

The Implications of Land Use Dynamics on Land Disputes in Depok City West Java

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Abstract: Land use dynamics represent an inevitable phenomenon in the process of urban development. The large-scale conversion of land in Depok City, West Java, has triggered various issues, particularly concerning land tenure, land use practices, and the emergence of land disputes—especially on *particuliere* lands, whose legal status remains ambiguous due to historical and administrative complexities. This phenomenon has significant implications for spatial and environmental sustainability and also exacerbates social tensions and conflicts related to land ownership. This study seeks to analyze the correlation between land use transformation and the rising frequency of land disputes in Depok City, while also identifying effective and equitable mechanisms for conflict resolution. This study employs a qualitative case study approach that integrates secondary data analysis and in-depth interviews to understand the dynamics of land tenure conflicts. The primary issue identified lies in the structural imbalance between escalating land demand and the limited supply of available land parcels within the urban landscape. Land disputes may be addressed through two primary pathways: litigation processes within judicial institutions and alternative non-litigation mechanisms that emphasize cooperative approaches outside formal legal proceedings. With the increasing complexity of land-related conflicts, alternative dispute resolution mechanisms—such as consultation, negotiation, mediation, conciliation, and expert evaluation—have become increasingly pertinent and contextually appropriate. The findings of this study indicate that land disputes in Depok City are driven by land imbalance and weak governance, with non-litigation settlements offering a more efficient and equitable approach that serves as the basis for adaptive land policy recommendations.

Keywords: Land Use Dynamics, Land Disputes, Depok City.

INTRODUCTION

Land use dynamics represent an inevitable phenomenon in the process of regional development, particularly within urban areas. These dynamics reflect complex and continuous transformations in land functions, directly associated with either the increase or decline in specific types of land use. Changes in land use patterns tend to align with shifting demands and population growth, reflecting a trend toward more sustainable spatial governance practices (Zhou & Huang, 2024). The intensifying pressure of urban development contributes to dynamic land use changes that often result in uneven spatial distribution, thereby generating spatial inequalities and conflicts over land access (Xu, Li, & Wang, 2023). According to research by Gandharum et al. (2024), between 2013 and 2020, there was a significant conversion of agricultural land in urban areas of West Java, primarily

driven by the expansion of residential and infrastructure development. Meanwhile, Faoziyah et al. (2024) emphasize that such changes not only threaten ecosystem sustainability but also have the potential to trigger social tensions due to overlapping interests and competing claims over spatial utilization.

Land use change is often regarded as an indicator of regional growth, particularly in the development of physical infrastructure, public facilities, and housing. The increase in population, the intensification of economic activities, and the evolving social structure of society have cumulatively escalated the pressure on the availability of physical space in urban areas (Firman, 2004). This condition has led to an imbalance between land supply and demand, which may give rise to various issues, including land control disputes and ownership conflicts.

One of the most common forms of agrarian conflict in urban areas is land disputes involving *particular* land. In Indonesia, the term "*particuliere land*" refers to former *eigendom* lands originating from the Dutch colonial era, in which private ownership rights over land were granted to individuals, including both Dutch nationals and indigenous people who legally acquired such rights (Harsono, 2010). One region with a long-standing history related to *particular* land—particularly since the period of the Dutch East Indies administrations—is Depok City, located in West Java Province. Several areas in Depok City were once part of *eigendom* estates controlled by landlords, typically marked by the presence of large manor houses, or *landhuizen*, which served as centers for land management (Toha, 2011).

From a legal perspective, the existence of *particuliere* land was officially abolished with the enactment of Law Number 1 of 1958 concerning the Abolition of *Particuliere Eigendom* Rights. Nevertheless, in practice, legal ambiguities regarding land status remain prevalent, particularly in urban areas such as Depok City, which often lead to land ownership disputes (Sekarmadji, 2023). The complexity of these land conflicts is further exacerbated by weak administrative governance, including the issuance of *girik* (traditional land certificates) without legal basis by certain government officials (Aditya, 2022).

Geographically and functionally, Depok City holds a strategic position due to its direct borders with the Special Capital Region of Jakarta (DKI Jakarta) and Bogor Regency. As part of the *Jabodetabek* metropolitan area, Depok City is designated as a buffer zone for the capital, with primary functions as a residential area and a center for education, trade, and service activities, as well as tourism (Bappeda Depok, 2021). This development has significantly increased the demand for land. When land availability does not increase proportionally, competition over land becomes an inevitable phenomenon. As a result, issues related to land control and use have grown increasingly complex, giving rise to new disputes that may involve individuals, community groups, and even institutions.

Most previous studies on land-use change in the Jabodetabek area have primarily focused on patterns of Land Use and Land Cover (LULC), the driving factors of urbanization, and the environmental impacts associated with temperature changes. Although a considerable body of research has employed multi-temporal spatial analyses of LULC, these studies have largely remained disconnected from examinations of land conflict at the local scale. For instance, a longitudinal study on LULC dynamics in Jakarta identified the conversion of green areas into built-up zones between 1990 and 2020. However, this study did not directly link land-use change dynamics with the spatial distribution or intensity of land disputes at either the city or sub-district level (Rachman, Huang, Xue, & Marfai, 2024).

Another strand of research on land-use change dynamics in Depok City has revealed a rapid expansion of built-up areas over the past two decades (Dewi, Ariyani, Shafwah, & Komariah, 2024). However, these studies have generally been oriented toward technical spatial classification, without identifying the occurrence of land disputes or empirically testing the correlation between land-use change and the frequency of conflicts (Rivai, et al., 2023). This highlights the existence of an empirical gap between long-term land-use change studies and validated spatial mapping of land-related conflicts.

The literature on land conflict and conflict mapping methodologies emphasizes the importance of integrating spatial data with conflict typologies in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the distribution and intensity of conflicts. Several recent studies have highlighted the necessity of linking LULC data with conflict data (Fienitz, 2023). Nevertheless, most of the existing research remains conceptual and primarily concentrated on the regional scale (Berenschot & Saraswati, 2024), while studies applied to the context of medium-sized cities remain limited. Furthermore, research on mechanisms for resolving land disputes in Indonesia has generally remained focused on juridical and institutional dimensions (Sari, Perdana, & Wajdi, 2025), while the utilization of spatial LULC mapping as a foundation for designing location-specific resolution strategies remains very limited. Yet, the effectiveness of policy interventions requires a spatial understanding of high-vulnerability areas and their underlying drivers, such as agrarian conversion, unclear status of private ownership, and weak land asset governance systems (Aldyan, Latifiani, & Nugraha, 2024).

Meanwhile, the issue of land disputes in Depok City cannot be separated from the pressures of urban development and the weak management and oversight of land use. These disputes reflect the intersection of legal rights, historical claims, and contemporary economic interests. Therefore, a study on the implications of land use dynamics for the emergence of land disputes in Depok City, West Java, is highly relevant—not only to gain a deeper understanding of the root causes, but also to formulate sustainable solutions through participatory and inclusive governance approaches. This study examines the

relationship between the dynamics of land-use change and the increasing incidence of land disputes in Depok City, while also identifying resolution approaches that can mitigate conflict complexity in a fair and effective manner through spatial mapping of dispute cases. The research is expected not only to enrich the existing body of knowledge on macro-scale LULC studies and predominantly normative land conflict literature but also to provide more targeted policy recommendations addressing the specific dynamics of urban development in Depok City.

METHODS

This study was conducted in Depok City, West Java Province, which is geographically located within the *Jabodetabek* metropolitan area and is characterized by diverse physiographic conditions. Depok City lies between the coordinates 6°19'00" – 6°28'00" SL and 106°43'00" – 106°55'30" EL. Topographically, the city is predominantly composed of lowland areas and gently undulating hills, with elevations ranging from 50 to 140 meters above sea level (Bappeda Depok, 2021). These topographic conditions render Depok highly vulnerable to development pressures, particularly in the form of land conversion for residential and infrastructure purposes.

Administratively, Depok City holds a strategic territorial position, as it shares borders with several major cities and regencies across two provinces. Its location places Depok in a spatially pressured zone, subjected to intense urbanization and land conversion processes, both of which have the potential to generate land tenure issues and ownership disputes. The study area, located in Depok City, West Java Province, is illustrated in Figure 1.

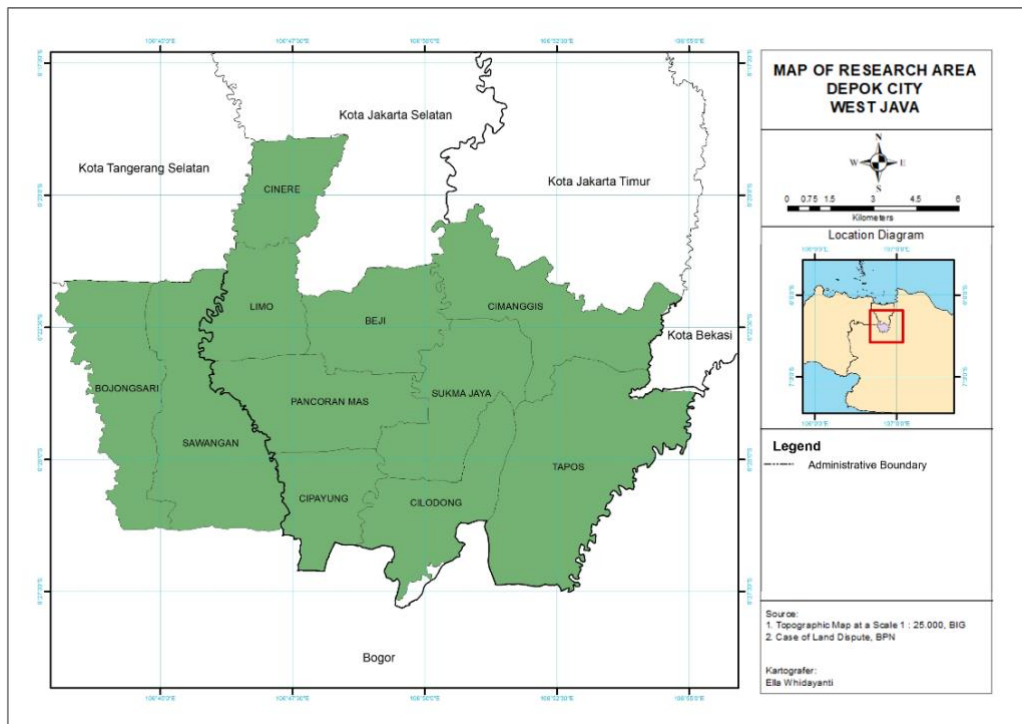


Figure 1. The Map of Research Area in Depok City

Source: Data Processing, 2025

In this study, the geographical and administrative characteristics of Depok City constitute the analytical basis for examining spatial and social dimensions of land use patterns and the dynamics of land-related conflicts. This approach seeks to elucidate the correlation between the area's physical attributes and prevailing land use pressures, while also identifying zones that are particularly vulnerable to disputes due to their spatial location and the intensity of land-use conversion processes occurring within the city.

Data Processing

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, utilizing secondary data as the primary source, which was obtained through a literature review method. The literature review aimed to gather, categorize, and scrutinize diverse documents and academic publications pertinent to land disputes in Depok City, utilizing the sub-district level as the analytical unit. This technique aims to enrich the conceptual foundation and deepen the contextual understanding of the issue, particularly in examining the dynamics of land use and their implications for land-related conflicts in Depok City.

The primary and secondary data collected were classified based on thematic categories. Subsequently, spatial data in the form of land use maps were analyzed using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to identify patterns of land use change in Depok City over time. This spatial analysis was also employed to overlay areas prone to land

disputes with the dynamics of land use conversion. The data utilized in this study are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Data

No.	Data	Source	Utility
1	Administrative data	BIG	Map of Research Area
2	Land use data	BIG	Map of Land Use
3	Land tenure and ownership data	BPN RI	Map of Land Tenure and Ownership Conflicts

Source: Data Processing, 2025

Data Analysis

The data analysis in this study focuses on examining the nexus between land use dynamics and the intensity of land disputes in Depok City. To achieve a comprehensive understanding, a descriptive approach was employed, supported by secondary data obtained from the Ministry of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning/National Land Agency (ATR/BPN), as well as other relevant documents collected through an extensive literature review. The dataset includes information on land use changes, the number of reported land dispute cases, and their spatial distribution across sub-districts within the city.

The first step undertaken was the classification of data based on categorical variables, including land use type, dispute location, and conflict scale. Subsequently, land dispute cases were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods to identify the distribution patterns and incidence rates of land disputes at the sub-district level. The intensity of land disputes was categorized by the number of reported cases into three levels: low, medium, and high (Table 2). The classification method based on quantitative indicators, which groups cases according to the scale or type of conflict, enables spatial mapping of the distribution, frequency, and degree of conflict vulnerability within a given area. (Williams, 2000). In practice, such typologies have proven effective in identifying patterns of conflict vulnerability and providing an empirical foundation for designing context-specific resolution strategies (Wehrmann, 2008). Accordingly, this classification facilitates the identification of areas with higher vulnerability to land conflicts, thereby allowing for further analysis of their correlation with land use change dynamics in Depok City.

Table 2. Data Classification

No.	Number of Cases	Vulnerability Level
1	<15	Low
2	15-22	Medium
3	>22	High

Source: Data Processing, 2025

A comparative analysis was carried out to explore the linkage between the intensity of land disputes and land use change, particularly in urban areas undergoing land conversion driven by development pressures. The findings of this analysis were used to construct an interpretation of land use dynamics and their implications for land conflicts in Depok City.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Land Use Dynamics

The research findings indicate that land use in Depok City has undergone considerable dynamics, reflecting ongoing processes of urbanization and territorial expansion. According to the classification outlined in Regulation of the Minister of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning/Head of the National Land Agency (ATR/BPN) No. 16 of 2021, land use in Depok City comprises five main categories: residential land, corporate land, industrial land, service land, and building land. Each category represents a specific function within the city's spatial structure, such as residential use, economic activity, public services, open space, and supporting ecosystems.

The interpretation of the land use map (Figure 2) reveals that residential areas constitute the most dominant form of land utilization, particularly in the western and central parts of Depok City, including the Beji, Pancoran Mas, and Sukmajaya sub-districts. Population growth and increasing housing demand have driven the expansion of residential zones toward the urban periphery, areas that were previously used for agriculture and productive gardens. Nevertheless, several sub-districts—such as Cimanggis, Tapos, and Sawangan—still retain non-urban land characteristics, including paddy fields, plantations, and green open spaces.

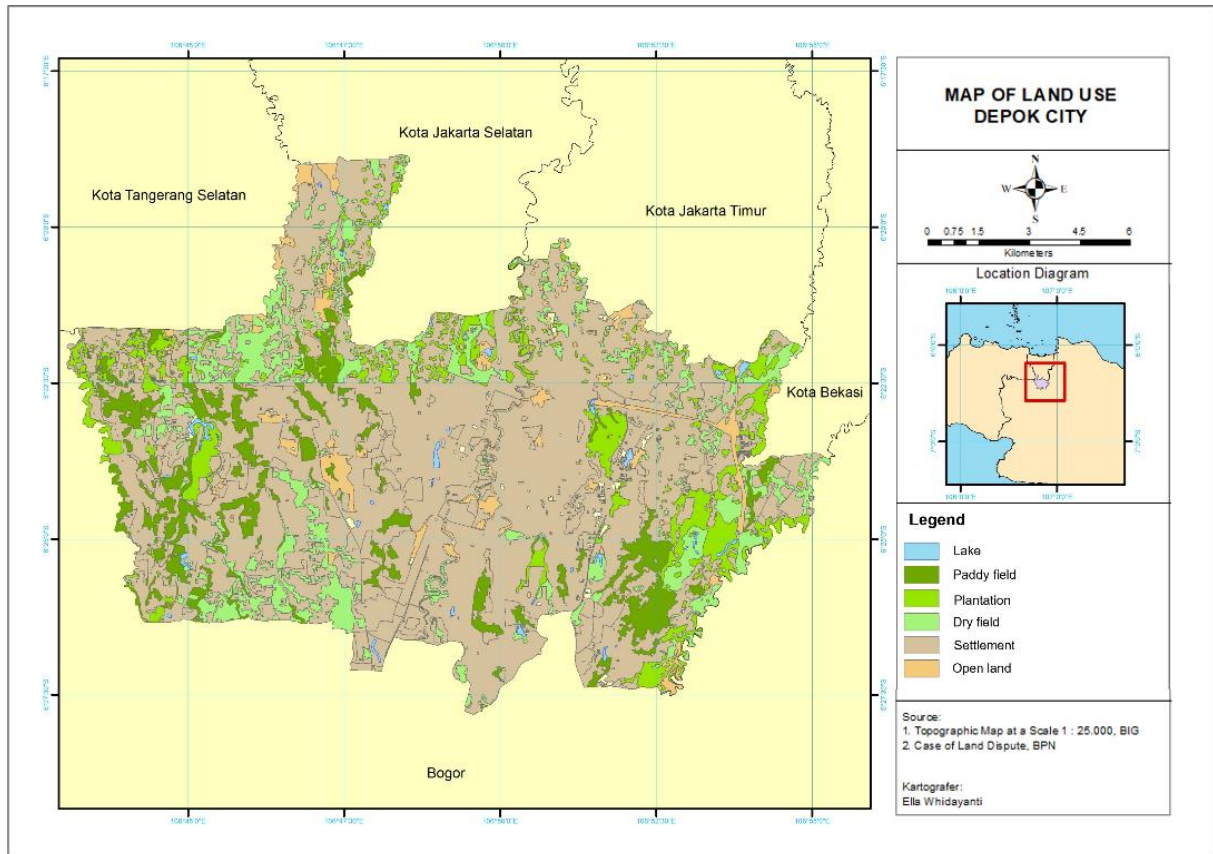


Figure 2. The Map of Land Use in Depok City, West Java

Source: Data Processing, 2025

The transformation of land use from agrarian to non-agrarian function has had a direct impact on the emergence of potential land conflicts. Rapid land conversion processes, often lacking clear legal ownership status, serve as a primary trigger for disputes—particularly in areas that have not been fully integrated into formal land governance systems. This dynamic reveals a significant mismatch between spatial planning policies and the realities of land utilization on the ground, resulting in overlapping land claims among individuals, community groups, and both governmental and private institutions.

Land use dynamics in Depok City reflect the city's spatial development and contribute significantly to the emergence of land disputes. The misalignment between spatial planning and the actual patterns of land utilization constitutes one of the primary challenges in land management, particularly in urban areas experiencing intense development pressures such as Depok City.

Land Dispute

The analysis results indicate that the intensity of land disputes in Depok City varies across sub-districts and shows a correlation with both land use types and the legal status of land ownership. Data obtained from the Ministry of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial

Planning/National Land Agency (ATR/BPN) reveal that sub-districts in Depok City can be classified into three categories based on the number of land dispute cases: low intensity (fewer than 15 cases), medium intensity (15-22 cases), and high intensity (more than 25 cases).

Beji, Pancoran Mas, Sukmajaya, Cilodong, and Cipayung sub-districts are classified as areas with low levels of land disputes. In contrast, the Limo and Cinere sub-districts are categorized as having medium levels of land dispute intensity. Meanwhile, Bojongsari, Sawangan, Tapos, and Cimanggis sub-districts exhibit a high number of land dispute cases, with more than 25 incidents recorded within a given time period. This phenomenon indicates that the intensity of land-related conflicts is not evenly distributed across the city but rather concentrated in specific areas experiencing significant pressure from land use changes.

Areas with high levels of land conflict—namely Bojongsari, Ssawangan, Tapos, and Cimanggis sub-districts—are generally dominated by the “non-built-up” land use category, which includes paddy fields, plantations, dry fields, and open spaces. Such areas are often characterized by weak legal documentation of land ownership and a high prevalence of *girik* land status. *Girik* refers to land ownership evidenced only by a letter of acknowledgment issued by the urban village or sub-district office, rather than by a formal land title (certificate of ownership) issued by the Ministry of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning/National Land Agency (Sihombing, 2018). The land dispute map of Depok City is presented in Figure 3.

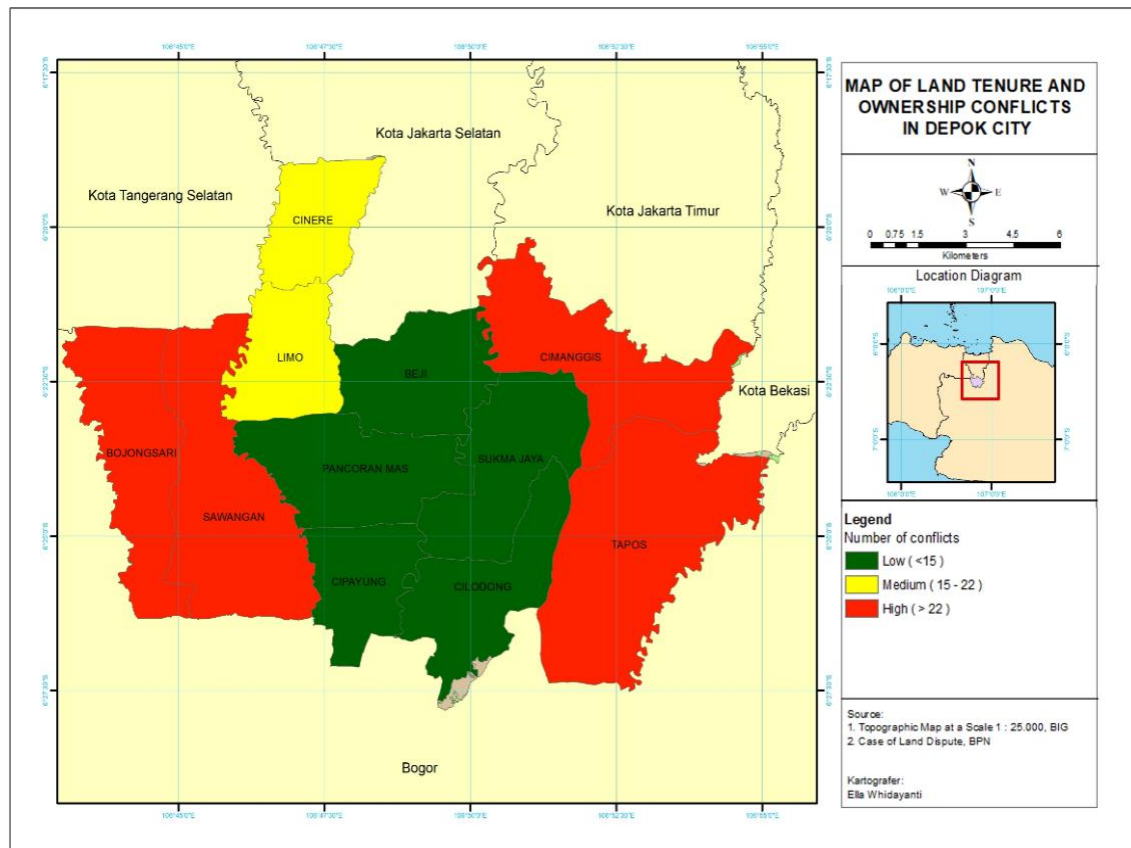


Figure 3. The Map of Land Tenure and Ownership Conflicts in Depok City

Source: Data Processing, 2025

Girik land is not recognized as valid proof of ownership under the Basic Agrarian Law (UUPA) No. 5 of 1960. Within the framework of Indonesian land law, legitimate land ownership must be supported by an official land certificate as evidence of legal title (Art. 19 of the UUPA). In cases of overlapping claims between certificate holders and *girik* landholders, the claim supported by the land certificate carries greater legal weight. This situation often triggers conflicts, particularly in areas undergoing rapid and unregulated land conversion (Harsono, 2010).

In addition to *girik* land, land disputes are also triggered by the presence of *particuliere* land. *Particuliere* land, or *eigendom* land, refers to a legacy of Dutch colonial rule, wherein land was granted to individuals—both Dutch nationals and Indigenous elites—as a form of reward from the colonial government. Although *eigendom* rights were officially abolished after Indonesia's independence, generational claims and informal control over *particuliere* land persist in practice. This has resulted in legal ambiguity concerning land status and has led to complex and prolonged disputes (Lubis, 2015).

Thus, land disputes in Depok City are driven not only by the physical aspects of land control and use but also by the complexities of legal ownership status. The absence of official land certificates, the prevalence of *girik* land, and the legacy of *particuliere* (or

eigendom) land constitute a combination of key factors contributing to ownership conflicts — particularly in areas that retain agrarian functions or are undergoing land conversion. Therefore, agrarian reform and the acceleration of land certification processes are crucial in preventing and resolving land conflicts in urban areas such as Depok City.

Approaches to Resolving Land Disputes

The research findings indicate that uncontrolled land use dynamics in Depok City can increase the risk of land disputes, particularly in areas undergoing rapid conversion from agrarian functions to residential or commercial uses. Therefore, resolving land ownership conflicts requires adaptive, efficient, and sustainable legal and social approaches. One commonly recommended method is conflict resolution through direct deliberation between disputing parties. This method emphasizes the principles of familial consensus and voluntary participation, which can be facilitated through informal mediation. If mutual agreement is reached within this forum, the dispute can be resolved without proceeding to litigation. Non-litigation settlement is considered more efficient and helps preserve social relationships between the involved parties. (Sutedi, 2011).

However, some land dispute cases cannot be resolved through deliberation, and thus litigation becomes the alternative. Judicial settlement may proceed through either civil or criminal court, depending on the substance of the dispute. In cases involving unauthorized use of land, resolution can refer to Law No. 51/Prp/1960 concerning the prohibition of land use without the permission of the rightful owner. Meanwhile, cases involving administrative land policies may be brought before the State Administrative Court (*Peradilan Tata Usaha Negara*, PTUN). Nevertheless, litigation is often regarded as inefficient due to its lengthy procedures and high costs (Yunus, 2014).

As an alternative to court proceedings, arbitration and alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms have become increasingly relevant, particularly amid the growing complexity of land disputes in urban areas. According to Law No. 30 of 1999 on Arbitration and Alternative Dispute Resolution, parties may choose arbitration as a binding resolution mechanism, provided that it is mutually agreed upon through a contractual clause. In addition, various other forms of ADR may be employed to mediate conflicts, including negotiation, mediation, consultation, and expert appraisal (Hadjon, 2013). These methods are expected to offer solutions that are faster, more flexible, and oriented toward win-win outcomes.

Strengthening the capacity of local mediation institutions and increasing public awareness of the importance of legal land ownership (e.g., through land certification) are crucial steps in the prevention and resolution of land disputes in Depok City. In addition, to establish a conflict resolution system that is responsive to dynamic land use changes, it is essential to ensure transparent integration of government data and institutional synergy

among the Ministry of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning/National Land Agency, local governments, and the judiciary.

Case Study: Land Conflict in Cimanggis Sub-District

One notable case reflecting the dynamics of land disputes occurred in 2021 in Mekarsari Urban Village, Cimanggis Sub-District, Depok City. The case involved a two-hectare land area contested between local residents holding *girik* land and a property developer in possession of a Building Use Right (HGB) certificate. The residents claimed ownership based on hereditary land control dating back to the 1980s and supported their claim with a Land Statement Letter (*Surat Keterangan Tanah*, SKT) issued by the urban village office. However, the developer held a formal certificate issued by the Ministry of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning/National Land Agency, which was followed by an official eviction notice (Sutedi, 2011). The initial mediation facilitated by the urban village and sub-district authorities failed to produce an agreement, as both parties believed their respective legal claims were sufficiently strong. As a result, the dispute proceeded to the judicial process through the State Administrative Court (PTUN) and the Depok District Court. The core issue raised in the legal proceedings was the alleged procedural irregularities in the issuance of the Building Use Right (HGB) certificate (Yunus, 2014).

The court decision confirmed that the developer's Building Use Right (HGB) certificate is valid because the residents with *girik* land could not prove legal ownership using the official processes required by the Basic Agrarian Law (UUPA) No. 5 of 1960. The decision emphasized that while *girik* documents may serve as evidence of physical possession, their legal standing is significantly limited in the absence of an official land certificate. (Harsono B. , 2010). This case underscores that litigation offers legal certainty; however, it often results in substantial social and economic consequences, particularly for low-income residents lacking access to formal land certification processes. Therefore, this study emphasizes the need to implement preventive and participatory strategies, actively involving local governments and the Ministry of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning/National Land Agency at the early stages of land-use conversion.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that land disputes in Depok City are a direct implication of the growing demand for land that is disproportionate to the limited availability of land resources. This gap between demand and availability has driven significant land-use changes, often without being accompanied by adequate land governance, thereby contributing to increasingly dynamic and uncontrolled land-use patterns.

The results of the spatial analysis indicate that the distribution of land dispute intensity in Depok City is uneven. Areas with low conflict levels include Beji, Pancoran Mas, Sukmajaya, Cilodong, and Cipayung Sub-District. In contrast, the highest levels of conflict are recorded in Bojongsari, Sawangan, Tapos, and Cimanggis—areas that are generally still dominated by undeveloped land. Conflicts in these areas are primarily triggered by weak asset registration systems and administrative deficiencies at the local level, as well as the continued prevalence of uncertified land parcels.

This study identifies two primary approaches to resolving land disputes: litigation (judicial process) and non-litigation (alternative dispute resolution). While litigation ensures legal certainty, it often involves lengthy procedures and high costs. Therefore, cooperative non-litigation methods—such as consultation, negotiation, mediation, conciliation, and expert appraisal—offer a more efficient alternative that is oriented toward social justice.

Efforts to resolve land disputes in Depok City require not only legal interventions but also institutional strengthening, improved land governance, and increased public awareness of the importance of legal land ownership. A holistic and collaborative approach is essential to establishing a spatial planning system that is equitable, orderly, and sustainable amidst the growing pressures of urbanization.

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