

# SEMBILAN MATAHARPS VMAPS: RETELLING GEOGRAPHICAL MEMORIES AND NARRATIVES IN DIGITAL CULTURE

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## Abstract:

Images and representations have long been used to tell the history of a place, to crystalize local memories, myths and beliefs, and to share meaningful values in a collective life. *Sembilan Matahari*, one of the nationally renown film-makers and video artists in Indonesia, has produced works of video-mapping (vmap) from 2010 to 2014 in public spaces as part of the local events to celebrate and re-activate the life of a people. Through *Sembilan Matahari*'s works the city of Jakarta, Pekalongan and Bandung have animated their iconic buildings to tell their stories and renew the memories of the place and the people. This article is based on a research examining the spatial construction of the event and the video-mapping, and how these spatial constructions relate to the geographical memories and narratives of the place. By using phenomenological approaches, this writing will explain how the three spatial constructions relate to one another, and how the reading/ interpretation of the video-mapping occur in experiencing *Sembilan Matahari*'s works.

## Keywords:

*video-mapping • vmap • narrative • memory • representation*

## **Introduction**

In 2010 *Sembilan Matabari*'s first video-mapping (vmap) in public space was projected onto the History of Jakarta Museum as part of an event conducted by the local government to activate Jakarta's creative space. Since then, works of *Sembilan Matabari* have lighted several other iconic buildings and public spaces in the city of Jakarta, Pekalongan and Bandung. Images and representations have long been used in buildings and public spaces to create a message, to adorn a space and give a special meaning to it, as well as to give specific indications to a place. While this practice has existed since the first establishment was created by human, digital images have only been used recently and just entered the urban spaces when public screen was found and proliferated. The video-mapping technology used by *Sembilan Matabari* to create their works, enables the creation of moving-images outside the boundary of the conventional frame. This research is conducted to see how the images merge itself into the physical context of a public space, and what kind of experience is constructed as a result of this superimposition.

## **Methods and theoretical framework**

Phenomenological methodology is used to examine the spatial experience with the video-mappings to see how the understanding, the reading, and the interpretation of the works relate to a viewer, and how this type of composition construct and convey a message through its particular nature. While the phenomenological approaches in this observation are based on the works of the original phenomenologists, two specific approaches need to be explained further here to give a clearer understanding of how the methods used in this research.

## **Phenomenological Approach to Sound Composition**

Ferrara (1984) proposes a phenomenological method as a tool to analyze music that has a different understanding from the phenomenological works of Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, in that it uses a construction of syntax, semantic, and ontological conception. Ferrara's approach is closer to structuralism way of analyzing where it sees its object as a form of language or a metaphor. The concept of 'bracketing' used by Ferrara in his analysis is the underlying factor that gives a similarity to the

phenomenological approach and its understanding of *époche*. The essential difference brought about by Ferrara's analysis is the nature of music itself which positions a subject to be the object of a composition, while the phenomenology method proposed by Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty has an understanding of articulating oneself in his multi-relations to the world. This self-articulation is a process of reflecting oneself on the other as to have a comprehensive meaning of his being in the world. In Ferrara's approach, the analyst becomes an object of a composition for the nature of fluidity of musical dimension that always surround its listener, the listener is always positioned *within* the dimension.<sup>2</sup> It has a different nature from the visual dimension that has its nature in being *seen*. Ferrara further explains that in experiencing musical composition, one *enters* the world of another, that is the world of the composer, and dwells within it as he opens up a new world.

The analysis procedures used by Ferrara follows a sequential and cyclical steps of determining the syntax, the semantic, and the ontological conception, as well as finding the inter-relations between the three factors. The cyclical procedure is a process of an initial interaction, followed by identifying, interpreting, structuring, and re-defining the musical experience. Ferrara's defines this procedure further as phases of open listening and reflective listening.

Varèse's composition, *Poème Électronique*, was specifically selected for this phenomenological method of analysis to examine the essential difference(s) from other methods of analyzing musical composition commonly used to analyze tonal compositions. In using phenomenological approach to analyze a composition, whether tonal or atonal, one has to identify its semantic layer in his first interaction with the composition, for not all works contain this element or have an ontological meaning. These elements have to be recognized before one can use the phenomenological approach proposed by Ferrara. In this understanding, Ferrara uses the fundamental phenomenological concept in experiencing a work of art, where the truth of the work is experienced in the first interaction and continually re-defines its meaning in the subsequent interactions. In his conclusion, Ferrara says that the ontological meaning of Varèse's composition lies in its ability to give an understanding of human relation to technology and thus re-defines Heideggerian concept of being in the world.

### **Phenomenological Approach in Reading Spatial Narrative**

The relation between architecture and narrative in Psarra's theory (2009) lies within the use and the relations of architectural elements of abstract conception, perceptual experience and the cultural meaning it conveys.<sup>3</sup> The comparison made by Psarra in her analysis is between spatial configurations and perceptual experiences that have directed interpretation of meaning and the ones that give layers of understanding and interpretation. Gadamer says that 'works of architecture do not stand motionless on the shore of the stream of history, but are borne along with it'.<sup>4</sup> This is a different understanding of multi-interpretation of meaning, where the narrative and the truth contained in a design are revealed along the change of time, and not confined within an era, a programmatic conception, a form of society, nor an understanding of an existing larger narrative. This is exhibited by various designs that have gone through their process of historicity. The life that enliven the design and recognize the values within it, is the essential element which gives the ways of interpreting an architecture work, and conceive the meaning as it progresses in time.

The conception of meaning occurs as the work of a design present itself, and as it is appropriated through the existing life within a period of time. So eventhough architecture works have essential characters in the solidness of its material, architecture works are organic systems that always interact with the life that occupies them. In this interaction, a representation is formed and becomes part of the history of the life that constructs it.

Contemporaneity of a work of art is defined by Gadamer as a single thing that presents itself to us achieves in its presentation full presentness, however remote its origin may be.<sup>5</sup> Gadamer gives a further explanation on this using the nature of a festival, which is a form of redefining a way of life, a collective value, or a collective being within the chronological process of time. For Gadamer, the being of festival lies in its presentness or 'its being there', and therefore it is celebrated. This is what Gadamer as the contemporaneity of a work of art, where the presentness of the work gathers a new meaning and a current understanding.

In her analysis, Psarra identifies issues of identity that underlie the spatial configuration of the buildings and the chosen artefact collection.

This issue of identity is connected to the ways how the buildings are articulated and related to nature. However, there is no specific explanation in Psarra's analysis of how this relation ultimately constructs the conception of an identity. The essential relations between nature and human identity is more elaborated in Heideggerian concept of historicity and Gadamer's explanation on the relation between human and nature. In Heideggerian understanding, the way man defines and articulates his place in nature is part of the primordial acts of how man defines his identity, and as Gadamer says 'The interest in natural beauty is related to the moral sphere' and so thus man finds his representation in the context of his surroundings. By this, it can be concluded that the relation between identity and how a design configured in nature as proposed by Psarra is the primordial way of how man articulates his being in nature.

### **Phenomenological Approach in This Research**

Phases of open listening and reflective listening as described by Ferrara are used to examine the experience with every video-mapping. Because of the visual components of the videos, the phases conducted in this research become open listening/viewing and reflective listening/viewing.

Phenomenological approach to the location was done to examine the relation between the experience with the video-mapping and the experience of the spatial narrative of its location context.

The following explanation describes how these approaches were conducted in every case, beginning with the experience of sounds and images of the local context, the spatial narratives of the building base, and a brief description of the respective video-mapping(s).

### **Geographical context, spatial narrative, and video-mapping**

#### ***Case 1: Pekalongan - Pesindon and Kauman Batik Kampongs***

The establishment of Pekalongan city was initially based on the typology of cities in the Islamic Mataram era.<sup>6</sup> Its further development though was more generated by its position as a port city, where modes of sea and inland transportation meet and articulate the spatial formation of the city. These lines of transportation give Pekalongan a fragmented configuration of space, and the various types of building construction

only adds more disconnected pieces to the space, and therefore there is no definite spatial experience in the city where one can identify a climax/ anticlimax narrative of a place.

Pesindon and Kauman kampongs do not have a certain language of construction that can differentiate their areas from the rest of Pekalongan city. The delineation of the kampongs areas is more manifested through the spatial experience. The position of both kampongs is located behind Pekalongan's main areas of commerce with its heavy traffic and frequent flows of people, but as one enters the kampong area one can feel a significant difference in the volume of sound within the kampong's perimeter.

The intimate scale of space in Pesindon and Kauman bring various methods of construction into such proximity in which the unity of the entire place can still be felt. This is the essential factor that is not found in a larger city such as Jakarta, where methods of construction greatly vary and the scale of its space is mostly out of the range of a personal space. The construction dynamics in Pesindon and Kauman are also relatively constant and so therefore give the areas a specific characteristic from other areas in Pekalongan.

The traditional batik industry in these kampongs gives another layer of characteristic to the area. Throughout the kampongs one can see layers of clothes hung on the main streets of people's yards, from the ones prepared to be processed, to the ones ready to be delivered to customers. The smell of heated wax and coloring liquids give another dimension to the spatial experience in Pesindon and Kauman. The various activities in these kampongs are unified by the dimensions of such fluid spaces. Children's activities in school yards and throughout the kampongs' streets, as well as the daily activities of the kampongs' inhabitants are infiltrated by these fluid dimensions.

The pattern of construction in both kampongs does not display any intentions to symbolize anything, except for some insignificant details. Within the kampong's perimeter, method of symbolization only manifested in the local mosque, which was not specifically constructed on the need to create a certain image of the city but more based on the need to have a public religious facility to accommodate the inhabitants' daily practice.

The daily life in Pesindon and Kauman is relatively quiet compared to

the rhythm of life of the surrounding areas and this gives further emphasis to the kampongs' space dimensions. In some parts of the kampongs, the sound dimension is the only sign of existence of a collective life. The volume of sound of the kampongs life only faintly gives signs of the batik producing activity. But quietness evidently is the most representative mode of sound that can express that activity, it exists like a void within a place filled with images or a rest within daily busyness.

The occasional sound of motorcycles in the kampongs streets connects the life in these areas to the activities outside the perimeters, and the sound of prayer calls from the local mosque mark the time throughout the day. These two elements are the only constant dimension of sound that filled the entire kampongs. If the occasional traffic sound indicates these areas as parts of a larger urban system, the sound of the prayer calls not only gives the marking of the day, but also a certain horizontal and vertical connections to a larger world.

#### *Pekalongan Batik Museum*

The use of this establishment has a different pattern of change from the other iconic buildings used in *Sembilan Matahari's* video-mapping projects. The initial design of this building was made to accommodate a need for an administrative office of a sugar factory in Pekalongan. Only after *staatgemeente* Pekalongan was established in 1929, this building was used as the municipality facility, and then in 2006 it was finally converted to its current use as the city's Batik Museum.

The issue of place identity represented by this building was represented from its initial use a sugar factory administrative office, representing the area abundance of agricultural products. Then its function as the city's administrative facility represented the entire city of Pekalongan, and finally its current function as Pekalongan Batik Museum gives a representation of the local culture.

#### *Video-mapping Pekalongan Batik Museum (2011)*

*Sembilan Matahari's* work in Pekalongan has a clear linear construction of narrative with many similarities with the previous work. The opening part of the video introduces Pekalongan image as an agriculture area and a port-city. The rhythm which paints the picture shows the slow-moving

life in the city, and the pentatonic tones create an impression of life in Java island. Within these tones, some layers of sounds were added to animate the daily life of the city.

In this video-mapping, there is no time-signs as in the work in Fatahilah, however the sequential narrative gives a clear understanding of how Pekalongan develop from its initial form as an agricultural dwelling place, then as a port-city, the memories of the colonial era, the revolution, and then into its contemporary life. Along this unveiling of narrative, the rhythm of the visual and sound composition fluctuate between breaking/ pausing-accelerating/ decelerating, and finally picks up and accelerates into the contemporary life of the city. The visual composition no longer uses the images of people from clips or photographs as in the previous Fatahilah video, but instead uses the computer-graphic drawings to create a sense of nostalgic life that was once enliven the city. A sequence of travel by train is constructed in the visual composition to animate the nostalgic past and to illustrate the life of the people that moves forward into the future and into the modern era.

### ***Case 2: Jakarta – Fatahilah Square and Kemang Area***

Fatahilah square has a very articulated character in its physical construction and also an integrated language of architecture that unites the entire area. The authenticity of its spatial construction has been established through a length of process of historization, and so therefore one can easily experience the memory of the place.

For most Jakarta city dwellers, Fatahilah has always been part of the history of this city, nevertheless for these people Fatahilah square is also not part of the historicity of their life. The reason behind this is a simple but complex fact that is the scale of Jakarta's spaces which are far outside the range of any personal scale in the people's daily life. For the users of Fatahilah square themselves, the area is appropriated through their daily activities and this appropriation constructs a new layer to the dimension of the place. The changes of function of this square and its establishments construct different layers in the narrative and the memory of the place.

Kemang area has the opposite character of Jakarta urban landscape. The construction of this area does not have significant features which can define the area and give points of reference to the place. Nevertheless,



Kemang is one of Jakarta's popular places for dwelling as well as for various kinds of commerce. The fact that this area is also one of Jakarta's spots prone to the city annual flooding, does not reduce the intensity of Jakarta's public interest to visit the area if not to obtain a property in this place. The image of Kemang area has always been a place of style with a modern and international flair. These are the factors that construct the spatial relations and dimensions of the place, and these are also the factors which keep reconstructing the image of the entire area, for a place to be modern it has to keep redefining itself.

#### Fatahilah Square *and* Batavia Stadhuis

In all the iconic buildings used to project *Sembilan Matabari's* video works, traces of articulating the building connection to its context of nature have certainly underwent many changes since their first construction. This is especially exhibited in the History of Jakarta Museum, initially known as the *Batavia Stadhuis*. The illustration of Fatahilah square below shows the original concept of its design where the planned *stadhuis* was situated within an outdoor landscaping. The change of use itself, from the residence of Batavia governor, to Batavia municipal office, and to its current use as the History of Jakarta Museum, displays a continuity in its use as a representation of the Batavia area, and as a representation of the city of Jakarta currently.



Image 1. *Batavia Stadhuis* (1770)

(Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Batavia\\_-\\_Townhall\\_1770.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Batavia_-_Townhall_1770.jpg))

*Video-mapping History of Jakarta Museum 2010/ 2011 and 2014*

*Sembilan Matahari's* first work in 2010/ 2011 can be seen as their initial exploration of this video-mapping technology, in which the content of the video explore the various possibilities of how this technology could map and change the features of a physical surface. Much of its visual repetitions were used to enhance the articulation of the museum's façade and not for constructing its narrative content. The projection of some graffiti artists in this video-mapping gives a specific relation to how building walls or other physical surfaces were used before as canvases for painted images. The traditional motifs sprayed as graffiti give a direct linkage to the techno-traditional understanding of this videowork. Images that show the sequential historical narrative of Jakarta give that essential connection to the place, while images which follow after narrate the continuation of life in Jakarta as a city that is developing and a city that has gone through many memorable events. The images of contemporary life in Jakarta are overlapped with some images of Betawi and Indonesian traditional culture to convey the message of the event, that is to re-activate the creative spaces in Jakarta which have long been forgotten.

*Sembilan Matahari's* work in Fatahilah 2014, *Fiesta Fatahilah*, is the only form of a video-mapping sequel to date. The reading of the content thus has to be connected to the previous work on the museum's façade. Some of the visualizations which articulate the building façade do not only accentuate the building's features, but in this 2014 composition they were intertwined with its sound composition.



Image 2. Rhythm in the video composition articulating the museum's façade  
(Source: video snapshot from *Sembilan Matahari's* recording)

This work also has used more visual effects to animate the museum's façade and more articulate in revealing the message of its content, as is shown by the destruction effect of the building and its reconstruction to illustrate the entire event, which was the revitalization of the old city.

### *Video-mapping ICAD 2011*

*Sembilan Matabari's* video-mapping in ICAD 2011 (Kemang) was their only work made based on an event. Even if the content of the video is attempted to be read based on the context of the building (Grand Kemang Hotel), it still gives the understanding of its eventual character, because the nature of the facility itself as an establishment that accommodates such activities. If seen in a larger context, which is Kemang area, its eventual nature would still emerge, as the dynamics of the area are aimed to keep modernizing the image of Kemang district.

Without the theme of the event, *Escapology*, the content of this video-mapping will appear as a series of meaningless images and sounds. The concept of escapology in this *Indonesian Contemporary Art and Design* is the sole base for interpreting the content of this work. Based on this interpretation, what is conveyed in the video can be understood as the representation of the life in Jakarta generally, if not the life in Kemang specifically. The figure of angry birds, clips from popular film *Star Trek* and *Mission Impossible*, show how the life in Jakarta is already overflowed with images and representations. This over-abundance of images is part of the entertainment life in the city, or the *e-scape* of the city. The fragmented clips in this vmap present its nature as a work different from other forms of film. Images of the interior of the hotel in the composition gives a direct connection to its building-base, while other images such as light bulbs, concrete walls, growing trees, or flowers spread can be seen as the images of the different aspects of life in Jakarta.

### **Case 3: West Java Province – Bandung**

*Sembilan Matabari's* works on Gedung Sate were part of the celebrations of West Java anniversary. Therefore the geographical context of *Sembilan Matabari's* works here is the area of the province itself eventhough much of the content of their video depicts the image of Bandung city. In this context, Bandung and Gedung Sate have to be considered

as representations of the province because of their administrative role, and not as representations of the various forms of life of West-Javanese people.

### *Gedung Sate Bandung*

The spatial configuration of Gedung Sate has been designed from the beginning to position itself within the geometrical landscape of its surrounding. This fact is shown by the articulations of its exterior and interior spaces, by the use of tropical construction elements, also by the use of geometrical axis of orientation in its spatial configuration. The identity aspect of this building design was already manifested since its first use as the municipality facility of the area, until its current use as the governor's office of West Java province.

### *Video-mapping Gedung Sate Bandung 2011, 2013, and 2014*

*What a Wonderful Jabar* on Gedung Sate Bandung is *Sembilan Matahari's* fourth video-mapping production, after *Fatahilah* in 2010/ 2011 and *Pekalongan 2011*, and *ICAD 2011*. The closeness of its time production from the previous works gives *What a Wonderful Jabar* similar characteristics in its language and its way of structuring the narrative. However, this work was not successful in mapping the articulate façade of Gedung Sate, and so therefore it will be misleading to try to interpret the details of its content.

In 2013, Gedung Sate was once again used to project another work of *Sembilan Matahari*, and in this work they no longer used the same structure as they had done in the previous ones (*Fatahilah 2010/ 2011*, *Pekalongan 2011*, *What a Wonderful Jabar 2011*). The mapping of the building's façade was much refined in this work, and if *What a Wonderful Jabar* in 2011 had a festivity character in its content, in 2013 *Jagat Lalana* had a more subtle message which was taken from a local traditional wisdom. Images of mountain and the life of a darkened and polluted city, the sound of Sundanese tune and the sound of machinic-technological-laden city, painted the condition of a city that is struggling to protect its traditional values in a growing urban development. The following picture entwined visual and sound components to illustrate the continuing struggle of the city in its endeavor to protect nature, to protect its inherited culture, while still maintaining its growth in a modernistic urban environment – the

sweeping volume of water that wipes away the image of the city, changed by the image of sea with its slow and steady rhythm, incrementally revealing a new life, followed by an accelerating sound and rhythm, an image and sound of a waterfall that quietens the entire scene, filling the life of the city which has been separated from nature, and finally closed by a sequence of growing green spaces and a new life in the city, creating a new urban life that lives in harmony with nature.

The use of traditional color of music in this video-mapping composition is the essential factor that links the entire composition to its local flair of narrative. The building base of this work gives the associative connection with other works on Gedung Sate. A message of local wisdom that was used in *What a Wonderful Jabar*, gives the underlying meaning to the interpretation of narrative in *Jagat Lalana*. On hindsight, in comparison with others *Sembilan Matahari's* works on Gedung Sate from 2011 to 2014, *Jagat Lalana* has the most subtle character in delivering its content and its message.

*Sembilan Matahari's* fourth work on Gedung Sate in 2014, *Naaradewa*, has a totally different format from the previous works. This 28 minute length of video-mapping already has a complete set of elements of a narrative where there is a plot, characters and dialogue, added with a prologue and an epilogue at the opening and closing of the story. This videowork can already be categorized as a short animation, constructed within a mainframe and a subframe. The mainframe of the video uses the center-vertical part of Gedung Sate's façade, and the subframe takes on the horizontal part of the surface. The content of the video tells the story of *Nara* and *Tarum* in their endeavor to save nature that has been destructed because of the ignorance and carelessness of modern human.

### **Events Comparison**

The events of video-mapping projections in Fatahilah square, Pekalongan, and in Bandung, have got their legitimacy or validation from their respective local authority. However, the relation of each event to the life of the city, whether in the daily life or to other eventual moments of the city, is also an important factor which gives an event its authenticity. The event in Fatahilah square was not directly connected to Jakarta's anniversary celebration, but the historical value of Fatahilah area, along with the validation that comes from the local authority,

created a strong perception that the event in Fatahilah was part of the city’s anniversary celebration. The event itself was actually an effort from the local government to re-activate that part of the city which has long been neglected. The continual events in Fatahilah from 2010, 2011 and in 2014, showed a certain consistency in the effort, especially with the insertion of new programs in the area and the reconstruction of some of the dilapidating establishments.

The events of video-mapping projections on Gedung Sate in 2011 (*What a Wonderful Jabar, Jagat Lalana* 2013, *Naaradewa* 2014) were celebrations of the forming of West Java province. It is a common gesture by an authority of an area to meet its people and celebrate their collective life. From the observation of the videos’ content, it can be seen that the celebrations in these events were overlapped with the historical perception of Bandung city itself. The history of Bandung actually has a separated line of narrative from the rest of West Java history. The shifting collective memory in the celebration of this province’s anniversary in one hand strengthened the position of Bandung to be the representation of the whole area, but on the other hand, weaken the understanding of the collective life in West Java which has not reached even a century, and also weaken the understanding of life in other cities in the province which have their own line of history and collective memory. The shifting memory was revealed in 2014 when the anniversary of Bandung was celebrated only a few weeks after the celebration of the province’s anniversary.



*Sembilan Matahari's* video-mapping in Pekalongan was part of the city's celebration of its 105<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The event was also part of the government's program to launch Pekalongan as a 'world batik city'. The birth time of the city was actually only decided in 2006 by a group of people consisting the local government, historians, cultural analysts, as well as other concerning parties. The year 1906 was then considered as the birth year of Pekalongan in which the area of *afdeeling* Pekalongan gained its administrative status as a *gemeente*. If the year 2011 Pekalongan has celebrated its 105<sup>th</sup> anniversary, that means there is a century of life of this city in which there is no definitive pattern of a collective life that could be celebrated before. The five-year distance of time between 2006, where the date of birth of Pekalongan was decided, and 2011 where *Pekalongan World Batik City* was launched, gives an indication of a plan to rejuvenate the city as one of Indonesia's batik culture focal points.

### Video-mapping comparison

Through phases of open listening/ viewing and reflective listening/ viewing, the reading and interpretation of *Sembilan Matahari's* video-mappings were done by recognizing the images in the works and through the total experience of the entire composition i.e. the experience within the soundscape and the experience of its visual sequences. Notations of the total experience of each work have shown the three-part construction used by *Sembilan Matahari* to compose their narrative.

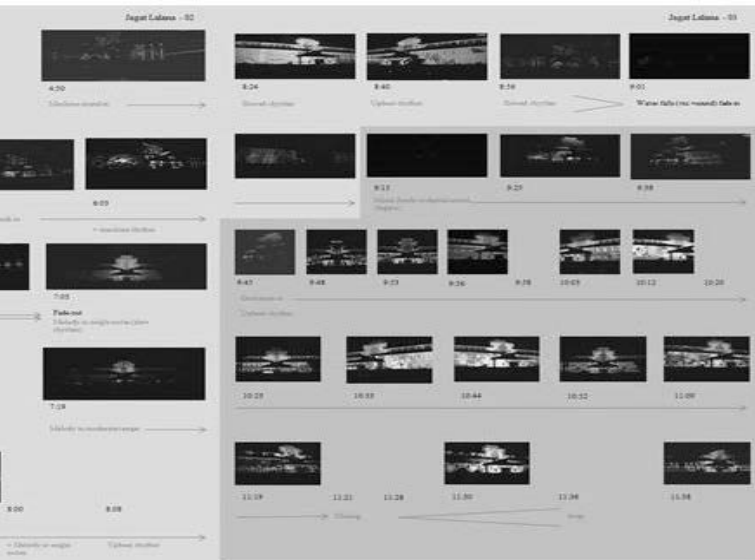


Image 3. Notation from *Jagat Lalana* vmap 2013

From these notations it can be seen that the experience with each video-mapping did not go through the same process of reading and interpreting as in other forms of visual language, such as frescoes or building reliefs. In these notations, the visual movements and sequences are essential parts in the process of reading/ interpreting the entire composition. As the audio components of the works structured the movement of the visual components, therefore the process of reading/ interpreting both audio and visual components cannot be separated from one another. Acceleration and deceleration of rhythm and movement in these video-mappings determine the dimension of space in each experience, where deceleration of rhythm and movement widen the space dimension, and acceleration gives the opposite experience of space.

Besides the characteristic nature of moving-image and sound composition, the experience with these video-mappings also cannot be done in the same process of reading/ interpreting as in other forms of visual language because of their existence in public spaces. Within each public space used to project *Sembilan Matahari*'s works, the viewer's position to the work determines the process of reading/ interpreting, where the visual details projected onto the building façade are certainly cannot be perceived by the viewer.<sup>7</sup> In every public space in these events, there is no frontal position to the work where a viewer can capture the total details of the building façade. In ICAD 2011 video-mapping, the spectator space provided in the event gives distorted perspectives of the work. In Gedung Sate projections, the extensive length of the building façade as well as its very articulated details, do not give a possibility for a viewer to have a frontal position to the work and be able to experience every detail in the video. In the case of Fatahilah and Pekalongan events, where the scale of the building and space could give that ideal perspective to the viewers, the reading/ interpreting of the visual components happened only within seconds of time. Observations of the works through video recordings also give the same process of visual reading, where the works were taken from a certain perspective. Video recordings that were taken from a frontal position give the same level of detail and can only be perceived within the very limited time-space.

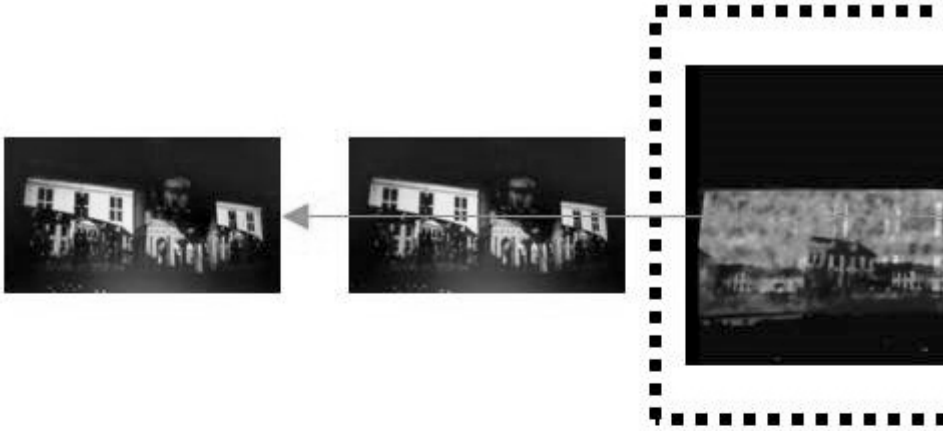
In the process of reading/ interpreting each work of *Sembilan Matahari*, there is also a process of relating and comparing with the previous work(s).



This process of relating and comparing can be categorized into three forms: the first is association with the work done within the closest time of production, the second is association on the context of building base, and the third is association with all the works done previously.

Based on the above forms of association, similarities in ways of structuring, in selecting and treating visual images, in experiencing the sound-signs, are found especially in the initial works of *Sembilan Matahari* i.e. the video-mappings in Fatahilah square 2010/ 2011, Pekalongan 2011, and *What a Wonderful Jabar* in the same year. In the comparison based on the sameness of building context, a line of continuity within the vmaps' narrative can be constructed, such as in vmaps series in Fatahilah square and the series on Gedung Sate Bandung. In Fatahilah vmap series, use of visual images from the previous work is the key element that connects the entire series. In Gedung Sate vmaps, the message conveyed in the first work on this building is the element that makes up the narrative content of the following works.

In the comparison of the entire works of *Sembilan Matahari's* video-mapping, classification can be made based on the closeness of time production, and in this way of categorizing, a pattern of development and transformation in *Sembilan Matahari's* works can be visualized, from its first pattern of a sequential historical narrative and local memories, to its latest form of a short animation in *Naaradewa* 2014.



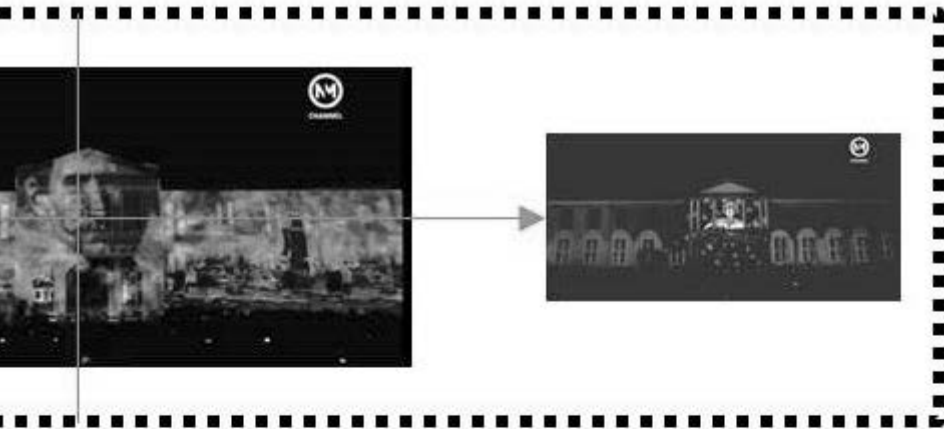


Image 4. Fatahilah vmap series - Use of visual images from the previous work connecting the narrative of the sequel

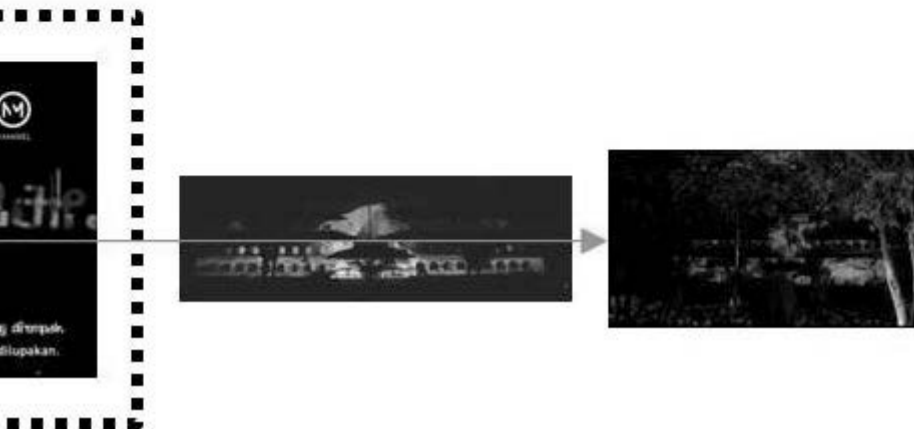


Image 5. Gedung Sate vmap series - Use of textual message in the first work connecting the narrative of the following works

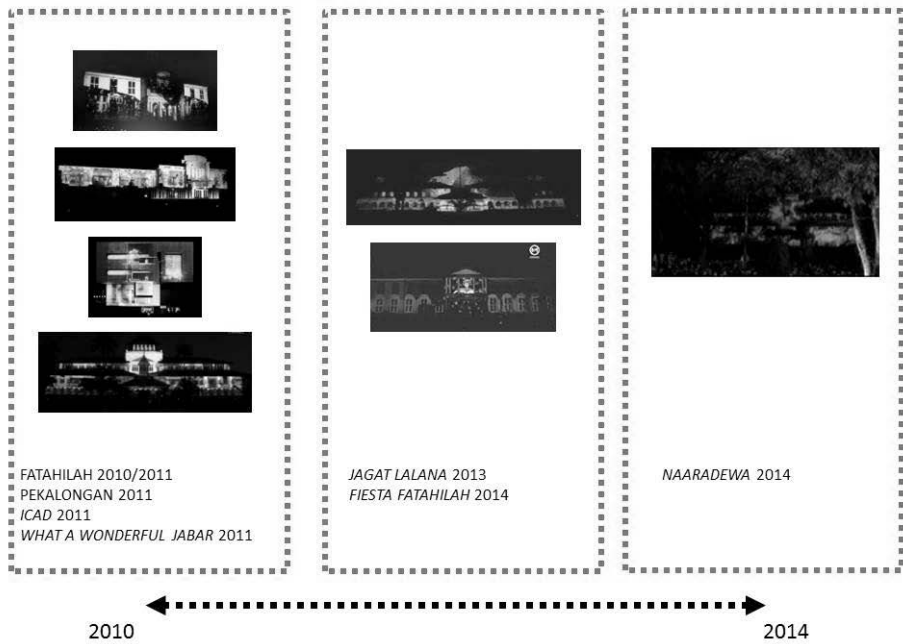


Image 6. Classification and transformation of form in *Sembilan Matahar's* vmaps

### Interpreting *Sembilan Matahar's* video-mappings

The phenomenological understanding use in this process of reading/interpreting *Sembilan Matahar's* vmaps, see works of architecture as a representation of a form of life, and so the interpretation of architectural works used in *Sembilan Matahar's* projects incorporated every aspect contained within that form of representation, and not just the visual aspect. In interpreting the video-mapping itself, the sound component becomes the main frame that not just constructs the entire composition, but also the main line of thread which reveal the narrative of the content. Without the structure of the sound component, the images in the video will become meaningless and therefore cannot be interpreted.

There are three categories of type of sound elements used in *Sembilan Matahar's* video-mappings. The first is sound-signs such as sound of traffic, sound of waves, or sound of bird chirping. The second type is parts of songs or music compositions that are already familiar to local listeners, such as parts of the Sundanese folksong *Tokecang*, a part of monolog

from the popular film *Star Trek*, or parts of Indonesian traditional tunes. The third type is music compositions that are made specifically for the video-mapping. The interpretation of the entire sound composition in every video-mapping thus is a process of memory association of the past that has found a new meaning because of the reconstruction with a new music composition. The composition of the moving-image itself in the vmaps, if read based only on its visual aspect, will always be superimposed with the details of the building façade. The nature of the video-mapping technology by default will incorporate the details of a surface into the images it creates. Therefore the reading and interpretation of the moving-images in *Sembilan Matahari's* vmaps are forms of superimposition reading/interpreting of the video as well as the image of its building base.

In reading the entire composition of each video-mapping, the two components of the video, the visual and the sound components, are always intertwined and cannot be separated from one another. The categorizations of the two components above are made to emphasize the importance of the viewer's experience with the soundscape.

If there is a form of validation that verifies any image of representations used in the video-mappings, this form of validation formalized in two ways. The first is the institution of the buildings which are representations of the local authority and local history. The second is the institution of the events which are organized, sponsored or supervised by the local authority and are forms of celebration of a people. The video-mapping in ICAD 2011 does not have a building base which has an institutional form of representation, but this video-mapping still has its institutional form of space that is the event of Indonesian Contemporary Art and Design.

The total experience with *Sembilan Matahari's* works and the events that accommodate them, was very much determined by the spatial arrangement of each event, as well as the arrangement of the event's program. The time of the events which were done in the evening reduced much of the perceptual experience of the public space that usually encountered in daytime. Therefore the reading/interpreting of the projected vmap are much based on the understanding of the existence of the building itself and its spatial context. For viewers who do not have this basis of understanding, their experience with the projected vmap would be much based on how the vmap present itself. The same condition also constructs the experience with the video-mapping recordings, where no perceptual

experience of the event exists. In this experience, the understanding of the building base and its context is determined by the memory of past experience(s) of that space.

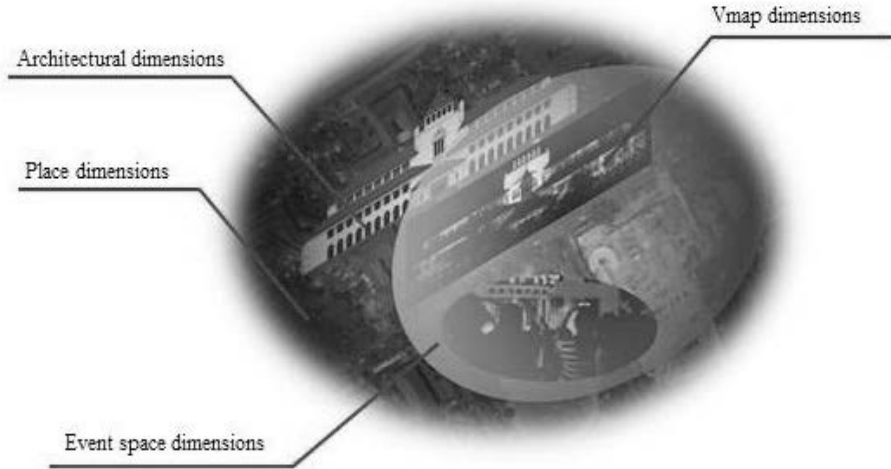


Image 7. The construction of the experience

## Conclusion

The reading/ interpretation of *Sembilan Matahar*'s video-mappings has shown that the spatial construction of the experience cannot be separated with the spatial experience of the event and the understanding of the existence of the building base and its context. Phenomenological understanding itself is always in search for meaning and its ontological purposes, even if the methodology has been developed and specified into a certain kind of spatial construction such as musical dimension in Ferrara's research or in reading a spatial narrative in architectural works. In conceiving this layer of ontological meaning in this research, the spatial construction of the event as well as the daily construction of space in every local context determine the depth of this semantic-ontological layer in *Sembilan Matahar*'s works. While a work can present itself and convey a meaning to its viewer/ listener, the overlapping construction of space between *Sembilan Matahar*'s works, the events, and the understanding of the building base and its context, build up the total experience of the space as one enters the narrative unfolded by this video-mapping technology.

Geographical memories and narratives do not merely tell the life

and stories of a people, they define the relations between a place and its people, for it is memories that tie us to a place. The fleeting growth of digital spaces has enabled us to travel beyond geographical boundaries and thus creating a people and societies of its own kind, unbound from the boundaries and from the ground. *Sembilan Matabari's* videoworks have attempted to establish a connection between those digital spaces and geographical memories of a people, but the desired connection is still yet to be seen for the attempt itself is a movement against the fleeting current of the technology they use. The ontological pursue of phenomenology is facing the same challenge.

In the growing myriad of digital networks constructed with hypertext narratives, the way we interpret the content of a space determines the path we are about to embark, thus determines the continuing narration and the space we construct. Hypertext itself is a challenge of its own to be comprehended in the Heideggerian sense 'language is the house of being', whether in digital spaces or augmented spaces such as *Sembilan Matabari's* video-events, but the validation of the narratives themselves will be needed first and foremost before any interpretation could be done, if one has to tackle the speeding current of the technology. And in finding the validation of the narratives, the groundwork of phenomenology on the subject of intuition, recognition, authenticity, genuineness, and of truth, will always come to the fore and be re-valued.

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## Endnotes:

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- 2 See Husserl's explanation on *The Self-constitution of the Body* in *Transcendental Aesthetics* and on *Consciousness of Internal Time*.
- 3 Psarra's theory is constructed upon Hillier's *Social Logic of Space* and Lefebvre's *Production of Space*. The aspect of 'meaning' was added by Psarra as she relates the understanding of social space to the narrative embodied in architectural works.
- 4 H. G. Gadamer, *Truth and Methods* (Sheed and Ward, 1975) 139.
- 5 *Ibid* 63.
- 6 D.B. Setyaningsih, *Tata ruang kota Pekalongan tahun 1906-1939*, Jurusan Arkeologi Fakultas Ilmu Budaya, (Universitas Gadjah Mada, 2005) 13-15.
- 7 See Berger *Another Way of Telling* (1982) 279-288; *Ways of Seeing* (1972) 7-35, 129-154; *About Looking* (1980) 199-205.