosopher Pierre Bourdieu furthered. Heterodoxy and orthodoxy are two sociological concepts. Orthodoxy refers to the beliefs and opinions circulated by the ruling actors in society, such as the government, and spread through mainstream discourse. In contrast, heterodoxy refers to the counter-beliefs and opinions that sit in opposition to orthodoxy. Previous studies have endorsed the notion that environmental doxa, which shape life experiences and critical subjectivities against neoliberal practices toward nature, may instigate activists to build new movements (Caplow & Thomsen, 2019; Puig & Echarrí, 2018). The activists develop opposing beliefs (i.e. heterodoxy) as a cognitive platform for new environmental education foundations. This paper intends to explore further the beliefs and experiences of environmental activists and the manner in which these experiences drive them toward environmental action. For the future of eco-education, particularly as Indonesia faces extensive urban environmental problems, environmental activists suggest coursework should involve participants considering the historical causes of environmental destruction, and how those have led to effects on the ecosystem today 45 50 55 60

The remainder of this paper is structured in five sections. The first section reviews the very concept of heterodoxy. The second section presents the environmental problems of Bandung City, West Java, Indonesia, which have arisen due to the affirmation of neoliberal orthodox beliefs. The third section describes the research methods and participants. Results are presented in the fourth section, including an analysis of the activists’ narratives, informed by the concepts of orthodoxy and heterodoxy. The fifth section concludes with a general discussion. 65

## Theoretical perspective on heterodoxy 70

First of all, Bourdieu defines doxa as “what is essential goes without saying because it comes without saying” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 167). Doxa is ‘implicit and unspoken acceptance of its purpose and rules’ (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 169). He further breaks down the doxa into heterodoxy and orthodoxy, which stand in binary opposition to one another. Orthodoxy is in the hidden belief system of the dominant actors that govern society. Alternative and opposing opinions are referred to as heterodoxy. 75

In a resistance movement, orthodoxy becomes the material of resistance for the opposition when the opposition has reached the peak of social change. That is to say that social change occurs when actual reality is not in line with the believed doxa built by ruling actors. When this shift occurs, orthodoxy, as mainstream discourse, is no longer able “to produce the naturalization of its own arbitrariness” (Bourdieu, 1993, 80

p. 73). The legitimacy of doxic logic, or orthodoxy, thus becomes dysfunctional: ‘(..) functioning as a critical break with doxa (and often associated with crisis) is what brings the dominant agents out of their silence’ (Bourdieu, 1973, p. 73). Existing social changes and opposition to doxa may give birth to a ‘moment of crisis’ (Bourdieu, 2004, 2008), perpetuating social protests. In the same vein, ruling actors reach the height of their anger and strive to ‘produce the defensive discourse of orthodoxy, the right thinking, right wing thought that is aimed at restoring the doxa’ (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 3). The ways in which ruling actors defend doxa, such as by issuing threats, blackmailing, and mobilizing political pressure against the opposition, are observable actions in various authoritarian states.

Furthermore, the resulting struggle is a result of differing aims between environmentalists and the authorities. The eco-activists become influential as they challenge the position of the authorities. This condition develops orthodoxy, or “when the doxa is specifically defended” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 169) Even though this doxa is tacit and manifests in everyday social interactions, it becomes apparent through an effort to verbalize and update the discourse and, as emphasized by Bourdieu (1977, p. 169), ‘by entering the discourse can more readily be negated’. In *Language and Symbolic Power* (1991, p. 92), Bourdieu made further assertions regarding how dominant actors exercise orthodoxy. He argues that doxa is normalized through the ‘language, categorization, symbolic capital and its centrality in political struggles’. This idea implies that orthodoxy can be disseminated through linguistic practices and symbols, which then become targets of resistance in struggles. Heterodoxy manifests in the opposition between the ruling actors and the ruled: ‘What appears to us today as self-evident, as beneath consciousness and choice, has quite often been the stake of struggles and instituted only as the result of dogged confrontations between dominant and dominated groups’ (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 56).

Environmental and ecological struggles are a catalyst for the creation of new environmental organizations. In agency, this condition is created because of the asynchronous relations between subjective expectations and objective outcomes, triggering social criticism. Embarking from this point, the environmental struggle manifested in the pursuit of sound conditions for the environment is a manifestation of protest by the activists. Whenever environmental action is carried out and involves the community members, the government often construes it as political pressure. It is the emerging moment for activists to put their heterodoxy in the *avant-garde* of the movement. Through this elaboration, we espouse the view that conflict between activists’ subjectivity and objective structures within the field of politics leads to a crisis, materializing in chaos (Crossley, 2003). In this paper, the objective structure is found to be the dominance of the neoliberal economic system of the Bandung City government, which exploited the natural environment for economic development.

Environmental activism in this study is defined as a soft confrontation with the dominant economic system, which is operated by the government in partnership with the private sector. The latter is known to be the greatest contributor to global environmental pollution, thereby causing inevitable damage to nature. The emergence of environmental organizations as a response is, according to Bourdieu, a resistance to the “holder of the monopoly over legitimate symbolic violence” (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 22). Environmental exploitation as a source of economic profit is a form of symbolic violence

against nature (Le Billon, 2001). It may be conceived in that manner because nature is no longer embedded in people's lived experiences. In a Bourdieusian way, such political reality, in which the dominating group takes control over nature, is tantamount to acting as colonizers of nature (Bourdieu, 1977). 130

### Environmental problems in urban Bandung, Indonesia, as orthodoxy

For local activists who have higher knowledge and understand the logic of the manner in which the environment is controlled, regional environmental damage is part of orthodoxy in their everyday lives. This is due to the fact that environmental problems are the effects of the complexity of capitalistic development that is transformed into a daily discourse that tends to be difficult to resist and impossible to ignore. Indonesia's urban areas are apparently suffering destruction as well. It has become massive, particularly following the implementation of the decentralization policy in 2004 (Palmer & Engel, 2007). Despite environmental law enforcement, urban areas in Indonesia have been transformed by the government into centers of industry, housing, education and trade, and services, which are targets for sourcing regional revenue, a typical scenario for the exploitation of the environment that follows. It is clearly evident that while the environment faces degradation, decentralization affects sustainability prospects in urban areas. 135 140 145

The decentralization policy has been in effect since 2004 (Ito, 2011). With a large regional distribution network, regional decentralization was introduced to provide the regions with autonomous opportunities to innovate and develop their potential (Pierskalla & Sacks, 2017). Each region was granted independence to reap domestic profits and increase regional income (Ostwald et al., 2016). Therefore, strengthening the economy is the main goal of this liberal economic policy. However, along with the freedom to raise local income, the natural environment has been sacrificed. This is exacerbated because supporting the urban ecosystem gradually becomes less and less important for community livelihood. Decentralization is unanimously believed by the Indonesian government to accelerate regional growth on the grounds of each region having unique resources and the capacity to manage itself. This belief has been seen to be a virtue since 1966, the time of President Soeharto's leadership, echoing imperial developmentalism (Warburton, 2016). However, at the time, the exploitation of natural resources in Indonesian territory was operated by the central government. Large-scale demonstrations demanding separation from Indonesian territory, which took place at the end of 1999, were one of the government's fears, and it culminated in the Indonesian government putting decentralization into practice. 150 155 160

For Bandung City, in particular, decentralization has had a major impact on the governance of urban areas and economic management. The Bandung City government's belief in reinforcing economic capitalism is also fostered by its proximity to the Indonesian capital, Greater Jakarta. In less than 2 hours by road, Bandung residents can visit Jakarta and vice versa. Firman (2009) criticism identifies the physical construction of the Jakarta Metropolitan Area and Bandung Metropolitan area, spanning 200 kilometers, as having eliminated the boundary between urban and rural activities. He asserts that it reflects "a growing mega-urban region marked 165 170

by a mixture of rural and urban activities and blurred rural-urban distinction” (Firman, 2009, p. 327). Jakarta’s transformation into a megapolis has impeded the construction of an independent development ideology in Bandung (Firman & Dharmapatni, 1995). The ease of exchange and transaction of goods and services through land transportation access has established Bandung as the center of economic growth in West Java. 175

In 2005, northern Bandung was under acquisition by Bandung City’s mayor, Dada Rosada (Hermawati & Runiawati, 2015; Hidayah & Wiludjeng, 2012). With its cool climate and beautiful scenery, it was seen as a promising future prospect for investments, and the government and developers cooperated to build housing on dozens of land areas (Wardhani, 2012). The popularity of Bandung as a rendezvous hub on weekends for tourists encouraged the government to approve hotel construction by granting construction permits (*Ijin Mendirikan Bangunan*). However, this rendered the climate of Bandung much hotter because of the increasing urban heat island effect (Tursilowati, 2010). Between 2010 and 2012, city mayor Dada Rosada was questioned by the Commissions for Corruption Eradication for charges of misappropriating the state’s budget (Atnan, 2015). Critically, in mid-2009, the Dada Rosada government succeeded in attracting PT. Esa Gemilang Indah through a joint contract to convert the Babakan Siliwangi urban forest into a restaurant (Alam et al., 2019). After mobilizing cultural resistance, environmental activists successfully thwarted the forest commercialization plan in mid-2012. 180 185 190

Environmental groups in Bandung have benefited from strong networks with local mass media. Although the government of the day reveals a vested interest in promoting new development projects, environmental activists monitor the actions of the government. Such was the case at the end of 2011 when Bandung activists organized a collective meet-up to examine the “Raport Merah Pembangunan Kota Bandung” (Red City Development Report; Interview with Dadang, Head of WALHI West Java, February 2015). In addition to revealing the government’s exploitative acts in the aftermath of Indonesia’s reforms, this collective event revealed the corruption of the Dada Rosada government regime, which had embezzled a number of social funds that were not used in accordance with their intended objectives (Martokusumo & Zulkaidi, 2015). A study of the environmental movement in Bandung Alam (2016) highlighted concerted efforts among environmental activists, who were also co-led by WALHI West Java (Indonesia Friends of the Earth) and the West Java Legal Aid Foundation and who succeeded in overthrowing Dada Rosada and finally putting him into prison. The pressure exerted by environmental activists in Bandung is so immense due to the environmental protection movement (Alam, 2020); therefore, this study aims to identify what inspires activists to build such environmental movements. By using a case study of an environmental organization that focuses on environmental education, Friends of the City, the present study explores activists’ motivations, subjectivities, and experiences of heterodoxy, which encouraged them to establish the organization as a form of resistance to capitalism in Bandung City and challenge development orthodoxy. Next, the research methods section below discusses the ways in which this set of ingrained beliefs has motivated activists to assume a leadership role. 195 200 205 210 215

## Materials and methods

### *Research design*

For young people, nature is an egalitarian space wherein they can build and explore their cultural capital, such as environmental knowledge, social networking, and linguistic navigation. This study was undertaken between November 2012 and January 2013, when the author was involved in fieldwork examining growing environmental activism in Indonesia. During their visit and fieldwork in Bandung, they selected Friends of the City as the only environmental organization that orients its programmes on education. Other than FoC, 30 youth-based environmental organizations were identified, with different affiliations: universities; national environmental organizations (i.e. Sahabat WALHI and Friends of the Earth Indonesia); international environmental organizations (i.e. Greenpeace Youth Bandung, Earth Hour Bandung) and independent organizations (e.g. City Friends/Friends of the City, Birds Conservations (BICONS), Bandung Gardening/Bandung Gardening, Bandung Greeneration, and City Park/City Garden) (Alam, 2015; Suharko et al., 2015). The main interest of the researcher was to concentrate on nonpartisan, youth-driven organizations that have separate structures and have routine and monthly programmes that are more creative. Environmental organizations can maintain creativity without affiliation as they base their project activities upon ideas from their members, whereas affiliates always depend on instructions from their parent organizations.

### *Participants and instruments*

Friends of the City, an environmental education-based organization in Bandung, was chosen for the present study. It was chosen because it fit the study's rationale to examine environmental activists' belief in developing alternative environmental education in the country. Their loci of activities are within Bandung City. Many meetings were held with the founders of FoC before conducting the in-depth interviews, with the aim being to develop interpersonal closeness between the researcher and the founders. To ensure honesty during data collection, the founders were informed of the researcher's position and the agenda of fieldwork activities while in Bandung. Because this work of research explores individual beliefs, the depth of the respondents' stories or narratives is determined by the closeness and trust in the relationship between the researcher and respondents.

As elaborated in the theoretical perspective section, heterodoxy is a common belief that emerges as an inner conflict with the given conditions. This inner opposition comes to the surface as part of the individual's subjectivity, who opposes the objective conditions around them. To explore the heterodoxy that determined the initial formation of FoC, this study used Significant Life Experiences (SLE) as a methodology (Chawla, 1998). SLE is done by asking respondents to relate life experiences and subjectivities that are considered to be transformative and have the strongest impetus in building an entity. Using this approach, the founders of FoC were asked to talk in-depth about life experiences, subjectivity, as well as their critical observations and the facts on the ground that



inspired them to form this organization. The author then asked the respondents to focus their narratives on two phases: the time when they were in secondary school (ages 12–16 years) and when they were university students. 260

In-depth interviews were conducted with five respondents aged 25–30 years. The interviews were conducted separately for each respondent, lasted 1–2 hours for each respondent, and took place in a café chosen by the respondents themselves. The respondents' choice of café as a meeting place reveals the new style of consumption of educated middle-class Indonesians. Unlike the reform activists in the New Order that occupied the location of the university campus as a struggle space, the millennial middle-class now chooses the café because it represents their modernity and their openness. Before the interviews, respondents consented to have their voice recorded and the study results published, provided they were de-identified. The names used in this study are pseudonyms. The narrations were then transcribed and read again to conduct a thematic analysis. The author used the NVIVO qualitative software package to categorize the emergent themes. The analysis revealed three major categories related to neoliberal aspects: 1) damaging urban development, 2) the failure of formal education about the environment, and 3) consumeristic urban lifestyle. 275

### ***FoC and its urban environmentalism***

FoC is a nonprofit organization working with local youngsters in Bandung City to optimize the growth and development of children in the context of an urban environment. In 2007, this organization was pioneered by six young people from Bandung (Suharko et al., 2015). The activists run an organic and inorganic waste segregation business to fund their environmental education activities. They regularly organized waste recycling programmes while studying at the Institute of Technology in Bandung. Their initiatives of a waste management programme could have been regarded as a form of “subterranean politics” (Kaldor & Selchow, 2013), which provided an alternative method of waste management in Indonesia. However, it has stagnated because it has not reduced the volume of national waste significantly 285

The first activity run by FoC was to take children on a “city adventure” during the long holiday. Children were taken on a 2-day tour to explore cities and actively engage with the urban environment. Kandi, a founder of FoC, points out:

We believe that children learn best from their environment, which means the city itself. Living in harmony and interacting positively with the surrounding environment, both natural and social, will provide valuable learning for children's physical development and character. 290

This organization claims that there is an urgent need to create an environment that supports optimal child development and that child development is an obligation of all city citizens, including young people. FoC, with its “Come Out & Play” movement, actively invites primary school students to learn and play in the city space, mainly through the Kidsventure Club ‘(Alun Ulin)’ and Friends of the City Summer programmes. 295

Sahabat Kota, Selasar Sunaryo Art Space (SSAS), and Bandung Creative City Forum (BCCF) were co-organizers of the Bandung 2035 Projection Exhibition, Children's Dream City, which presents children's creative work produced in a series of Riung Gunung vacation programmes: Mari Reka Kota (Let's Plan the City). This community-based activism 300



is intended to present children's aspirations for the urban environment as residents who do not have a voice in the field of urban planning. In the event, participating children are divided into groups, in which they use their imagination to develop a miniature Bandung City.

Considering that in the next 20–30 years, the city will be led by today's generation of children, it is constructive for them to become familiarized with urban planning and become agents of change for their city. To implement this idea, FoC designed a 6-day vacation activity called "Riung Bandung" for children aged 8–12 years, consisting of roaming activities and workshops based on their vision of Bandung City in the future and ending with an exhibition of Bandung City. 'Riung Gunung: Mari Reka Kota' (Mountaineering: Let's Plan the City) is a series of annual holiday programmes run by FoC. Workshops, performances, and exhibitions are held at Bale Handap and Bale Tonggoh in Bandung. Furthermore, 'Riung Gunung' was one of the pre-events in the series of Design Action programmes from BCCF, which was presented at the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on Design Thinking in October 2013. In the Design Action event, Riung Gunung employed the theme 'Children as Co-Designer'. This exhibition was an inspiring event for city residents in general and for Bandung residents in particular, who saw a new perspective of their city.

### **Activists' profile in brief**

Before proceeding with an exploration of the doxic neoliberal beliefs that encouraged activists to create non-formal environmental education, the author will profile the educational capital of the respondents.

The five respondents obtained their tertiary education in Bandung City. One graduated from the Department of Biology, and the remaining four are architecture and environmental engineering graduates. They discussed ways in which knowledge about environmental management, including the science behind environmental pollution, changes in physical ecosystems, and the climate of Bandung city, were studied intensively in their undergraduate programmes. With an educational background in the field of science and environment, it is easy for these activists to understand the chemical–biological causes of air pollution. Previous studies acknowledge that science students doing outdoor nature activities share a close bond with nature (Bell et al., 2003). Since all respondents spent their childhood in Bandung City, the narratives of their environmental experiences are necessarily embedded in the environmental conditions of Bandung City.

### **Activists' heterodoxy**

#### ***Damaging urban development***

In their narratives, the activists related their heterodoxic beliefs about building environmental education to their lived experiences with nature, which occurred when they were young adults. At the time, the decentralization policy had not manifested in major cities in Indonesia, and Bandung City was not flooded with hundreds of hotels and cars as it is now. In her interview, Mila revealed, "In 1990, Bandung still had very fresh air because not many trees had been cut down, but now all of them were lost in the construction of the

hotels". Karen also recalled her childhood experience when Bandung was clean and not inundated with cars, 'Because there were no cars packed in the city like now, Bandung was very comfortable for traveling because the smoke may be said not to have been as oppressive as it is now'. 345

Q12 The other three activists also remembered their childhood as a time that they eagerly wished to revisit. Explicitly, their narrations implied a "topophilia" (Tuan, 1990), or the sense of being strongly embedded in the physical locations that they had inhabited since childhood. The feelings that were revealed in the subjective experiences above also indicated the shifting of the feeling of attachment to their homeland, which physical changes in the space had exacerbated. Moreover, such concerns were manifested through the environmental movement they have established. 350

In the study of urban space, neoliberalism is characterized by government partiality in creating regulations and policies for preserving nature. The products of neoliberalism are particularly visible when the construction of private infrastructure is rampant, such as increasing numbers of hotels and the dramatic rise in motor vehicle numbers, both of which cause unbearable air pollution. This has been happening in Bandung for the past 20 years. 355

In Bourdieu's view, the neoliberalism of Bandung City would be dubbed as "orthodoxy". It is a discourse circulated by the government that becomes an inherent belief for residents of the city. Such orthodoxy is strengthened and increasingly distributed by local media and other development agencies. Environmental activists, who are well equipped with knowledge of the damaging effects of urban development, are better able to grasp the dangers of such orthodoxy, which they react to by generating opposing beliefs, or 'heterodoxy'. Hence, we examine the substantive practice of activist heterodoxy, which goes against the grain when it comes to capitalistic neoliberalism and which shapes their motives for establishing environmental education in Bandung City. 360 365

The crowded highways in Bandung City have contributed to severe air pollution and are evidence of the triumph of neoliberalism over the environment (Alam & Nilan, 2018). Governments have apparently failed to implement regulations to control air pollution, such as by imposing a vehicle tax on car owners and prohibiting the entry of cars into certain areas of the city. In addition, the construction of shopping malls has diminished children's play areas in the city. Karen views this situation as a threat to children: 370 375

With the increasingly chaotic changes in the city space of Bandung, we cannot expect anything from the current government. In this day and age, children cannot play any longer and find free playgrounds in urban areas because various urban spaces are already filled in with hotels, privately-owned entertainment spots, and malls. Children in Bandung now prefer to get into the mall, which is actually a shopping centre, not a place to play for their formative ages. Besides that, in 30 more years, when they grow up and become holders of power, what can they be proud of in Bandung? Most likely nothing. 380

Bandung City itself has operated public city transportation (minibus or *ang*) that allows ample collective mobility for its citizens (Joewono & Kubota, 2006). However, the exemption from taxes on buying and selling motorbikes in Indonesia actually 385

reduces the use of this kind of public transport. Besides the benefits of urban transportation for traveling to historic sites, Mita believes that environmental education would improve children's attitudes to public urban transportation:

Public transportation in Bandung already exists, such as *angkot* (payable mini-shuttle bus). This is actually mass transport and may reduce the carbon footprint. With the increase in the volume of motorised vehicles from year to year, mass transportation and campaign improvements are needed so that people can ride city transportation comfortably and safely. But more than that, urban transportation routes that can travel along historical locations in Bandung are also much needed for the community, especially for school children. This would help children know which city transportation is most efficient for their mobility.

These narratives demonstrate that these activists, as founders of an environmental education organization, embrace a strong belief that the government should support the use of public space as a playground and exploration space for children. Non-formal environmental education is a transformative movement for activists, who can provide an alternative arena for learning about the environment (Räthzel & Uzzell, 2009).

### **Consumeristic urban lifestyle**

Rapid industrialization in the Bandung municipality and other cities of Indonesia drives people to adopt a globalized lifestyle. With the extensive growth of shopping malls, urbanization, and social networking sites, people are now experiencing what Appadurai labels "life-projects" (Appadurai, 1998, p. 22), allowing them to 'compare other worlds with their own'. By the same token, there is no longer a boundary between what people need and what they want. People buy items for the sake of self-satisfaction. It has been established that consumerism increases the intensity of environmental problems in the world (Klein, 2014).

The social changes perpetuated by the construction of shopping centers in Bandung City cause concern among the founders of FoC. They argue that hedonism, as an effect of consumerism, will penetrate the everyday lives of children. More broadly, the natural element of Bandung City's identity will gradually disappear. The practice of free-market ideology that has bombarded Bandung City through massive shopping malls is believed to damage the social character of the next generation:

High-rise buildings have *made* ancient buildings unseen, the water reservoir has also begun to shrink, and lifestyles are increasingly hedonistic. Bandung society has changed its lifestyles to become modern. Even the identity of Bandung, which used to be rich in trees and ancient buildings, has slowly disappeared. (Anita)

Activists critically understand the free-market logic that dominates urban development and urban planning in Bandung City. Capitalistic behavior, as embodied in development plans, has shifted the role of the environment as a playground for children and society in general:

The market ideology adopted by the government has the potential to damage the younger generation. The government does not have a great alignment with nature. The logic of free trade and the economic value of exchange have penetrated into urban planning models in Bandung. If it is a matter of money, the government will defend itself as hard as possible.

Bandung is a small city, but two malls don't feel enough. One mall with another mall, the distance is not so far. Suppose the land leased for the construction of the mall is made into city parks where there is a grass field and a children's playground, then the positive impact on the social interactions of citizens on their environment also changes (Mila) 430

The development budget designed by the government impedes future environmental sustainability. In addition, the government has not used investments that have flooded the city's economic coffers to implement programmes to revitalize the environment as a children's play area. One study revealed that Bandung is not a children-friendly city any longer as public spaces have been shrinking at an unprecedented rate (Chandradimuka, 2016). Investors dominate the political position of the government. Furthermore, Teddy elaborated: 435 440

The government suffered defeat against the owners of capital. This is not because the government does not have the budget to build a sustainable city or child-friendly city. This is because the government's power and commitment to natural ecosystems in the future are weak.

The other activists also detailed their beliefs about the manner in which individualistic lifestyles have afflicted urban communities in Bandung. The loss of environmental sensitivity can cause individuals to jettison their relationships with their natural surroundings. There is now an urgency for environmental education to re-sensitize children to the natural environment. Raisa stated the following: 445

Individualistic lifestyles that are currently attracting children make their mentality worse and lower environmental sensitivity. As environmental sensitivity is low, their ability to identify causes of natural damage weakens. As a result, as individuals, they only become spectators, not as 'game-changers. So, I want them to be agents. 450

In the narratives above, the activists' heterodox beliefs are revealed as deep worries about global risk, evidenced in the everyday industrialization of Bandung City. As individuals who were brought up in nature-embedded families with eco-friendly attitudes, they developed the capacity to foresee the impacts of industrialization on the environment and younger generations. In a nutshell, the global risks that are translated in the everyday neoliberal lived experiences of Bandung City are also their own personal risk (Beck, 2005; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2009) 455

### ***The failing of classroom-based environmental and non-environmental education*** 460

Fordham et al. (2018) argue that formal education, as a product of government policy, is aimed at instilling the values of morality, one of which is pro-environmental behavior, so that future generations can become safeguards for environmental sustainability. The formal education model in Indonesia emphasizes indoor classes (Baetty & Thomas, 2020; Bjork, 2018; Pawlowski, 2019), and this has dismantled students' sense of attachment to the environment as they are construed as "passive learning participants" (Michel et al., 2009, p. 398). The Indonesian government's education policy includes an environmental education curriculum for primary through to upper secondary school. However, Indonesian environmental education has proven to be ineffective at promoting pro-environmental attitudes and conservation practices among young people. It was found in the Adi Wiyata Program 465 470

commissioned by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry for all private and public schools in Indonesia. However, one of the main criticisms of it is that the delivery of environmental content takes place in the classroom exclusively. The emphasis on classrooms as learning spaces may result in children becoming cognitively detached from the natural environment (Wilson, 2007). As Mila staunchly argues: 475

In terms of psychological growth, the children are still in the explorative stage. They still have the eagerness to visit more places where they can explore their curiosity towards nature, such as mountains, plantations, hills, rivers, and the like. This desire should be facilitated in our basic education system. Basic education needs to provide a large space for children to explore their environment. Well, okay, now there are a lot of schools with new models such as integrated primary schools, international curriculum-based elementary schools, but in reality, there is not a single model that specifically has an environmental education curriculum. The environmental education that I imagined could hold regular weekly or monthly activities for children to learn with nature. So, the natural learning model is done directly. 480 485

For Mila above, her heterodox belief regarding environmental education is due to the fact that the absence of a specific environmental education curriculum has been an “anarchic structure” (Pearson, 2018, p. 68), which removes people from the natural world around them. The homogeneity of the current educational curriculum, tending as it does to prioritize academic success over a sense of responsibility for protecting the environment, is seen as a bottleneck for creating future generations who will be capable of conserving nature. This narrative also infers that that education has turned into a ‘zone of transgression’ (Fadaee, 2018, p. 76)—a circumstance that disassociates human being and nature in learning. 490 495

Admittedly, another drawback in the current education model is over-reliance on textbook learning. This model is viewed as ineffective for children’s development of alternative understandings of and appreciation for nature. As Raisa asserts: 495

It cannot be denied, the primary school education curriculum designed by the government becomes more textbook-based, not reality-based. Decades of improved textbooks, unfortunately, cannot foster a generation of young people who respect the environment. It seems like the government, and also the parents are trapped in the desire to create intelligent children by merely studying mathematics and sciences but forgetting that children also live every day with nature. They also breathe air and see plants every day, so they also need to know what to do so that the plants and the air they enjoy remain sustainable. 500 505

As determined by the Indonesian government, the formal education of elementary schools emphasizes the mastery of science and mathematics. The Ministry of Education believes that having pupils achieve success in “hard science” at the primary school level would benefit the nation. However, this ‘technocratic learning’ style (Matthijs & Blyth, 2018), as Raisa argued above, actually distances children from nature. That such technocratic learning is problematic appears to be a heterodox belief for Raisa, who aims to establish a hands-on approach to environmental education through activities at FoC. For example, one activity was to bring primary school students to visit a lamb farm in Bandung City. 510

Other activists were cautious about the use of mobile technology for classroom learning. The integration of mobile technology in the classroom is ideally intended to advance students' comprehension of the subject being studied. Yet, to some extent, it isolates them from real life. Teddy articulates this reasoning as follows: 515

Conventional environmental learning models, such as those based on textbooks, are clearly outdated and cannot be taught to children anymore. You see it now; children just read from a tablet or mobile phone. They learn about animal sounds not at the zoo but from tablets. However, if they are taken outside the house and shown the original animal, they do not remember. 520

Teddy's heterodox belief captures today's social reality, in which learning about animals mediated by electronic media could create "pseudo realms" (Rivers, 1990, p. 272) in the students' minds, referring to the replacement of a real object with a fantasized version. In addition, this heterodox belief implies an important fact: cognition and praxis in environmental learning mediated by mobile technology are two distinct entities. Environmental de-sensitivity, in turn, is a problem that results from the disconnection between praxis and cognition. In the eyes of activists, formal education that utilizes technology and textbooks may give rise to stagnation in environmental learning. Raisa states: 525 530

When environmental sensitivity is low, the ability to identify causes of natural damage is also getting weaker despite the fact that they know it may be from iPad or Android tablet. As a result, as individuals, they only become spectators, not 'game changers'. We need them to be agents. For that, we need some kind of activity and action that can fight objects that weaken them directly and indirectly. 535

As Raisa elaborated above, the advent of mobile technology has shifted children's modes of interaction, from direct participation to knowledge mediated by mobile devices. Mobile device-based learning, in her opinion, would entrap children into a comfort zone that discourages real conversations about other interests. Geist (2011) avows that this is a modern phenomenon permeated by the extensive use of pad technology. 540

## Discussion and conclusion

The narratives described above reveal the trajectory of the formation of heterodox beliefs among five urban environmental activists in Bandung City and illustrate how these beliefs led them to create a trailblazing environmental movement contemporaneous with others and in opposition to the mainstream orthodoxy. Their subjectivity is situated in the material conditions of Bandung City, following the implementation of neoliberal policy and urban decentralization in Indonesia. The development of a consolidated ecological habitus among these activists, which was formed through their cultural capital and access to environmental knowledge and personal experiences of learning about nature, has given rise to great strength and a belief that policy changes that undermine the environment should be resisted through non-formal environmental education. It is clear that, as Bandung locals, these activists are disturbed by the rise of neoliberalism and its products and the risk that this poses for children's engagement with the natural environment. 545 550 555



The development of massive hotel infrastructure as a source of revenue for Bandung City, which was a result of Indonesia's decentralization policy, ignited the activists' passion and concern for nature. Their lived experiences of Bandung's green identity in the past were critical to the birth of an alternative environmental movement. As Smetana and Metzger (2005) explore, childhood experiences of performing outdoor activities, such as tree planting, playing in the zoo, mountaineering, and conserving nature, robustly enrich individual responsibility toward the natural surroundings. The activists experienced a "moment of crisis", as observed in their anger toward the failure of the municipal government to engage in advocacy for the environment. As an environmentally-conscious educated group, these activists go against the development orthodoxy of the Bandung government, which threatens the future of the natural environment.

Various formal education models have emerged that integrate environmental programmes, but these should be understood as products of neoliberalism. For example, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry has implemented the Adiwiyata inter-school program and environmental competition schemes. However, this programme is designed to improve schools' prestige rather than conserve the natural environment in the long run or utilize environmental space as a learning space (Tanu & Parker, 2018). The activists interviewed for this study remain skeptical toward these kinds of programmatic, government-led environmental actions. In their view, failures in sustaining the long-term impacts of environmental programmes due to the fact that the programmatic environment in formal education does not promote pro-environment attitudes in students' everyday lives. It also illuminates the fact that a school-engaged environment has not been prepared well for students and schools to deal with the complexity of environmental problems through school-engaged environmentalism. In revealing their heterodoxic beliefs, the activists demonstrated deep concern over consistent dissolutions of educational institutions at the regional level in Indonesia. Thus, FoC is the manifestation of a productive counter-response to the failure of formal education to teach children about the value of nature.

Critically, the activists' narratives revealed that urban neoliberalism is inherently a pedagogical space for activists to materialize resistance. The way that neoliberalism permeates in the city might be unbeknownst to lay people or non-ideological people. Yet, it subtly filters through the logic of governance and development and promotes a lifestyle that is disconnected from the environment. Havins said that these activists' presence in Bandung is a catharsis for the absence of critical thought within urban society.

It is apparent that neoliberalism has been embedded in the mundane interactions between everyday people and is normalized in market transactions. Neoliberalism is the established orthodoxy, is dominant in the development discourse, and is further promoted by the mass media, who are notable agents of development projects. The presence of activists who are fully conscious of the environmental effects of neoliberalism needs to be appreciated (Terriquez & Kwon, 2015; White & Mistry, 2016; Youniss et al., 1997). Their emergence and the creation of this environmental education movement are "minoritarian ethic assemblages" (Yu, 2013, p.197), which have the capacity to create new, green ethical standards that can slowly defeat neoliberalism itself.

Bourdieu's concept of heterodoxy provides a rich theoretical framework in cultural and social geography that facilitates the critical exploration of the impact of urban development on activists' subjectivities. An important reflection on their lived experience



indicates that the urban environment has experienced symbolic violence through the development and privatization of urban spatial planning and a consumerist lifestyle. In the same vein, when the extent of the impact had become entrenched and already too difficult to reconcile, the formal environmental education launched by the government was obviously unable to inculcate pro-environmental behavior in citizens. Instead, it has only been used to contest social status between school institutions. These conditions have become engrained in the country for the long term. The activists in the present article saw this as an impediment to environmental management and characteristic of the government's thinking as a policymaker. In contrast, FoC's for children has intensified in Bandung as a form of grassroots resistance to the lame reasons intensified in Bandung as a form of grassroots resistance to the lame reasons for modernization in Indonesia. Methodology-wise, Chawla's SLE permitted researchers to navigate activists' previous experiences of enjoying nature during their childhood through their attachment to place. In addition, this method also enabled us to illustrate activists' politico-environmental values and how they shape their knowledge and resistance to urban development – something that is fundamental to the emergence of heterodoxy. As we are now living in **apocalyptic** age where environmental destruction is so immense and omnipresent, some researches delving deeper on activist's heterodox belief and their eco-anxieties would be instrumental for making sense of the historical trajectories of the destruction itself.

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