

The Spatial Awareness Behind the Naming of Social Groups and Geographical Areas in Mainland South Sulawesi

Ahmadin

Faculty of Social Science and Law, Universitas Negeri Makassar

Corresponding Author: Ahmadin ahmadin@unm.ac.id

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Space, Social Groups, Geographic Regions, South Sulawesi

Received : 5 January

Revised : 19 February

Accepted: 24 March

©2024 Ahmadin: This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).



ABSTRACT

In the sociological paradigm of space, as a place whatever its form and name as long as it is inhabited or used as a base for human activity, it is not a passive natural entity but rather dynamic. This is made possible by the spatial dialectics and social reproduction that take place accompanying the development of a space along with the meaning of it which is always changing and dynamic. This paper examines spatial identity in naming social groups and geographical areas in Sulawesi using place identity theory, social identity theory, and identity process theory. This type of research is a literature review with a sociology of space approach that uses data and analysis descriptively from a number of relevant literature. The results showed that some social group names in Sulawesi are a representation of the geographical structure of a space, so that when mentioning the name of the group or its residential center, it will reflect its spatial identity. This fact is sociologically a spatial awareness that has been created in the long history of Sulawesi as well as can be categorized as local community intelligence

INTRODUCTION

Space and place (Hoggett, 1992) are an inseparable part of human life, especially in its various activities and interactions based on life goals or interests. In the study of social science, the relationship between humans and their environment (Williams, 2010) is discussed with reference to the triangular concept of space, time and life. *First*, the context of the discussion of man in space is the scope of social science studies in the realm of geography studies (Alijani, 2015) with a focus on the spatial dimension in a broad sense, namely the profile of an area. *Secondly*, the concept of man in time is the field of study of the discipline of history (Caradonna, 2022) that discusses the development of human life from time to time including culture and civilization. *Third*, the concept of man in life (Kapp & Kapp, 1961) is the realm of study of several social science disciplines such as sociology (examining humans in the context of social interaction, social stratification, social differentiation, power and authority, social change, and others), anthropology which examines humans in a cultural context (ethnic origin and distribution, forms of human culture, elements of culture, and others), law which discusses aspects of rules and sanctions as a social system in community life, and many others.

The development of science is increasingly rapid, causing space and place not only to be the scope of study of geography and environmental science (ecology) but has become a field of study of various scientific disciplines. One of them is sociology which expands its studies to include the realm of space and gives rise to a new type of study, namely the sociology of space (Urry, 2001). The basic assumption that accompanies the presence of sociology of space (Löw, 2016) is a paradigm shift that previously considered space as a passive entity into a dynamic entity. Space that is perceived as a stage for actors, namely individuals and social groups in their activities in its development is given and has meaning in such a way. This means that the perspective and perception of individuals and social groups towards space then affects spatial practices. This paradigm at least sees that the dynamic aspect of social change (Reeves* & Forde, 2004) in society is no longer only based on time, but also on space. In short, there is a dialectic of space that influences social reproduction (Norton & Katz, 2017).

The study of space and place both in the scope of sociology and other scientific disciplines, is heavily influenced by Lefebvre's view of space as a result of social construction (Gottdiener, 1993). Space, which is then imagined to have a strong identity and image by the complexity of meanings attached to its existence, is constructed by three elements, namely spatial practices, spatial representation, and representational space (Halfacree, 2006). The first element, spatial practice, concerns the spatial relationship between objects and products, where spatial characteristics are described through perspectives and spatial situations experienced or experienced in everyday life. The second element is the representation of space which relates to the creation of space as a form of meaning production carried out by humans on symbols both language and science. The space that is interpreted and perceived according to language and science, then becomes an imagined space and from here humans project the existence of themselves and others who live together in a space (place). The third

element is representational space which is the result of a dialectic between spatial practices and representations of space which is then called real space. In various studies on space, the third element is often referred to as creating a dominant group that performs acts of control over a space (Watkins, 2005),.

This research examines the phenomenon of spatial awareness (Schwenkler, 2012) created behind the tendency to name social groups and geographical areas according to their ecological characteristics (Li et al., 2020) with the unit of analysis of several examples in mainland South Sulawesi. This sociology of space study has at least two main objectives, namely: *First*, to reveal the meaning and values behind the emergence of spatial awareness created as a spatial practice in labeling a social group and geographical area which then becomes an identity and image. *Second*, if the study of space so far has focused more on spatial practices, representation of space, and representation space in urban areas, the study actually portrays space in the perspective and perception of people in rural areas (inland) as a form of spatial awareness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Spatial Awareness

Spatial awareness is the primary motivation for the emergence of a diverse set of spatial practices (Özkul, 2014). An interesting piece of research is cited that discusses how to navigate space through the processes of wayfinding, information gathering and decision-making. It also describes spatial orientation as a spatial thinking skill that has significance in everyday life. The first important aspect discussed is the characteristics of human spatial cognition and behavior and the tendency of spatial knowledge to be distorted and fragmented in the environment. It was emphasized that there are fundamental differences in the cognitive mapping skills of individuals with regard to the accuracy of understanding metrics and environmental configurations. The second important point was described as the difficulties in the use of maps and the description of spatial relationships. It is even recommended about alternative ways to help people through mobile navigation tools in improving cognitive mapping skills while practicing spatial orientation (Ishikawa, 2021).

Other research results on spatial awareness (Klippel et al., 2010) are linked to many philosophers' views on the impossibility of experiencing objects, properties, or spatial relations except against the backdrop of absolute spatial awareness. The author of this paper rebuts this claim through an analysis of the case of a brain-damaged subject whose visual experience is alleged to have violated this condition. That is, objects and spatial properties are present in his visual experience, but space itself is not. A recommendation is made in relation to this study that a phenomenological argument can provide evidence about the nature of the mind even if the evidence is not fully corrected (Schwenkler, 2012).

Referring to these two research results, it can be understood that spatial awareness is constructed by the characteristics of human cognition, visual experience, and perspective on space. These three factors influence spatial practices and orientation. To reinforce this argument, let us try to compare it with another research result with the locus of urban green open space studies,

illustrating the importance of the role of user perceptions in assessing the feasibility of a public. The research results with the case of residential areas in Tianhe District, Guangzhou, also illustrate that the type of greenery, location form, and spatial effects are related to public perceptions (Chang et al., 2020). In relation to research on spatial awareness that influences the names of social groups and geographical areas in Sulawesi, it will be related to the characteristics of congeniality, visual experience, and the way people perceive the space or environment where they live.

Social Groups

Social groups (Charness & Chen, 2020) in the study of this paper are not explained according to definitions or types, but describe them according to the context of the discussion. Various historical sources mention that there are four main ethnic groups that inhabit the mainland of South Sulawesi in both the capital and districts, namely: Makassar, Bugis, Mandar and Toraja (M. Ahmadin, 2021). The Makassar ethnic social group and its sub-ethnic groups inhabit several districts: Pangkajene and Islands, Maros, Gowa, Takalar, Jeneponto, Bantaeng, Bulukumba, Selayar. The Bugis ethnic group (Pelras, 1997) inhabits the districts of: Maros, Pangkajene and Islands, Bulukumba, Sinjai Bone, Soppeng, Wajo, Parepare, Pinrang, Sidenreng Rappang and parts of Luwu (Caldwell, 1992). The Mandar ethnic group inhabits the districts of: Polewali Mandar, Majene, Mamasa, and Mamuju. The Toraja ethnic group inhabits the districts of: Toraja, North Toraja, and parts of Luwu (Cavanagh & Mercieca, 2014).

Each social group from each ethnic group that inhabits coastal areas, islands, mainland, or in the mountains, lives with their respective cultures (traditions) and distinctive spatial practices (Watkins, 2005). This is part of the way they adapt to the environment and it is certain that they have characteristics of cognition (Wallace et al., 2000), visual experience (Pautz, 2010), and the way people view the space (A. Ahmadin, 2024) or environment where they live. Although it is certain that there will be a variety of cognitions, experiences, and perspectives in each ethnic or social group with a very large number, this study is only limited to describing some of them as units of analysis. Without dismissing the importance of each spatial practice and its orientation in each ethnic group, in this study only some are considered to represent the others.

METHODOLOGY

This research is a descriptive study of space sociology from the aspect of data presentation and analysis (M. Ahmadin, 2024). The data collection technique is a literature study related to social groups and geographical areas in mainland Sulawesi. As a literature study with a qualitative research type, the search for data sources is not carried out in the field but based on written works. The types of written works in question include research results that have been published in the form of books and scientific journals or that have not been published. The research stages are data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and data verification (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Sociologically, people in South Sulawesi (Husain et al., 2021) are divided into social groups based on the ecological conditions (Saino et al., 2004) of their settlement. The social group that inhabits the coastal area among the Bugis people is called *Tupabbiring* (Chairunnisa et al., 2020) or *Topabiring* (people who live along the beach or coast). The term *Topa' Biring* derives from three words: *To* or *Tau* (person, human) (Millar, 1983), *Pa* (profession/occupation), and *Biring* (edge/side). The social group is divided into three categories, namely (1) coastal communities (Sutton-Grier et al., 2015) who work as fishermen to meet family economic needs; (2) coastal communities who work as non-fishermen or other professions including farmers, and (3) coastal communities who work as fishermen and farmers as well as other professions. The naming of these social groups is not based on the type of profession practiced in the three categories, but based on the ecological spatial conditions (Brown, 2008) of their settlements.

Another social group in Bugis society is known as *Tori Bulu'*, which refers to those who live in mountainous areas (mountain peaks, mountain slopes and mountain foothills). The term *Toribulu* means *To* or *Tau* (person, human), *Pa* (profession/occupation), and *Bulu'* (mountain), respectively. The naming or mentioning of this social group is based on the ecological space conditions of their settlements, namely mountainous areas. This social group category works as permanent and seasonal farmers for certain types of commodities. During the kingdom or colonial period in South Sulawesi (Wellen, 2021), people who lived in the mountains also became actors and links in the trade network, namely as suppliers of various agricultural products from the interior. They transported agricultural products from the hinterland to the port area using horses. Some inland people also used wooden boats and utilized the river flow to transport agricultural products to the port located at the mouth of the river.

The next social group category is *Tori Je'ne'*, which in Makassar and its sub-ethnic languages (including Selayar) means people who are in the water. This term is applied to the Bajo or Bajau community (Clifton & Majors, 2012), people who live and work at sea or sea people. The spatial practices of this social group are unique in that they build houses on the water with poles planted into the sea. For a long time, the Bajo people had a principle of life, including a commitment to live, work and do activities only in the sea, so they had a house on land. Some historical sources say the ancestors of this nomadic tribe originally came from the

Sulu Islands, South Philippines (Rodriguez et al., n.d.). Their settlement spaces in several districts are called Bajo villages. Some Bajo villages in the archipelago include: on Nain Island (Bunaken National Park) Manado Bay North Sulawesi, Rajuni Island (Taka Bonerate) Selayar Islands South Sulawesi, and several other places including West Nusa Tenggara and East Nusa Tenggara.

Representations of space (Aase, 1994) in relation to the naming of geographical areas in Sulawesi can be taken from several examples in Selayar Islands District. This district, located in the administrative area of the South Sulawesi provincial government, has two geographical categories: mainland and archipelago (Hunt, 2017). In these two categories of governmental areas, the naming of sub-district-level governmental areas represents the spatial conditions of the geographical area, as well as a marker of the location and geographical position of the region. For the naming or mentioning of sub-districts located on the mainland, it is accompanied by the word "*Bonto*" which means land, while for the naming or mentioning of sub-districts located in the archipelago, it is accompanied by the word "*Pasi*" which means island or archipelago. Some names of sub-districts in the mainland, such as: Bontoharu, Bontomanai, Bontomatene, and Bontosikuyu sub-districts. The names of the sub-districts on the islands are: Pasilambena, Pasimarannu, and Pasimasunggu sub-districts.

The naming of social groups and geographical areas is not limited to being interpreted as a form of spatial awareness that represents the condition of geographical areas that will facilitate the recognition and identification of the characteristics of an area. Instead, it can be understood as a prayer and hope for a space and the people who inhabit it. An interesting example can be seen in the names of two sub-districts on the mainland of Selayar Island (Heersink, 1994), Bontomarannu, which means a land that promises joy, and Bontomatene, which means a land that promises happiness. It can be assumed that these names contain hopes and prayers deliberately implied by the giver, so that the people who inhabit these lands can live in an atmosphere of joy and happiness. The islands of Selayar (Mead & Lee, 2007) also have the names Pasimasunggu, which means an island that promises happiness, and Pasimarannu, an island that promises joy. The elements of hope and prayer contained in the names of geographical spaces (Nunes, 1991) both on the mainland of Selayar Island and on the islands show that Selayar Islands Regency is blessed by the creator. In addition, the emergence of various diction containing hope or prayer in the naming of areas in the district is also thought to have been inspired by the predicate or designation of Selayar as Tanadoang or the land of prayer.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the description of the representation of space in the labeling of social groups and geographical areas, it can be said that the practice of space is a form of intelligence of past local communities in South Sulawesi. An area (place) name that is used as a marker in accordance with its characteristics, will make it easier for everyone to know and identify it. Thus, when people read or hear the name of a social group or the name of a region, at the same time it will be directly illustrated that it is a land area, an archipelago, a coastal area, a mountainous area, and so on. In this context, the meaning of a name becomes something communicative that informs the public.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The availability of data and various sources related to this study is inseparable from the role of many parties. For this reason, we would like to thank all those who have provided information/data and also provided relevant reading sources.

REFERENCES

- Aase, T. H. (1994). Symbolic space: Representations of space in geography and anthropology. *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, 76(1), 51–58.
- Ahmadin, A. (2024). *Sociologizing Urban Space: Makassar in the Colonial and Post-Colonial Period*. Widina Bhakti Persada. <https://repository.penerbitwidina.com/publications/567918/sociologizing-urban-space-makassar-in-the-colonial-and-post-colonial-period>
- Ahmadin, M. (2021). Sociology of Bugis Society: An Introduction. *Jurnal Kajian Sosial Dan Budaya: Tebar Science*, 5(3), 20–27.
- Ahmadin, M. (2024). Spatial Practices as A Pattern of Maintaining Social Relations Among Selayar Ethnic Migrants In Makassar City, Indonesia. *Revista De Gestão Social E Ambiental*, 18(2), e02051. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24857/rgsa.v18n2-100>
- Alijani, B. (2015). Spatial analysis in geography studies. *Journal of Spatial Analysis Environmental Hazards*, 2(3), 1–14.
- Brown, G. (2008). Social–ecological hotspots mapping: a spatial approach for identifying coupled social–ecological space. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 85(1), 27–39.
- Caldwell, I. (1992). Bugis Weddings: Rituals of Social Location in Modern Indonesia. By Susan Bolyard Millar. Berkeley: Center for South and Southeast Asia Studies, University of California at Berkeley, 1989. Pp. xx, 236. Illustrations, Notes, Bibliography. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 23(1), 179–181.
- Caradonna, J. L. (2022). *Sustainability: A history*. Oxford University Press.

- Cavanagh, R., & Mercieca, P. (2014). *EFL curriculum implementation in primary schools in South Sulawesi Province in Indonesia*. Curtin University.
- Chairunnisa, A. S., Asri, S., Bochary, L., & Firmansyah, M. R. (2020). Modeling Origin Destination Matrix in the Inter Island Cluster of North Liukang Using Gravity Model. *IOP Conference Series: Materials Science and Engineering*, 875(1), 12083.
- Chang, N., Luo, G., & Yuan, J. (2020). Study on green environment resources of urban residential areas and multidimensional impact. *Arabian Journal of Geosciences*, 13(1), 2.
- Charness, G., & Chen, Y. (2020). Social identity, group behavior, and teams. *Annual Review of Economics*, 12, 691–713.
- Clifton, J., & Majors, C. (2012). Culture, conservation, and conflict: perspectives on marine protection among the Bajau of Southeast Asia. *Society & Natural Resources*, 25(7), 716–725.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications.
- Gottdiener, M. (1993). A Marx for our time: Henri Lefebvre and the production of space. *Sociological Theory*, 11(1), 129–134.
- Halfacree, K. (2006). Rural space: constructing a three-fold architecture. *Handbook of Rural Studies*, 44, 62.
- Heersink, C. G. (1994). Selayar and the green gold: the development of the coconut trade on an Indonesian island (1820–1950). *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 25(1), 47–69.
- Hoggett, P. (1992). A place for experience: a psychoanalytic perspective on boundary, identity, and culture. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 10(3), 345–356.
- Hunt, P. (2017). Configuring the UN Human Rights System in the "Era of Implementation": Mainland and Archipelago. *Hum. Rts. Q.*, 39, 489.
- Husain, S. B., Puryanti, L., & Setijowati, A. (2021). Education for all: A study on education for indigenous people in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences*, 42(3), 623–629.
- Ishikawa, T. (2021). Spatial thinking, cognitive mapping, and spatial awareness. *Cognitive Processing*, 22(Suppl 1), 89–96.
- Kapp, K. W., & Kapp, K. W. (1961). *Toward a science of man in society*. Springer.
- Klippel, A., Hirtle, S., & Davies, C. (2010). You-are-here maps: Creating spatial awareness through map-like representations. *Spatial Cognition & Computation*, 10(2–3), 83–93.

- Li, G., Jiang, C., Du, J., Jia, Y., & Bai, J. (2020). Spatial differentiation characteristics of internal ecological land structure in rural settlements and its response to natural and socio-economic conditions in the Central Plains, China. *Science of the Total Environment*, 709, 135932.
- Löw, M. (2016). *The sociology of space: Materiality, social structures, and action*. Springer.
- Mead, D., & Lee, M. (2007). Mapping Indonesian Bajau Communities in Sulawesi. *SIL Electronic Survey Report*, 19.
- Millar, S. B. (1983). On interpreting gender in Bugis society. *American Ethnologist*, 10(3), 477-493.
- Norton, J., & Katz, C. (2017). Social reproduction. *The International Encyclopedia of Geography*, 1-11.
- Nunes, J. (1991). Geographic space as a set of concrete geographical entities. In *Cognitive and linguistic aspects of geographic space* (pp. 9-33). Springer.
- Özkul, D. (2014). Location as a sense of place: Everyday life, mobile, and spatial practices in urban spaces. In *Mobility and Locative Media* (pp. 101-116). Routledge.
- Pautz, A. (2010). Why explain visual experience in terms of content. *Perceiving the World*, 254-309.
- Pelras, C. (1997). *The Bugis*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Reeves*, J., & Forde, C. (2004). The social dynamics of changing practice. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 34(1), 85-102.
- Rodriguez, J. J. R. B., Schroeder, L., Muallil, R. N., Dino, N., Herrera, M. J. B., Ishmael, A. I., Abrahamsson¹⁰, E., Stoneking¹¹, M., & De Ungria, M. C. A. (n.d.). *Sea Nomads, Sultans, and Raiders: History and Ethnogenesis in the Sulu Archipelago, Philippines*.
- Saino, N., Szép, T., Romano, M., Rubolini, D., Spina, F., & Møller, A. P. (2004). Ecological conditions during winter predict arrival date at the breeding quarters in a trans-Saharan migratory bird. *Ecology Letters*, 7(1), 21-25.
- Schwenkler, J. (2012). Does visual spatial awareness require the visual awareness of space? *Mind & Language*, 27(3), 308-329.
- Sutton-Grier, A. E., Wowk, K., & Bamford, H. (2015). Future of our coasts: The potential for natural and hybrid infrastructure to enhance the resilience of our coastal communities, economies and ecosystems. *Environmental Science & Policy*, 51, 137-148.

- Urry, J. (2001). The sociology of space and place. *The Blackwell Companion to Sociology*, 3-15.
- Wallace, L. S., Buckworth, J., Kirby, T. E., & Sherman, W. M. (2000). Characteristics of exercise behavior among college students: application of social cognitive theory to predicting stage of change. *Preventive Medicine*, 31(5), 494-505.
- Watkins, C. (2005). Representations of space, spatial practices and spaces of representation: An application of Lefebvre's spatial triad. *Culture and Organization*, 11(3), 209-220.
- Wellen, K. (2021). Recollections of a lost kingdom: The varied interactions between history and memory in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. *Memory Studies*, 14(5), 1035-1060.
- Williams, J. C. (2010). Understanding the place of humans in nature. *The Illusory Boundary: Environment and Technology in History*, 9-25.