

# CREATES YOUR OWN CITY: JOGJAKARTA GAMERS AND THE PRODUCING MEANING OF SPACE OF THE SIMS3

**Vanny Suitela**

*Gadjah Mada University*

E - m a i l : vannysuitel@gmail.com

## A B S T R A C T

---

This paper will discuss the Sims3 as a living space produced by the introduction of American's urban folk culture into the virtual scene of gamers. The Sims3 is an open world of life simulation game developed by the Sims studio, an America Studio based in Redwood city, California and released by Electronic Arts in June 2009. Nature of the game is mainly a representation of urban society life targeting a transnational audience entrenched in similar gameplay mechanics of the genre. The game features urban society and city life based on Western environment. I was curious about the representation of "virtual space city" of the game comparing to "real space city" of Indonesia based on the overview of the Sims3 design. How did gamers in Indonesia, in particular Jogjakarta gamers construct and do spatial practice in the game? Further, how did they make some responses to those? Based on those questions then my focus is on the role of gamers in doing reception on spatial virtual lived and their potentialities to reverse that representational spaces following their real spatial lived. In this case then I refer to Lefebvre's theory of production of space. My results of research show that there some dissimilarity appear related to spatial practice of the game comparing to real spatial practice of gamers. The spatial order of the game is linked to the cultural tradition of cartographic representations of space and territory commonly puts gamers in a powerful position from which he/she may command the ongoing game. Spatial practice of the Sims3 gamers in Jogjakarta are particularly captivating subject because of the bizarre situation where gamers are natives in the real space city of Jogjakarta but relegated to the position of native in the virtual replication of American cities in the game. Gamers stroll down through the luminous geometry of urban cyberspace game world exploration make them such as doing a kind of tourism practice. The case of the Sims3

gamers may appear similar since they are in fact native to Jogjakarta city and quite familiar with both urban geography and culture of Jogjakarta. The juxtaposition of the native and the tourist provides a very peculiar entry point into the virtual world for them. In addition, messages of the spatial practice of Jogjakarta Sims3 gamers are negotiation, re appropriation and overlapping of conceived space and perceived space of the two realms – American virtual space city and Indonesia real space city.

**KEYWORDS :** The Sims3, spatial practice, interactivity, negotiation

## INTRODUCTION

### **Background**

A number of computer games increase dramatically in recent years. It is understood as a form of new media culture that merges together mediated communication, audio visual media such as television, radio and movie, and the culture of play. Bolter and Grusin elaborate such kind of merging process as remediation - mediation of mediation, a medium refashions its predecessors and also other contemporary media (Bolter and Grusin,2000:17).

Prior to 1984, computer games usually appear only as one example among many of media technologies and often a marginal one. But as the medium continues to mature it has in many ways become a center point among digital media and its importance is finally being recognized (Wolf and Peron,2002:1). In 1985, computer games industry rebounded with a new generation of technological advances, beginning with the release of the newly developed CDROM technology, computer games starting to be seen as interactive multimedia and receiving at least tangential mention as a form of “new media”. The introduction of CD-ROM-based games in 1992 had changed computer games position in public. Computer games are considered as everything: as the work (ergodic), as play (ludic), as narrative, simulation, performance, remediation, and also art. Even many people use computer games as playground for social interaction and also as toy and medium of entertainment. The process of remediation leads computer games at one level a play of signs, at the same time, it insists on the real - effective presence of media - in our culture. It has the same claim to reality as more tangible cultural artifacts such as photographs, films. Computer application is as real as airplane and building (Bolter and Grusin,2000:18).

Although computer games reforms its predecessors by offering a more authentic experience, it should be seen as a medium. It is a specific kind of medium that doing a transformation or transposition of something old into a new medium in which the text becomes an interactive text and play becomes

virtual play. It is a new medium of its own. The mediality of computer games is what makes that medium a distinct medium (Wolf and Peron, 2001: 12). Following these insight, we can say computer games is not an external agent that come to disrupt an unsuspecting culture. It emerges from within cultural contexts, and it refashions other media, which are embedded in the similar contexts.

As stated afore, computer games differ from other media according to how the program is used. What makes computer games different from any other new media is its specific mediality namely the form in which content is mediated. The form of computer games doesn't solely depend on the way data is processed, but rather on how content appears. It is the first to combine real-time game play with a navigable, onscreen diegetic space, the first to feature avatars and player-controlled surrogates that could influence onscreen events, and the first to require hand-eye coordination skills. Besides that, one of its program Massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs) are the first persistent worlds, and the first instance of individualized mediated experiences within a mass audience in which each player's experience is unique despite the large number of simultaneous participants. It is the first truly algorithmic medium (Wolf and Peron, 2001:11).

Computer games are pictures with which users have to interact in order to perceive them as something other than movies or static pictures. Further, they do not show something that is absent, instead they present something that has not existed before without being visualized. They present a virtual reality. But unlike other types of images, they offer images which have to be used. Therefore, we should think of computer games as something that must be seen in order to be played. Indeed, a computer game is not different from a movie or even a photograph without that such kind of performativity. In addition to, computer game pictures are interactive opposed to photographs, paintings, or even movies. The mode of reception of a computer game is not contemplation but rather interaction. What the player does when he or she interacts is actually an interaction with the image namely with the objects presented by the picture. Articulated, we have to consider the fact that a medium is no neutral carrier of messages or codes but takes the role of an actor in the process. So, these characteristics put down computer games as a medium. A computer game is (co)present as its message, "the medium is the message"(McLuhan 1992:108).

In line with some descriptions afore, then there is one specific of computer games which caught public attention, since it was released in 2009 namely the Sims3. In Indonesia, the game has million gamers with broad range from kids to adults either male or female. I have taken some early observations based on my curiosity of a question "why do people love to play the Sims3". The location in which I took some observations was in Jogjakarta, in an area in which I live.

Some results appear link to my question. One of some reasons people there like to play the Sims3 because the game simulates human daily life. The Sims3 was designed with specific end that is to let a gamer to “build his/her own avatar of the self, family, community and city”. “To create, to control and to rule your own Sims (avatars) and your own city” being the goal of the game. In general, the Sims3 is an open world of life simulation game developed by the Sims studio, an America Studio based in Redwood city, California and released by Electronic Arts in June 2009. Nature of the game is mainly a representation of urban society life targeting a transnational audience entrenched in similar gameplay mechanics of the genre. The game features urban society and city life more based on Western culture and environment, in particular, American’s culture. Simmers and goods were designed following various nations ethnics people in the world such as Asian, African, European and also American. While the design of the city is much more representation of Western landscape in particular American city natural landscape and infrastructure. A player can do some new expansions of new cities in order to build up new families, new houses, new schools, new offices and etc. However the basic materials such as natural landscape and game permanent-houses in a city in the game are still representation of American’s cartographic model. It can be seen from nature of virtual cities that appear in the game such as Dragon Valley, Monte Vista, Lunar Lake, Barnacle Bay that much more representation of real American Cities such as Florida-Miami, or San Francisco-California, Charlottesville-Virginia, or Pittsburg-Pennsylvania etc.

The overview of the Sims3 design then lead me to think about the representation of “virtual space city” in the game comparing to “real space city” of Indonesia. How did the Sims3 gamers in Indonesia do spatial practice in the game? Further, how did they make response to it?

My assumption that there some dissimilarity that appear related to spatial practice in the game comparing to real spatial practice of gamers. The Sims3 is a worldwide game in which it has billion gamers around the world. The virtual space city that appears in the game is not a static representation but a congruence of vigorous interactions between the originally designed space and gamic actions of the gamers. In fact, every gamer has his/her real spatial practice different from one and other including gamers in Indonesia. For examples, Indonesian cities natural landscapes and infrastructures are different with African cities, or with Vietnam cities, or with other cities in Asia. A gamer has been growing in this kind of environment for very long times, he/she has strong internalizing with his/her environment. When he or she comes to the game and interact with virtual space city that very different with his/her own, I wonder how does he/she does spatial practice in the game and makes meaning of that?

## Methodology

This study is aimed to explore the Sims3 gamers making meaning of spatial practice regarding dissimilarity of “virtual space city and bodily practices” of the Sims3 game comparing to their real one. I situate this study particularly in the context of the Sims3 gamers in Jogjakarta. In order to take data then I choose randomly 6 interviewers (ranging from 12 years old to 43 years old) which still active in playing the Sims3. This research is deeply entrenched in my own experiences in the game and my conversations with other Simmer gamers. I spent many hours wandering in the game taking screenshots and field-notes, then doing my observations and discussions with interviewers. Some questions and issues were emerged from my conversations with them. Those lead me to formulate some interpretations related to the core issue. Throughout some interactions and data collection process, I mostly positioned myself as a participant of discussion. This paper is the result of the synthesis of my reflection of the game.

This paper will discuss the Sims3 as a living space produced by the introduction of American urban folk culture into the virtual scene of gamers. These folkloristic cultures style include American English’s language, houses, offices and street scenes, public transports and also general landscape of the city. The aim of this research is not to assess the accuracy of representation per se but the reception of the “representations of space” by the Jogjakarta Sims3 gamers and their cultural expressions in the actions of game. Computer games in this sense are treated not as a rupture of the mundane existence for the gamers but as an expression of everyday life: the lived experiences of gamers and their aesthetic and spatial intervention in gameplay. Therefore, I refer to the lens Lefebvre’s theory of social space.

There are several theoretical approaches that are useful to help us in understanding spatial practice. Fraser in his research found that space in computer games is not a passive absorption of images, but rather through an active and largely self-directed process of exploration (Fraser, 2011: 94). Following this line, I argue that virtual space cities in the Sims3 are remediation of many of American space cities - a socially and visually prism of the real thing - the algorithmic dispositions on the producer’s end (Murray 2013). Since the inception of game studies, space has been a pressing issue. Many academic attentions catch this issue in the past decade. Few of them are Nitsche and Aarseth. In his elaboration on game, Nitsche figures out that “experience, comprehension, and spatial practice are phenomenological key elements that reappear throughout the discussion of virtual space”(Nitsche,2008:3). Whereas Aarseth done some identification of the comparability of game space to spatial practice. He says that “as spatial practice, computer games are both representations of space - a formal system of relations - and representational spaces - symbolic imagery with a primarily aesthetic purpose”(Aarseth,

2000:163). An edited book entitled *Space Time Play: Computer Games* (2007) explores the relationships between computer games and urban space from a variety of perspectives including both academics and designers. I am inspired by those adaptations especially those texts allude to Lefebvre's original book *Production of Space* (1991). I intend to build on this approach and explicate the application into a particular direction focusing on the role of gamers in doing reception on spatial virtual lived and their potentialities to reverse that representational spaces following their real spatial lived.

Lefebvre has brought his theories into active applications in many disciplines including the prospering field of cultural and media studies. The key idea of Lefebvre is that "space is socially produced" (Lefebvre,1991:26). It is a complex process instead of a static representation. Lefebvre breaks down social space into a tripartite system:

1. The spatial practice of a society secretes that society's space (Lefebvre,1991:38). It secures a certain degree of cohesion for a guaranteed level of competence and a specific level of performance of every society member's social relationship in space (p.33). Spatial practice is also linked to "perceived spaces". It is revealed through the deciphering and decoding of its space (Merrifield 2006).
2. Representations of space, which is conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers" (Lefebvre,1991:38); this is the dominant space in the society.
3. Representational space, "space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of "inhabitants" and "users". This is the dominated and hence passively experienced space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate" (Lefebvre,1991:39). This realm stays dominated thus characterized by non-reflexive everydayness.

Following this theory then computer games are representations of space because developers primarily implement the symbolic imagery or narratives and gamers interact with environments in forms predicted and programmed by the game designers. This predetermined design and prominence of algorithmic control are similar to static conceptualization of space practiced by urban planners. Apperley suggests that "all options, actions and possibilities are contained in quantifiable, dynamic relationships in the digital code of the game's algorithm" (Apperley,2010:27) In these conceived spaces, game developers inscribe the intended usages of different spaces just as city planners conceived the organization and segregation of public and private spaces. Further, computer games are also representational spaces because these are the directly "lived" environments where gamers perform through the proxy of avatars. Gamers are required to obey and learn algorithm in order to progress in the game. Hence, gamers passively experience space for the most part. However, computer games are not just designed experiences. In other words, gamers of the space

also seek to appropriate and surpass the passivity of the experience through their imagination. The operator of the game is not entirely subject to machinic actions. There is always a “simulation gap between the rule-based representation of a source system and a user’s subjectivity (Bogost, 2006).

The spatial analysis of Lefebvre is a process of practice or lived experiences that situate the body in the space. At the central of his theory, human beings are who enter into relationships with each other through their activity and practice in their corporeality and sensuousness, with their sensitivity and imagination, their thinking and their ideologies (Chess, 2005:29). Following these insights, then it is possible to situate the avatar body in the game space. For an instance, the description of Chess regarding the effect of the management of the avatar body on gamers of Grand Theft Auto. He pointed out that” the use of discipline where gamers must memorize and master game controls for each game essentially produces Foucault’s ‘docile bodies’” (Chess, 2005:.9). In other words, gamers master the control system with speed and dexterity through repetitive exercises. At the time, the operator’s subjectivity is completely submitted to machine. In The Sims3, we can observe different patterns of disciplinary complex. Gamers are not an apprentice of the avatar, since they have power to create their own avatars. Gamers builds up skills through some exercises and purchases as the game progresses,. Furthermore, gamers are responsible for a simulated body that needs some exercises, food, clothing, social relationship and even defecation. The game employs a quantified face point system that can be gained from quests and the space of player “create Sims” determines what outfits and accessories the avatar can wear. Create Sims space unlocks luxurious suits, designer sunglasses and leather shoes. Simmers are eligible for various kinds of outfits such as dress, T-shirts, jeans and snickers. However, gamers are not necessarily subsumed to algorithmic discipline of the body. The avatar body imitates the social pressures originated from the obsession over superficial appearances and materialism deeply rooted in Human daily life. The avatar becomes a caricature through gamer’s interpretative intervention in the course of everyday life in the game world” (Miller, 2008: p.273).

## R E S U L T A N D D I S C U S S I O N

The Sims3 was released in 2009. This game is the first MMORPG whose universe won’t be a fantasy or sci-fi land, but a contemporary Western-style environment. The Sims 3 is the third sequel of the Sims game which created by Will Wright. He created The Sims in 2000 for Maxis, and it was released to both critical and popular acclaim. The game has become the best sell PC game of all times and has spawned five “expansion packs” (Living Large, House Party, Hot Date, 28 Vacation, and Unleashed) which have all been commercially successful. The game is available on the Macintosh platform

as well). Wright's previous creations include SimCity, which is one of the few games studied in depth by academic researchers. Ted Friedman and Scott Miklaucic have studied different editions of the game, and explored how ideological biases and the organization of "space" built into the game have limited its more radical potentials.

The goal of the Sims3 is to develop a neighborhood of healthy and happy "simulated people" and watch them go about their daily lives. A player of the game can create individuals, families, build houses, cities, encourage or discourage various social interactions, and engage in lots of vicarious consumption. The mechanics of gameplay, as well as what is and isn't allowed, are explained in the game manual, which also provides hints to help gamers create more interesting situations. There is no "winning" in The Sims, and no end to the game. Actually, many gamers of the Sims3 realize The Sims is not a game - instead, it is a "software toy," which makes it even more intriguing to examine. Gamers can continue to play until they tire of the activity, but with the continual stream of add-on activities, products, and situations for Sims to encounter (including alien abductions, roach infestations, and mechanical bulls to install in the living room), this tendency is forestalled. The Sims is perhaps the most progressive game released concerning spatial practice. The game offers to a gamer "opportunity" to apply his/her own spatial practice creation. Another interesting facet of the game is its particular positioning of the player, as more interactive than any other game.

The spatial order of a game is linked to the cultural tradition of cartographic representations of space and territory commonly puts gamers in a powerful position from which he may command the ongoing game. If we take closer look at the typical interface structure of the Sims3, then it shows the recognizable pattern of the user interface, common to most of the computer games on the market. The screen is split into different areas. First, there is a separation between the area dedicated to navigation and control and the main-map/main view of the territory. The area of navigation and control again is separated into three different areas. First, there is the mini-map, dedicated to navigation and overview. Next to the mini map is a second area that provides information about the selected objects in the main-map. Third, there is a complex menu with icons of selectable objects, especially buildings. This third menu area also offers a variety of actions, depending on the selected class of objects. As a life simulation game then the Sims3 offers more of unoccupied space of its main map. The goal of this strategy is related to the game slogan namely "create your own Sims, create your own family and create your own city and let have fun". Gamers will occupy this space through their creation.

Since the study is more focus on the Jogjakarta Sims3 gamers dealing with spatial practice of the game based on Lefebvre, then my next discussion is focus on that issue, based on six subjects receptions of the game.



Spatial practices of the Sims3 gamers in Jogjakarta are particularly captivating subject because of the bizarre situation where gamers are natives in the real space city of Jogjakarta but relegated to the position of native in the virtual replication of American cities in the game. Gamers stroll down through the luminous geometry of urban cyberspace game world exploration make them such as doing a kind of tourism practice. One crucial argument in the study of tourism is that people often do bring perceptions and beliefs to these exotic and recreational spaces (Craik, 1997 in Miller 2008b). Further, cultural experiences offered by tourism are consumed in terms of prior knowledge, expectations, fantasies, and mythologies generated in the origin culture of tourist rather than by the cultural offerings of the destination (Miller 2008).

The case of the Sims3 gamers in Jogjakarta may appear similar since they are in fact native to Jogjakarta city and quite familiar with the urban geography and culture of Jogjakarta. The juxtaposition of the native and the tourist provides a very peculiar entry point into the virtual world for them. The Sims3 gamers are aware of the origin of the production of this virtual terrain. They emphasize the representation was from the perspective of American, therefore they have to make some appropriation with not only the Sims and stuffs but also context of city that they choose when they are in play time. They remarked that the disposition of different spaces and particular choices of locations and landmarks in the game reflected the stereotypical images of America. Some of them are not familiar but try to understand the context. It is a challenge for them. There various responses come from the Sims3 gamers. Some of the Sims3 gamers usually negotiate their conceived-virtual space with their perceived-real space in creating their representational space in the Game. For examples, Mita, a sixteen years old girl is a private senior high student in Jogjakarta, has been living with her parents in Jetis Pasiraman for thirteen years. She has been playing the Sims for seven years. She is an active girl, involving in a youth organization related to education and environmental issues both in her school and also in her's RT. She prefers to choose bay-based city such as Barnacle Bay as her primary city in the game. One reason why she chooses that model is her imagery to build her house someday in the future in this kind of environment, she states that she really love bay's nature. Another reason is she feels (imagines) full of peace and harmony when she sees this nature and she has a hope to occupy such in the future. However, she realizes her position nowadays that lives in the middle of the city of Jogjakarta, far from her imagery environment, so she often negotiate her feeling by creating and naming her's simmers, families, houses, and also accessories landscape of the city following her real space culture of Jogjakarta. She states that she loves American landscape of cities but she also loves her Jogjakarta culture, therefore she loves to combine both. Different from Mita, then Mr Abi, a 38 years old man, working as a civil servant of Bantul's regency government office, living in Jetis Pasiraman for 37 years and usually rides the motorcycle

to his office. He has been playing the game for three years introduced by his 10 years daughter name Nabilla. He plays the game during his free time at home with his daughter. He states that he love to play the Sims more than other games because it features his family everyday life. Furthermore, he can projects his own imagination of his family future, his future job and other important issues related to his life through the game. So when he comes to play, he likes to create his city and other Simmers and their stuffs following American model, however his own avatar, and his own stuffs are following his real character and body. He argues that he doesn't want to lose all things in the game. Therefore he decides to maintain his real one in the game play. He likes to create his family Sims name following Western name but characters are following Indonesia. He said that He loves to engage with many friends and siblings and doesn't want to be alone. Indonesian (Jetis) community is more appropriate for him then Western community. He argues that some of Western communities are "too individual" for him. Therefore, when he creates his family simmers then he likes to put them in a complete - big family, make them as neighbors. One of the big things that he tries to negotiate with his real situation is related to his transportation back and forth to his office that far from his house. He usually rides a motorcycle to his office in his real life, but when he comes to his virtual life then he rejects to use it as his own transportation. He is happy to ride the most expensive car as his own transportation, providing several at his garage for other family members. He states that by doing this then he is able to fulfill his desire (imagery) to ride an expensive car that actually cannot be fulfill in his real life. Further, he states that he puts his virtual family life as 'a future snaps' to encourage him to work harder and harder in his real life to achieve his imagery family life, especially to build a better house in a good environment, to have few expensive cars, to have several business and to have steady education and job for his members of family. Regarding to virtual design space, then he states that the environment which designed is lack of tropical plants. Therefore he likes to add some tropical plants to his space of city and also around his house because he said that he loves to see tropical plants that he sees along his way going to his office in Bantul. Mr Try, a 43 years old man, is a minibus driver, has been playing the game for one year, introduced by his daughter (a 19 years old) and son (a 10 years old). When he comes to play the game, then he focuses more on building "fine" infrastructure in his virtual space city. He usually combines the cartography transportation infrastructure of virtual city with real Jogjakarta cartography transportation infrastructure. He acknowledges that there some memorable history of Jogjakarta transportation in his time that he loves to be remembered. He narrates the situation of Jogjakarta couple years ago, with some simple transportation like becak, delman, train, and mini busses that used to serve urban people. Yet, everything has changed, there a number of vary transportation in Jogjakarta now. People are faced with traffic jam and air

pollution every day, and even some of minibuses drivers are threaten lose their works because of new model of transportation service. Therefore, he realizes that the game often becomes a kind of ‘escaping’ space to deal with his real space that undergoes huge change. He said that he is agree with all change that happen right now in Jogjakarta, yet he hope that the change will go to like virtual cities that appear in the game especially related to management system of transportation. He love to become a minibus driver for couple years, but if it doesn’t fit to serve people again then he is agree to move to another model of transportation service such as online taxi, however he argues that he likes to build close relationship with his passengers of minibus, he will continue it if he becomes an online taxi driver. When he enters the game, instead of pretending, he continues his real job in his virtual job with some extended. Bella, a 17 years old girl – a state university student has her own experiences playing the game and all once dealing with her situation as a student. She said that she really love campus in America or Europe especially those buildings design and architectures. So when she enters the game then she will search online several favorite universities building in order to see design then she will apply it into his virtual campus or cities. Regarding to circumstance in campus, then she likes the way virtual students make friends and build their relationships in campus. She usually practices this kind of virtual friendship when she goes to her real campus.

As demonstrated by the above examples, the pre-existing conceptions of the Sims3 gamers in Jogjakarta are brought into direct conflict and negotiation with designers “conceived space”. This discontent also leads to a position of “distant immersion” (Miller, 2008a). While gamers are reluctant to fully immerse, they still maintain a viewing position to negotiate their virtual space city with their real space city. For this reason, the Sims gamers focus on quantities of the maps, landscapes, buildings and people to assess the quality of the representation. The Sims3gamers are immediately brought their understandings of Jogjakarta as its folkloristic and habitual culture into the virtual city. Indeed, the gamers are very much concerned with how well the game space mimics their real space, or vice versa. Two interviewees proposed that most gamers are clearly missing the point to compare the virtual space city to the real one. It is impossible to adopt entire realistic-ness of the space in the game to the real space of Jogjakarta. By contrary, it is possible to adapt realistic-ness of the space of Jogjakarta into the game. The streets in the virtual space are deliberately made wider and emptier. If the game were to portray the real Jogjakarta city - the narrow and crowded streets and incessant traffic jams, the gameplay experience would be devastating since gamers probably spends most of the game time fighting his or her out of the crowds or getting trapped in the car. Furthermore, these discussions brought up the distinction between realistic-ness and realism. Game spaces approximate the real space but they are still allegories of the real - games still rely on the deviation from

reality in order to make the illusion playable (Aarseth, 2000). In fact, the more realistic representation of space, the more the space will be detached from gaming rather it is reduced to simulation. According to Galloway, realistic-ness is yard-stick held up to representation while realism requires a special congruence between the social reality depicted in the game and social reality known and lived by the player” ((Galloway, 2006:72&83).

In the case of the Sims3 gamers in Jogjakarta, then some dissimilarity of both the Sims3 gamer’s virtual spaces and real space are more apparent. However, gamers are tried to negotiate and to overlap those two spaces during their game play times. Through experiencing the game space, gamers then critically reflect and make some comparison upon some trivialities that often appear in their real space of everyday life comparing to virtual space of the game. In my conversations with other gamers, the topic of the easiness to find a job and to make money came around several times. Most of the gamers like these activities in the game. In contrast, it is not easy for some of them to find job and make money in the context of Indonesia, in particular in Jogjakarta. Some common reasons have been being cliché answers namely the limitation of available of job and also the problem of education level and skill ability of job seekers.

The topics of both secure transportation and safety riding on road are becoming other important reflections of the Sims3 gamers. In the game, school buses are small vans operating outside the realm of public transport. In contrast to normal buses in Indonesia, in particular in Jogjakarta, school buses are not yet regulated as special student-based transportation. Students who want to go to schools are still served by public transportation. It brings a lot of traffic problem. Instead of using public cars, many parents decide to drop off their children with their private vehicles. It brings some problems related to traffic jam and also the increasing of collision. Besides that, the consumption of new vehicles causes the increasing of air pollution in Jogjakarta. The Sims3 also includes a plot where the Sims can drive a car going to somewhere across main roads in apple pie order while can see beautiful nature and city landscape fully. Or the Sims can go by with very secure - minibuses. The game simulates clearly the Sims ride a car on the road heading toward a destination securely. This activity is not present in other sequels of the Sims.

The appearance of secure minibuses in the game triggered intimate feelings of the Sims3 gamers toward the operating model of minibuses in serving ordinary people from remote villages going to the downtown of Jogjakarta. People who used to ride off with such vehicles experienced communal and personal connections with other fellow commuters, the prevalence of aggressive driving and evasion of normal traffic rules and routes, which are all integral bits and parts of the public transportation culture in Jogjakarta. Moreover in real life, minibus drivers are excessively hasty simply due to the particular business model rather than triad competition. Minibus drivers

incomes depend on daily earnings of these buses so they have to be hasty in driving and aggressive in getting passengers. This hurriedness of driving is sometimes detrimental to safety of drivers and passengers. For the Sims3 gamers, this means of transport is incorporated into the hustle and bustle of city life. Thus, it represents a unique aspect of Jogjakarta urban culture.

Indeed, the game offer a new miniature portrayal and practical usage of these minibuses led to gamers demands for more opportunities to ride these buses besides the main means of transportation, which are bus and taxi. In this instance, the Sims3 gamers naturally reflect on congruence between their real life experience of mini buses and in-game experience. In other word, the demand for minibus in game space is motivated by the intimacy to minibuses despites its rude services and the anxieties rooted in the fact that the monopoly of large transportation corporations threatens to take over this private sector that serves the local community. The minibus as a means of transportation represents a vanishing community value in the dominance of the gigantic monopolies that governs almost every aspect of city life including public transport. The operation of minibuses style defies the uniformity of the “conceived space” of public transport monopoly - its faceless service and sole pursuit for profits. This circumstance is carried on in the virtual space where gamers demand to nostalgically re-”live” the chaos of street and triad owned business before the monopoly takeover - when street life was ferocious yet alive. Fredric Jameson views this as the artistic devices and technological equipment whereby it captures that truth of the world are explored and stressed and fore grounded, ‘realism’ will stand unmasked as a mere reality or realism effect( in Galloway 2006:74).

In his early writings on Grand Theft Auto, Frasca provides an utopian vision of computer games. He sees the environment is as a giant laboratory for experimentation, where he could test the boundaries of the system and his own creative goals (2003). In contrary, Chess provides the interpretation of Foucault of the space in Grand Theft Auto game. He views space is as a means of both disciplining and controlling a player, and also a system of rewarding his acumen (Chess, 2005:82). This type of spatial discipline also persists in the design of The Sims3 but in different forms. The progression of the Sims3 player in the game depends on effectively negotiating and memorizing the virtual terrain. Player develops a sense of direction through practicing navigation in a territory during questing or simply wandering/cruising. There are live - regulation scene that appears to manage life of Simmers. Fulfilling Simmers basic needs regularly will reward the player bonus money and also will increase maximum health of Simmers (avatars). The process of looking for these upgrades compels the gamers to do some daily activities regularly (spatial of discipline).

Moreover, gamers desires and pleasures in the Sims3 is predominately manufactured by the developers in an algorithmic manner namely the artificial

need for physical strength, social reputation which is measured by “needs” meter, and financial management. This spectacle of game space ultimately helps to reinforce the player’s encapsulation within the game (Chess,2005). In other words, the game space internalizes disciplinary rules and submissive mindsets. Similarly, in Lefebvre’s terms, these spaces of urban planning and traffic rules are grounded in rationality and institutional knowledge, detached from lived practices. However, this “conceived space” or the intended use of the space does not necessarily coincide with the entirety of users’ experiences. In the case of The Sims3 gamers, the situation is in fact quite peculiar for some gamers that wish his/her virtual city is supposed to resemble the traffic rules of Jogjakarta in a realistic manner namely gamers drive on the left. In contrast, this accommodating design in practice turned out to be a disorientating hindrance for other gamers who wish his/her real space city Jogjakarta is like the game’s depiction. As we can see from this example, the developers are only the initiator. The result of the game play on the end of the player is not necessarily what the developer originally intended but rather a result of the interactions between the dynamic (non-static) algorithms of the Sims3 gamers and infrastructure provided by the developers. The primacy of conceived space over the lived space or vice versa and also the condition of silence of users will not necessarily always persist. Some playful distractions can invert the situation. These are activities or interactions in game spaces where gamers can establish their own goals that oppose instrumentality or immediate usability of actions in the main game algorithm. Instead of striving for upgrades, levels, or better vehicles, gamers can pursue self-defined goals and exploit the space outside it intended uses. These experimentations of space and alternative narrative sometimes lead to surprises exposing options that are even beyond the spatial liberties provided. The gamers can manipulate spatial elements in order to achieve a goal that may be great enjoyment. The player has a central role to play in the production of game space. The main process takes place in the player, which can be directed by “conceived space” through repetitive training of navigation and mastery of algorithm. However, spatial or narrative elements provided by the algorithm not only help deciphering the designed events and space, but also prepares the contexts and tools that can be taken in control by the gamers to create meaningful space and experiences. The quality of place comes to life by learning how to effectively navigate a simulated body within this manifestation (Murray, 2005:92). Computer games are living spaces where condition of non-reflexive alienation can be inverted through active disruption of the game algorithms and this inversion occurs in the space of representation-the living practice of gamers.

## CONCLUSION

Lefebvre demonstrates the representation of the ideology of urban space as it is lived in the material acts of individuals. It symbolizes the imaginary, naturally and normatively separated, relations of individuals to their real, interdependent living conditions (Prigge,2008:53). In Lefebvre own word “what is lived and perceived is of secondary importance compared to what is conceived” (1988, cited from Merrifield 2006:175). The counteraction against this dominance of “representations of spaces” is the appropriation of the intended use of the space, which will distort the ruling spatial practice and “shatter conceptions of space in dreams, in imaginings, in utopias or in science fiction” (Lefebvre,1991:285). This maneuver of spaces through aesthetic spatial practices can potentially shift the boundaries between dominant and dominated spaces, thus it is possible to imagine an alternative utopia. This is a realm where the collective unconscious of functionalized metropolitan daily life can be made accessible to gamers by means of shock experiences in language, images, and cinema. This is also allowing gamers to set their own ideas of their real conditions of existence that may contradict the dominant ideological representations of these conditions (Prigge 2008:54). Continuing the discussion on space in computer games, the virtual city is in itself another algorithmic space and thus manifestation of the spectacle. In other words, the virtual city is born a spectacle, a perfection of urban planning and organization. However, it also potentially provides another playground for a Situationist aesthetic that simulates “will to playful creation” (Debord 1958 cited in Elias, 2010:825).

In addition, gamers do not just engage in ready-made gameplay but they also actively take part in the construction of these experiences. They bring their desires, anticipations and previous experiences with them, and interpret and reflect the experience in that light (Ermi and Mäyrä 2005). Gamers act within a communicative context as soon as he/she enters the gaming situation. The expectations and emotions can be seen as part of the game experience and are inherent to the process of gaming. To play video games provides a similar variation in our experience of interactivity. When starting a new game we may follow different routes and have an experience of controlling many options. But when we gain mastery we may not only experience the game as a series of routes that we may follow but also create a total “map” of the game and realize that we have a set of limited options. In this stage, the game is more likely to be experienced as a “message” from the game producers because we get insight into their game design. Experienced gamers may get to that stage sooner and shift more often between experiencing the game as an interactive world and reasoning about the possible intentions laid down by the producers. In this context, it means that by starting the game, the communication begins, and even an omitted input can be taken as a message.

In Jogjakarta Sims3 gamers case then, the message of the spatial practice is that about negotiation, re-appropriation and overlapping of conceived space and perceived space of the two realms-American virtual space city and Indonesia real space city.

## REFERENCES

- Aarseth E. (2000). *Allegories of Space: The Question of Spatiality in Computer Games*. In Raine Koskimaa (Ed.), *Cybertext Yearbook 2000*, (pp. 152-171). Jyväskylä, Finland: University of Jyväskylä.
- Apperley, T. (2010). *Gaming Rhythms: Play and Counterplay from the Situated to the Global*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures. Blackwell.
- Merrifield, A. (2006). *Henri Lefebvre: a Critical Introduction*. New York: Routledge
- Bolter J.D and Grusin R (2000), *Remediation: Understanding new Media*, MIT Press, USA
- Borries, F. V., Walz, S.P., & Böttger, M. (2007) *Space Time Play: Computer Games, Architecture and Urbanism – the Next Level*. Boston, MA: Birkhauser Verlag AG.
- Chess, S. (2005). *Playing the Bad Guy: Grand Theft Auto in the Panopticon*. In N. Garrelts (Ed.), *Digital Gameplay: Essays on the Nexus of Game and Gamer* (pp. 80-90). Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co.
- Debord Guy (2005), *The Society of The Spectacle*, Rebel Press, London
- Durham M. G and Douglas Kellner (2006), *Media and Cultural Studies Revised Edition*, Blackwell, USA
- Dyer-Witheford, N., & De Peuter, G. (2009). *Games of Empire: Global Capitalism and Video Games*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Eichner Susanne (2013), *Agency and Media Reception*, Springer, USA
- Elias, A. (2010). *Psychogeography, Détournement, Cyberspace*. *New Literary History*, (41),21
845. Retrieved from [http:// muse.jhu.edu/journals/nlh/summary/v041/41.4.elias.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/nlh/summary/v041/41.4.elias.html)
- Frasca, G. (2003).
- Fromme J and Unger A (2012), *Computer Games and New Media Cultures*, Springer, New York
- Galloway, A. R. (2006). *Gaming: Essays on Algorithmic Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.



- Galloway, A. R. (2007). Radical Illusion (A Game Against). *Games and Culture*, 2(4), 376–391.
- Hall, S. & Jefferson, T. (eds.). (2006). *Resistances through Rituals: Youth subcultures in post-war Britain*. London: Routledge.
- Hebdige, D. (1979). *Subculture: The meaning of style*. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd.
- Houlihan, J. (2012).
- Jenkins, H. (1992). *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*. Routledge, New York
- Juul Jesper (2010), *A Casual Revolution: Reinventing Video Games and Their Player*, MIT Press, USA
- Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The Production of Space*. Oxford, OX, UK; Cambridge, Mass., USA:
- Lewis Lisa (1992), *The Adoring Audience*, Routledge, New York
- Miller, K. (2008a). Grove Street Grimm: Grand Theft Auto and Digital Folklore. *Journal of American Folklore*, 121(481), pp.255–285.
- Miller, K. (2008b). The Accidental Carjack: Ethnography, Gameworld Tourism, and Grand Theft Auto. *Game Studies*, 8(1). Retrieved from <http://gamestudies.org/0801/articles/miller>
- Murray, S. (2013). The Art of Playing Grand Theft Auto. *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, 27(2), pp.91–98.
- Muggleton, D. & Wienzierl, R. (eds.). (2003). *The Postsubcultures Reader*. Oxford: Berg.
- Nitsche, M. (2008). *Video Game Spaces: Image, Play, and Structure in 3D Game Worlds*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Nunes, M. (2006). *Cyberspaces of Everyday Life*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Prigge, W. (2008). Reading The Urban Revolution: Space and Representation. In Kanishka Goonewardena(ed). *Space, difference, everyday life: reading Henri Lefebvre*. New York: Routledge.
- Schwartz, L. (2006). Fantasy, Realism, and the Other in Recent Video Games. *Space and Culture*, 9(3), 313–325.
- Wark, M. (2007). *Gamer Theory*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Wolf J.P and Perron B (2003), *The Video Game Theory Reader*, Routledge,  
USA