

**Framing children's citizenship: exploring the space of children's claims for social justice using Nancy Fraser's conception of representation**

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**Abstract**

This paper seeks to contribute to a dynamic understanding of the space of children's citizenship by exploring perspectives generated by children age 5-13 in two countries in the light of Nancy Fraser's (2008) theory of representation. To ensure that understandings of the spaces of children's citizenship are guided by the views of children themselves, the paper reports findings from six Children's Research Groups who, in a process inspired by Freire (1973), acted and reflected on their understandings of citizenship using participatory methods that they created. The spaces they describe in their data were analysed drawing on Fraser's theories for reframing claims to social justice. This synthesis of empirical research and political theory suggests the need to supplement Fraser's theory of representation with more diffuse understandings of how influence occurs in relational spaces. The dynamic spaces of children's citizenship can then be conceived of as framed by a concern for social justice that children identify and deepened by exploring the way in which relationships, institutions and networks influence the achievement of this claim over time, for different social groups. This approach enables children's citizenship to be located simultaneously in children's lived practices, in local and in global distributions of actions, attitudes and resources.

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Children have a contradictory relationship with citizenship, reflecting the contested nature of the concept of citizenship and the social position of childhood. Whilst the United Nations

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Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) confers on children the right to a nationality and to have their views heard in matters that affect them, children are denied the full rights of citizenship at the level of the nation state (Cohen 2005). Children are seen as future citizens, in need of education in order to achieve the competences necessary for entitlement to citizenship (Cockburn 1998, Moosa Mitha 2005, Lister 2007). However, the lines between adult and child competences cannot be easily drawn, as both children's and adults' capacities develop with experience and learning (Mayall 2002) and aspects of children's dependence are enforced by social regulation (Cockburn 1998). Despite their exclusion from the full status of citizenship, children can be seen as actual citizens in the sense that they live practices of citizenship in their everyday worlds, they exercise rights and responsibilities and they are social actors participating in communities (Jans 2004, Lister 2007).

Conceiving of children's citizenship of as a practice in daily lived experience can focus attention on local spaces, but wider spaces are also relevant. Children practice aspects of citizenship, negotiating social interdependence by claiming, contesting and achieving distributions of rights, responsibilities and statuses in spaces such as homes, schools, communities and collectivities (Jans 2004). Bosco (2010:387) suggests that children's activities within their families and communities should be seen as related to 'dynamic politics that often play out at multiple scales simultaneously'.

This paper aims to contribute to a dynamic understanding of the space of children's citizenship by exploring children's descriptions of the spaces in which they practice components of citizenship. I draw on research with six Children's Research Groups, in France and Wales, who reflected on citizenship as a lived practice. They explored

components of citizenship, namely rights, responsibilities/duties, respect/equality/status, participation and membership (Delanty 2000, Lister 2007), in the places of their everyday experiences. They identified aspirations for the kinds of citizenship they would like to achieve. Some groups also took action to try to achieve their claims to social justice in local and international arenas. The groups' explorations, descriptions, and actions revealed the folded and crumpled nature of the space and offers insight which can expand existing understandings of where children's citizenship is located.

In this paper I argue that Nancy Fraser's (2008) work *Scales of Justice* offers a useful framework for exploring the overlapping places in which children described experiences of and aspirations for citizenship. Fraser (2008) has added the idea of political representation to her theory of justice, which was previously based on two elements: recognition and redistribution (Fraser 2001). Her previous work has informed recent developments in citizenship studies (e.g. Kershaw 2010) and her focus on representation is new and significant contribution to political theory (Colish 2009, Owen 2012).

In the sections below I identify current spatial understandings of children's citizenship and relate these to citizenship theory. I outline Fraser's propositions on how questions of social justice should be framed. I give a brief account of the research process with the six Children's Research Groups and apply Fraser's Framework to their findings, revealing some of the tensions in her approach. I then suggest some ways in which Fraser's theory could be reinforced by aspects of citizenship theory, to enable children's concerns for social justice to set the frames for further explorations of dynamics of influence within the spaces of children's citizenship.

### **Existing understandings of children's citizenship**

As members of marginalized groups tend to be excluded from the formal spaces of citizenship, some theorists argue that citizenship can be located in spaces of lived experience. Yuval-Davis (1997) suggested, for example, that citizenship occurs in collectivities and interpersonal relationships. Echoing this Cockburn (2007), drawing on Ribbens et al. (2002), notes that children's citizenship might be seen as located in:

groups of collectivities rather than homogenised common bonds or a homogeneous representation of public opinion... intermediate spaces between the public and the private where private based concerns extends [sic] into political action... the ways the public world ascribes relationships within the private sphere. (Cockburn 2007: 454)

Locating children's citizenship in spaces of daily lived experience is useful, but this provides only a partial picture. Children are citizens in lived spaces, such as communities, groups, schools and families (Liebel 2008, Lister 2007, Jans 2004). Children's confinement to such localities can be seen as a form of control and spatial marginalization, based on conceptions of childhood and an ideology of protection or deviance (Cockburn 2007). Acknowledging that children are citizenship in the spaces they are confined to challenges assumptions about the status of childhood by recognising that children are 'young people with strengths and competencies' making social contributions (Neale 2004, p. 8). Children do not, however, live only in separate or localized social spaces (Uprichard 2010). Children are within every social system and do not live in a private or 'distinctive world of childhood', separate from the adult world (James et al. 1998: 100). Whilst spatial marginalization and lack of resources makes global events rare, some children take citizenship action at an international level through attending and reporting to the United Nations' Committee on the Rights of the Child (Ennew 2008).

Rather than a local focus, a multi-dimensional approach which acknowledges citizenship as practiced across developed structures and institutions, spreading through different 'scales' of social space and changing with territorial mobility (Desforges *et al.* 2005), is therefore a useful starting point for exploring children's citizenship. Developed structures include governmental and institutional layers of region, nation, territorial state, Europe and possibly the world (Soysal 1994). When seen to spread across different scales, inclusion in citizenship encompasses collectivities (Yuval Davies 1997), families and the intimate spaces of private lives (Plummer 2001), and the body (Ramussen and Brown 2006).

A multi-scalar approach to citizenship is particularly suitable for exploring the citizenship of members of marginalised groups, because it enables a focus on citizenship as something that is practiced, claimed and built (Conway 2004). Citizenship can then be seen in practices of caring for others, the self and the world (Kershaw 2010) and claiming rights through participation in social or global movements (Conway 2004, Isin & Neilsen 2008). Citizenship may also be seen in the personal practices of making decisions, because these too are spaces of resistance and rights claiming (Plummer 2001). Citizenship may then relate to practices between individuals as well as between individuals and the state.

Existing theory on children's citizenship goes some way towards identifying the importance of a relational and multidimensional approach. Moosa Mitha (2005) and Lister (2007) note that understanding children's citizenship as a relation and lived practice is key. There is, however, little empirical research with children that explores the spaces which they define as

relevant to citizenship. A more 'explicitly spatial analysis of citizenship', that seeks to 'understand the arenas in which struggles, challenges and conflicts and more radical forms of citizenship occur' (Weller 2007:171), is therefore needed.

Existing empirical research tends to test young people's knowledge about citizenship (Osler & Starkey 2006), and only a few international research projects invite younger children (aged under 13) to define their experiences of and aspirations for citizenship (Taylor & Smith 2009). For example, research with children in New Zealand (Taylor et al., 2008) concluded that children's definitions of what made people members of citizenship included issues of length of residence, family bonds of birth, marriage or parenthood; and participation in the privileges of citizenship. These links may reflect the research design, which suggested citizenship should be equated with national belonging (Taylor et al 2008, p. 197). Despite the national frame of citizenship implied by this approach, some children in this research still called for citizenship to be understood as also existing in their home contexts, although this may involve a different kind of citizenship, as children do have rights at home (Taylor et al 2008, p. 203).

Where place of birth is not taken as the starting point of discussions, research with older young people shows they tend to identify multiple spaces of citizenship membership. Some young people in Europe have at least a partial sense of European identity alongside their national identity (Jamieson 2005). National and local identities may be significant to some, but the relative importance of these layers of belonging continues to vary between different children and young people and different countries (Eyde 2002). Links with the UK, smaller nations and cities can be important (Osler & Starkey 2003) and recent research in China

argues young people construct parallel senses of belonging to global, national, and local communities (Pan 2011). However, some young people may not have a feeling of inclusion, for example in wider community settings, as they feel marginalised, targeted and left out, due to age based discrimination (Hart 2009, Weller 2007).

Existing understandings of children's citizenship, drawn from theoretical and empirical research, indicate that a dynamic relational understanding of space would be more appropriate than a localised focus when exploring the location of children's citizenship. However, political institutions remain important sites for conferring inclusion, rights and responsibilities; and for struggles to achieve these, using political, civil and legal pressure (Conway 2004). To achieve change, citizenship claims must be linked to political power over the economic and social structures which effect their achievement (Isin & Turner 2007). Fraser's (2008) work on representation may therefore be a useful addition to theorising on children's citizenship.

### **Fraser, Representation and Framing**

Fraser (2008) has added representation to her theory of justice. In her previous work (e.g. Fraser 2001) she defined justice as 'parity of participation' in social life, noting that recognition and redistribution were needed to dismantle the injustice of institutionalised cultural and economic barriers that prevent some people from participating in social life as peers. Representation refers to a third way of achieving justice, through overcoming political barriers to 'parity of participation'. Representation is necessary, she states, as discussions of cultural and economic injustice should not be separated from discussions of political boundary setting, or framing. Fraser argues political injustices of framing arise in three forms: ordinary political misrepresentation and two aspects of misframing.

Ordinary political misrepresentation occurs when the rules of political representation in a given political community, deny parity of participation to some of those who are nominally included. She gives the example of different types of electoral systems, arguing first past the post, single member constituencies may be seen to deny parity of participation to minorities who are spread across multiple constituencies. Ordinary political representation was not discussed in the empirical research I draw on below; therefore I do not explore it fully here. However, this issue of ordinary political representation in situations where children are nominally recognized as included remains relevant to children's citizenship. Putatively representative structures for children, such as school councils and youth forums, can be far from representative, especially where class representatives are selected by the teacher rather than pupils.

Turning to misframing, the first aspect of this concerns the definition of who count as members of a political community. Misframing occurs when some people are unjustly excluded from 'the opportunity to participate at all' in a given political community (Fraser 2008, p.19). Those who suffer misframing, Fraser suggests, 'may become objects of charity or benevolence... they become non-persons with respect to justice' (2008, p. 20). Such misframing can be seen in the case of children, where they are not recognized as rights holders even in the spaces of their daily lives, for example where rights about children's schooling are given to their parents who are expected to act benevolently (for examples of this see Cohen 2005).

The second aspect of misframing occurs when the boundary of a political community is wrongly drawn, when political spaces are divided in such a way that claims for justice cannot effectively be addressed at those institutions whose actions affect the achievement of justice. The current dominant model of political frame is what Fraser terms Keynesian-Westphalian, where the subject is a citizen of a territorial state. She argues that assuming this political boundary is no longer sufficient, as:

*“the idea of national economy is increasingly notional ... questions of recognition ... regularly transgress national boundaries ... questions of representation... [are] made outside the precincts of territorially based government” (Fraser 2009: 31)*

She suggests that imposing Keynesian-Westphalian boundaries protects some institutions, which have a negative impact on social justice, from claims which might be made on them. Continuing with the example of schools, wrongly drawn boundaries might be seen, for example, if children are seen as citizens in schools and their claims making about education can only be made through a school council. The school’s council is likely to be powerless to address issues of resources and it might be more appropriate to frame children’s claims for resources in schools in way that encompass the global financial markets which affect levels of public sector finance.

Fraser proposes representation as a solution to misframing. Claims for justice may be misframed in relation to ‘who’ because the claimants are not included as subjects of justice in a given bounded political space. Claims for justice may also be misframed in relation to ‘where’ because claims are addressed only to a bounded political space that is powerless to affect change. Claims for justice, then, should not be judged in relation to current

assumptions of who is a subject of justice in a given political territory. Rather, the boundaries of existing defined political space should be contested.

Representation would start by considering what matters should be seen as issues of justice, how these issues are influenced across space, and then determining who is affected by these issues of justice. The challenge in reframing therefore becomes to understand *how* institutions and structures operate to support or constrain social justice, in relation to a given issue. This requires ‘complex political judgments, which combine empirically informed normative reflection with historical interpretation and social theorizing’ (2008:40). Conceptions of how institutions and structures influence patterns of advantage and disadvantage are then normative, not simply statements of fact. Fraser advocates opening the political and epistemic nature of how patterns of influence occur to public debate and scrutiny (2008:42).

Whilst Fraser’s account of representation and misframing has been heralded by some as a significant contribution to political theorizing (Colish 2009, Owen 2012), some problems have however been identified. Israel (2010) points out that Fraser extends justice over ever greater scales, transnationally, obscuring the significance of subnational contexts and ignoring existing theories that explore the politics of scale. Dean (2010) similarly argues that Fraser fails to build on existing knowledge on framing from cognitive linguistics, sociology, or social movement theory.

As I explore in the sections below, drawing on empirical research with children complements Fraser’s theory, as it focuses attention on a range of scales at which issues of social justice are

identifiable and through which influence occurs. Fraser's approach, applied to children, encourages attentiveness to what children identify as matters of justice. This can ensure that they are recognized as relevant subjects of justice in relation to a wide variety of issues, not just standardly defined children's matters.

## **Children's perspectives on the spaces of citizenship**

### ***The research process***

To address the gaps in existing theory the research explored below developed understandings of all aspects of citizenship with six groups of children, aged 5-13. The research is therefore a snapshot of the perspectives of particular children at given moment in their lives, but within these limits and the confines of the resources available to fund the research, my aim was to contribute to a more inclusive definition of children's citizenship. Recognising that insiders and outsiders have different perspectives on citizenship (Lister et al. 2003), the research invited participation of groups of 'outsider' children living in areas among those experiencing the most significant levels of poverty in two countries, Wales and France. The choice of these countries was based on the language skills of the researcher (in English and French) and the wish to gather perspectives from children who may be exposed to different theoretical traditions on citizenship. The participants in Wales were the Disabled Children, Gypsy Travellers, and Young Carers groups and in France they were Refugee, Looked After and Minority Ethnic groups<sup>2</sup>. Of the 55 children 51% lived in Wales and 49% in France; 65% were girls and 35% were boys.

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<sup>2</sup> The names Refugee, Gypsy Travellers, Young Carers and Disabled Children are used because the children used these terms and/or discussed these experiences with pride. The terms 'Looked After Group' and 'Minority Ethnic Group' are used, in the absence of any clear description of common identity on the part of the children, to ascribe an identity to the group, but not to the children in it. The Looked After group were all living

The six groups generated qualitative data through participatory reflective action that drew on the methodologies of *Conscientização* (Freire 1973). This approach was adopted to ensure groups had the time and space to reflect upon and dialogue with their peers about the complex concept citizenship. Groups met between four and six times and were initially given generative words on children's definitions on the different components of citizenship (as defined by Delanty 2000, Lister 2007). These words were drawn from the existing research, reviewed above, in English and in French. The groups explored their own experiences and meanings related to these generative words employing participatory methods and ethics (e.g. Alderson 2005; Cook & Hess 2007). After the first session, each group reviewed their data from the previous session and decided which areas to focus on, what aspects of their citizenship experiences they would like to change and what action could be taken to achieve these aspirations. To do this exploration and reflection they developed their own methods, these included focus groups facilitated by games, video and photo tours, peer interviewing.

Following the fieldwork, the groups' data was analysed using a grounded approach to critical realist theory building (Oliver 2011), which involved developing a meta theory by exploring existing accounts and the deficiencies in these (Cruickshank 2003). In this paper I detail only the understandings which arose from exploring their data by asking the question 'Where is children's citizenship?' and synthesizing this understanding with ideas on representation and framing, provided by Nancy Fraser.

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in a children's home, with differing levels of contact with their birth families. The Refugee group members had not been granted legal refugee status at the start of the research and were in a process of asylum seeking. During the research some group members' statuses changed.

### *Applying Fraser to explore the spaces of Children's Citizenship*

The Children's Research Group members developed 400 different claims to social justice, that is, descriptions of the rights, responsibilities, respect and participation which formed their experiences and aspirations for citizenship. These lived citizenship claims were expressed in very concrete terms related to specific distributions of attitudes, actions and resources which they wanted to achieve. At the last or penultimate group meeting, some members of each group also took part in a map making exercise I introduced, through which they reflected on who should share the aspects of citizenship they had identified in their research.

Fraser's structure offers three questions, which I address in the sub-sections below. These questions facilitate exploration of the way the Children's Research Groups' lived citizenship claims were framed. What issues are matters of social justice? How does influence over these issues occur? Who are relevant subjects of justice?

#### *What issues are matters of social justice?*

There was some commonality and some difference in the sorts of claims to social justice members of different groups identified, and in what they sought to change. All groups generated claims related to the themes of education, play and leisure, family life, basic standard of living, safety, caring, association and participation. These included the right to teachers who show respect, the right to have a family, friends and love and not be hit, the right to food and to learn, and the right to make choices related to school and food.

These claims related to their immediate daily experience, but at the same time are connected to international human rights instruments as they mirror aspects of the UNCRC. The dynamic nature of the spaces of their citizenship was evident when my attempts failed to categorise individual social justice claims according to one physical locations or governance structures such as home, school, group, locality, region/small nation, state, super state and world. For example, the Looked After groups who said children should 'Do writing, maths, work and go swimming'. These activities took place at school and in community facilities.

Responsibilities to do writing, maths and work also extended into the children's home as children spent some time there fulfilling their homework obligations. The amount of homework children did could be seen as related to expectations placed upon them by individuals in personal relationships as well as national and even international policy.

Some groups explored social justice claims that were not touched upon by other groups, but which could again be linked to the UNCRC. Discrimination and cultural differences were mentioned most by the Gypsy Traveller group. Two groups referred to special help for disabled children and two others talked about good alternative home life. Two groups raised the issue of protection from exploitative paid and unpaid work. Only the Refugee group mentioned special help for refugees.

Some claims to social justice fitted less directly with the UNCRC, but again related to local and global concerns, such as national and international politics and freedom of movement.

Two groups in France discussed issues like who should be the national President, how countries should relate to each other, the need to end wars and to prevent pollution. For example, one group in France wanted to change the president so that he gave more money to people who were poor and disabled. Groups in both France and Wales identified issues

related to freedom of movement in such diverse claims to social justice as the right to travel to school on a bicycle and the right to leave a refugee reception centre.

Issues identified by group members as matters of social justice did not relate only to their direct personal experiences, but were also affected by contact with others and ideas acquired through relationships, education and television. For example, the Minority Ethnic claim for ‘The right to have parents’ was conceived of for someone not in their research group, namely a friend from Africa who has been adopted and who does not get to see her parents. A television report appeared to prompt two members of the group to talk about homelessness. Discussions of the EU in one school appeared to lead to some concerns with relationships between different nation states.

Issues of social justice that concerned the Children’s Research Group members were, then, not just those related to localised spaces or personal experiences. Many of their concerns did arise from their lived experiences in local spaces, but these concerns might simultaneously relate to remote spaces through connections established in interpersonal relationships, through the media or education and through the framework of international human rights instruments and governance.

### *How influence occurs*

The Children’s Research Groups explicitly identified some ways in which influence over their social justice claims occurred. They lobbied people and organisations who they felt had influence over their claims, in local settings, in more remote governance structures, and in international arenas. For example, the research report from the Minority Ethnic group was

presented to the homework club management committee to lobby for more opportunities for play. The Looked After group asked for changes in the relational space of staff actions in the children's home. The Young Carer research report was used to lobby for a homework pass scheme in schools across two local authorities. The Gypsy Traveller group gave their research report to a young Gypsy Traveller representative who then presented it to an MEP. The Young Carers presented the findings of their research at an international academic conference.

Despite these examples of action, and understandably given our time constraints, the Children's Research Groups members did not explore how all influence over their citizenship claims occurred, but influence of physically present actors was sometimes explicit in the groups' discussions. For instance, some Looked After group members described various actors influencing the achievement of what they termed 'the right to Love, friends and friendship'. Some of the actors they named as enabling the achievement of this claim to justice included themselves, family members, other children who were residents at their children's home. At times this claim was also influenced through relatively formal structured patterns of behaviour. This can be seen in the actions of children and staff in the children's home, such as videos recording key workers hugging children to say goodbye and a rota on the kitchen wall, which timetabled which children should do what chores and when. In other data, children from all groups also describe schools in this way, where there are organised patterns of activity and expectations, around responsibilities to work and help tidy classrooms.

Sometimes research group members also identified more remote influence that spread across national and international boundaries. When a Minority Ethnic group wanted to change the President so that he would give certain people more money, she named a national actor who she saw as able to influence the distribution of financial resources. Members of two groups talked about influencing the distribution of resources themselves, enabling their claim for there to be food and toys for everyone in the world, by raising money locally and distributing it internationally through charities.

Working outwards from the Children's Research Groups data it was also possible to identify influence which the groups do not identify, but which could be plausible explanations of mechanisms observable in their data. This provides other avenues for further understanding where citizenship can be claimed. For example, the Looked After group made a claim to both the right to return home to their parents and the right to go home every, or every other, weekend. Mechanisms that influence whether children achieve these rights operate through social relationships with family members and social workers, within institutional, local authority and national rules on children's care; and via networks of welfare services. Some of these rules will also be affected by mechanisms like national and international law, policy and lobbying. Global international institutions are, for instance, trying to exert influence on national laws and rules in France, for instance the UN committee on the Rights of the Child, concluding observations suggest some children's access to the claim to return home to their parents may then be affected by levels of parental income (CRC/C/FRA/CO/4: 14). This in turn may be seen as related to availability of jobs and the influence of national and international economic systems.

Children themselves can therefore be seen as influencing the achievement of their claims to social justice. Their claims were also influenced by the actions, attitudes and distribution of resources by their family members, by workers and management committees, by policy makers and politicians, and by national and international networks of regulation and governance.

*Who are relevant subjects of justice?*

The only term that all the research groups used was to describe who should be included in the citizenship claims they had defined was 'The World'. Indeed, all except the Looked After group gave at least half their citizenship claims to everyone in the world. Despite my suggestions of such spaces in the map-making exercise, there was very little use of physical spaces or governance structures such as Europe, nation or local areas, homes or schools. On the occasions when groups they used these categories to distinguish between people, their judgements appeared to relate to feelings of connection with others, knowledge of other places and perceptions of need in certain places. For example, children from certain countries were seen by some group members as more likely to be hit, or to not have adequate housing.

More commonly than these distinctions based on physical spaces, some group members developed other categories of inclusion that informed their allocation of citizenship, according to these socio-spatial factors (Barker & Weller 2003). These socio-spatial understandings of 'who' were largely generated after I finished the fieldwork in Wales, as the first group in France challenged my focus on physical spaces and governance structures. Their allocation of rights and responsibilities to different groups indicate the ways in which

they see people as linked to each other, related to conceptions of age based capacity, gender, absence or presence of resources and obligation.

Making age based distinctions; some group members saw certain rights and responsibilities as suitable for younger people, particularly children, whereas, others were for older people, though not necessarily adults. For example, three groups gave children responsibilities to behave, listen and do school work. Only Minority Ethnic group members allocated particular rights only to adults, namely the right to be respected. Indeed, even this was overturned when the group reviewed their work the following week. Members of two groups made distinctions according different ages regarding how the right to play (UNCRC Article 31) should be achieved. Looked After group members gave rights specifically to children, to draw, paint and decide what to put on bedroom walls. Refugee group members made distinctions between children and young people of different ages, for example saying that ‘little ones’ should not have the right to go skiing as they cannot ski. There was, therefore, no support for all children to be excluded from any aspect of the justice claims they discussed, but some support for some age specific claims within childhood and age based exclusions, informed by assumptions about capacity.

Gender was occasionally used as basis for some distinctions; some rights and responsibilities were seen as ‘for girls’ and others ‘for boys’, but there were disagreements about this. In the Gypsy Traveller group, some children talked about girls having particular responsibilities for housework, but some boys also shared these responsibilities. In the Refugee group girls were given extra responsibilities and their rights, for example to have a boyfriend, were

constrained. However, two girls in this group, aged six and seven, at times disputed the judgements of the 13-year-old boy, about both age and gender.

Members of three groups sometimes gave resource holders further rights or responsibilities. For example, some members of the Looked After group allocated the right to family and friends to ‘those who had these relationships’; the right to gifts from parents and drums to ‘those who have the money to buy them’; the right to draw and paint to ‘those who know how’; the right to not speak and to go home at weekends to ‘those who are allowed/have the right [ceux qui ont le droit]’. These distinctions appear to reflect some children’s experience of not accessing rights, because they live in relatively disadvantaged social position in relation to access to resources (such as money, knowledge and freedom).

Members of three groups at times allocated citizenship claims according to absences of resources. For example, one child in the Looked After group, wanted toys to go to those who have none. Further, some of the occasional uses of place to allocate rights apparently also related to resources, such as when members of the Gypsy Traveller group gave people living on traveller sites the right to live without rats. Their explanation suggests this should be seen as an allocation of rights according to an absence of appropriate resources in certain places, because, they explained, some official council-provided traveller sites were places without appropriate health and safety provisions.

The idea that rights are distributed according to resources may be interpreted as a child’s confusion between whether something is a right or a privilege. However, liberal citizenship

can be seen to operate in this way, making rights available to those who have the resources or liberty to access and enact them. Similarly, the idea that rights, for example to well-paid jobs, are deserved by those who have knowledge, is implicit in education and social systems based on principles of meritocracy. I am therefore suggesting that some looked after children in this research correctly identified that, in lived experience, access to rights can be a privilege that only some people enjoy. This is in contrast to previous research which asserts that some looked after children misconstrue rights as privileges (Peterson-Badali et al. 2008, p. 110).

Sometimes, different social-spatial distinctions between different subjects of justice overlapped. Some resources holders were given responsibilities related to their knowledge or capacity that appeared to relate to age. For example, the Refugee group gave children the responsibility of speaking French for their parents. That children took on this role may be related to a capacity that lessens with age (the ability to learn further languages) or a capacity related to experience (of being immersed in a further language in a full time educational setting). Either of these cases would challenge dominant understandings of competence increasing with age.

In sum, the Children's Research Groups most frequently suggested that the relevant 'who' of their justice claims was 'everyone in the world'. Sometimes group members' views challenged each other and either repeated or refuted existing established categories of inclusion and exclusion that are associated with citizenship, particular with reference to age, gender and access to resources.

## **Discussion**

The Children's Research Group members debated, rather than uniformly accepting, dominant definitions of 'who'. At different times they either reinforced or challenged dominant conceptions of childhood and gender. This confirms Fraser's suggestion that there is a need to generate and contest claims through democratic debate that includes the points of view of the disadvantaged (2008: 78), in a form of 'good enough deliberation' (Fraser 2008, p. 45). Fraser acknowledges that current spaces for hearing competing claims are inherently flawed, being the product of already existing patterns of disadvantage which entail certain groups having greater opportunities to express justice claims in public arenas. However, she suggests that existing structures are the only place we have from which to start.

That the Children's Research Groups' differentiated ideas of 'who' relate to different structural positions confirms the relevance of Fraser's 'all-affected principle' (2008, p. 24). In this she argued that 'what turns a collection of people into fellow subjects of justice is not geographical proximity, but their co-imbrication in a common structural or institutional framework, which sets the ground rules that govern their social interactions, thereby shaping their respective life possibilities in patterns of advantage and disadvantage' (Fraser 2008, p. 24). Differences in children's citizenship may not, then, relate to distinctions between children as opposed to adults, but rather to overlapping socio-spatial locations in relations to structured patterns of advantage and disadvantage, including perceptions of place, need, age, capacity, gender, privilege or feelings of connection.

However, Fraser revised her 'all-affected principle' (2008:24), to become an 'all subjected principle' (2008 p 65), in which she argues that 'fellow subjects of justice' are created by their 'joint subjection to a structure of governance that sets the ground rules that govern their

interaction', which encompasses 'relations to powers of various types', not only states but also 'non-state agencies that generate enforceable rules that structure important swathes of social interaction' (2008, p. 65). In this formulation Fraser rejects the idea that justice should be limited to those who share a citizenship status or nationality. She also (2008, p. 64) abandons her all-affected principle as not sufficiently robust because, when social life is understood as a relational pattern of interdependence, virtually everyone can be seen to be affected by everything.

Fraser's 'all-subjected principle' is difficult to apply to the Children's Research Group's claims to social justice because the relationships of power which influence children's access to the social justice are diverse. Group members at times accessed their claims to social justice through their own agency, and through the actions of other individuals. Some claims to social justice could be subject to the enforceable rules of agencies, operating through institutions like children's homes, social welfare networks and national and international policy frameworks. The achievement of other claims to social justice may also be influenced by bodies without powers of enforcement (like the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child) or powerful structures like national and international economies, not operating exclusively through enforceable laws. This problem with Fraser's all-subjected principle has already raised 'a number of questions', about types of governance, the nature of political spaces and articulations of power in activism in less structured spaces (Dean 2010, p. 303).

To encompass the more dynamic spaces described in this empirical research with children, Fraser's framework could be complemented by drawing on further theory. Political power over structures is not necessarily contained within a nation state but in local and global

practices and contingencies (Ong 2006). Places can be seen as process (Urry 2000) which are both spatial and relational, that is constructions of ‘social relationships stretched over space’ and time (Allen et al. 2011: 143). Urry (2000), using a metaphor introduced by Castells (1996), also suggests that virtual communicative spaces can be described as networks, which are dynamic open structures through which people and organisations operate and along which people, information, images, money and waste flow. Any particular place is then a coming together of the physical or psychological proximity of social relationships, networks and presence of various kinds of objects or activities (Urry 2000:140) in any particular time.

When the spaces in which children experience and claim citizenship are seen as social relationships stretched over processes, networks, flows and time, the interpersonal nature of the spaces that influence their justice claims is confirmed. It becomes less relevant to address their claims for social justice to governance structure of the kind Fraser identifies, however, her call to identify ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘who’ is useful.

When children define their claims to citizenship, these may be seen as the ‘what’ of social justice (Fraser 2008). These claims can also be seen to define a space or frame of social justice. This frame can then be given depth by exploring ‘how’ influence occurs related to a claim, through social relationships stretched over processes, networks, flows and time including through governance structures. Further, which children are relevant ‘who’, in relation to this framed claim, could be explored with reference to debates on differentiated understanding of children’s social positions, for example recognising differences related to conceptions of age, gender, access to resources. Exploration of how different social groups are differentially affected or subjected to governance within the space of a given claim may

also lead to a deeper understanding of the frame, by including further relevant relationships, networks and flows. As this process is repeated, with regard to different claims to social justice, a picture of where children's citizenship may be located appears as a series of overlapping frames.

This approach foregrounds a definition of the spaces of children's citizenship in children's concerns for social justice, balancing an understanding of children's agency and competence with acknowledgement of structural difference. For example, a claim to social justice such as 'more resources at school', may be taken as a frame of children's citizenship. Understanding of this frame would be deepened by exploring, *inter alia*, the multiple dimensions of actions by children, parents and teacher, all of whom may contribute resources towards achieving this claim; networks of policy making and flows of money that emanate from structures of governance; and global financial regulation and markets that affect the influx of tax revenue and priorities for government spending.

Framing children's citizenship in relation to their claims to social justice would not limit children's citizenship to the spaces associated with childhood; rather it could help understand the dynamic relevance to children of spaces of lived experience and wider social issues. Issues such as 'more resources for school' are simultaneously issues of global finance. Further, children make claims to social justice, such as 'ending wars' that may be seen as issues of international relations, but which touch some children in their everyday lives, for instance they may be soldiers, victims of war, anti-war campaigners, children of soldiers; they may also suffer an absence of resources in their schools because available government finance has been directed towards military budgets.

Children can then be seen to create themselves as citizens within the spaces defined by their claims to social justice. Their citizenship of these spaces does not rely on structures of governance acknowledging them as subject. Rather they enact themselves as citizens through their actions such as claiming and contesting social justice and making social contributions to relationships of social interdependence.

## **Conclusion**

Fraser's proposal (2008:73) that relevant frames of justice be debated by starting from hearing the claims for justice generated by the disadvantaged, rather than assuming existing boundaries of any given political territory, remains crucial. Her theory also draws attention to the need to explore how influence over issues of social justice occurs.

Children are key actors who influence the achievement of social justice. Their social justice claims are also affected by diffuse spaces of relational influences not just structures of governance with enforceable rules. Children's experience of, agency in and concerns for social justice can be seen to extend across relational spaces. These spaces can be seen as simultaneously covering multiple scales, and made up of processes flowing through networks and spread over space and time. Citizenship may be regulated by national and regional governments, but it is lived in spaces of everyday life. Understanding 'how' children's claims to justice are influenced requires framing claims to justice to spans relationships, institutions and networks.

Locating children's citizenship in overlapping domains of concern and contestation requires looking first at children's descriptions of 'what?', then 'how?' and 'who?' (Fraser 2008). Through asking questions such as these, the spaces in which children's citizenship is enacted, claimed and contested may be rearticulated as deep and dynamic frames. This may enable us to move beyond associating children's citizenship with structurally limited zones of experience or even tiers of governance. Combining a micro and macro approach, children's claims for social justice may thereby more successfully be directed towards all avenues that have potential for achieving their aspirations for citizenship. More research is however needed to understand the diffuse ways in which power operates within such spaces.

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