‘Not every superhero wears a cape’

Children’s navigations in a context of deprivation and vulnerability in the municipalities of Tshwane and Ethekwini (South Africa).

Picture made by author during fieldwork

Master’s thesis
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After months of preparation, conducting field research in South Africa and analysing data, the final product is there: the thesis for my Master’s in Social and Cultural Anthropology. This period can be described as very interesting and challenging at the same time, but I am truly glad and proud I made this intense journey.

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Enjoy reading my thesis.

Jolanda IJzerman
Executive summary

Many children who grow up in the economically deprived municipalities of Tshwane and Ethekwini in South Africa, are labelled as ‘vulnerable’ by policy makers. This constructed concept is based on specific criteria, such as the children’s poverty level. However, children who have this label, also move within this environment, shape it and try to tackle the problems they encounter. This raised the following questions: ‘how is vulnerability defined by policy makers?’, ‘What do the children themselves perceive to be necessities in their lives?’ and ‘How do they make an active contribution to the construction of their lives?’ This made it important to conduct field research to children’s reflections and actions which took place from January to March 2015 within the two before-mentioned municipalities.

This study used the intermediality approach of Evers (2012) as a tool to shed light on the existing overlap and differences of ideologies between and within stakeholder groups, and it prescribes some important steps to take within the study (Evers 2012: 112). First, it helped me to analyse the conceptualization of ‘vulnerability’ constructed by different policy makers, such as the World Bank (2015), the government of South Africa, several non-governmental organizations (NGOs), staff from day care centres, a church worker and the coordinator of an orphanage. These policy makers are appointed as stakeholders, since they all have, through their policies, a stake in children’s well-being, based on the created construction of the concept of ‘vulnerable children’. Secondly, I noticed that the World Bank (2015) and the government principally focus on the income criterion, while other stakeholders came up with other criteria, such as the parental care or the presence of parents, education, the child’s safety, the important role of the day care staff and the white people in poverty instead of the Black South Africans. The third step helped to understand that these stakeholders do not criticize the constructed concept of vulnerability, but just take it for granted, innovate it or try to fill niches they deem important. Finally, it became clear that there exists not only overlap and differences between the groups, but also within the groups of stakeholders. This makes it necessary for them to mediate in specific ways and in specific settings to be able to reach their own goals. The influence of such a construction, made it important to research how children, having this label, act and react in certain ways and settings.

Also among children convergences and divergences were found. Although many children recognize the importance of basic needs, most of the children focus on their housing, their need of education, the care of their parents and the need for protection. The capability approach of Sen (2004) showed that it is important to have a set of general capabilities that points out our freedom of ‘beings and doings’, such as the freedom to be educated. However, this set varies per person and therefore is not a fixed set of general capabilities. We need to study children’s opportunities to accomplish what they
value. They can have abilities and qualities that help them to deal with structural constraints (Sen 2004: 80). That is why the possibility was provided to the children to express their own necessities. It became clear that many children attach great value to education, because it gives them the ability to create new friendships at school. Another important finding was that many children argue that they want to grow up doing things differently than their social context, or to help other people who struggle as well. Also the support they offer within the household and the exercise of religion can be seen as important necessities the children came up with. Some children were able to deal with the structural constraints around them and achieve these necessities, others were not. This may depend on the way in which children try to mediate within the expectations of the social context, such as their parents.

The last step of the research focused on the way the capabilities of children can be helpful to improve their lives, considered to be the expression of agency. Different economic and social contributions from the children were found. Children already work for economic gain, offer help within the household and create options for parents to receive grants. Social contributions were related to the way in which they alert others that help is needed within the family, the way they show their happiness that strengths and inspires their family or the way they are able to improve the self-image of their parents. These contributions need to be socialized, because they can be important to reach the criteria such as formulated by the stakeholders. For example, the money the children earn may be a necessity to be able to attend school. Stakeholders might deny these intricately intertwined benefits for children, because they might deem this to be child labour. However, these stakeholders could potentially gain from the insights children have into their lives and what they consider to be elementary to build a good life.

The main contribution of this study is focused on the last-described insight, related to the title of this thesis: ‘not every superhero wears a cape’. It is not always possible to protect children, because they need the freedom to achieve their own necessities. However, we cannot romanticize the perspective on providing children with agency, because there are still a lot of structural problems to tackle. At the same time we might realize that children do ‘not always wear a cape’, but actively contribute to the construction of their lives. It is important for policy makers to be aware of this and it might help them to construct an environment that makes it easier for children to fend for themselves.
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1. Introduction

“One way that we can build a better future for children is by empowering them through allowing them to speak up for themselves. Of course, we as adults have to guide them and to take ultimate responsibility but that is something quite different from patronizing them. The rights of children must, importantly, include the right to be themselves and to talk for themselves” (Nelson Mandela, 2003).

This excerpt from a speech by Nelson Mandela in 2003 shows the paradigm shift that is moving from children as victims who need protection and help, to children as agents who have the power to voice their own wishes and necessities. Concerning this agency perspective, Evers, Notermans and Ommering (2011) describe, by studying ten qualitative studies, African children’s own perspectives. They argue it is important to receive insights into children’s creativity to deal with their living conditions and their own reflections, in order to counterbalance the image of children who need protection (Evers, et al. 2011: 3).

However, when we zoom in to children in South Africa who grow up in economically deprived municipalities such as Tshwane and Ethekwini, it is impossible to ignore the children’s social, political and economic context, in which they express this agency. We need to study these dynamic circumstances, to understand the development and experiences of the child. An addition from Vigh (2009), who researches the concept of navigation and the contribution it can make to our understanding of people’s actions within the social world, is that children are not only shaped by this changing environment, but they are also able to adapt to it, shape it and move within it. That is why Vigh (2009) describes these children as social navigators (Vigh 2009: 433). In this context, it is also relevant to discuss the study of Huijsmans, George, Gigengack and Evers (2014), who argue that we need to conceptualize young people in development in relation to the contexts and processes around them, instead of categorizing them. In this way, we elaborate Vigh’s (2009) vision and study these young people in relation to other people and circumstances. Huijsmans et al. (2014) strengthen their argument by studying seven articles that develop these ideas in further detail. They show the importance of longitudinal research on these young people, and the importance of taking the social context and their intergenerational relations into account (Huijsmans et al. 2014: 171). An NGO or other policy makers that have the ambition to change the contexts in which the children live, need to be aware of this interaction between the children’s own reflections and actions, and the social world around them. These policy makers put the label of ‘vulnerable’ on these children, based on specific criteria, such as the poverty level of the children. However, how do children, having these labels, adapt, shape and move within these environments?
This question made it important for me to conduct field research which took place from January to March 2015 with children who are labelled as ‘vulnerable’ by policy makers within the municipality of Tshwane or Ethekwini. In order to receive more information about these municipalities before entering the field, I studied the paper of Armstrong, Lekezwa and Siebrits (2008) that provides information on the characteristics of people who live in this region and adds certain important dimensions of poverty. One of the outcomes of this study is that you can find strong (racial) inequalities in the distribution of income and wealth within the municipalities, something that reflects the lasting influence of South Africa’s history (Armstrong et al. 2008: 2). The municipality of Tshwane (2014) tries to understand their rich heritage through studying the history of South Africa. The year 1948, when the white electorate of South Africa voted the National Party into power, and the policy of Apartheid became official state policy, is described as an important year. This policy of Apartheid continued until 1955, when the Freedom Charter was adopted (Tshwane Vision 2055, 2014). However, as shown by the study of Armstrong et al. (2008), this blueprint for a free and democratic country did not guarantee an equitable distribution of income. It still has great consequences for the lives of black and coloured people as compared to the whites (Armstrong et al. 2008: 12). On the other hand, this also affects white people who do live in poverty and struggle as well, since they are often not automatically target of programs or policies aimed to help poor people. The government of South Africa, as one of the policy makers, focusses on the unequal distribution of income, and produced the report ‘Social profile of vulnerable groups in South Africa’ (2011). This study used data of the ‘General Household Survey’ from 2002 to 2012. It appoints different economically deprived areas, including the provinces in which the municipalities of Tshwane and Ethekwini are located. These areas are seen as strategic priorities related to vulnerable groups (Statistics South Africa 2011: 2).

Besides recognizing that the label of vulnerable children exists within these municipalities, it is necessary to understand the criteria on which this constructed concept is based, as it influences the lives of the children. Evers’ (2012) intermediality approach offers a helpful tool to study this construction. It stresses that there are different key stakeholders who play a role, and it is important to receive knowledge about their perceptions and practices within this context. These different stakeholders do not design independent policy instruments, but innovate on each other’s criteria. As a result, convergences but also divergences between and within the stakeholder groups arise. This makes it important to study how this interaction between and within them occurs, and how they profile these perceptions and practices in specific ways and settings (Evers 2012: 112).

The next step is to answer the question whether this constructed concept of vulnerability, based on specific criteria or capabilities, will create powerlessness and a lack of freedom and action for children who receive this label. Sen’s (2004) ‘capability approach’, offers a helpful tool to study this tension between children as agents and the structure in which they find themselves. In his article, he discusses the effects of such a fixed set of capabilities from the stakeholders that denies the possibilities of participation of the local people, who can have the abilities and qualities to deal with their structural
constraints around them. Furthermore, they are able to explain their social reality, and what should be included and why. The added value of a particular capability can be highly personal because of the fact that they are used for different purposes, in different social conditions and (likely) explained in public discussions and reasoning. Sen (2004) argues that he is not against listing these different capabilities, however, this list cannot be fixed (Sen 2004: 80). In this context, Stoecklin (2012) argues, in his study of the child’s agency in relation to the theory of child participation that the capability approach explains that children’s capacities are the outcome of the interplay between individual competences and social opportunities (Stoecklin 2012: 454). This means that they are able to actively contribute to the construction of their lives.

The list of capabilities, as created by the key stakeholders, can influence the perceptions, choices and actions of children. However, also the stakeholders could potentially gain from the insights children have into their lives and what they consider to be elementary to build a good life. The present study aims to gain a better understanding of those issues. That is why the following research question has been defined:

‘How do children, viewed as vulnerable, navigate in a context of the economically deprived municipalities of Tshwane and Ethekwini?’

In order to answer this research question, the following three sub questions have arisen:

- How is vulnerability defined by various stakeholders, including the NOVA Institute (NGO for which the research is conducted)?
- What do children, viewed as vulnerable, perceive to be necessities for their own lives?
- How do they make an active contribution to the construction of their lives (socially and economically) in Tshwane and Ethekwini?

By formulating answers to these questions, the study contributes to the existing literature in multiple ways. Whereas previous studies, regarding children growing up in poverty, principally focused on the label of children as victims in need of protection or children as agents, this study researches this tension, and focuses on the life experiences of children within the constructed framework. Crivello, Camfield and Woodhead (2008) already mentioned how important it is to be aware of this tension. Within their research that studies the concept of wellbeing in the context of children’s experience to live in poverty, they argue that we need to involve children within research and recognize the differences between the groups of children, and between the children and people around them. However, at the same time, we need to consider the different reactions, the impact of risk, and protective factors of the children and their social relationships (Crivello et al. 2008: 69). In addition to this approach, I draw on Lancy (2012), who criticizes the child’s agency perspective as not taking the key understandings of childhood and culture into account. He mentions various problems regarding the agency perspective, including the
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denial of the influences of culture on children (Lancy 2012: 2). That is why the present study tries to integrate the existing theories and hopes to contribute to fill the knowledge gap on the problems and structural constraints we encounter when studying children as agents, and the way we can reduce these problems. It is not my intention to provide answers to all these issues, because I cannot ignore the complexity of the social reality and development of children as individuals, and I do not approach them as a homogenous group. However, it can be seen as an important step to overcome the simplistic policy designs, and increase the knowledge about the child’s reflections and contributions.

It is also essential to include children’s voices from a more social perspective. By providing children the chance to express their own worries, necessities and dreams, these results can be implemented into future policy documents and country assistance programs. According to Peek (2008), we cannot assume children’s needs are met when their parents’ needs are met. Within her research, she describes children’s resilience, a concept that will be further elaborated in chapter five, and the necessity to improve children’s agency in order to reduce their vulnerable position (Peek 2008: 4). Besides these differences between parents, policy makers and children, there also exists divergence among children. That is why this social perspective will be of benefit for both the policy makers and the children themselves. This can be explained through the article of Bartels, Knibbe, de Koning and Salemink (2010), who conceptualize the tension between groups, in their case between Dutch Muslims and ‘native Dutch’, in terms of human security. They argue that this is helpful to understand the boundaries and interaction between them, in order to avoid feelings of insecurity (Bartels et al. 2010: 123). When the key stakeholders within the present research try to interact with the children themselves, and fit the components of the programs with the children’s ideas, they can improve the effectiveness of their interventions designed to assist, protect and help these children. At the same time, the children themselves are more able to express their opinion. In addition, the feeling may arise their environment is in control and they are no longer forced by outsiders to change their lives in ways experienced as differently than their own cultural paradigm or essence. This can reduce the described feelings of insecurity. A significant addition of Sen (2004) in this context is that we cannot avoid some ‘fixed’ basic capabilities from the stakeholders, which point out what every child in every society is free to do and free to be (Sen 2004: 79). When we combine these different perspectives, this may result in a positive combination of the inside knowledge of the ‘vulnerable’ children, and the outside knowledge of the policy makers on what is good for them.

The collected data that contributes to these scientific and social domains, will be structured as follows. First, in chapter two the methodology is presented, which contains a comprehensive description of the research access, the research group, the methods used, the operationalization of the key terms and concepts, the ethics and reflectivity. Then, in chapters three to five the analysis of ethnographic data will be presented, including the theoretical perspective and relevance of the research findings. Finally, in chapter six the conclusions based on the ethnographic data will be discussed.
2. Methodology

“Why do you feel excited Thando?” “Because you ask me a lot of questions!” (Thando, nine years old, 11-03-2015)

This child positively reflects on the interview method I used with her during the research. Besides a comprehensive description of the applied methods, this chapter describes the research access and scene, the research group, the reliability of the data, an operationalization of the key terms and concepts in connection to the research question, and a personal reflection on the research, including the problems and challenges I encountered.

2.1 Research access

A couple of months before my departure to the field, I already established contact with the NOVA Institute, an NGO located within the municipality of Tshwane. The goal of this NGO is to battle against poverty by focusing on households in the local context. To reach this goal, they work with a Research & Development (R&D) methodology that starts with a concept shaped through practice research and interviews with people from various disciplines. After the experimentation phase, they search for ways to take it to scale with network partners. One of their programs is ‘the Chics Programme’, of which they think research can add value to the development of it. The vision of this program is that all children in South Africa need to grow up in healthy households. With a healthy household NOVA refers to places where children have the opportunity to satisfy their needs (NOVA Institute, 2015). These different needs will be discussed in chapter three of this thesis. After some conversations with the Nova Institute, I decided to focus on the children, who are in the eyes of this NGO and other stakeholders, vulnerable. The Chics Program had a few questions to be answered, such as: ‘how do these children give meaning to their existence?’ and ‘what strategies do they use to reach a better quality of life?’ In the field, they helped me with finding my first respondents. From that moment, I approached several NGOs, who could bring me in contact with other respondents. I obtained permission from the day care staff and mothers to speak with the children without any difficulty, as they saw the relevance of my study.

2.2 Research scene

The central focus of my research was the municipality of Tshwane, in which the NOVA Institute would like to implement their programs. Tshwane is located in Gauteng, and forms the local government of this province. Tshwane is among the six biggest metropolitan municipalities in South Africa, and was
established on December 5, 2000. However the history of human settlement in the region goes back to the 1600s at least (Tshwane vision 2055, 2014: 22). Within this province, 43.3% of the children live in low-income households, as researched by the government of South Africa (2011) and described in their report ‘Social profile of vulnerable groups in South Africa’ (Statistics South Africa 2011: 14).

I mainly interviewed people from the areas Mamelodi, Soshanguve, Wolmer, Elandsport and the Inner City, as these were the focus of the involved NGOs. These areas can be described as ‘impoverished communities’ within the Tshwane municipality and, according to the NGOs, in need of help. The NGO Funanani took me to an early childhood development centre in Soshanguve, which provides pre-school education to young children, and a temporary, safe care home for children who are removed from their environment. In Mamelodi I visited the primary school of Funanani. Another initiative in Mamelodi is the psychological services clinic where children, referred by schools, with learning or behaviour problems are helped. Also the NOVA Institute is involved in one day care centre in Mamelodi. I visited this centre and interviewed a staff member. The Hanna Charity and Empowerment Foundation organises soup kitchens and other activities in the communities Wolmer and Elandsport. These activities are primarily intended for white poor people instead of the black South Africans, for whom they employ a very different approach than the other NGOs, which principally focus on black poor families. In these communities I helped with the soup kitchen projects and I have done some house visits. The Participate, Empower, Navigate (PEN) organization is located in the Inner City of Pretoria. Many observations, interviews and creative methods took place within their day care centres.

Another important part of my research was my stay at an ‘orphanage’, located in the municipality of Ethekwini. Ethekwini belongs to the Province of Kwazulu-Natal, and faces, such as the municipality of Tshwane, various social, economic, environmental and governance challenges (Ethekwini Municipality, 2015). This municipality has, after the Eastern Cape, the highest percentage of orphans, respectively 5.9% and 6.1% (Statistics South Africa 2011: 6). At the ‘orphanage’, I tried to spend as much time as possible with the children, youth, staff and some families. I was involved in the day care services they offer to the young children, the home work classes for the older children, and their daily way of living their lives.

2.3 Research group

The matrix of respondents, which you can find in appendix number one, offers an overview of my methods, my respondents, some of their characteristics, the involved NGOs or organizations, and the interview dates1. I used pseudonyms for all respondents, and the age displayed serve to make the distinction between children (below thirteen) and youth (from the age of thirteen). My choice to also interview children from thirteen, is based on the idea that they were able to reflect on their own childhood.

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1 See appendix number one
and the choices they made. This provided a more comprehensive picture of the way children position themselves.

As shown in the matrix of respondents, I interviewed seventeen children, seven youngsters, five staff members of NGOs, the coordinator of the orphanage, three staff members of day care centres and four mothers. I had nine informal conversations with staff members of NGOs, a staff member of a day care centre and a mother. I used creative methods, as explained in section 2.4, with 29 children and youth in total. The youngest child I spoke to was four years old, the oldest youngster was seventeen years old. In addition, I conducted daily (participant) observations as described above. All children and youth are selected on the basis of the key stakeholders criteria of vulnerable children (see section 2.6 ‘operationalization’ and chapter three).

2.4 Methods

In order to answer my research question and sub questions, I used different methods. These methods were dependent on the specific contexts and participants within my research. A method that has been the focus throughout the entire fieldwork period, is the stakeholder analysis. Through this analysis, I was able to understand the ideologies, discourses and practices of the stakeholder groups within my research, and the convergences and divergences between and within these groups. This method is based on the intermediality approach of Evers (2012), as further elaborated in chapter three (see Evers 2012: 115). Through this approach, questions such as ‘How do stakeholders construct the concept of vulnerability?, ‘Do all stakeholders involved in the research agree on the construction of the concept?’ and ‘How do people, having these labels, position themselves?’ could be answered. For analytical purposes, I made a distinction between the stakeholders within my research, as shown in the matrix of respondents. However, in the field I found out that these different people all reflect and anticipate in their unique way and have totally different life worlds and discourses, which makes it impossible to place them into one level or group. It was indeed the intermediality approach that brought this into the limelight and helped me to theorise. It felt like a significant contribution to use this method, to involve the voices of different people and to not approach them as homogenous groups. Also for an NGO like the NOVA Institute it is important to be aware of these convergences and divergences, in order to deal with them. One of my approaches to gain a broader understanding of the different perspectives, was the observation method.

My intention was to do a lot of house visits, in order to observe the houses of the families, the interactions with each other, daily life and other activities. However, it proved to be a challenge to visit all the houses I planned for, because of my own safety and the privacy of the participants. That is why most of the observations took place within the settings described in the section ‘research scene’ (2.1). This turned out to be an interesting observation places as well, because I could not only see the interaction between children and their parents, but also with peers, staff members of the NGOs and day
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care staff. Besides that, I tried to overcome the before-mentioned challenge by staying at an ‘orphanage’ for two weeks. I experienced this stay as useful input for my research, because I was able to observe and talk with the children and youth the whole day, and to take part into their lives. This method helped me to gain more information about the reflections and actions of the children, and especially their active contribution to the construction of their lives’ context. It is difficult to understand this contribution without using the observation method, because this process can also take place ‘without saying’. For example, children can, by acting very passive or aggressive, alert someone that help is needed within the child’s family.

In addition to the observation method, the interview method was important to understand the previously described behaviour of the children. I spoke with the children themselves, their family members and with professionals. From the observations, it seemed like these children often try to ‘go with the flow’, and do what is asked and expected from them, instead of breaking the rules. However, when I interviewed the children, they had really clear observations about what is going on in their lives and strong ideas about their necessities, worries and personal goals. This shows that the observation and interview methods utilized in my research, are closely connected with each other.

Van der Brug (2011) researches children’s experiences in Namibia who are orphaned by AIDS. Within her study, she found out it can be difficult for young people to talk about issues in their lives, especially when they are not familiar with giving their opinion. That is why she did group interviews and used drawings as one of her research methods (van der Brug 2011: 44). To overcome this problem within my own research, I also used creative methods. These different methods were helpful to act in consonance with the suggestion of Tisdall, Davis and Gallagher (2009) to take the preferences and characteristics of your participants into account, as described within their study providing resources and possibilities to design your own research with children. They argue it is better to recognize the child’s personal characteristics, instead of simply distinguishing between methods for children or adults (Tisdall et al. 2009: 7).

The first creative method I used is the Fairy and Wizard tool, as set up for the Sign of Safety approach of Turnell (2012), an initiative based on child protection casework. This approach, which is utilised in different countries, tries to stabilise and strengthen child’s and family’s situations of suspected or substantiated child abuse. The Fairy and Wizard tool asks three key questions: ‘What am I worried about?’, ‘What is working well?’ and ‘What needs to happen?’ These questions are asked by using a drawing of a Fairy or Wizard figure. The clothes are representing something that can be changed in the lives of the children. The wings show that you can fly away and escape your problems, and the cape protects you. The last question that focuses on the wishes and vision of the children for their lives, is linked to the star and the spell bubble (Turnell 2012: 36). I experienced this tool as very helpful to understand children’s way of thinking and feeling. After completing the questions, the children coloured

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2 See appendix number two
the drawing. This gave me the opportunity to talk in a relaxed atmosphere about the questions and their answers.

Another tool I used to involve children in a creative way, were drawings. They could express their feelings and ideas on paper, instead of answering the questions verbally. The children enjoyed to draw, and it gave me the possibility to understand children’s imaginations about their world. I spoke with them about their drawing, which led to stories and other conversations. This is in agreement with the findings of Crivello et al. (2008), who show how helpful this method can be to talk with children about their wellbeing and their experiences to live in poverty. It can provide a concrete focus for children to tell a story around their drawing (Crivello et al. 2008: 68).

Within the interviews I had with the younger children, I used an emotion card that shows a little boy who expresses emotions, including happy, angry, upset or excited. I asked the children which figure fitted best to them when they were in their home environment, school environment, and so on. This method helped me to interpret how children cope and mediate in specific ways and settings. However, I kept in mind that these interpretations can be infused with Western meanings and pre-understandings of feelings or emotions.

2.5 Reliability of data

Since I was in contact with several NGOs, I gained most data through their contacts and programs. Therefore, I had the possibility to interview people from different communities in the municipalities of Tshwane and Ethekwini, different types of stakeholders, different ages and people within different social groups. This dissemination within the research field, will be of benefit for the reliability of the data. However, I had to keep in mind that these people may respond differently because they are ‘connected’ to these NGOs. I tried to overcome this challenge by explaining them my own status as a student and my independent position. Still, the small sample size of the research was another challenge for the reliability of the data. That is why I analysed documents, the interviews and observations, and used other before-mentioned methods, and tried to correlate the data coming from the various methods.

2.6 Operationalisation

Within the research questions, some abstract terms and concepts are used that need to be translated into more observable and researchable facts. One of the terms that needs more explanation is ‘economically deprived municipalities’. This term will be elaborated first, because there is a great cohesion between this term and the construction of the concept of the ‘vulnerable’ child. The World Bank (2015) shows the high rate of the South African population who lives below the national poverty line. The government of South Africa is taking over these policies, but focusses specifically on some poor areas. It describes

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1 See appendix number three
these areas as economically deprived, as a high rate of the population is depending on social grants and lives in a household with a very low income per capita (see chapter three for details).

The NOVA Institute, which is located in one of these ‘economically deprived municipalities’, depends on these figures, and mentions the low income of parents as a criterion that makes children vulnerable. Their goal is to promote well-researched and tested resources to assist families in caring for these vulnerable children (NOVA Institute, 2014). However, this is not the only criterion of ‘a vulnerable child’. By constructing this concept, based on specific criteria, vulnerable children are a creation of their policy instruments. I will refer to this NGO in particular, but also to the World Bank (2015) and the government as stakeholders, inspired by the article of Evers (2012). Within this study, a stakeholder is described as anyone claiming a stake in a project related to land use management. These stakeholders take part in the mediation process by informing, or even by fuelling people’s perceptions outside this project, what the local people of Malagasy are like (Evers 2012: 113). This definition of stakeholders can be applied to the present study. The described stakeholders all have a stake in children’s wellbeing, since they construct the concept of ‘vulnerable children’ and base their policies on this construction. Besides the World Bank (2015), the government of South Africa and the NOVA Institute, also other stakeholders will be described within the study. Children (below thirteen), who met the criteria within the construction of vulnerability from the key stakeholders, as further elaborated in chapter three, were approached for this research.

Although the key stakeholders construct the concept of vulnerability, based on specific criteria, children are able to reflect and act within it. This is in line with the aforementioned concept of Vigh of children as social navigators, who navigate within the moving context around them (Vigh 2009: 420). This ‘navigation’ concept will focus on the way children reflect about the things they need in life, constructed by using the notions of Stoecklin (2012): activities, relations, values, self-images and motivations (Stoecklin 2012: 448) (further elaborated in chapter four). However, the navigations of children also explain that some of them have the abilities and qualities to shape this context themselves and thereby make an active contribution to the construction of it. While focusing on this perspective of a child as an agent, the structural constraints need to be taken into account.

2.7 Ethics & reflexivity

Narayan, Chambers, Shah and Petesch (2000), whose research is based on the life experiences and reflections of over 20,000 poor men and women from 23 countries, describe some ethical challenges that may occur researching poor people. Some of these challenges also emerged within my research. The people in the study depend on the implementation of the received knowledge about their experiences to live in poverty, into policy programs of the NGOs around them (Narayan et al. 2000: 17). This reason made it hard to take people’s time. The parents and day care staff, who are involved within the research, work long days that makes their ‘free time’ really valuable. Although there was not a direct benefit for
the people, many respondents mentioned it felt great someone listened to their stories and experiences, instead of prescribing them how to live their life. Another challenge were the false expectations of the respondents. Mainly the mothers hoped to receive direct financial support or other types of assistance from me. This most probably led to socially acceptable behaviour. However, in a later stage of the research, they realized I was not in the position to help them in the way they expected, what made it easier to observe their usual daily behaviour.

Although integrating the children’s voices can be seen as an ethical recommendation, there are some ethical issues I had to take into account. First of all, it was important to receive permission from the parents, the day care staff and the involved NGOs to interview or utilize creative methods with the children. Besides this permission, I tried to explain the children themselves why I wanted them to express their wishes, feelings and necessities. This ethical decision is based on the study of van der Brug (2012) that advocates the transparency in interactions with children (van der Brug 2012: 48). As already argued in section 2.4 (methods) and as pointed out by Tisdall et al. (2009), I also had to be careful avoid making assumptions about the differences in methods between adults and children (Tisdall et al. 2009: 7). Instead of selecting the research method based on the age of the child, I chose what was best for the situation and the child’s preferences. The different selected methods also proved to be very suitable to avoid distress of the children. Some children found it more easy to draw their story, others preferred to talk about it. Finally, I took time for every child, what made it possible to reflect on their own stories or drawings.

My personal challenge, with a background study in pedagogical sciences, was to observe and hear about the interaction between the day care staff or parents and children, rather than to intervene. It felt hard to observe children while sitting on their chair for more than an hour, without doing anything. Seeing children without a sparkle in their eyes was a challenging, personal experience. However, by giving the children attention, listening to them or working together on a drawing or other creative method, already felt like a small contribution. Thando, the young girl who expressed her feelings in the introduction of this chapter, made this point really clear. By using these different types of methods, I contributed to the possibility for young and old people to raise their voice and express their wishes, feelings and necessities.
3. **The concept of vulnerability**

“Do you like it to live in your house?” “Yes. Because it keeps me home. There is a shelter that protects me. [...] I like everything about my life” (Montho, nine years old, 03/11/2015).

This boy, who grows up in the municipality of Tshwane, reflects on his house and the world around him in a positive way. However, this reflection cannot be studied in isolation. At the same time, a ‘political debate’ is going on how to categorize these children who grow up in an economically deprived municipality like Tshwane or Ethekwini. As explained earlier, one of the labels that is put on these children, is the vulnerability concept. This constructed label is based on specific criteria and created by different policy makers. Within this chapter, the dialogue between these policy makers about the construction of the concept of vulnerability will be further elaborated, including a description of children’s own insights into their lives. In this way, the first sub question ‘how is vulnerability defined by various stakeholders, including the NOVA Institute (NGO for which the research is conducted)?’, will be answered.

3.1 **Intermediality (Evers, 2012)**

The introduction and the methodology already made clear that there are different key stakeholders within the municipalities of Tshwane and Ethekwini, who construct the concept of vulnerability, based on specific criteria. Before introducing these key stakeholders and their different ways of policy making between, but also within groups, it is useful to provide more information on the intermediality approach of Evers (2012), since this approach helped me to bring these convergences and divergences into the limelight.

To understand this approach, we need to take the study of Chapple and Kattenbelt (2006) as a starting point, who describe the subject of intermediality from the perspective of theatre and performance. They point out that the presence and incorporation of digital technology and other media within theatre productions, blurs the generic boundaries. This can influence the existing perceptions and performances. Therefore, something that appears to be fixed, can become different and change processes (Chapple & Kattenbelt 2006: 11).

As argued by Evers (2012), this theory also offers a helpful tool within anthropology. That is why Evers (2012) rewarded the intermediality concept to be applicable in anthropological studies. She first used it in her research of socio-cultural dynamics in foreign large-scale land projects. This approach is helpful to distinguish some important steps within research. First of all, the approach helps to analyse the actors who can play an important role within the research setting. Secondly, it is useful to understand
their knowledge, social realities, perceptions and practices. This categorizes them in different levels and groups. Then, it is important to understand how these actors are related to one another and mediate these views. This will result in the final step: studying the existing convergences and divergences of perceptions and practices between and within the stakeholder groups (Evers 2012: 112). The next sections within this chapter will use these different steps in order to receive more knowledge about the convergences and divergences between and within the groups, and the dialogue that is going on.

3.2 Key stakeholders and their construction of the concept of vulnerability

As explained through the first step of the intermediality approach of Evers (2012), we need to analyse the key stakeholders who play an important role within the research (Evers 2012: 115). For analytical purposes, a distinction between these policy makers and the levels in which they operate, will be made in table 1. However, I am aware about the fact that not all actors can be placed into one level or group and that they do not all think in the same way.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Stakeholder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>The government of South Africa (The report of Statistics South Africa, 2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>NGO the NOVA Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NGO Hanna Charity and Empowerment Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NGO Participate, Empower, Navigate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NGO Funanani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Day care staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Church worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coordinator ‘orphanage’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Levels and groups of key stakeholders who participated in the study (IJzerman, 2015)

With a focus on the specific criterion ‘income’, the Word Bank (2014) measures the poverty and unemployment rates of South Africa, in comparison with the rest of the world. They show that 23% of the South African population lives below the national poverty line, and the unemployment rate has risen since 2008 from 21.9% to 24.9%. These inequality rates are one of the highest in the world, with as a consequence exclusion. According to the World Bank (2015), children can be seen as vulnerable when these circumstances influence their basic opportunities, like access to safe water and improved sanitation, health insurance and school possibilities (World Bank, 2015).

The government of South Africa, who presented the report of Statistics South Africa (2011): ‘Social profile of vulnerable groups in South-Africa 2000-2010’, is adopting these policies and follows the same line as the World Bank (2015). The report mentions that 36% of the children in South Africa live in households without any employed members, depending on social grants to improve their access to food and education (Statistics South Africa 2011: 13). In exception to this found convergence, the government deviates from the policies of the World Bank (2015) by mentioning the ‘presence of the parent(s)’ as a criterion for the concept of vulnerability. This criterion can have influence on children’s growth and their preparation for formal education. It shows that 39.3% of the children in South Africa
live with their mother only, 3.3% live with their father and 23.9% live with neither of their parents, possibly as a result of labour migration, poverty and illness (Statistics South Africa 2011: 4-7).

The different NGOs however, innovate on these policies, and introduce some other criteria on which they construct the concept of vulnerability. A staff member from the NOVA Institute explains their choice to expand the income criterion: “Initially, it was like that. But through improving and developing, we realized that proper quality of life is not only based on poor people. Initially, the service started looking at those people. But right now, we want to establish a Chics Programme in the eastern Pretoria, in the white community. They have like everything they need: clothes, proper shelter, but you may find that they need other things” (Cicile, the NOVA Institute, 19-03-2015). By taking this position, the NOVA Institute finds convergence with the World Bank (2015) and the government, which also focus on the income criterion and its influences on children. However, it deviates in the content of these influences. While the World Bank (2015) and the government specifically mention the lack of food and education, the NOVA Institute takes broader position and mentions the lack of opportunities or possibilities of children to realize their fundamental human needs. This vision of the NOVA Institute is based on the human needs that Max-Neef (1991) described as follows: subsistence, protection, affection, creation, idleness, understanding, participants, identify, freedom and transcendence (Max-Neef 1991: 27). As Murray, Nel, de Wet and Senyolo (2011) from the NOVA Institute argue in the manual of the Chics Programme, it is not people’s fundamental human needs that are different, but the way in which these needs are met (Murray et al. 2011: 20). Max-Neef (1991) describes these needs as satisfiers, who can meet more than one fundamental human need at the same time (Max-Neef 1991: 27).

The policy of the NGO Funanani offers a helpful example to understand this theory of Max-Neef (1991). In their eyes, children need a main role model in their lives. This criterion can be seen as satisfier to meet the fundamental human needs of protection, affection and identify. As Funanani points out, this main role model needs to be really close, like a mother or father. With this point of view, this organisation also operates in the same line with the government, which already mentioned the importance of the presence of the parent(s).

The NGO Participate, Empower, Navigate (PEN) also acknowledges the importance of the parents to be there for a child. However, it also places strong emphasis on training of day care staff: “the most important thing that was needed was training, because these people are not qualified. Basic teaching skills. We know that the teachers do not play. [...] Nothing is happening. The children just sit” (Mara, staff member PEN, 16-03-2015). Since many children spend long days in day care centres, PEN tries to make these days as stimulating as possible for the children. By constructing the concept of vulnerability on the criterion of ‘day care staff skills’, PEN deviates from the stakeholders described above, who emphasized the importance of basic opportunities and the presence of the parent(s).

Also the NGO Hanna Charity and Empowerment Foundation bases itself on new criteria, with a focus on the white poor people instead of the black people. The organisation convergences with the policy design of the World Bank (2015) and the government that focuses on the criterion of income.
However, it tries to fill the niches with accommodating people who are not automatically target of these policies, such as the white people. By doing this, they already practice the future plans of the NOVA Institute, such as described above.

The staff from the day care centres find most convergence with the policies of the World Bank (2015), the government and the NGO PEN. Just like the first two stakeholders, the staff puts great emphasis on the criterion of income, and the way these circumstances affect the other mentioned criteria. However, divergence is found within this stakeholder group. A one-day care teacher explains why she disagrees with her colleagues: “We have to be grateful for what we have. You can be really rich, but you can still suffer. And you can be really, really poor, but really, really happy” (Sieneke, day care teacher PEN, 13-01-2015). Despite the fact that this staff member deviates concerning this criterion, they all agree about the importance of their own role and the parent’s role in the children’s lives, just like the criteria of the NGO PEN.

One of the staff members from the involved church within the research, finds overlap with the NOVA Institute in the need of protection. This church tries to provide help within the community by giving courses about for example marriage, and they started a trauma centre and a care centre. This Crux After Care Centre is a place where children can do their homework, play with each other and return home when their parents are back from work. The church worker expresses her worries about the safety of children after school, like on the streets and in their houses. These worries are connected to the social contexts of the municipalities of Tshwane and Ethekwini, who are not always safe for the children. Because of the fact that parents work long days, children are home alone or hanging out on the street. Through the care centre, the church tries to keep the children safe.

The last stakeholder of focus in this study is coordinator Lara of an ‘orphanage’ in the municipality of Ethekwini. She gives, like many other stakeholders, attention to the parental care and the importance of education. However, she deviates by giving attention to the difficult history South Africa faced. As Kearney (2014) points out in his study that focuses on the term ‘cultural wounding’, it is important to study the impact of the past to understand current experiences and circumstances. The influence of this past is far from universal. An individual can show empowerment and agency in spite of a difficult past. This is related to the concept of resilience, as further elaborated in chapter five. All contextual and socio-cultural factors which were present in the past, can still influence current situations (Kearney 2014: 611). These strong influences of the past and the way individuals try to deal with it, aligns with how Lara, the coordinator of the orphanage, formulates the criteria of the concept of vulnerability: “They are still very vulnerable. You see, the biggest problem here, most of the children are a product of the Apartheid. In the Apartheid, they did not worried about educating the black children. They opened those rural farm schools, with unqualified-teachers, no books or anything like that. So, to really make a big success when you come from the Apartheid education, I take my hat off to them. The thing right now is overcrowding. Because right now it is a law in this country that everybody above the age of six needs to be educated. So every child goes to school, but they have not got the
Not every superhero wears a cape. Children’s navigations in a context of deprivation and vulnerability in the municipalities of Tshwane and Ethekwini (South Africa)

facilities” (Lara, coordinator ‘orphanage’, 11-02-2015). She does not focus, such as the World Bank (2015) and the government, on the possibility of children to go to school, but the way these schools are facilitated.

3.3 Sub-conclusion

The described intermediality approach of Evers (2012), is proposed within this study of children’s navigations in the contexts of the economically deprived municipalities of Tshwane and Ethekwini. As shown in section 3.2 that describes the key stakeholders and their construction of the concept of vulnerability, there are many convergences and divergences within and between these groups. That is why these stakeholders need to mediate in specific ways and settings that places them in different levels. One of the stakeholders, the coordinator of the ‘orphanage’ in the municipality of Ethekwini, gives a good example of how this mediation takes places. In an interview she explains the history of the ‘orphanage’: “It all started in 1993. When we closed our business, some people came to us to live at the farm. And then the husbands died of AIDS. And they left the wives with the children, so that is how we landed up with a few mothers and their children. So, we originally started with a few children, and it has now grown to the 63 children we have today. When we closed our business, a lot of people heard about us. And they asked us: please look after my children. We are not a government funded organization at all, unfortunately” (Lara, 11-02-2015). Although a lot of the children still have parents and some mothers live at the project, the coordinator profiles it as an ‘orphanage’, instead of an extended family. This may be a deliberate mediation strategy to be able to connect with other stakeholders and secure subsidies or help from the government, volunteers and the neighbourhood. That explains why the social and political context, the policies in South Africa, but also the divergences between and within the stakeholder groups, may influence the way the stakeholders profile themselves.

As further elaborated by Evers (2012) within her intermediality approach, the expressed perceptions of the different stakeholders, can create stereotypical imagines of other people or situations and impacts on them (Evers 2012: 114). Comparable to Evers (2012), Boyden (1997) describes within her study with a focus on the constructed concept of childhood, the major influence these policy makers can have on local people. It creates standards and specific categories in which they have to profile themselves (Boyden 1997: 195). This makes it essential to take the next step and focus on an important group of stakeholders within the present study: the children themselves and the social context around them.

3.4 Children´s voices

In compliance with the described visions of Boyden (1997) and Evers (2012) about the influences of stakeholders, Clark’s (2007) study problematizes the ‘vulnerables’ category from the United Nations High Commissioner for refugees as applied to groups of refugees, based on qualitative research with
young Congolese refugees in Uganda. This ‘fixed’ label of vulnerability is based on shared characteristics of these groups of people, such as physical weakness, economic dependence and emotional instability (Clark 2007: 285). Just as Clark’s (2007) study, the present study analyses the constructed concept of vulnerability of key stakeholders as applied to children who grow up in economically deprived municipalities like Tshwane and Ethekwini in South Africa. They attach great importance to the criteria income, school possibilities and facilities and the provided care from the parents and the day care staff. Attention is also be paid to the safety of the children and the white poor people. According to Clark (2007), these constructed labels can be problematic for two reasons. First, we cannot approach children and their social environment as a homogenous group. Secondly, we need to take the contextual and relational aspects into account, because they may influence their position (Clark 2007: 285). Similar to the conclusion of Clark (2007), the present study tries to go beyond this ‘fixed’ label of vulnerability and fill the gap in knowledge about the children’s experiences of these formulated criteria, by listening to the children themselves within varying contexts and relationships.

As assumed by the World Bank (2015), the government of South Africa, the NGOs the NOVA Institute and the Hanna Charity and Empowerment Foundation, and the day care staff, especially children who grow up in poverty can be labelled as victims who need protection and help from these policy makers. Convergences as well divergences between and within the groups are related to this criterion. Many children emphasize the importance of basic needs like water, food and clothes, but their main focus is, in many cases, related to their own house; it is often too small and not proper enough. Lesley, who lives in a cottage with his mother in the municipality of Ethekwini, explains his story with a drawing (figure 1) that shows a house and a crying person: “My house makes me sad. When it rains, all the water comes through the roof. I want to live in a nice house” (Lesley, nine years old, 16-02-2015). However, some other children deviate from Lesley, and argue that they are happy with their house, although their house is often comparable to Lesley’s house. An example is Anele, who lives in a house that consists of one room. I asked him: “Why do you like it?” His answer: “Because it is beautiful and it is big” (Anele, eight years old, 11-03-2015).

The perceptions of children on their basic needs like water and food or their perception of a proper house, can be strongly mediated to them by the stakeholders or the social context around them. Montho, the nine year old boy who reflected on his house in the introduction of this chapter, is a perfect example of this mediation. Although he is still so young, he already mentions the term ‘shelter’. To understand why he takes this position within the interview and mentions this specific term, it is important to research the social context around him and the people he interacts with.
In contrast to most of the children, all mothers I spoke to put great emphasis on the poverty they live in and their lack of basic needs. Mother Tina expresses this view from her own ‘poor position’: “It is bad to wake up in the morning wondering where the rent is coming from and where the food is coming from. At least we sorted it out every time” (Tina, 14-01-2015). It is remarkable how much convergence is found between the perceptions of these mothers and the day care staff. A reason for the agreement between these two stakeholder groups might be because they are very closely interwoven with each other, affected by the political economy of South Africa. In order to improve their situation, parents often work long days or try to get a job. Children spend these (long) days in day care centres, of which you can find plenty within the municipalities. To offer people with little money the opportunity to bring their child to a day care centre, reduced school fees are asked. The costs are kept low in these centres, by hiring women who work long days for a modest salary. The manager of the NGO PEN explained: “Some are just starting with taking care of children without any teaching background. They don’t know how it works. There is no contract, they work unbelievable long hours” (Mara, PEN, 16-03-2015). That is why most of the day care teachers, who take care of poor children, also live in poverty themselves and try to earn money for their own family. In other words, these women intermediate between motherhood for their own poor family and working as a day care teacher. When I spoke with them at the day care centre, they profiled themselves as teachers and spoke about poor children in general, instead of their own situation. However, when I spoke to them in their home setting, they profiled themselves as mothers who are suffering a lot and who are definitely vulnerable. A reason for this can be that these mothers, who are very aware of the existence of the income criterion of the government, try to receive a subsidy by using this deliberate mediation strategy of positioning themselves in a specific way.

This is also the case for the white poor mothers with whom I spoke about their situation. A staff member from the Hanna Charity and Empowerment Foundation, the NGO which specifically focuses on the whites, ‘warned’ me before the interviews with the mothers: “They are not like the blacks, they are always accepted. The whites are very proud people. Even though they have no food in the house, they will never let you know” (Henny, Hanna Charity and Empowerment Foundation, 14-01-2015). Remarkably, the white poor mothers do the opposite during the interviews they have with me; they talk about their hard situation and ask for help. It seems like they profiled themselves differently when they talked to me than with the staff of the NGO. They use a mediation strategy of which they think is most helpful for their own situation. The staff member of the Hanna Charity and Empowerment Foundation gives one of the possible reasons for this change in behaviour when they speak to the staff instead of me: “They think like, the social worker can come and will take my children away” (Henny, Hanna Charity and Empowerment Foundation, 14-01-2015).

In this context, it is relevant to discuss Stoecklin’s (2012) perspective of the sociology of action in relation to participation. An actor makes specific choices, who are influenced by subjective perceptions, but also their social position at that moment (Stoecklin 2012: 454). The mediation of the
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day care staff and the mothers shows this reflexive use of their own rights but also the influences of the political economy and the policies in South Africa on their actions. This demonstrates the interplay between the social and cultural norms of the structure, and their ability to make use of them. Not only the day care staff and the mothers have these abilities, but also some children know how to deal with the structural constraints around them.

The most significant overlap between the perceptions of the stakeholders and the children is based on the criterion of education. The key stakeholders who operate on international, national and local level put great emphasis on this criterion. It is obvious that this perception of the stakeholders is mediated to the children. They mention the importance of school in order to get a good job and improve their own situation. Lovuyo, a youngster from the ‘orphanage’ explains the big influence of the political economy of South Africa in relation to their vulnerable position in the future: “Right now, I need to study. That is the only way I can improve my life. Because in South Africa, when you are not educated, you are actually nothing. You cannot go anyway. You will end up working here, around the farmers for R1000 a month” (Lovuyo, seventeen years old, 10-02-2015). Also the mothers mediate this criterion to their own children. They agree about the fact that school is very important for their children and try to stimulate them. They relate it to their own past and current situation and wish a brighter future for their children. Nevertheless, they recognize how difficult it is to grow up poor and perform at school at the same time.

Besides the future perspective, some children attach great value to school because of their teacher. There appears to be a big divergence within the group of children about this subject. Some mention to have a good relationship with their teachers. These children also find convergence with the NGO PEN, who already mentioned the importance of the interaction between the teachers and the children, and try to influence the interaction styles of the teachers. Other children explain they are afraid of their teachers. Anele distinguishes between black and white teachers: “I like it because we have white teachers. The black teachers are beating us and the white teachers not” (Anele, eight years old, 11-03-2015). The way children find convergence or divergence with each other and other stakeholders of this criterion, is again influenced by the social context around them and the attached value of this criterion by the policy makers. Also the teachers themselves have clear perceptions on their provided care:

‘The room is small and decorated with bright colours. On one side of the room, children sit down on small chairs or walk around, on the other side the day care staff chat with each other. I am standing in the doorway. The children do not have toys to play with, so they just stare or talk. This proceeds ten minutes, without any actions from the staff. The children do not approach them and wait quietly. After these ten minutes, I walk towards the children and starts tickling them. Finally I see some smiles and twinkles in the eyes. All children run towards me and try to touch, tickle or hug me. A small boy enters the day care. One lady from the day care staff tells me that it is his first day over here. He looks around, searches for his dad who just left the building, and starts crying. Rachel [other Dutch researcher] gives
him some attention by lifting him up and hugging him. The lady from the day care tells her: please put him down, otherwise he wants this attention again and again (Field notes, 13th of January 2015).

This observation in the field is connected to the description of some children on their teacher and the worries of PEN about the communication styles of the day care staff and their understanding of the emotional needs of the child.

As Evers (2011) argues within one of her discussion papers about the intermediality approach, she often notes problems in anthropological analysis in understanding the connection between cultural concepts or practices and the differences within groups of people. We need to study the differences in practice, in order to understand the cultural meaning of a concept for an individual (Evers 2011: 6). So, if we want to gain knowledge on the convergences and divergences between and within the groups of key stakeholders about the criterion of education within the present study, we need to know their practices and the meanings of other criteria for the individuals. As we have seen in the section on the key stakeholders and their construction of the criterion ‘education’, this concept was based on ‘schooling’. This explains why they consider children who have access to education as less vulnerable. However, the importance of the concept of education for a child can depend on what concepts of, for example, friendship or development mean for the individual. If they put great emphasis on, for example, the interaction with friends at school and they want to develop themselves in order to have better future perspectives or to be able to help others who struggle as well, they can be more motivated to go to school. Also the mothers agree on the importance of education, however, they do not speak about the skills of the day care staff or the importance of a good relationship between them and their children.

In this context it is also relevant to appoint one of the arguments of Sen (2004), related to his capability approach. Although he agrees on the importance of a set of relevant capabilities, he argues we cannot ignore the weights and importance of these different capabilities (Sen 2004: 78). As shown within this study, the key stakeholders as well all children agree on the importance of education. However, the valuation of this capability can be different for every individual. That is why it is important to study if children come up with other criteria than the key stakeholders, as achieved in chapter four by using the capability approach of Sen (2004) and the actor’s system of Stoecklin (2012).

The beliefs of the mothers in the importance of education, without taking the day care skills or relationship between the staff and their children into account, is comparable to the beliefs they have in raising their children and the personal relationship with their child. They do not give much attention to this topic, and speak in ‘broad terms’ about the love their child needs in life and the lack of resources that makes it difficult for them to foster their children. This is in contrast to the study of Bray and Brandt (2007) on the interaction between poverty and the provided child care, generated through qualitative studies conducted in an extremely poor community in South Africa. One of their main arguments is that the material provision is not the only factor that determines care ideals and practices of parents, but also the emotional components are of great importance (Bray & Brandt 2007: 13). The position of the
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mothers in the present study deviates from the government of South Africa, the NGOs Funanani and PEN, the staff from the day care and the coordinator from the orphanage, who pay great attention to the presence of the parent and their provided parental care. A day care teacher, who is also a mother herself, explains the attitude of the mothers, with reference to the general perceptions about raising your child in South Africa: “You, white people, have more time to do it. I am not saying all of you, but here we think a child will grow up anyway. Also with my kids I say: you are a child, you will learn anyway. Today here I am, you see” (Sienieke, PEN, 13-01-2015). By profiling herself as a mother instead of a professional, this lady shows the major influence of the social context on her own beliefs.

The study of Boyden (1997) explores this impact of the created ideal of childhood on children and their social environment. This ideal is based on a set of rights, embedded in law. These rights of children are based on the idea that children need to grow up in a carefree, safe, secure and happy surrounding. Although the norms and values of this ideal of childhood are originally based on Western ideas, they are also applied to countries with highly varied and contrasting social and economic conditions. By setting this standard, the diversity across the world is not taken into account, which can have impact on the children and their context (Boyden 1997: 192). The present study shows why this can be problematic for the children and/or their parents. While the created ideal of childhood focusses on a carefree period for children, many mothers in the study put great emphasis on the support their children provide within the household. When this ideal of childhood would be accepted by the parents, the children might become worthless for them. For the children it could be hard to position themselves in relation to the expectations of their parents to take care of the household and the family, while the key stakeholders urge them to take care of themselves. These expectations of the mothers can be seen as one of the main reasons why divergence is found between the mothers and some key stakeholders within the study. Another reason for this deviation could be that these parents just do not know any better: their parents lived like that and their grandparents, so they will live like that, and their children will live like that as well” (Eline, staff member Funanani, 27-01-2015). In this context, the children especially worry about the punishments they receive from their parents and day care staff. They often relate the sad boy on the emotion card (see appendix three) with themselves after they are beaten: “I feel upset when they beat me at home. With a belt. My mom. When I play soccer, and they want me to go and buy bread. And when I cannot find it, they beat me” (Aba, ten years old, 29-01-2015). Another important issue the children came up with in relation to their parents, is the absence of one or both of them and their desire to see them again. However, not only convergence about this topic has been found. A youngster, who lives at the ‘orphanage’ speaks about his childhood at his grandmother: “It is very ok like this. My granny always took really good care of me. She is like a mom for me” (Grevo, sixteen years old, 17-02-2015). This boy experienced his situation in a personal way, which demonstrates how children position themselves in different ways within the same setting. Sometimes the parents are still alive but they just leave for a few years or bring their young child to the extended family. This is related to the previously described view by Sienieke that children grow up anyway. Sihle, a boy of nine years old who lives in the
municipality of Tshwane, is feeling very confused about the departure of his parents: “I do not know. Because my mother said to me that she does not want to live with my sister anymore, because she is asking her a lot of things. My mother bought a new house, and now she is staying in it. I want to stay with my mother, because my sister is always shouting at me” (Sihle, 11-03-2015). None of the mothers talked about the above-mentioned issues of the children. When I asked them about the presence of the parent, they were especially worried about the difficulties related to raising their child alone.

In connection to these findings, Foster’s (2010) study, based on orphaned children in Africa, and the capacity of the extended family to care for them, is useful. Most of the time the aunts and uncles are responsible for the protection of these children. The next step within the research of Foster (2010) is the identification of indicators by which weakened or saturated ‘extended family safety nets’ can be identified. Children, for example, who belong to families which have little regular contact with relatives, have a higher risk to be abandoned. Foster concludes that the extended safety nets, although they are weakening, are still very predominant caring units in Africa. However, we need to be aware of the consequences when children cannot rely on a safety net, and live in extremely difficult circumstances (Foster 2010: 56). This study of Foster (2010) is applicable to the present study, given that many mothers rely on the safety net and try to build up a network with people who can help them. Especially grandparents play a significant role in the lives of the mothers and their children. However, as it is important for the parents to receive support from family, all children attach great importance to their social opportunities with siblings or friends. They felt unhappy when they were not in the position to undertake actions and activities, or when they were bullied. Remarkably, this dimension is not mentioned by any stakeholder or mother. The World Bank (2015), government and NGOs especially focus on ‘big concepts’ like basic needs, parental care and education and it seems like they do not approach this friendship criterion as important enough to include this in their policy instruments. The research of Sen (2004) can again be used as an explanation why this criterion is not mentioned by any of the stakeholders or mothers. Although they can recognize the importance of the criterion of friendship for children, they can valuate this criterion different than the children themselves. That is why Sen (2004) argues that these capabilities need to respond to public reasoning and the formation of social values (Sen 2004: 78). It is important to be aware that some children will have the abilities and qualities to deal with these structural constraints around them, and others do not.

With a focus on the need of protection, a criterion which is mentioned by the NOVA Institute and the church worker, the children themselves especially worry about their families’ safety, and are afraid people will do bad things to them. That is why they wish to be strong or have some power, with which they can change the situation. Fex, a boy of twelve years old who lives in a safe house, shows an example of this search for power with a drawing (figure two). His parents died of AIDS when he was a little child. Although he lives in a safe house with people who care for him, the belief his parents are killed by someone and he has to save them from death, is still present. He explains: “F: This is me, I am flying. And this is my family in the small cottage. And this person tries to kill my mom. She is laying in
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I: ‘Yes, wow. So, you saved them?’
F: ‘Yes, they are alive now’ (Fex, twelve years old, 24-01-2015).

Figure 2. Drawing Fex

Other children in the research are not afraid of these kinds of situations, but explain their fear for their own parents or teachers, especially when they are shouting or beating them. The mothers do not mention the dangers their children are afraid of. According to mother Mies, the social context ensures that this sense of security remains: “We are safe in our areas, because we know everyone. And we help one another. I watch my neighbour’s children. When a criminal comes, we make a sound, so everybody comes out of the houses. Then we grab the criminal. That is how we protect ourselves (Mies, 02-02-2015). They never talk about hitting or neglecting their own children, but admit it happens a lot in the neighbourhood.

3.5 The interaction between agency and structure

By studying how children and their social environment, having the specific label as vulnerable people, describe their own insights into their lives, power is given to the child’s agency and their wellbeing. One of the authors who recommended this paradigm shift within the anthropology of children, is Boyden (2003). She argues that childhood is not only shaped by personal and psychological universals, but also by personal factors of the children and the context around them (Boyden 2003: 10). That is why the possibility is provided to the children and their parents to give their own opinion.

However, as we have seen within this chapter that offers space to the agency-oriented perspective, we still have to take into account the structural constraints of the construction of
vulnerability. The perspectives of the children about their vulnerability are often mediated to them by their parents, teachers, the government or other stakeholders who are involved within their lives. Lancy (2012) agrees on this point and states that it is a necessity to be aware of this construction as set up by the stakeholders and appoints that we need to try to tackle the problems we encounter when children express their agency (Lancy 2012: 2). That is why Vigh’s (2009) concept of social navigation, as described in the introduction, needs to be applied to understand how children and their social environment act and react in these changing circumstances (Vigh 2009: 419). This view aligns with how Jackson (2005) describes, within his book that explores a variety of contemporary topics, the life world of children as “the outcome of a dynamic relationship between circumstances over which they have little control and their capacity to live those circumstances in a variety of ways” (Jackson, 2005, 14). The vision that children are positioning themselves within the circumstances of their culture, highlights the argument of Huijsmans et al. (2014), as described in the introduction of this thesis. Instead of romanticizing the agency perspective, we should not forget the social continuity around these children as agents as change and continuity go side by side (Huijsmans et al. 2014: 168). This argument explains why this study researches the tension between the constructed criteria of the key stakeholders and the reflections and actions of the children themselves and their social context.

The described intermediality approach of Evers (2012) is a powerful instrument to research this tension. The first step made it possible to analyse the different stakeholders within the study. Not only the World Bank (2015), government or NGOs are described, but also the people who are target of their policy instruments. The second step of the intermediality approach demonstrated that these key stakeholders are able to construct a concept, based on specific criteria. The perceptions and practices of these stakeholders resulted into the concept of vulnerability. Subsequently, it was interesting to understand how these actors are related to one another. Although the NGOs have other criteria than the World Bank (2015) and the government, they do not criticize them but innovate on them. This makes it important to discuss the last step of Evers’ approach (2012): where can we find convergences and divergences between them? We have to gain knowledge on these complex processes of interaction between changing conditions and settings (Evers 2012: 112). This implies, as argued within the study of Clark (2007) that we have to look beyond their constructed label of vulnerability. She (2007) did qualitative research on the ‘vulnerables’ categories applied to groups of refugees in Uganda. She found out that the created criteria not always hold true for all people categorized as vulnerable. This can result in underestimating other important criteria for the children themselves. That is why she advocates, instead of the categorization approach, to analyse the complex and nuanced realities of this concept (Clark 2007: 285). From this perspective, the next chapter will provide insights into the criteria the children came up with themselves.
4. Children’s necessities

“I want to change myself from young to old. I will do something different when I am older. I want to change something. I want to help my family” (Spesi, fifteen years old, 18-02-2015).

The previous chapter already described the children’s voices and their reflections and actions, related to the constructed criteria of vulnerability from the key stakeholders. However, besides these criteria, it is important to know what they think is needed in life themselves. In this way, we do not see the concept of vulnerability as a passive construction, but as part of children’s lives. It takes the contextual and relational aspects, which may influence their position, into account. These analysis will provide an answer to the second sub question: ‘What do children, viewed as vulnerable, perceive to be necessities for their own lives’?

4.1 Necessities

As already discussed through the concept of social navigation of Vigh (2009), children as agents and the surrounded structural conditions shape each other (Vigh 2009: 419). Sen’s (2004) theory of the capability approach provides valuable insights in this context. It is useful to follow the different steps this approach prescribes. The first step is already made in the previous chapter, through discussing the different criteria or capabilities on which the key stakeholders base the concept of vulnerability. As Sen (2004) argues, it is important to have such a set of basic capabilities that points out what we are free to do and free to be. The next step is the insight that these capabilities can offer some opportunities for the people within the structure, for example the capability to be educated. However, Sen (2004) argues that this set of capabilities, does not need to be fixed, because the capabilities are used for different purposes, in different social conditions and it denies the effectives of public discussion and reasoning (Sen 2004: 77-80). The children and their social context may differ in weight and importance they give to the criteria, and in their ability and qualities that help them to deal with structural constraints. That is why the last step will provide space to the children, to give their own social reality and values.

In order to get more insight in this capability approach of Sen (2004), and to understand the interplay between the described capabilities of the key stakeholders and the children’s capacities to use those opportunities and to create their own necessities, the actor’s system of Stoecklin (2012) will be used. Stoecklin (2012) did research on children in street situations in several countries, and the way they
develop their own ways of evaluation. To understand the way these children give meaning to reality, he introduced the actor’s system. This system uses different components namely: activities, relations, values, self-images and motivations. These components can be experienced in a personal way. That is why they are not considered as things per se (Stoecklin 2012: 448). This model with its different components is helpful to reconstruct children’s abilities and qualities to transform the capabilities into valuable activities, as argued by Sen (2004). In this way, Stoecklin (2012) tries to overcome the difficult dichotomy between the agent and structure.

One of the important criteria from the stakeholders, is the capability to be educated. Especially the World Bank (2015) and the government of South Africa attach great value to this criterion. Their motivation is related to the vision that the usage of this criterion can improve children’s future opportunities and their quality of life. They see the potential of children to be a major resource of national development (Statistics South Africa 2011: 2). The capability approach of Sen (2004) shows us that this provided opportunity from the key stakeholders can generate valuable outcomes for children. To reconstruct how children use this capability of education, the components of Stoecklin (2012) will be linked together. I found out that many children within the research make sense of the provided opportunity of proper education from the key stakeholders. The significance of this capability is often related to the description of vulnerable children in context of education, as mentioned in chapter three by Luvuyo; you need to be educated to get a proper job and follow your dream. Neno, a youngster from the ‘orphanage’ explains: “It is the best thing ever. Because I will get educated, and the best thing about school is that I can become anything. Because education is the key, the key to success” (Neno, seventeen years old, 16-02-2015). Almost all children within the study agree on the fact that this is beneficial for them and transform this provided opportunity in the valuable activity of going to school. However, through providing the children with the possibility to explain the values on which their necessity of education is based, as suggested by Sen (2004), the divergences between the group of key stakeholders and children, but also among children became clear. Some children have the ability to use this capability of education to develop relationships with friends at school, although this necessity is omitted by all key stakeholders. These children motivate that it is important to have good friends at school and in their neighbourhood. For other children it is hard to reach this necessity, because of personal characteristic or external factors. They are, for example, bullied by others, what makes it more difficult for them to have some friendships. This may also probably influence their images on self.

Another capability that would seem to demand attention by many stakeholders, is the freedom to grow up with parents. As argued by the government of South Africa (2011), the NGO Funanani, the
staff from the day care and the coordinator from the ‘orphanage’, children who grow up with one parent or neither their parents can be seen as vulnerable. A lot of convergence was found between the stakeholders’ perspective and the reflections of the children. Many children argue that it is a necessity to have your family around you. However, the actor’s system of Stoecklin (2012) shows us that there are different reflections and abilities among children related to this capability. One youngster motivates that the lack of safety was the main reason to undertake action and leave his mother behind to move to the ‘orphanage’: “My mother lives right now in a town, and I don’t like it to live in a town. The people there are different. When they do not like you, they just beat you. And the other people are bullying. It is dangerous. That is why I am living here” (Anthe, 18-02-2015). The capability approach of Sen (2004) shows us that this youngster describes his own social reality and the way he is ‘deprived’ of the capability of parental care, through external factors, such as his safety. Although the ability to be safe in general cannot be put invariably above or below the ability to grow up with parents, this boy took the provided opportunity to be safe. This indicates that the component of relations cannot be studied without taking values such as safety into account. Although this boy had the freedom to achieve parental care, he does not mention this as a real opportunity, given the social conditions. Lula, a girl of 16 years old from the municipality of Tshwane, shows that children can deviate a lot within their reflections and actions about the capabilities. She balances the importance of the capability of parental care and a proper house: “My parents. They are good. It is a small house, but with lovely people. That is the most important thing” (Lula, 28-01-2015). She gives less weight to the ability to be well-sheltered than the ability to grow up with parents. Although both youngsters ‘received’ the capability to grow up with their parent(s), they give their own social reality to the specific components of Stoecklin (2012), which led to different choices. The study of Bluebond-Lagner and Korbin (2007) also shows that there exists a complex interaction between different worlds that lead to children’s own reflections and interpretations on the important components in life. This argument is based on their study of five articles that researches the key challenges and opportunities within the study of children and childhoods. They found that children live in self-created worlds, but also in worlds that others have created for them and worlds in accordance with others (Bluebond-Lagner & Korbin 2007: 243). The capability approach of Sen (2004) and the study of Bluebond-Lagner and Korbin (2007), both explain that youth places another weight or importance on the created capability to grow up with parents. The boy Anthe puts great emphasis on the values of safety and self-determination, while the girl Lula uses the provided opportunity to grow up with her parents and build up a relationship with them. In line with these findings, I draw on Vigh (2009), who defines navigation as the way we navigate in a moving environment. This alternative vision shows that interactivity of practice is part of everyday life (Vigh 2009: 433). Both youngsters are a perfect example how we do so. Anthe decides to, instead of accepting his vulnerable position as constructed by the stakeholders and his predicted actions within the moving social environment, reflect and interacts within it. Although he has a good relationship with his mother and he has to leave her behind, he chose to be safe. This makes Anthe a social navigator. At the same time, the girl Lula also reflected on the
provided capability and decided to stay instead of undertaking action, like Anthe did. By positioning herself within the constructed context, she can also be seen as a social navigator. She does not just act, but interacts with her social environment. Both youngsters have the abilities and qualities to deal with the structural constraints around them. However, we still have to keep in mind that not all children within the present study have these abilities and qualities. They do not reflect on the different capabilities in their lives or move and shape their moving environment, like Anthe and Lula, but act in line with the provided capabilities within their lives. Sen’s (2004) argument shows that these children can be deprived of some capabilities, because of, for example, the ignorance that these capabilities exist (Sen 2004: 79). Another reason can be that these children act in line with the expectations of the social context around them, which shows the complicated mediation process.

Some children argue that the absence of a supporting family, or a bad relationship with one or both of their parents, makes them tired of being young and it motivates them to develop the ability to do it different when they are grown up, just as Spesi described in the introduction of this chapter. I had a conversation with a young boy from the municipality of Tshwane, who told me that his father left his mother when he was a young child. When I asked him about his necessities in life, he argued: “I want to be a bigger person. I want to be a father. I want my own children. I want to be different” (Lucky, twelve years old, 03-02-2015). This young boy already reflects on the social context around him, and describes the way he wants to interact within it. This component is also related to the wish of many children to help other people who struggle just as they do when they are grown up. They reflect about their self-images, and realize how they appreciate the help from others in their lives:

‘When we say goodbye, the father, mother and children take our hands and we form a circle. They all start praying in their own way. The mother squeezes tightly in my hand and starts to scream with closed eyes. When everyone is quiet again, they explain to us that they thanked God that we visited them and that we gave them hope for the future. Personally, it is hard to imagine that this visit of complete strangers, provided so much hope to this family. A smile on their faces makes me happy and sad at the same time’ (Field notes, 12th of January, 2015)’

This family fled from Congo to South Africa in search for a better life. However, it is uncertain if they are allowed to stay in South Africa. Lungile, one of the girls from the family, shows her worries, the things she likes in life and her wishes, by usage of the Fairy and Wizard tool (Figure 4. Turnell 2012: 36). She describes that everything is going well with her family and with God, she prays and fasts a lot. As explained through the capability approach of Sen (2004), the functioning of praying and fasting of this girl, needs to be conceptualized in a way that signifies individual’s capabilities (Sen 2004: 78). The girl explains that it helps her to escape from the worries of her schoolwork and the way they live. The perspectives of Lungile are in line with those from her father and mother, as shown through the prayer. It is likely that the perceptions of the parents are mediated to this girl. Other children within the study
deviate from Lungile on the reflection of the necessity of religion, dependent on a number of components of Stoecklin’s (2012) actor’s system. Some children argue that their relation with God helps them to ‘improve’ their self-image, but also the perspective of their parents about them. Many children motivate that they want their parents to be proud of them and build up good relationship with them. By going to church and praying, some children hope God is there to save them or to improve their situation. Therefore, the value of a relationship with God and the related motivations, activities and self-images, are very personal for every child within the research. This emphasizes the finding that every individual can achieve a capability in a personal way. The wish of Lungile, as described within her Fairy, is to go to university, to be a star and to help people. While colouring the drawing, she explains to me that she realizes, because of her own situation, how important it is to be there for others who struggle as well, build up a relationship, and help them (Lungile, fifteen years old, 12-01-2015). She wants to learn specific life skills in order to realize these necessities. In this context, it is relevant to discuss the article of Bartels et al. (2010) in which they deal with the link of cultural identity to human security. They argue it is important to recognize the cultural meaning of concepts people may have. However, at the same time we have to relate these individual experiences to the structural social and cultural processes around that person. The identity construction of one person always interacts with others, inside and outside their own group (Bartels et al. 2010: 128). The necessity of the girl from Kongo to learn life skills in order to help others, is different than the criteria as created by the key stakeholders. Instead of describing her need of a South African passport, the income situation of her parents or issues related to her safety, this girl describes the help she needs to offer to other people as a necessity, a criterion that is not mentioned by any stakeholder. These necessities are caused by the ‘we’ and ‘they’ feeling, related to her cultural background, her own difficult history and the current situation she lives in. These individual experiences of the social and cultural processes around her, makes that this divergence is found. This is exactly what makes Sen’s (2004) capability approach a powerful model within this context that balances the set of capabilities and the personal reality of people (Sen 2004: 78). By giving this girl the possibility to explain her own necessities, it became clear that she has a totally different reality than all key stakeholders within the

Figure 4. Fairy Lungile (fifteen years old)
study. However, at the same time we should not forget that children not always have the capability to fulfil these necessities. For example, because of financial resources or oppression from the other stakeholders. It can be difficult for parents to except the child’s necessity to help other people, since they need the children’s own help within the household. Parents can mediate these perception to the children, which may insure that these children will not take the opportunity to transform their necessity into valuable activities. Other children will have the abilities and qualities to deal with these structural constraints. Again, a strong interaction between agency and structure is found.

Since many stakeholders attached great importance to the income of the families as an important capability, we cannot ignore this topic when studying the necessities of the children themselves. However, just a few children mention the importance of money. These children motivate that this need especially has to do with the relationship with their parents. A youngster from the ‘orphanage’ explains this motive: “I hope to have a job that gives me a lot of money so I can buy a big house for my family. I do not like my mom staying here forever. I want to make her happy.” (Londi, seventeen years old, 09-02-2015). More attention is paid to the house the children live in. As they argue, they need proper facilities and more space to play and to have more privacy. Again the reflections of the children are in relation to the social relationship with their parents and their personal experiences. However, we cannot ignore the great emphasis placed by the key stakeholders on the criteria of income, their role in identifying basic necessities for children, and the way this may influence the perspectives and the actions of the children and their parents.

4.2 Sub-conclusion

The actor’s system of Stoecklin (2012) is used in order to consider the social actions of children, by the usage of five components: activities, motivations, relations, values and self-images (Stoecklin 2012: 448). The way in which their reality is formed and their well-being is achieved, can be displayed by the capability approach of Sen (2004). This approach showed us that children, who are labelled as vulnerable through the created set of capabilities from the stakeholders, need the freedom to achieve well-being by transforming these capabilities into valuable activities. This needs to be understood in terms of children’s opportunities to do so. It is important to display their own necessities and the weight and importance they put on those specific capabilities, in order to understand the final step of this study: in which way can the capabilities of children be helpful to improve their lives and to tackle the problems they encounter? There are many differences between the groups but also within the group of children in their ability to transform the capabilities into valuable activities, as presented in the actor’s system of Stoecklin (2012). The activity component, for example, showed us that many children like to go to school and get educated. This activity is also constructed by the stakeholders as a capability that needs to be considered as a freedom to achieve well-being. Both convergences and divergences are found between and within the stakeholder groups on their motivation to put great emphasis on the criterion of education. As well the World Bank (2015), the government, the coordinator of the orphanage and the
children stress the importance of education in order to have future opportunities. However, this is not the only motivation of many children to mention education as a necessity in their lives. Many children put great emphasis on the value of relationships with their friends at school. This component of friendship can be experienced in a personal way, which may influence the self-images of children who are bullied and do not realize their need of friendship. This example, based on the capability to be educated, shows the importance of the capability approach of Sen (2004); every component needs to be understood in terms of people’s capabilities, so their real opportunity to achieve well-being, is related to their personal reflections and characteristics and social opportunities or external factors (Sen 2004: 77). This is why the children not only deviate from the key stakeholders when it comes to the criteria, but also from each other.

These opportunities Sen (2004) mentions within his theory, are based on the way stakeholders construct the concept of vulnerability taking into account different criteria. Through these ‘basic capabilities’, they try to achieve their goal to improve the lives of children who met these criteria. This goal is congruent with Annan’s (2000) definition of human security and the aims of the United Nations, as described in the Millennium Report about the role these Nations in the 21st Century: “freedom from want, freedom from fear and the freedom of future generations to inherit a healthy natural environment” (Annan 2000: 17). However, when children are not able to express their own ideas, the situation may arise in which they feel that there is a lack of freedom to achieve well-being, since they do not have the ability to transform their own necessities into valuable activities. Salman’s (2010) research about the citizenship-debates in Bolivia, and the way people are taking risks for security’s sake, shows that “the notion of human security is helpful only when it is acknowledged that both security and insecurity come in many different shapes and forms, and that people’s perceptions, appraisals and responses are as crucial as ‘the facts’ of insecurity” (Salman 2010: 25). Eriksen (2010) agrees with Salman (2010) and emphasizes the link between this concept of security and the social anthropology. The security building from the stakeholders can cause feelings of security, but also insecurity, within the lives of people (Eriksen 2010: 5). Because of the fact that every child has its own perception on an ‘insecure situation’, it may result in political exclusion or feelings of insecurity, to limited freedom of choice, action and powerlessness for the children and their social environment.

In this context, it is relevant to discuss Gigengack’s (2008) study. This study describes his fieldwork of street ethnography, with a focus on street children in Mexico City. He argues that research on street children has to focus on the self-destructive agency within their lives. The importance of drugs within the lives of children is often trivialized by researchers. They argue for example that these children are victims of miserable circumstances and therefore fall into drug use, or they use drugs to suppress their hunger feelings. However, Gigengack (2008) argues that the use of drugs can be very important for the children and the problems they encounter. They can be necessarily to bind the children together, to earn money or to give them feelings of freedom. At the same time, they know the negative consequences of drugs and recognize their self-destructive agency. However, they still see drugs as
something they want, although it is bad for them. In this way, the children shape their own existence in which we cannot ignore the social context around them, which maintains the exclusion of these children. That is why we should not be blind to this self-destruction as a social problem and the way these children see it as an important part of their identity and their way of living (Gigengack 2008: 216). This article is applicable to the present study because of the fact that the children came up with some necessities that were not mentioned by any stakeholder, such as their need for friendship or the help they want to offer to other people. However, their social context highlights other capabilities, which can ensure that children do not have the freedom to achieve well-being. Similar to Gigengack’s (2008) study, the key stakeholders within this study should also not be blind to assessments of children themselves about their necessities in their lives. That is why the next chapter will study the different ways these children try to shape their own existence through using the capabilities in a way that they will be helpful for them to improve their lives, what can be seen as the expression of agency.
5. **Children’s active contribution**

“Sometimes I think my parents are angry at each other. And then me and my sister like to do funny stuff so they can laugh again” (Spe, eight years old, 11-03-2015).

As already briefly discussed within the previous chapter, children are able to make an active contribution to the construction of their lives, besides reflecting and acting within it. That is exactly what this young boy tries to do. By acting in a funny way, he changes the situation in a positive way. This shows that children are sometimes able to actively contribute in spite of the described power of the key stakeholders, who do not mention these kind of capabilities and the way they can be helpful for children to improve their own lives. That is why it is worthy to study these children in their own right and to increase knowledge on these contributions. In this way, the third sub question will be answered: ‘How do they make an active contribution to the construction of their lives (socially and economically) in Tshwane and Ethekwini?’

5.1 **Economic and social contribution**

When you think about the active contribution of children in municipalities where many stakeholders operationalize the concept of vulnerability in an economical way, this contribution will be often connected to the way children support the financial situation of their parents. This contribution can take place in a very practical way, like Aba describes: “I am already working for my money. I ask my grandmother to buy a lot of chips. Then, I pack them in little plastic bags and sell them” (Aba, ten years old, 29-01-2015). However, also some indirect contributions of the children to the financial situation of their parents need to be mentioned.

One of these indirect contributions is connected to the initiative of the government to facilitate the problems South Africa still faces, such as poverty, inequality and unemployment. The study of Samson, MacQuene and van Niekerk (2006) researches these initiatives, with a focus on the social grant system of South Africa. One of these types of social grant is the Child Support Grant, which provides support to families with children under the age of fourteen. Samson et al. (2006) found out that this system is effective to reduce poverty. However, they argue that the government needs a clearer picture of how these social grants affect different components within the households (Samson et al. 2006: 4). The study of Samson et al. (2006), which places great emphasis on the financial situation of the families, links with the constructed criteria of the concept of vulnerability in the present study. In addition to the argument of Samson et al. (2006), the different perceptions, focusing on the way these social grant affect households or the way they are used, are studied. Especially the mothers and day care staff agree with each other on this subject. They mention the importance and their dependency of the social grant system
to buy food and other important things for the children. This perception is comparable to the study of Armstrong et al. (2008) that is based on two surveys, as conducted by Statistics South Africa, showing that these grants are a highly important source of income for the poor households. Since the expansion of social grants in 1999, extreme poverty is significantly reduced (Armstrong et al. 2008: 21). However, another mother expresses her worries about the usage of the grants by many (young) mothers: “The government introduced the anti-conception. That is good because sometimes the children are two days old, and you see the mothers already with social grants. Two days! Because the problem is that they want the money. Girls who are sixteen or seventeen years, they already have children because they want to help themselves with their social grant. They fix their hair for the boyfriend. Some need the money, and some do not need the money and they use the money for themselves, not for the children” (Mies, 02-02-2015). The staff from the NOVA Institute and PEN share these concerns. In this way, the contribution of the children happens through ‘being there’, which allows parents to make a claim on the government’s system.

Another contribution of the children to the financial situation of their parents, is related to the help they offer within the household. This creates options for the parents to spend this time in earning money for the family. Already from a young age, children clean the house, do the dishes and take care of siblings. The perception of the children on this contribution deviates a lot. Some children argue that they do not like it at all, others state it is the most fun thing to do when they are home. The mediations from the parents to the children about their expected help, are clearly present. As explained in chapter three, there are also situations in which the parents move to another place for a few years, in search for a better life, and leave their children behind. In these situations, the younger children are totally depending on their older brother or sister. A youngster, who lives at the ‘orphanage’, reflects on the time her mother left her and her siblings alone: “I had to take care of everything. I was really aware of the situation. Because everything my brother and sister needed, they were telling me. And I was making a plan for them, because I had to take good care of them. For me, it was the hardest time ever. I will never forget this period” (Myra, seventeen years old, 16-02-2015).

As the previous sections demonstrate, children perform a range of activities within the household, like working for money, helping in the household or care work for their siblings. In this context, it is relevant to discuss Abebe’s (2011) study about the interface between work activities of children, gender and schooling in rural Ethiopia. Within his study, he researches the category of ‘childhood’, and the way it varies according to socio-cultural contexts and child-adult relations. Many studies highlight the importance of child’s agency and their interdependent needs. However, Abebe (2011) argues we cannot ‘single’ those rights, because they are intertwined with the capabilities and needs of the parents, siblings and extended family of the child. Although it is an ethical recommendation to take the rights of children into account who prescribe that children should not work, Abebe (2011) argues we need to move beyond these recommendations, and recognize the necessities of the children themselves, and the indirect benefits children receive by undertaking these activities. Many children
within the research of Abebe (2011) expressed themselves very positive about their contributions; it gives them a sense of renewed identity and self-worth, and it is important for their social position within the household. Moreover, these activities are very important for children to improve their social and economic independence and, for example, to attend school. So that is why Abebe (2011) argues that we need to gain knowledge about the role of children within this process and the way these activities are intricately entwined with the child’s life. When there exists a clear boundary between the ‘child’s work’ and the ‘adult’s work’, the wider context and social structures are not taken into account. We have to analyse how this context and the strategies of children are intertwined with each other (Abebe 2011: 169). With a focus on the present study and the constructed concept of vulnerability from the policy makers, these capabilities from the children are completely denied. Although one of their main criteria focusses on school possibilities for every child, they do not link this necessity to criteria such as child labour. The children themselves mention this link by explaining their wish or the necessity to learn life skills, and many children are proud about the fact that they already help in the household or take care of siblings. In this way, they describe the concept of education in a totally different way than policy makers, who just appoint the necessity of schooling. These indirect benefits for the children cannot be encouraged by the policy makers, because it needs to result in policy implications. All mothers within the research reflect in a different way on the contribution of their children, than the children themselves. They express their happiness about the received help. However, they argue that they are not depending on this help at all. This shows the difficult position of children in relation to the expectations of their parents to take care of the household and the family, while the key stakeholders urge them to take care of themselves. Some children were able to deal with these structural constraints around them, others were not.

The described situation of Myra, the girl who had to take care of her siblings while her mother searched for a job, can alert the neighbourhood or an NGO that help is needed within the family. She explains her ability to change the situation: “We asked for food and clothes to wear. Later on, the owner of the orphanage asked the housemother: why is she always asking for food and clothes? He took us from the compound” (Myrna 16-02-2015). From a young age, children are already able to tell others about their situation or show specific behaviour that contributes to the help that is provided to the family:

‘I ask the little girl (four years old) which boy on the emotion card presents her family. She points, without any doubt, to the little boy who shows the angry emotion. The staff member of the Hanna Foundation and I look to each other. ‘Why did you chose the angry boy?’ I ask her. She looks at me and answers: ‘My mother is drunk. My father dragged my mother out of the house. Mommy threw a rock to my daddy, through the window. She tried to get through the window to open the door. She cuts her arm’. After this conversation, while walking back to the car, we notice how the girl grabs a toy and starts kicking it. The staff member looks shocked and tells me: ‘wow, there is so much anger within this
girl. *I did not even know this was going on. I really need to get a social worker’* (Field notes, 28th of January, 2015).

Already, while she is still so young, this girl is able to tell about what is going on in her family and reinforces this with her specific behaviour. An NGO like the Hanna Charity and Empowerment Foundation uses this information to help the family with their problems. Within this contribution of the children, the staff of the day care centres also play an important role. They declare it is not that hard to recognize the children who struggle at home; most of the time they are not happy, do not eat at all or eat really fast and behave aggressive or really shy. One mother spoke about the important role of her children to alert other people: “Very important. When the children come to me and I am sick and alone over here, they tell other people: my mommy is sick, tell everyone” (Misa, 11-02-2015). In many cases, children do not only alert others, but also try to help their parent(s) and care for them. Both situations can be seen as active contributions of children.

The described worries in the previous section about children’s development or needs from a stakeholder such as the Hanna Charity and Empowerment Foundation, can result in provided help for the whole family. Children are still seen as the main victim of the vulnerable situation the parents live in. However, as shown through the constructed concept of vulnerability from the government, the NOVA Institute, the NGOs Funanani and PEN, the day care staff and the coordinator of the orphanage, agree on the point of view that the social interactions and relationships around children influence their development and activities. That is why most of the help of these stakeholders is focused on the whole family. As described by a staff member of the Hanna Charity and Empowerment Foundation, some mothers consciously use this vision to reach their own goal: “They say: you know, I need your help. I need food for my children” (Henny, staff member Hanna Charity and Empowerment Foundation, 14-01-2015). However, within the Chics Programme of the NOVA Institute, there is no benefit for the parents in the sense of money or resources. The benefit for the parents is especially focused on their conscious choice to support the development of their child. A staff member of the NOVA Institute explains: “The role of the child is crucial. Chics do not have any direct benefit for the parents then for example grants have. The benefit for parents is that they can be part of the support group, and they can think together about the education of their children. But there is no cash hand out or benefits in the sense that they can have almost misuse the fact that they have a child. I think the progress in children and the way we see results. That is important” (Marrow, the NOVA Institute, 03-02-2015). So, the contribution of the children to the construction of their lives deviates a lot, depending on the vision and provided help of stakeholders.

The previous sections showed the different economic contributions from the children to the construction of their lives. However, the vision of the NOVA Institute describes that the contribution of children also takes place in a social way. This social contribution may occur on different levels. One example is the happiness of children that can give parents and the social environment the strength and
inspiration they need to enjoy life, despite the hard circumstances they live in. Especially the mothers within the research describe the new energy they receive from the happiness of their children. However, a big divergence is found within the group of children related to the way they provide their social contribution. Although some children show their happiness, others profile themselves in a way as expected of them, without showing many emotions. Especially at the day care centres this ‘go with the flow’ mentality of children is clearly present. They often sit for a long time at one place, waiting for the next instruction of the teacher. A staff member from the NGO Funanani explains these expectations of children in relation to the cultural background in South Africa: ‘In South Africa we have that saying: ‘children are supposed to be seen, but not heard’, meaning that they not speak in adults’ presence. It is strong related to the African culture, very strong. That is why the children will not say anything, they are very reserved, even if they are not general reserved when they play by themselves. When they are sitting in the classroom, they do not have that wildness, it is very sad’ (Eline, staff member Funanani, 27-01-2015). This cultural background can be very important and relevant for some individuals. It explains why they see this motive of action and position of the children as a big contribution. The children try to realize this contribution by mediating in specific ways and settings.

This described mediation of children takes place often, although many children are aware of the situation they live in and have clear ideas on what they actually need in life (as shown in chapter two). An important note in this context is that not all children mention the difficulties or lacks within their own lives. One youngster of the ‘orphanage’ reflects on this ‘different worldview’ of the younger children, and the way it affects their necessities: “When you are here, it is far from town. A lot of the opportunities are in town. They never had people coming here, telling them about different universities. They know that it exists, but they have never seen it before and it is like you are talking about an alien universe for them, you know? I tried to take some of them to an university so they can see what it is. They do not know there is a world out there, they have never been there. With ‘Be the Miracle’ we try to improve an environment where children are able to show their talent” (Luvuyo, seventeen years old, 10-02-2015). This boy set up his own non-profit company and tries to offer future opportunities to the youngsters from the community by showing their talents. This initiative shows that children not only contribute to the construction of their own lives and that of their families, but also from the people around them. This is frequently connected to their perception that they need to help others, because they experienced the situation themselves and know how important help from others can be.

Another social contribution of the children that needs to be mentioned, is the way they (try to) improve the self-image of the parents and make them proud. One mother for example, explains the moment she stopped with drugs because she found out she was pregnant. She mentions that it is all her fault that her children have to grow up in a situation like this. However, children can contribute by reassuring and putting it in perspective: “She says: mommy, mommy, do not worry and then I feel better” (Tina, 14-01-2015). Especially the day care staff and the mothers within the research attach great value
to this type of contribution of the child. Also the children know very well for themselves how to make their mothers happy, for example by doing their best at school.

5.2 Children’s resilience

As shown within this chapter, each child reacts in its own way on the circumstances they live in, and provides a different economic and social contribution to their lives. This emphasizes children’s individuality and shows children’s creativity. Besides the perspective of children who ‘survive’ their childhood in an economically deprived municipality, attention is also paid to their capacities to make a contribution. Peek (2008) argues in her article that this contribution of children explains the relation between the concept of vulnerability and resilience. She gives a comprehensive overview of eleven articles that study children’s experiences and reactions on (a constant state of) disaster, for example chronic poverty or unsafe conditions. Children who grow up in these kinds of situations, are often described as vulnerable as it can affect their personal growth and development. The vulnerable ‘label’ of children can be divided into three different types: psychological, psychical and educational vulnerability, each with several risks. However, Peek (2008) points out that the children cannot be seen as ‘passive victims’. They can participate within these disasters and may have creative ideas to recover or make the disaster more bearable. That is why it is important to hear about children’s own experiences, and how this varies across groups, cultures and contexts. She argues that, this “ability of people and communities to survive, adapt, and recover from loss and disruption”, described as disaster resilience, needs to be promoted in order to reduce their vulnerability. According to Peek (2008), this is possible through improving their access to resources and information, empower their participation in activities related to the disasters, and by supporting them. At the same time, this will also be helpful for children’s families and the community to recover from the disaster. Most of the time, local and national governments and NGOs have no experience in these processes of including children, although this can also be very helpful for themselves, the community and the children’s families to recover from the disaster (Peek 2008: 20).

Also Camfield’s (2011) study offers a helpful tool to gain more knowledge on this concept of resilience. This study presents case-based analysis of four children from urban Ethiopia, in order to receive more knowledge of their pathway to wellbeing within a poor community, and the role of social connections within these pathways. In this way, Camfield (2011) would like to find out how it is possible that many children, who grow up in materially poor communities in Ethiopia, still report high levels of well-being. In this study, she uses resilience, defined as “a person’s capacity to recover from, adapt to, and/or remain strong in the face of adversity”, to frame the analysis, besides the Young Lives household and child questionnaire. Although this definition of resilience can be helpful to understand the concept, Camfield (2011) argues that this concept needs to be socialized. For example, the social competencies of children in the study were really important to construct a network that can be helpful to access resources that may be important for themselves, for example being well-nourished. However, these
social competencies can also be disadvantageous, for example when children feel obliged to help in the household instead of going to school. This explains the potential of social relationships of children, but also the limitations of it (Camfield 2011: 408).

The complex interaction between the potential and the limitations of children’s social competencies as resulted from their resilience, is comparable to the described theory of Abebe (2011). The capabilities children come up with, can be of indirect benefit for themselves, their family and the community (Abebe 2011: 169). The present study shows for example, how the described capability of education from the World Bank (2015), the government and the coordinator of the orphanage, is not only of benefit for the children’s future opportunities, but also children’s friendships or the pride of parents. These benefits can also have co-benefits for the children. An example is how Grevo, a youngster from the ‘orphanage’, explains why he needed these friendships in order to obtain his other necessities: “Like at school, they were having extra money. On school, I was hungry, because I was not eating before I was going to school. And then, even in the class, you cannot concentrate when you are hungry. So, they bought me chips and stuff, and then I ate” (Grevo, sixteen years old, 17-02-2015). In this particular case, the necessities of this child and the indirect benefits by undertaking these activities find convergence with the key stakeholders around him; it is not against their policy implications. However, the study of Abebe (2011) also showed us that it can become problematic when divergences between the children’s necessities and those from the stakeholders will become too big, and children do not have the possibility anymore to develop their resilience, as long as these stakeholders deny this indirect contribution (Abebe 2011: 169). Although the stakeholders can mention the same necessity as children, for example the capability of education, they cannot always encourage the capacities of children to achieve this necessity, because they might deem this to be child labour. In proportion to the results of Camfield (2011), the present study also found a link between the social competencies of children to access resources. Because children already work for money or take care of siblings, there is money available to gain access to education. That is why Abebe’s (2011) vision that we have to listen to the children beyond just hearing them, goes one step further and argues that we need to ground these perceptions of the children within a reinterpretation of the benefits of the specific activities of the children in their social and cultural context (Abebe 2011: 169). Policy makers could potentially gain from these insights children have into their lives and what they consider to be elementary to build a good life. In this way, the described critique of Lancy (2012) about the concept of agency is taken seriously, and a balance will be sought between the perspective of children as agents with their own reflections, the concept of culture and the constructed expectations of a good life.
6. Conclusion

The present study investigated children’s navigations in the context of the economically deprived municipalities of Tshwane and Ethekwini. The aim of the study was to explore the tension between the label of vulnerable children in need of protection, as constructed by the key stakeholders within these municipalities, and the children, who receive this label, as agents, expressing their perceptions, necessities and their contributions to the construction of their lives. The aim was also to gain more knowledge about the consequences when this tension will grow and the different stakeholders are blind to assessments of children themselves on their necessities in life.

An ambitious theory to provide valuable insights in this context, is Evers’ (2012) intermediality approach. This approach, as first used by Evers (2012) in her research of socio-cultural dynamics in foreign large-scale land projects, can be used as a tool to bring the existing convergences and divergences of ideologies between and within the stakeholder groups into the limelight, and it prescribes some important steps to take within the study (Evers 2012: 112). As shown through the first step of this approach and by usage of the stakeholder analysis method, there are various key stakeholders who play an important role within the research setting and who construct the concept of vulnerability, based on specific criteria. The dialogue on this subject and the way these stakeholders innovate on each other, tries to fill niches they deem important or deviate, made it essential to understand their perceptions and practices, as suggested by the second step of Evers’ (2012) approach.

Both the World Bank (2015) and the government of South Africa operationalize the concept of vulnerability in a highly economic way. They show the high unemployment rate and the way this influences the basic opportunities of the children who live in these economically deprived municipalities. The different NGOs introduce some other criteria in which they construct the concept of vulnerability, such as the parental care, the school facilities, the day care skills, the need of child protection and the focus on the white poor people instead of the Black South Africans. By doing so, they do not criticize this particular paradigm of children in need of protection as constructed by the World Bank (2015) and the government, but innovate on it, or in some cases, just take it for granted. The final step of the intermediality approach of Evers (2012) made clear that not only between, but also within the groups of stakeholders divergences are present. This insight helped me to realize that these stakeholders cannot be placed into one level or group and do not all think in the same way. As a result, the stakeholders mediate in specific ways and settings, as a deliberate strategy to reach their own goals.

The next step within the present study was, by studying these different key stakeholders, to obtain knowledge on who and how people receive this label, and reflect and act within these municipalities. Boyden (1997), who focuses on the constructed concept of childhood within her study, argues that policy makers have a huge impact on local people (Boyden 1997: 195). Another reason to listen to the children themselves, was provided by Clark’s (2007) study about the problems we encounter...
when we focus on this constructed label. She (2007) argues we cannot approach these children as a homogenous group, and secondly, we need to take the contextual and relational aspects into account that influence their position (Clark 2007: 285). In line with these findings, I draw on Vigh’s (2009) concept of *social navigation*. This concept explains that the children are not only shaped by the changing environment around them, such as the criteria as set up by the stakeholders, but they are also able to adapt to it, shape it and move within it (Vigh 2009: 433). It appeared that many children, although they emphasize their basic needs such as water and food, pay more attention to the importance of the criteria of education, relationships with parents, teachers and friends, and the safety of their family. However, also within the stakeholders group of children divergences are found related to the weight they give to the different criteria. This made it important to realize that some perceptions of children are mediated to them by the key stakeholders or the social context around them, such as some authors propose. Lancy (2012) for instance, criticizes the agency perspective, when the context and constraints are not taken into account. He argues that we need to try to tackle the problems we encounter (Lancy 2012: 2). This is also highlighted in the argument of Huijsmans et al. (2014) that we should not romanticize the agency perspective, but identify the social continuity around the children (Huijsmans et al. 2014: 168).

Sen’s (2004) *capability approach* provides helpful insights in this context. He argues that this continuity around children prescribes capacities that point out what we are free to do and free to be. This made it important to describe the criteria on which the concept of vulnerability is based, such as the freedom to be educated. However, this list of criteria or capabilities does not need to be fixed and space is needed for the people themselves to accomplish their own social reality and values. They can have abilities and qualities that help them to deal with structural constraints (Sen 2004: 77). That is why the present study provided children the opportunity to express their own necessities for their lives. *The actor’s system* of Stoecklin (2012) that uses the components activities, relations, values, self-images and motivations, maps the way in which children give meaning to reality and their opportunities to transform the capabilities into valuable activities (Stoecklin 2012: 448). The children came up with a number of criteria that were completely omitted by the key stakeholders and their social context, such as the need of friendship and their desire to help others who struggle as well. Sometimes a situation occurred in which the key stakeholders and the children emphasized the same criteria, but reflected on it in different ways. An example within the study is based on the construction of the concept of education. Despite the fact that the children, just like the government, the NGO PEN, the day care staff and the coordinator of the orphanage, putted great emphasis on the necessity of schooling in order to improve their future perspective, they also motivated that the meaning of this concept is based on their practices and other criteria, something that Evers (2011) stresses in the connection between cultural concepts and differences between and within groups of people (Evers 2011: 6). Many children mentioned that education is important to build up relationships with others, such as their teachers and friends, or to make their parents proud. In this way, these children make sense of the provided opportunity from the key stakeholders that prescribes the capability of education, in order to meet their own necessities.
However, at the same time we should not forget that children not always have the capability to fulfil these necessities. Parents can, for example, mediate to the children that it is important to help within the household, instead of playing with friends. Although the found divergences between the criteria from the key stakeholders and the children not always cause problems, the situation may arise that the goal from key stakeholders to reach ‘freedom from want, freedom from fear and the freedom of future generations to inherent a healthy natural environment’, can give children the feeling there is a lack of freedom, if they cannot express their own ideas or do not have the possibilities to deal with it (Annan 2000: 17). This made it necessary to take the final step of this study: studying how these abilities and qualities of children can be helpful for them to actively contribute to the construction of their lives, and what may happen when the divergences between the key stakeholders and the children’s reflections and actions become too big, and the stakeholders are blind to assessments of children themselves on their necessities in life. This step was based on Gigengack’s (2008) argument that we need to study how children’s reflections and actions can be important for them within their lives. At the same time, we cannot ignore the social context around them that highlights other capabilities, which can ensure that children do not have the freedom to achieve their well-being (Gigengack 2008: 216).

Different economic and social contributions of children within the municipalities of Tshwane and Ethekwini were found. To support the financial situation of their parents, children already work for their money. This contribution also takes places on an indirect level. Through the Child Support Grant, parents receive money for every child under the age of fourteen. Another financial contribution from the children is the help they offer within the household that creates options for the parents to work or search for a job. Children can also display specific behaviour that alerts others that help is needed within the family. That is why most of the help of NGOs also focuses on families with children. Social contributions of the children are for example their happiness that strengthens and inspires people around them, or the way they (try to) improve the self-image of parents by reassuring and putting it in perspective. These contributions of children show the resilience children may have, described by Camfield (2011) as the person’s capacity to recover, adapt to, and/or remain strong in the face of adversity (Camfield 2011: 408). When we socialized this concept, it became clear that it may be beneficial for children, for example through improving the lives’ circumstances of themselves and their families. However, in agreement with the findings of Camfield (2011), it became clear that this concept may also cause limitations, especially when there is a big divergence between the children and the key stakeholders.

The study of Abebe (2011) is useful to give an explanation of this argument. His study shows us that these contributions of children are intricately entwined with livelihoods of themselves, their families and communities. Children benefit from contributions such as care work for siblings or working for money, since this makes them able to, for example, go to school. Although the key stakeholders emphasized the necessity of education, they do not encouraged this intricately entwined benefit for children. In fact, they discourage criteria such as child labour. Abebe (2011) argues it will be impossible
for children to further develop this resilience, as long as these stakeholders deny the indirect contribution (Abebe 2011: 169).

‘Not every superhero wears a cape’, the main title of this thesis, integrates all conclusions as stated above. If we see children as vulnerable and in need of protection, like the key stakeholders do, we can give them a cape to protect themselves. This cape can cause feelings of security for the children, but also insecurity when children want to express their own reflections and necessities. In this case, we can provide children a cape to stand up for themselves, and stimulate their agency. However, both suggestions ignore the interaction between agency and structure. When children express their agency, there are still many structural problems to tackle. They act and react within the changing circumstances as social navigators. At the same time we might realize that children do not always wear a cape, but still have the possibility to contribute to their life’s context. The specific actions and reflections of children can have mayor benefits for their own lives, and those of their family and community. It is important for policy makers to be aware of this and it might help them to construct an environment that makes it easier for children to fend for themselves.
7. Literature


8. Appendix

Appendix 1. Matrix of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Stakeholder</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Fictitious names</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Interview date (d/m/y)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Lucky</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Crux After Care Center</td>
<td>03/02/2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Aba</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Crux After Care Center</td>
<td>29/01/2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Child</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Nafuba</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Crux After Care Center</td>
<td>29/01/2015</td>
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<td>Emotion card</td>
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<td>Nephin</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Funanani – primary school</td>
<td>11/03/2015</td>
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<td>Funanani – primary school</td>
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<td>Lesly</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Funanani – primary school</td>
<td>11/03/2015</td>
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<td>Thandile</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Funanani – primary school</td>
<td>11/03/2015</td>
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<td>Male</td>
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<td>11/03/2015</td>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>Funanani – primary school</td>
<td>11/03/2015</td>
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<td>Sihle</td>
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<td>Funanani – primary school</td>
<td>11/03/2015</td>
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Not every superhero wears a cape. Children’s navigations in a context of deprivation and vulnerability in the municipalities of Tshwane and Ethekwini (South Africa)

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Appendix 2. the Fairy and Wizard tool
Appendix 3. Emotion card