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MARKETING GRAVES: CHANGING PARADIGM OF A BURIAL GROUND FROM A CITY OF DEATH TO A CITY OF AMUSEMENT IN SAN DIEGO HILL CEMETERY IN CIKARANG, WEST JAVA

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ABSTRACT

A cemetery is commonly understood as a city of the death where corpses of beloved, hatred, heroic or even the unknown persons were buried. From ancient civilizations to present day, various forms of cemeteries had existed throughout the world. The cemetery had become an important symbol, identity or even held cultural significance for a particular society. In Indonesian urban context, the cemetery becomes an important part of city, as it provides greenery and a water reservoir or catchment area for urban communities. Recent forced economic conditions, especially the increasing land value factors in the cities influence people's thoughts for a proper grave place and seek an alternative for a new concept of cemeteries amidst ever changing and dynamic developments of city's life style.

One of Indonesian's powerful developers, the Lippo Group, lead by the Taipan family of Mochtar Riyadi, built a large public cemetery namely San Diego Hills Memorial Park and Funeral Homes (opened in January 2007) in Cikarang near Karawang Industrial Corridor West Java. Originally, this cemetery was intended only for Riyadi's family, and later on, it was extended and opened for public. The owner's strategy is to provide proper cemetery by selling 'kavling' (land-lot) aggressively to people (from different faiths) without waiting until these people have died. The design's concept offered, is not only to provide a burial ground, but also to provide grounds for people with an amusement park. This marketing strategy attracts some members of society and until now some of the lots have been sold.

This paper attempts to analyze the idea of such a new cemetery which was initiated by a Taipan family in relation to the urban people's lifestyle in JADEBOTABEK (Jakarta Depok Bogor Tangerang Bekasi) area. The aim is to discuss what is the meaning of burial ground (as a place) today, and what creative strategies are applied by developer or the owner in order to form an urban space proper for the dead and the living?

Keywords: burial grounds, capitalism, memorial garden

INTRODUCTION

One day in 2006, Mochtar Riyadi (the leader of Taipan family of Riyadi) ordered a group of native people from Bogor to move a big stone from Bogor to a specific location in Cikarang, West Java. This specific stone became a memorial monument for the parents of Riyadi's family who had died. The stone was placed in a particular place near a familial compound where the cremated ashes of Riyadi's parent body will be kept. Later, the area was developed as a new public cemetery by the family, and was named San Diego Hills Funeral Homes and Memorial Gardens.

Global trends of capitalism, where dynamic circulation of money changes people's modes to invest, directly influences people's creativity to increase the value of money. How to put money into our kitty is not the main issue today. Instead, how money can change the world is the powerful propaganda today. Therefore, it is necessary to be very careful in finding the right investment opportunity. It is what has been done by an Indonesian giant developer Lippo Group, lead by James Riyadi, the son of Mochtar Riyadi. Lippo Group (founded by Mochtar Riyadi) does not only enter uncommon business of cemetery, but is able to make money from that. Located on the industrial corridor of Cikarang West Java, about more than 15 km from the capital city of Jakarta, the San Diego Hills project's development was started in 2006 and firstly launched in 2007. Until now, more than 20 percents of the land-lots have been sold for burial grounds.

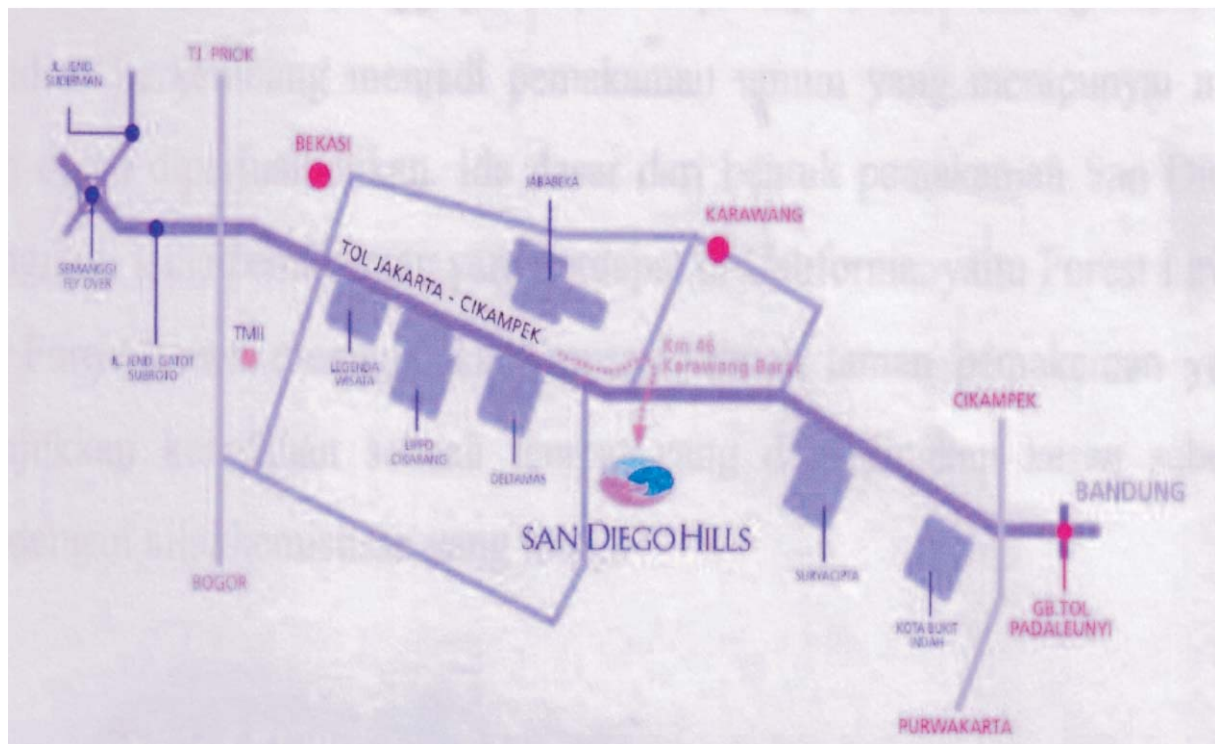


Figure 1. A cognitive map shows the location of San Diego Hills Cemetery.
Source: Internet

This paper tries to look at the relationship between death, architecture and capitalism. How images of architectural and landscape are simulated and replicated in order to sell land-lots in a new cemetery. Does a cemetery which conveys memory of the death ones become a prospective business for the future?

The method of this research relies on the data sources, which are primarily collected from field investigations, observations and interviews. The collected data is analyzed through architectural and cultural studies in order to see a possible connection between place, people and money in relation to funeral architecture.



Figure 2. The greenery image of San Diego Hills Landscape with variety of supporting buildings designed by Architect Ahmadsyah Fauzi illustrates variety of religious symbols.
Source: private documentary of Architect Ahmadsyah Fauzi.

ARCHITECTURAL IDEAS

The initial concept of San Diego Hills cemetery was to create a universal symbol of cemetery which can accommodate the deaths without differentiate their religious background. However, in the mid-time of conceptual process, it was realized that this ideal concept cannot fit in Indonesian context since Indonesian people still prefer to bury their loved one based on their religious rites which are different between one and another. It is the reason why the cemetery's land was then designed according to variety of religion.

The architectural ideas of the San Diego Hills cemetery came from another cemetery in California USA, namely Forest Lawn. The Forest Lawn model of cemetery was considered capable to change the image of common cemetery in Indonesia which has ghostly connotation or improper place for life people. Forest Lawn demonstrates that a cemetery does not only function to bury the deaths, but also provide a scenic panorama through its beautiful landscape design which can attract visitors to come. That cemetery can unite with its surrounding natural landscape.

The design concept of San Diego Hills is to build a 'memorial garden.' The landscape consultant, Edaw Aecom was commissioned to design this memorial garden. Garden is a reflection of paradise. It is acknowledged by any religion that there is life after death. In order to convey the image of immortal life or heavenly paradigm that human must enter after he/she dies, there are some gardening themes which were used to name the area of San Diego Hills. First, 'Garden of Creation', it is the area intended for Christian and Catholic people. Here, there is a 'Wall of Creation' set up the biblical stories, simulated from the painting works of Leonardo da Vinci. The idea of 'Wall of Creation' also imitated from Forest Lawn. Second, 'Garden of Prosperity and Joy,' this area is intended for Buddhist, Hindus and Chinese. Taking the concept of space in Buddhism; 'the Outer,' 'Inner', 'Imperial City,' and 'Forbidden Garden', this zone is united by an axis started from Lion Gate, then one by one pass through Island of Prayer, Inner Garden, Hidden Garden, Forbidden Garden, and at last Golden Pagoda for praying. This axis ends to Riyadi's family compound which has Chinese characteristics. Third, 'Heavenly Garden,' this zone is functioned to accommodate Moslem's cemetery. The design took Mughal Garden as the main inspiration. This grave yard orientates to *Kiblat*, and uses one of main features in Islamic architecture: water.

If we can trace back to history, the precedents of graveyard or cemetery are so various around the worldwide, from the Pyramids in Old Egypt, Taj Mahal in India and Imogiri Royal Cemetery in Indonesia. Even in Indonesia itself, we also have many other examples of graveyards built by different ethnic groups, such as by Nias, Torajan, Balinese, Sumbanese and many others. However, the concept of garden cemetery movement, which we consider close to the concept of San Diego Hills, was firstly initiated by John Claudius Loudon (1783-1843), a British landscape designer who wrote several landscape-gardening books applied to public cemeteries. He criticized the condition of public cemeteries in Britain which downgraded a visual quality of a city. For him, a cemetery's design can improve quality of society and morality around graveyard besides keeping historical records and nostalgia of people who were buried inside that place. Loudon advised that location of cemetery should not close to human settlement, be in higher land in order to obtain fresher air, and orientate to sun-light. He made aware that a healthy environment of a cemetery should be created in order to make a place more interesting.

All cemeteries would be as healthy as gardens or pleasure-grounds, and indeed would form the most interesting places for 'contemplative recreation.'

In San Diego Hills, there are some supporting buildings and area which are named 'Family Centre'. It does not only function to support funeral activities, but also centre of leisure for life people side by side with the place for deaths. They include restaurant, gift shops, meeting halls, sport facilities, hotel and a chapel. For water recreation, the developer also builds an 8 ha lake. It is interesting to look at the meaning of a sacred place here which is also embedded on profane buildings or juxtapose with secular activities. The cemetery's zones and leisure areas seemed supporting to each other. Through this design, life people can be close to their dead family without being frightened by previous stories of a city of the deaths.

CHANGING PARADIGM: MARKETING GRAVES

The limitation and high value of land in Jakarta is one of the reasons why many developers choose outside Jakarta as an alternative place for their projects. It is estimated by Lippo, that the



Figure 3. A brochure of San Diego Hills cemetery shows marketing strategy of Lippo Group to change images of common cemeteries today. Source: Lippo Cikarang.

San Diego Hills cemetery can attract people around JADEBOTABEK area to spend their money to bury their loved ones in proper and beautiful places. The marketing strategy of the company is to create and sell the image of a new cemetery which can become an amusement park for life people.

The Riyadi's family has already had a convincing background in many architectural projects and properties. Kemang Village Apartment, Pelita Harapan University, and Lippo Karawaci Property Project are among others. One of Mochtar Riyadi's messages in developing San Diego Hills is to remind people that every human being will face death. Therefore, it is important to make a preparation before we die.

In order to attract people buying land lots for their burial grounds, the image of common cemetery as frightening and ghostly place must be wiped out. Therefore, this cemetery must be built as a proper place for family recreation and leisure combined with specific occasions like wedding parties. It is hoped that people who visit the area will have a good memory about that place.

The name of cemetery is carefully chosen for easily marketable. San Diego Hills connotes image of Cowboy-American prairie and hilly landscape, which is hoped will be able to attract people to

come. This name is reproduced and simulated from its original context overseas in order to fit with market and consumer's tastes. Brochures produced by the Company also strengthened this reproductive image. Family Centre with various types of non-Indonesian traditional buildings represents this strong connotation, from American style Chapel to Byzantium Dome are some of examples.

This cemetery is treated like a private estate or small city intended both for life people and death ones. The security is monitored 24 hours non-stop. However, people become more responsive with the existence of this cemetery and aware that it is not taboo to prepare burial ground for their future. The cemetery which initially is a 'pre-need', now become an 'at-need' for some urban people in Jember. Lippo Group encourages people by saying that it is the right time to invest their future in funeral business.

The prices offered are affordable for every social level of community, even for lower income people. Lands are sold per-meter-square. There are three types of burial grounds offered to consumers with different prices based on land-width. They are single space, private estate and peak estate. From these kinds of types, the most preferable lot is 'estate' type, because this type can accommodate more than two burial grounds for familial cemetery compound, commonly acknowledged in South-East Asian culture.

CONCLUSION

From above discussion, we can conclude that burial grounds today are not a taboo or unpleasant place to visit. San Diego Hills Cemetery proves a new paradigm by blurring the idea of sacred and profane or between sacred and secular into uniting symbols where a city of deaths stand up side by side with a city of amusement. This is made possible through the strong design and marketing strategy of Lippo Group which takes the concept of a Memorial Garden combined with a Family Centre.

The critics for San Diego Hills specifically are for its architectural images. Why non-Indonesian architectural styles are introduced in the area where people still live in traditional way. Simulation and reproduction of a foreign architectural style without considering the essence of those forms only produce meaningless forms. These produced forms are only replica, and the visual images through advertisements are tools to seduce people for imaginarily experiencing this pseudo architectural landscape.

Does a cemetery which conveys memory of the death become a prospective business for the future? This question is not easy to answer, because people always sense and experience a place differently from time to time. People always move forward and backward in life, speculate, criticize and then decide what is the best for them in the future. Therefore, funeral architecture business could be promising in the future, but nobody knows how long it will last.

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