

"An Act of (Digital) Kindness Goes a Long Way": An Overview of the Involvement of Digital Devices in the Enactment of Space and Places

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ABSTRACT

Lefebvre's view on space is explained as three modes of existence: Spatial Practices, Representation of Space, and Representational Space. These modes leave the question about how we can observe these different space modes when conducting empirical studies? Drawing from works of John Law on material semiotics, we argued that these modes, although they stand as conceptual and perceptual, are enacted by material entities. Although the enactments are strictly material, these enactments can "create" changes through material, social, even mental aspects of humans by affecting the performativity done related to these enactments.

We observe how these material enactments were arranged, performed, and established in Ciliwung River Community, Depok. This community can transform the Ciliwung River area that previously categorized as critical land and abandoned by nearby locals – which is consisted of the newcomer, contractors, and foreign business owners – into a place where education and entertainment were encouraged beside the riverbanks and under the bridge. Communities like such are initiated the idea of river restoration but only gained wider attention after the recent social media boom. The ideas of restoring the Ciliwung River extend through digital spaces, most notably Instagram and Facebook, creating a new perception of the river and spread it through social media.

Drawing from the Ciliwung River Community's case, we argued that "creative" and "space" are enacted concepts that stemmed from various human and non-human arrangements. Those concepts are not static but a performativity concept that can change relative to the arrangements. Above all, digital technology gave the human a new ability related to the sign – a representation – that can be circulated while keeping the idea intact.

Keywords: *Production of Space, Material Semiotics, Creative Space, Ciliwung River, Performativity.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The widely spread usage of social media and smartphones is changing everyone's life in this era. It could be said a new emerging civilization with the people are getting immersed in using various social media platforms and smartphone devices. Along with this widespread behavior came along a few discourses that propose the usage of this technology. Some say there is an optimization of economic activities, while others emphasize its usage in various social and cultural processes. Simultaneously, other associated digital

technology with the formation of space leads to the growth of creativity and fosters knowledge economy.

Regardless of what the introduced term is, the question remains unanswered. What does digital technology do to enable creativity? Moreover, what is the relation of these to the concept of space? These questions are proven to be central when we would take a step further in utilizing digital technology to foster creativity, leading to innovation and economic growth. This question also begets the explanation of agency in digital technology. What action does digital technology enable, and for whom that action is relevant?

This research aims to discuss the basic understanding of Lefebvre's space, John Urry, and Setha Low. The research attempts to propose a novel understanding of space and its relation to objects by learning from these works. Utilizing John Law's Material Semiotics as a conceptual framework, this research employs a Science and Technology Studies paradigm that relies on Actor-Network Theory's approach. This research's proposition is then tested in the Ciliwung River Community's empirical studies, a grassroots community located in the Depok section of Ciliwung River. This community promotes protection and environmental restoration along riverbanks, which they have done it with various attraction and communal activity—these activities include raising awareness through social media posts.

2. SCHOLARLY CONTEXT

Lefebvre [1] mentioned that space is produced through social practices and material conditions from this space and time; it depends and is shaped by macro-scale policies and innovations. Lefebvre shows that space and time are socially produced and held through administrative policies, social conventions, and technological systems for life. Apart from the material aspects of space and place formation, it also reveals the real and latent ideology that underlies this materiality. [1] Lefebvre derives his conceptual triad of spatial practice, representations of space, and spaces of representation. [2]

The first element that Lefebvre addresses are representations of space; Lefebvre suggests that it is the main space in current society and the conceptualized space constructed out of symbols, codifications, and abstract representations. [1] These representations are the 'logic and forms of knowledge, and the ideological content of codes, theories, and the conceptual depictions of space.' [3]

The second element to consider is spatial practices, which 'embraces production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation.' [1] As such, it comes together with other triadic elements to ensure the levels of cohesion and competence required for society's everyday functions, the spatial events of life. This 'cohesion through space implies, in connection with social practice and the relating of individuals to that space, a certain level of spatial "competence" and a distinct type of "spatial performance" by individuals.' [3] It is the learned, but often eventually intuitive, spatial practices that enable individuals to participate effectively in a spatial event.

The third element of the triad, spaces of representation, is the space of lived experience; it is a space 'as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of "inhabitants" and "users." [1] It is the space that overlays physical space as it is lived in the everyday course of life. It is the aspect of

space that embraces the partiality of representation and knowledge systems, and which Lefebvre tries to ensure prominence in any engagement within a spatial event. It is the representation spaces that form, inform, and facilitate the deviations, diversity, and individuality that are fundamental aspects of any social encounter.

Mobility is always located and materialized and occurs through mobilizations of locality and rearrangements of places' materiality. [4] Mobilities also include movements of images and information on local, national, and global media. The concept embraces one-to-one communications such as the telegraph, fax, telephone, mobile phone, and many-to-many communications effected through networked and increasingly embedded computers. [5] Mobility turn introduced by Urry [4, 5] gave an operational basis that can be measured when observing how space is being constructed. Institution and social practices rely on a few combinations from certain mobility. [6] Suppose Lefebvre and Urry have different dispositions about space. In that case, Low is describing how do their contributions are being put together on explaining how material movement based on different immaterial aspects, commonly know as schools of thought, can emerge.

On the other hand, a French Sociologist, Michel Callon, proposes the translation to explain what an actor carries an act. The notion of translation proposed by Callon is attributed to the universal concept of an entity's action; regardless, the entity is a human or non-human. Carillon's proposition is useful to explain what is every actor does in their role. The concept of translation consists of two notions: the actor and its goal. Callon's translation assumes that every actor has a purpose for acting, and that is because its goal has never been reached. The actor took a "detour" to fulfill this purpose: to enlist another actor who also has a different purpose of achieving each other's goals. This detour consists of various dialogues between actors, be it negotiations, compromises, even controversies. Assuming the detour success, and thus the translation has been established, we can see at least two different actors work in unison towards a goal. It might not be the former or latter actor's goal; it may be a different set of new goals altogether. The previously mentioned "mobility" is a kind of "detour" in Callon's term.

Taken from this assumption about what actors do and drawing from Urry's and Lefebvre's works, we argued that the notion of space is a conceptual framework that is defined by its purpose, a goal. [1, 4, 5] One might assume space is formed or produced in Lefebvre's term if there are goals to achieve or a purpose to be fulfilled. Space as a concept is a form of a "detour" done by actors to fulfill their purpose. Therefore, the concept of space is abstracted from various negotiations, compromises, and controversies done by one's action to another. In other

words, a movement of mental entities that establish space. By going with this framework, we can safely assume that the notion "there is some space" is regarded as one's action to relate or connect to another entity to fulfill one's purpose.

By being connected or related to another entity, one would recognize another characteristic, its behavior when related to something else, even its actual conditions. Shortly put, one would have greater comprehension about another when getting connected or related; this comprehension might be based on the connection's intensity. On the contrary, how can we determine two entities are connected? Our proposed answer is that if there are connections between these entities, one must be aware of others' changes. In other words, we can say there is a connection when an entity changes; the other is aware of this change. In this regard, space is enacted to achieve a purpose; this is done by abstracting, building an association between entities.

Assume that the connection between two human entities, namely "A" and "B", has a different body, mind, and aptitude. However, both of them have the purpose of being fulfilled. "A" perceives "B" can help to achieve A's purpose, and vice versa. To do a proper translation, "A" should have enough understanding of B: B's inclination towards its goal, B's characteristics, choices, conditions, or even past achievements that are relevant for A to judge whether B is a proper person to be asked for help in A's effort fulfilling its goal. The same goes for B in fulfilling its purpose, both of them developing an understanding of each other and themselves. Assuming later translation is a successful one, a properly addressed negotiation should be built based on these understandings of each other and oneself. We argued that the notion of "properly addressed negotiation" would refer to creativity. What is abstracted by creativity, in reality, is how A present a solution to B's problem and vice versa, while on the other hand, both of them reworks their solution to fit each other's interests. This "reworking" is an action to be abstracted as creativity. Drawing former argument about space, this action of building understanding and reworking each other's solution consists of negotiating and compromising the connection to each other, which is later coined in a term as "Creative Space" which consists of negotiating and compromising purposes, thus formed a myriad concept of spaces.

How could digital technology contribute to this negotiation of purpose and transformation of space? The prominent feature of digital technology is sharing and update; these are features of social media that are distinctly different from a static website from the information age. Sharing features allows social media users to capture and present their actual conditions as they see fit; this feature allows other users to view and build an understanding of one's disposition to a certain degree. On the other hand, the update feature allows

social media users to accommodate temporal aspects in their shared content. It enables other users to understand the sharing user's actual dispositions, keeping the judgment relevant from time to time. These two features enable negotiations and compromises on time and keep the enacted space's relevance to the previously agreed goals or purpose.

3. METHODOLOGY

Material semiotics is an approach to exploring how practices in the social world relate to forming bonds that are simultaneously semiotic (because they are relational or they carry meanings) and material (because they are about the physical stuff caught up and shaped in those relations.) It assumes no single social structure or patterning form because these material and social webs and weaves come in different forms and styles. [7]

Instead, approaches are used to explore a variety of topics, which include: how the bonding process is achieved or fails in practice; where does the bonding material come from; their characteristics, and what they exclude; their productivity and activities, including how they form the bonding materials that compose them; the goals they expect; the variety of different realities they create; how they interact with, conflict with, or ignore one another; how are they colonize or are colonized by other webs; how they produce domination; and how such forms of domination might be resisted.

In short, it is to trace how they pattern themselves in weaves, webs, or networks and to explore the consequences of their patterning. At a time when environmental aspects have been largely neglected, there are many case studies in material semiotics exploring how nature and nature are treated, how they are separated from culture, and the political and analytical implications of this split. [8, 9, 10] Material semiotics resists reductionism and assumes that social life weaves are messy and multiple. [11]

This research takes place at the Ciliwung Depok Community. A community at the riverbank of the Ciliwung river. Initiated by Mr. Taufik that interested in Ciliwung riverbanks and their mistreatment, Ciliwung Depok Community started as a Facebook page. It was a prominent community among the Ciliwung river and has expanded its interest in various other activities regarding the river.

4. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

4.1. First Phase: Advocation of the Riverbanks

The story begins with Mr. Taufik, a river enthusiast, who wanted to raise Depok citizens' awareness of their environmental crisis regarding the riverbanks' development. In January 2013, Mr. Taufik made a

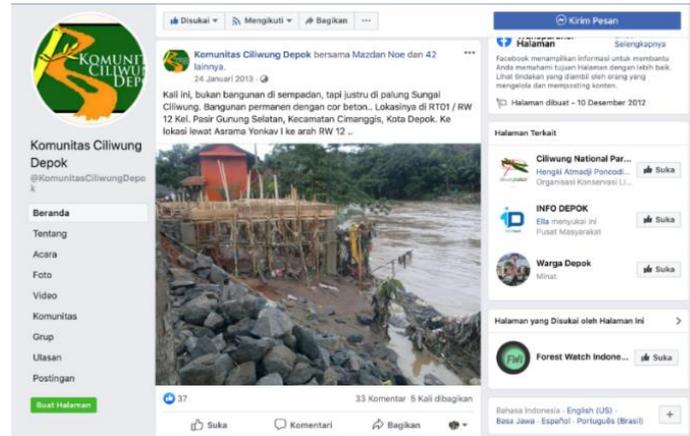


Figure 1. Facebook Screenshot of Ciliwung Depok Community, January 2013. Source: Ciliwung Depok Community, *Komunitas Ciliwung Depok*. Source: [12]

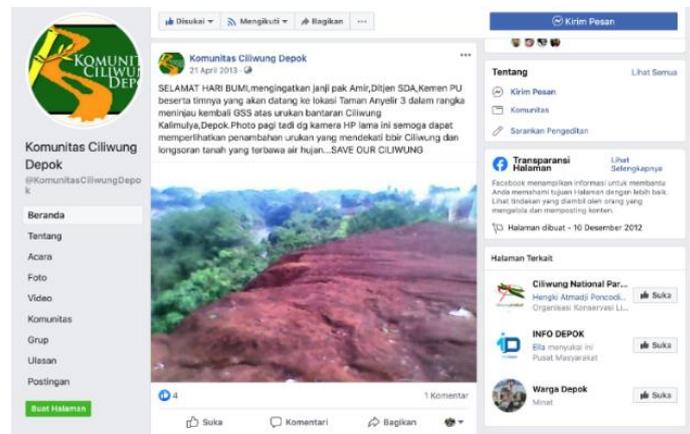


Figure 2. Facebook Screenshot of Ciliwung Depok Community, April 2013. Source: [12]

Facebook page entitled "Komunitas Ciliwung Depok" to publish his photos and stories about his experience in traveling along Ciliwung riverbanks. Attached below is the picture of the first Facebook post that Mr. Taufik made in January 2013.

The caption of Figure 1 particularly highlighted how the riverbed is being treated. Mr. Taufik wanted the reader of this post, aware that the river it is also known for, to be mistreated. He was also given a particular direction for those who wanted to confirm his statement in the post and the picture's credibility. Mr. Taufik attempted to connect the readers of his post on Facebook and the Ciliwung riverbed. In some other post, Mr. Taufik also takes a picture of riverbanks and mention a few people that Mr. Taufik thought can change the riverbanks condition. Such as the following post.

The post caption reads: *"This time, not a building on the riverbank, but instead on the riverbed of Ciliwung River, but a permanent building with a concrete cast. The location is in RT01/RW12 Pasir Gunung Selatan Village, Cimanggis District, Depok City. Reach here through First Cavalry Battalion to the RW12..."*

In Figure 2 caption reads: *"HAPPY EARTH DAY, reminding the promises of Mr. Amir, General Director of Water Resources, Ministry of Public Works, along with his teams that would come to Taman Anyelir 3 to review GSS of Ciliwung Riverbanks backfills Kalimulya, Depok. The photo was taken this morning with this old phone camera, [I] hope can show the addition of backfill that encroaching Ciliwung river and landslides that carried by rainwater... SAVE OUR CILIWUNG."*

The particular post highlight how the public servant is neglecting the Ciliwung river. Mr. Taufik emphasizes this negligence with a photo taken regarding landslides and backfill from the nearby development area. The focus of Mr. Taufik's posts is about how rivers are being threatened by nearby development and how locals should be aware of the threat if certain actions regarding the river do not occur.

Mr. Taufik's efforts are not limited to Facebook posts. He also encourages his readers to meet up in the riverbanks and do their expedition to go along the riverbanks with Mr. Taufik. Two pictures on Figure 3 depict how Mr. Taufik brought his Facebook post readers to the Ciliwung river and doing their expeditions.



Figure 3. Ciliwung River Expedition, January 2013. Source: [12]

This expedition aims to see locals' treatment around the Ciliwung river to their part of the river and riverbanks. Since land use along the Ciliwung river at that time is changing rapidly from general use, public spaces, or even conservation areas to a development area for housing and commercials. This expedition will post their report on Facebook in the form of updates or photos with the caption.

4.2. Second Phase: The Transition

Mr. Taufik's effort to make Depok citizens aware of the Ciliwung river crisis is eventually paid off. Many are interested in the Ciliwung river. Depok Mayor, another river enthusiast, environment critics, philanthropists, students, and fellow academics, are interested in the Ciliwung river and its community. In 2013, Ciliwung Depok Community was featured in one of the University of Indonesia's events, namely Run4River.

This activity garners much attention from many kinds of people. It is the start of the Ciliwung Depok Community to expand its members and their audiences. One of these audiences is an academic of the University of Indonesia, Mrs. Ismala Dewi, a Law Faculty lecturer at the University of Indonesia. The following is Mrs. Ismala Dewi's answer when asked about her opinion about the riverbanks.

"...It was not like that before, it was a land without defined usage, there were lots of people there, [doing] perverted [things], beg your pardon, there were lots of condoms there ... Well, that is what happened, then if it becomes beautiful is through the mural festival, there are pictures, paintings, like that, so it started from homeless people who work odd jobs to the official [would go] there, but the people who hang out there are people who are [truly] environmental activists."

Through this snippet of an interview from Mrs. Ismala Dewi, she was concerned about the river's human activity, not particularly about the river and riverbanks themselves. She mentioned various activities and other things that she thinks should not be there. She also mentioned those related to aesthetic senses that build relevance to the riverbanks. When Mrs. Ismala Dewi asked about how the riverbanks should be made or her vision regarding how the river and riverbanks are managed, she answered.

"...the most appropriate for such organizations is the association, a legal entity registered in the ministry. Now it has been legalized. It has legitimately gone out. It is already a legal entity..."

Through the quoted interview, Mrs. Ismala Dewi is certainly concerned about community activities and their legal standing. Not particularly about river or riverbanks, instead of the community and its activities alongside riverbanks that should be legalized.

The association that Mrs. Ismala Dewi proposed as a legal framework for the Ciliwung Depok Community was approved. It changes the activity in the riverbanks to beautify the river, as illustrated in Figure 4. A legal framework also gave another opportunity, and that is to interact with another legal entity as an equal. It allowed Ciliwung Depok Community to receive substantial monetary contributions by the Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR) framework in turn of accomodating activities of the donor corporate or its subsidiaries. Some of these activities are illustrated in Picture 5 as Hero Group CSR.



Figure 4. Hero Group CSR, April 2017. Source: [13]

4.3. Third Phase: Previously Foreground, Now They are in the Background

At the present time, the Ciliwung Depok Community has expanded its activity. It ranges from river school

activities, a Ciliwung river tour, to renting stalls beside the river and its food court accommodations. One of the initiators of this activity is Mr. Dodo. A member of the Ciliwung Depok Community describes it, while the rented stall is illustrated in Figure 5.

"It all began with Mr. Dodo... he has experience designing riverbanks in Jakarta areas. He engages the local Karang taruna (a youth organization) and invites them to clean up Ciliwung riverbanks here from the garbage. After that, he laid out those areas so that it can be used for locals' activities. Such as independence day celebrations, kids' competition is held there. This field here [are also their work], we now have a place to hold an activity."

The informant emphasizes the lack of a clearing to do a certain activity. Taking the informant's example of activities, the activity mentioned here is related to the gathering of many people and some flat land as a basic requirement. Regarding the informant's quotes, it can be said that this activity might not be directly related to the river.



Figure 5. Stall Area Along Riverbanks.

Regarding the stall, an interview with Mr. Dodo also discovers something that does not directly relate to the river. The following is Mr. Dodo's quotes.

"That is individually rented (pointing to nearby stall), he would only pay to rent fee, it will then be used for locals' money... There is a campus around here, so many students are having their dinner here. The atmosphere here is different; its uniqueness is different from other food courts. Below the bridge, beside the river, and also the places are neatly designed."

Mr. Dodo emphasizes that students were having their dinner. He also relates to the "atmosphere" beside the river with another food court. This quote shows that Mr. Dodo did not look directly attentive to the river and riverbanks. Instead, he shows the river as a different part of the collective. It is also consistent with another example of Mr. Dodo's work. Many occasions of gathering use Mr. Dodo and Karang Taruna's effort. One of the gatherings is a wedding ceremony, as illustrated in Figure 6.



Figure 6. Wedding Ceremony Taken Along Riverbanks. Source: [13]

Figure 6 emphasizes the bride and the groom, their procession, and their collective. A whole different activity was carried from the start of the Ciliwung Depok Community. An activity where people in the picture do not interact directly with the river and riverbanks. Emphasize Figure 1 to Figure 6 that the river and riverbanks move from the photos' foreground object to become the background of the photos. Even there are those photos that cannot interact with the river at all, such as Figure 7.



Figure 7. Instagram Screenshot from Kebon Coding, December 2017. Source: [14]

Caption from Figure 7 reads, *"Kebon coding (IT Community) location in Margonda feels like in remote villages with nature still preserved, and the sound of the water from the Ciliwung river was very suitable for my fellow programmers to look for inspiration."*

The caption seemed to be intended for readers of wide origin since the Infodepok_id account was made for Depok citizens' general viewers. The caption emphasizes a preserved nature and relates it with programmers that need a location for inspiration. The river is expanded into a broader way of interpretation alongside programmers, a profession that has no connection whatsoever with a river.

5. DISCUSSION

Figure 1 to Figure 7 illustrates how the river and its banks are being treated via digital technology or social media in this case. Figures 1 and 2 give us an impression about riverbanks being mistreated, and the river is a being that should be preserved, guarded, pristine, and sacred. While on the other hand, with Mrs. Ismala Dewi's interpretation, the river and its banks are more about human activities, its legal provisions, its spokesperson's ability to speak as an equal to other human activities. While in another phase, Mr. Dodo interprets the river and its banks as a potential field for people to gather.

What we have seen is that different people emphasize different aspects of a river and its banks. Different emphasis makes different actions carried out in certain parts of the Ciliwung riverbank, and the effect is what we interpret as a manifestation of space. A different person held different objectives; to achieve this objective, this person enrolls others into their composition. Important to note that this enrolled person also has objectives. Various compromises and negotiations have to take place for an objective to be achieved. It may not be the first person's objective nor the second person's objective. However, it may be somewhere in between, or even an entirely different objective.

The positioning of the river shows this by various photos in Figures 1 to 7. In Mr. Taufik's photos and Facebook posts, he is certainly concerned about riverbanks. Simultaneously, Mrs. Ismala Dewi's quotes shown that she is more concerned about the activity besides the river. On the other hand, Mr. Dodo showed that he is more concerned about gathering activity and its benefit. Slowly but surely, we do not talk about the river anymore in the finding section. Nevertheless, it is about a person's point of view regarding how rivers affect people's lives. The riverbanks that came into being in Mr. Taufik's Facebook posts slowly pushed into the picture's background, such as in the wedding ceremony. Even in Figure 7, no picture represents the riverbank at all.

What can we learn about creativity and digital technology in this discussion? It seemed that we extract the concept of "creativity" when we see a different point of view about an object. A different perspective can also mean that the benefit of the particular object is expanded, including more people to receive its benefit, allowing each person related to the object to pursue their best of interest. In this argument, we propose that creativity is relative to every member of the collective benefit received by every collective member. Such as Mr. Taufik raise awareness of Depok citizens of riverbanks. On the other hand, Mr. Dodo allowed students from all over Indonesia to rest and break more comfortably in the riverbanks.

Digital, on the other hand, help this expansion of benefit through various texts. Photos, videos, writings,

posts are what social media is all about. The most prominent feature of digital technology is the ability to share and update to include the dimension of time in the collective. Giving the collective an ability to review, learn, and be aware of their progress while also viewing others. Such as illustrated by Figure 7 that relates entirely different professions to the river and riverbanks.

6. CONCLUSION

Creativity stemmed out from the understanding of the human condition to pursue their best interest. While pursuing their goals regarding this interest, an abstraction called "space" is formed, manifested by various material changes, including human bodies and objects. Digital, on the other hand, is expanded our ability to include time in tracing these changes. Enabling us to reflect and learn, also perceive our future better.

In this regard, what is creativity entails? Creativity entails a certain degree of understanding of a particular entity. This paper demonstrates different people's understanding of riverbank, an object that has particular characteristics. One sees this object as a damsel in distress, while another sees it as a uniting entity and another purely recreational purpose. Each of them purposefully creative; they create a "space" called riverbanks in their image of best interest. They assemble material and social entities to enact a "space" of riverbanks by articulating its particular characteristics and relating to the other entity.

What does digital media do in enacting creativity? If we recall Lefebvre's notion about space production, then digital media could be included in this triad. Digital media enables its user to circulate texts, images, or audiovisual representations of many different entities, allowing its user to trace the representation to the sources, assuming the digital media is properly used. In this regard, digital media assist in the circulation of representations, allowing various entities to be acknowledged, accounted for, and be explored further. It entails a better articulation of every entity, enabling various kinds of "spaces" to be explored in the same collective.

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