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*by* Andi Agustang

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# Commodification of Environmental Discourse in the Process of Producing Space in Bukit Baruga Housing, Makassar

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**Abstract.** An Eco-friendly Housing is an alternative choice of housing emerged along with the development of environmental discourse. The environmental discourse is commodified in the process of producing spatial space to increase the value of the product mark, which is the house. Commodification is defined as turning non-commodity goods into a commodity goods or adding value to a commodity goods, thus the value is more valuable than before, and it can be traded for profit. This study used a descriptive research with a qualitative approach to describe the current phenomenon taking place. The study was conducted in the Bukit Baruga Housing, Makassar, which is a housing developed with the concept of an environmental insight since 1996. With knowledge related to environmental discourse and power over capital possessed by the development company, it presents a simulation spaces with various signs and symbols of environmental insight. The process of commodification is carried out by the developer company through three stages, which are the stage of planning and development, marketing, and management.

## 1. Introduction

Human awareness of environmental problems since the 1950s has begun to receive serious attention, both from scientists, politicians and the public. The environmental discourse became ever more widespread marked with the presence of the United Nations Conference on the human environment in Stockholm, Sweden, on 5-16 June 1972. This conference is a manifestation of the concern of the nations of the world for environmental issues, and it is a prime commitment to the responsibility of every citizen to formulate it in every environmental management policy.

In responding to the issue of environmental damage, various descriptions have emerged when discussing ecological issues, and the answer having been frequently put forward is the



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policy of sustainable development [1]. Then, the environmental discourse began being a struggle for capitalist power, and various kinds of products then were produced bringing the theme of various kinds of environmental terms and symbols. Recycled paper, recycled packaging, green houses, standardization of motor vehicle exhaust gases obliging manufacturers to make vehicles meeting Euro IV emission standards, green housing, eco-friendly housing, green cities, and others.

By observing the shift in environmental discourse, from the impact of capitalism to the current commodity of capitalism or what is called by environmental commodification, it is certainly true to describe it by utilizing the power and knowledge relations put forward by Michel Foucault. In the viewpoint of Foucault, power always accumulates through knowledge, and knowledge perpetually has a power effect because every power is structured and established by certain knowledge and discourse [2]. One of the forms is the development of Eco-friendly housing. The development of a residential area is the production of space, for Lefebvre, human social relations equally create the accumulation of knowledge ultimately playing a role in the construction of discourse about space [3]. These conditions have an impact on deteriorating environmental quality, social conflicts and potentially triggering segregation of settlements (impacts) [4].

Bukit Baruga is a housing estate in Makassar developed since 1996, and it is designed with the concept of Green Living or an Eco-friendly residence. In home consumption characterized by a certain lifestyle, in which in this case is an Eco-friendly house, a formal market is created in which symbolic exchange takes its role. As Bukit Baruga comes with various symbols of environmental insight, starting from the logo using mango leaves as a brand identity, the use of names with a natural accent, house models, and various other symbols and signs. According to Baudrillard, consuming means producing social meanings to affirm class differences. The consumer society needs an object to be existed, and to become an object of consumption, an object must be a landmark [5].

This study aims at determining the constructive process of commodification of environmental discourse by developers in the process of producing space in the Bukit Baruga Housing, Makassar.

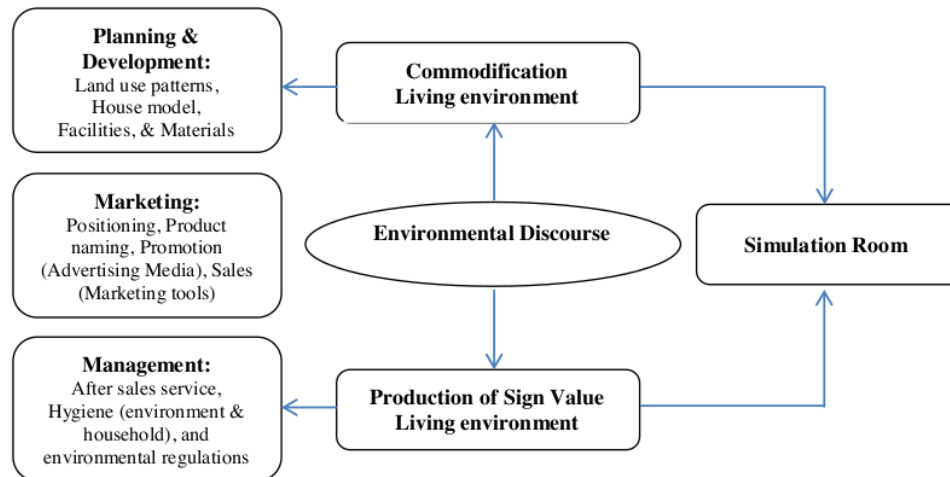
## 2. Method

This study is a descriptive research using a qualitative research approach to describe in detail the actual phenomenon becoming the aim of this study. The study was conducted in Bukit Baruga Housing because it is a housing in Makassar having been developed from the beginning to this time which is still consistent with its concept of environmental insight.

The process of collecting primary and secondary data was carried out simultaneously. Primary data were obtained from in-depth interviews with relevant informants from housing development companies, and they were also obtained from interviews with randomly selected residents of the housing as a representation of each existing cluster. Secondary data were obtained from the development company in the form of drawings, both master plans, site plans, three-dimensional (3D) house drawings, and sales promotion material designs. The analysis methods used are:

- a. The stage of commodification of environmental discourse in the process of producing space
- b. Production of sign values in the commodification of environmental discourse

The research framework can be seen in Figure 1 below:



**Figure 1:** The Research Framework

### 3. Results and Discussions

PT. Baruga Asrinusa Development as a development company of Bukit Baruga Housing carries out three stages of commodification of environmental discourse in the process of producing space in Bukit Baruga Housing. The first stage is the planning and development stage; the second stage is the marketing stage; and the third stage is the management stage.

#### 3.1. The Planning and Development Stage

Previously, the land used as the site for the Bukit Baruga Housing development was mango gardens and rice fields. The company's land ownership area is 50 hectares, while the total area of the development plan is 300 hectares. Therefore, it required the company to acquire land for local residents. At this time, the process of producing (spatial) space becoming a commodity is took place. It is when space is constructed as a social product. [6] explained that space analysis cannot be separated from the development, preservation and expansion of modern capitalism. The planning process for Bukit Baruga as an Eco-friendly residence by presenting a house with a green living concept has started since the initial stages. Starting from the initial idea of the company owner perceiving the advantages of the site, in which the site has a hilly land contour with a height of between 7 meters to 24 meters above sea level. The idea is then elaborated in the form of a master plan in the form of a drawing of a land use pattern made with computer technology and architectural science. After that, it enters the planning stage by employing passive and active design. Passive design is based on the principles of wisdom and sustainability and does not depend on technology. Meanwhile, active design is related to the use of energy-saving technology in line with the development of the industrial world.



Table. 1 Data on Area and Number of Houses in Bukit Baruga

No.	Area	Phase/Cluster	Starting Built (Year)	Land Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Total House
1	Mahameru	Phase 1	1996	94,641	328
		Stage 2	1998	43,874	172
2	Celebes	Celebes	2000	38,178	180
		Matano	2000	24,500	42
3	Borneo	Borneo	2004	59,854	208
4	Andalas	Phase 1	2006	12,442	58
		Phase 2	2007	24,872	111
		Phase 3	2010	72,034	243
		Andalas Regency	2013	38,008	164
		Tebing Tinggi	2015	14,370	12
		Tanah Datar	2015	22,024	84
5	Java Regency	Java Regency 1	2016	21,448	96
		Java Regency 2	2016	24,706	88
		Java Regency 3	2017	26,627	101
6	Bali Regency	Bali Regency	2018	38,773	146
		*Bali Thai Land	2019	60,290	540
Total				616,641	2,573

\* The realization of the construction of Bali Thai Land Phase 1 is 223 units.

Within 24 years, since its construction was first launched until nowadays, six areas have been built in Bukit Baruga. The development of each area carried out in phases or based on clusters shows a process of knowledge transformation related to eco-friendly housing. It can be seen in land use patterns, building models and varied types of material between clusters. In general, Bukit Baruga looks green and beautiful from the main gate of housing in the Mahameru cluster to the Bali Regency cluster which is still under construction. The dominating plants are the mango, oil palm, palm and ketapang trees. Coupled with the existence of identical facilities to the environment, like the agro-tourism of mango garden covering an area of 14 hectares, Golf Driving Range, the water park called Bugis Waterpark, and the Islamic School Athirah has repeatedly won Adiwiyata Award, which is an award give to school for promoting environmental awareness.

The forms of environmental commodification at the planning and development stage are land use patterns, house models, and material use. The land use pattern applies a balance of occupancy and open space, which is 60:40. The construction of houses was in accordance with hilly land contours and without fences. Moreover, site plans accommodate large trees and large stones, so that it is common to find large trees or large stones on the middle of the road. In addition, environmental parks are present in each cluster. Although the space ratio of Bukit Baruga can typically be maintained 60:40, the model of the (spatial) space utilization has changed. There are still environmental parks in clusters of Mahameru, Celebes and Borneo, then starting from the cluster of Andalas, the environmental park is replaced with an

expansion of the road median park. It is except for Tebing Tinggi cluster in which this cluster ratio reaches 50:50 because it is categorized as a luxury home area.

The houses model follows the trend, starting from the classic mediterranean model as in cluster of Mahameru, Celebes and Borneo. It shifts to minimalist models in cluster of Andalas, Phase 1, and modern minimalism starting from the cluster of Andalas, Phase 2, characterized by large openings where windows seem to dominate the appearance of the house. However, despite experiencing a model shift, the ratio of physical space to open space is maintained at 60:40. In addition to applying a minimalist model, the green living concept is increasingly visible by reducing the use of wood materials. The frame of the window and the door already uses aluminum and the roof frame uses lightweight steel construction. From the interior, it still maintains the previous concept, in which the access between the living room and family room isn't limited by a dividing wall so that it feels spacious and is supported by a ceiling model following the roof contour. The shift in environmental knowledge is an inseparable part of human efforts to discover a recent form of balance between social goals [7]. The process of environmental concept reformulation carried out by PT. Baruga Asrinusa Development, shows that they acknowledge properly the importance of using signs and symbols in accommodating the environment when planning and building residential areas. The meaning of signs has traditionally been explored by semiological scientists analyzing how socio-cultural meaning is constructed with language which is a sign system (Barthes, 1967) in [8].

### 3.2. Marketing Stage

The commodification process of environmental discourse cannot be separated from the two marketing activities of Bukit Baruga Housing. Those are promotion and sales activities. A house or residential unit as the primary traded commodity by a developer contains a use value and an exchange value. As a matter of course, the value that other property developers or companies also have. Like so, it requires an extra value demonstrating an association or particular meaning for the buyer or user, or in Jean Baudrillard's terms, it is called 'sign-value'. Bukit Baruga, carrying the environmental discourse, then presents various environmental signs associated with the meaning of welfare, health and happiness.



**Figure 2.** Logo of Bukit Baruga Housing

The image of mango leaf on the logo of Bukit Baruga looks dominant as well as the green color. It is a form of the developer's commitment to presenting a residential area with intense concern for environmental conservation. The tagline "Harmony of Life" represents the developer's inordinate desire to make Bukit Baruga a balanced residential area, between the social environment and the natural environment.

Marketing activities in Bukit Baruga Housing are carried out by applying marketing principles, promotion and sales. According to [9], promotion is an element implemented to inform and persuade the market regarding new products or services to the company through



advertisements, personal selling, sales promotions, or publications. Meanwhile, selling or direct marketing is a direct relationship targeted to consumers to elicit a prompt response and building sustainable relationships with customers.

In activities of product marketing, the third strategy carried out by producers is to determine the positioning after the company has determined the market segmentation and target. According to [10] positioning is a strategy to enter a consumer's perception. In other words, brand positioning describes the condition of a brand that is different from its competitors, and it is embedded in the minds of customers. "Bukit Baruga is an Eco-friendly housing" was established as a positioning. In an effort to suggest this positioning in the minds of the public, consumer for the houses, various environmental signs and symbols are displayed in various marketing activities. It starts from product or brand names, logos, the use of Indonesian ecological identity as cluster names, house types and street names, as well as in various promotional media and marketing tools.

Activities of positioning is nothing but a form of commodification because it is an effort to put a product and brand image in the minds of consumers showing the image displayed is different from the image built by competitors. To be different, the company determines the value based on the advantages it has as the basis for determining the positioning. Values that are not functional values because competitors have the same values, but symbolic values.

Promotional activities in the marketing activities of Bukit Baruga Housing are carried out using all promotional models, either singly or in an integrated manner or what is called by a mix promotion. The use of advertising media always considers segmentation and target markets as well as following developments in communication and information technology. At the beginning of the development of Bukit Baruga Housing, many used print media advertisements, radio, cinema and outdoor advertising, like billboards or banners. However, with the development of technology, nowadays, they employ more online media and social media, even though they still used print and outdoor media.

The production of promotional materials and sales of Bukit Baruga Housing is determined by the availability of images of the house and cluster in three-dimensional (3D) form made by the Planning department of PT. Baruga Asrinusa Development. Referring back to Lefebvre's Production of Social Space, the activity of making three-dimensional (3D) images are nothing but the second dimension of the triadic space showing spatial production, namely 'space representation' providing an image or conceptualization so that something is defined as space. Representation of space appears at the level of discourse, and it appears in spoken forms such as description, definition, and especially the theory of space. A concrete explanation is put forward [11] that the living space which is the space of everyday life is a spatial experience formed through various images and symbols. Using Baudrillard's perspective, 3D images with various symbols and signs are nothing but hyper-reality. Hyper-reality presents reality models as a simulation for the audience [12].

The promotional media and marketing tools of Bukit Baruga Housing represent a description of the complexity of the commodification of environmental discourse, in which they contain various signs or symbols, simulation spaces and spatial representations because they are produced in such a way using computer graphics technology based on knowledge generate from the discourse developed by the authorities, in this case the capital owner. Marketing tools are produced to reinforce perceptions related to environmental housing in the minds of the public, potential consumers, who have previously been implanted through various promotional media, thus encouraging them to purchase products offered and marketed.

### 3.3. Management Stage

One of the departments at PT. Baruga Asrinusa Development is the Environmental Management Department, which is responsible for after sales service. The services provided are house maintenance, household clean water management, household waste management, environmental cleanliness management, environmental park and median park management, as well as managing the environmental security of Bukit Baruga Housing. The management department is also responsible for the operational activities of the available facilities, like the Bugis Waterpark, Bage Golf Driving Range, Baruga Food Park, Athirah Swimming Pool, and Tennis Court.

One of service forms of PT. Baruga Asrinusa Development for buyers of housing units in Bukit Baruga Housing is a guarantee for the maintenance period of the house in terms of building construction for three months and one rainy season for water leakage or seepage problems since the time when the buyer receives the house from the Environmental Management Department. It is stated in the Minutes of Home Handover signed by both parties, the buyer and the manager of Bukit Baruga Housing. It was also stipulated that the house maintenance period would be terminated if the buyer made changes, either additions or subtractions, to the building construction.

In addition to signing the Minutes of Handover of Houses, the buyers are also required to sign an Environmental Regulations Agreement for the Bukit Baruga Housing area containing a statement of the buyer's agreement to comply with environmental regulations for the sake of order, security and environmental comfort including road signs, parking, public lighting, house development, environmental cleanliness and household waste and environmental care.

Based on the information obtained, both from informants and secondary data, it is known that environmental commodification at the management stage is a continuation of the planning and development stages as well as the previous marketing stages. At this stage, the implementation of the environmental insight discourse seeks to be realized by the developer of Bukit Baruga Housing. As revealed at the marketing stage, the existing and established environment of Bukit Baruga Housing is an significant indicator in the marketing of residential units. Therefore, the Department of Environmental Management is responsible for maintaining the image of Bukit Baruga Housing as an Eco-friendly residential area, through relevant actions to that image.

What is done by the Environmental Management Department related to the production of spatial/social space from Lefebvre in relation to the dimensions of representational spaces is when space is understood only symbolically, then actually spatial practice in human daily life makes this symbolism as a marker of the most concrete relations between spaces. For [13] the representational space, it is related to the collective experience of space, in which in this context the market builds a system for the creation and accumulation of profits. According to Lefebvre, what should be observed is when the representational space collapses into mere symbolism. The problem is that because often this symbolic product of representational space is trapped in an aesthetic trend, it becomes temporary and easily loses momentum.

### 4. Conclusions

PT. Baruga Asrinusa Development made the environmental discourse with a set of knowledge related to it as the basis for abstracting the existing space, namely the current site of Bukit Baruga Housing, which previously was a mango garden area and rice fields was turned into a residential area with a set of supporting facilities. The commodification of the discourse on environmental insight is produced to increase the value of production sign,

where the house is no longer sufficient if only luxurious and expensive but also must be eco-friendly. The concept of green living or a concern for the environment becomes a sign or symbol and becomes an image to support the formation of competitiveness. Symbolically, the green living concept provides a breakthrough but does not add any fundamental functional value.

Commodification is carried out through the planning and development stages, in the form of a master plan and site plan that can change based on marketing needs, the application of the green living concept to land use patterns and house models and the construction of supporting facilities. At the marketing stage, commodification is carried out starting from building positioning, naming products from natural elements. Promotional and sales activities in the form of advertising media and marketing tools. Next, at the management stage, it is in the form of after-sales service, cleanliness, and application of environmental regulations. Commodification efforts carried out aim at establishing a brand image, especially for consumers having high hedonic attitudes and are very concerned about symbolic values in their consumption patterns and lifestyle [14]. The primary objective, of course, is the accumulation of capital and profits.

The process of commodification generates various signs and symbols as representations of the living environment and simulated spaces that are pseudo-nature. For Baudrillard, it is hyper-reality, which is when an object forms a perception of reality and existence that transcends reality, blurring the boundaries between what is considered right or wrong. [15] described hyper-reality when consumers cannot differentiate between reality and fantasy in their technology-driven society, where the media shape and filter then show what people think is real.

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