



Institutional Capacity and Bureaucratic Structure in the Implementation of Land and Abandoned Areas Management Policy in South Sumatra Province

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ABSTRACT

Land and displaced areas management is an important part of the agrarian reform and spatial planning agenda in Indonesia. This policy aims to ensure optimal land use, fairness, and social functioning as mandated in Article 33 of the 1945 Constitution. This study aims to analyze the institutional capacity and bureaucratic structure in the implementation of land and abandoned area management policies in South Sumatra Province.

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. The data collection technique was carried out through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation of key actors involved in policy implementation. The analysis framework uses the George C. Edwards III policy implementation model which includes aspects of communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure. The results of the study show that in general, the implementation of the policy has been carried out according to the provisions, but still faces obstacles in the form of limited institutional capacity, fragmentation of bureaucratic authority, as well as land dispute problems and high indicated abandoned areas. This study emphasizes the importance of strengthening institutional capacity and improving bureaucratic coordination to increase the effectiveness of land policy implementation.

INTRODUCTION

Land is a strategic resource that has economic, social, political, and ecological value that is very important for people's lives and the sustainability of national development. In the Indonesian context, land is not only seen as an economic commodity, but also as a means to realize social justice and people's welfare as mandated in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. Article 33 paragraph (3) of the 1945 Constitution emphasizes that the earth, water, and natural resources contained in it are controlled by the state and used for the greatest prosperity of the people. This principle places the state as the main manager of agrarian resources with the obligation to ensure the use of land in a fair, productive, and sustainable manner (Santoso, 2012). However, land management practices in Indonesia are still faced with various structural problems. One of the prominent problems is the existence of land and abandoned areas which shows inefficiencies (Suprianto et al. 2025) in the use of agrarian resources and weak supervision of rights and permit holders.

The existence of land and abandoned areas not only has an impact on the inhibition of economic development, but also has the potential to increase social inequality, trigger agrarian conflicts, and reduce the quality of the environment (Sumardjono, 2008). Therefore, this issue is a strategic issue that requires serious handling from the government.

Land neglect is basically contrary to the principle of the social function of land which is the basis of national agrarian law. Every land right contains an obligation to cultivate, use, and utilize land in accordance with the purpose of granting these rights (Harsono, 2005).

As the need for land for national development increases in various sectors such as food, energy, infrastructure, and housing, the government is required to ensure that land is not speculatively controlled and abandoned. In this context, the management of land and abandoned areas is a strategic policy instrument. The Government of Indonesia then stipulated Government Regulation Number 20 of 2021 concerning the Management of Abandoned Areas and Lands as the legal basis for inventorying, identifying, controlling, and utilizing land and areas that are indicated to be abandoned.

Although policies have been formulated normatively, key challenges often arise at the implementation stage. The implementation of public policies does not only depend on the quality of regulations, but is also highly determined by the capacity of the implementing institutions and the bureaucratic structure that runs them (Edwards III, 1980).

In the study of public administration, policy implementation is understood as a complex and dynamic process. This process involves various actors, interests, and structural conditions that can influence the achievement of policy objectives (Mazmanian and Sabatier 1983).

Institutional capacity is one of the main determinants of successful policy implementation. This capacity includes the ability of government organizations to manage human resources, finance, information, and the ability to coordinate and make decisions effectively (Grindle, 1997).

In addition to institutional capacity, the bureaucratic structure also plays an important role in determining the effectiveness of policy implementation. Hierarchical, fragmented, and lack of coordination bureaucratic structures have the potential to hinder the process of implementing policies in the field (Ripley and Franklin 1986).

South Sumatra Province is one of the regions in Indonesia that faces serious problems related to land and abandoned areas. This province has a large area of non-forest areas with the dominance of the plantation and mining sectors as the main drivers of the regional economy.

On the other hand, the amount of land allocation for these sectors is not always accompanied by optimal utilization. Many plantation and mining areas in South Sumatra Province are indicated to be not cultivated or not used in accordance with the permits granted.

This condition creates a paradox between the economic potential of the region and the reality of land use that has not been maximized. This shows that there are problems in the supervision and control of land use by rights and permit holders.

The problem is increasingly complex with the existence of lands that are in dispute status. Land disputes create legal uncertainty and often hinder the regulatory process because implementing officials must be careful in taking action (Nurhasanah 2019).

In the context of regional autonomy, the provincial government has a strategic role in implementing land policies. However, limited authority and coordination across sectors and levels of government are often obstacles in the implementation of these policies.

The South Sumatra Provincial Environment and Land Office as a policy implementing institution faces challenges in terms of land data management, inter-agency coordination, and limited resources in conducting field supervision. This condition shows that the problem of land management and abandoned areas is not solely technical, administrative, but also closely related to the existing institutional capacity and bureaucratic structure. Therefore, the analysis of policy implementation needs to be directed at how implementing institutions build internal capacity and manage bureaucratic structures so that policies can be implemented effectively and consistently.

The policy implementation model put forward by George C. Edwards III offers a relevant analytical framework for examining the issue. This model emphasizes four main variables, namely communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure. Through this approach, the implementation of land and abandoned area management policies can be comprehensively analyzed, both from the internal aspects of the organization and from the relationship between the bureaucratic units involved.

A number of previous studies have shown that weak bureaucratic coordination and limited institutional capacity are often the main inhibiting factors in the implementation of land policies (Haposan, 2013; Sulistianti, 2013). However, studies that specifically link institutional capacity and bureaucratic structure in the implementation of policies to control abandoned areas at the

provincial level are still relatively limited. The limitations of the study show that there is a need for more in-depth and contextual research, especially in areas with complex agrarian characteristics such as South Sumatra Province.

This research is expected to make an empirical contribution to the development of public administration science, especially in the study of land policy implementation in Indonesia. In addition, the results of this study are expected to be input for local governments in an effort to strengthen institutional capacity and improve bureaucratic structures to increase the effectiveness of land and abandoned area management.

Based on this description, this study focuses on the analysis of institutional capacity and bureaucratic structure in the implementation of land and abandoned area management policies in South Sumatra Province.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Public Policy Implementation

The implementation of public policy is a crucial stage in the policy cycle, because it is at this stage that political and administrative decisions are translated into concrete actions. Edwards III (1980) stated that policy implementation is a process that occurs after a policy is established and involves various administrative, organizational, and behavioral activities of policy implementers. The success of implementation is determined not only by the substance of the policy, but also by the institutional and bureaucratic context that surrounds it. Mazmanian and Sabatier (1983) view policy implementation as a series of activities influenced by the ability of policies to structure the implementation process as well as by social, economic, and political environmental factors. Thus, policy implementation cannot be separated from the capacity of the implementing institution and the inter-organizational relationship involved.

Institutional Capacity

Institutional capacity refers to the ability of government organizations to carry out their functions and authorities effectively. Grindle (1997) explained that institutional capacity includes human resources, organizational structure, authority, work systems, as well as coordination and leadership skills. Weak capacity will have an impact on low policy performance, even if regulations have been well formulated. In the context of land policy, institutional capacity greatly determines the government's ability to carry out inventory, supervision, rule enforcement, and land conflict resolution. Therefore, strengthening institutional capacity is an important prerequisite for the successful implementation of land and abandoned land management policies.

Bureaucratic Structure

The bureaucratic structure is an organizational framework that regulates the division of duties, authority, and responsibilities in the implementation of public policies. Ripley and Franklin (1986) emphasized that a fragmented bureaucratic structure and lack of coordination have the potential to cause overlapping authority and hinder policy effectiveness. Edwards III (1980)

identified two main characteristics of bureaucratic structures that affect policy implementation, namely standard operating procedures (SOPs) and fragmentation. SOPs are needed to maintain consistency in policy implementation, while fragmentation requires strong coordination between organizational units so that policies can run in an integrated manner.

George C. Edwards III Policy Implementation Model

The policy implementation model of George C. Edwards III was used as the analytical framework in this study. This model emphasizes four main variables that affect the success of policy implementation, namely communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure. The four variables are interrelated and form a complete implementation system. In this study, the main focus is directed on institutional capacity and bureaucratic structure as part of the resource variables and bureaucratic structure, without neglecting the role of communication and the disposition of policy implementers.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method (Suprianto and Riwayanti 2024). This approach was chosen to gain a deep understanding of the implementation process of land and abandoned land management policies and the factors that affect them at the regional level. Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation studies (Bambang Suprianto and Jiwa Riwayanti 2024). The data obtained were analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques with the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing as stated by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014).

RESEARCH RESULT

The results of the study show that the implementation of land and abandoned area management policies in South Sumatra Province has been normatively implemented in accordance with the provisions of Government Regulation Number 20 of 2021 concerning the Management of Abandoned Areas and Lands. The local government through the South Sumatra Provincial Environment and Land Office has carried out policy stages ranging from inventory, identification, evaluation, to the determination of land and areas indicated to be abandoned. This process is carried out with reference to technical guidelines set by the central government and involves coordination with relevant agencies, such as the Regional Office of the National Land Agency, district/city governments, and land rights or permit holders.

From the aspect of institutional capacity, the study found that policy-implementing institutions have a clear organizational structure and authority in implementing land and abandoned area management. However, the capacity of human resources is still the main obstacle. The number of apparatus that specifically handles land control and abandoned areas is relatively limited, while the scope of the area and the number of land objects that must be supervised are quite wide. In addition, the technical competence of the apparatus in the fields of

mapping, spatial analysis, and handling of land disputes is not completely evenly distributed, thus affecting the speed and accuracy of the field identification and evaluation process.

The research also found that support for facilities and infrastructure in policy implementation is still not optimal. Budget limitations have an impact on the intensity of field supervision and verification activities that should be carried out periodically. In some cases, the inventory and identification of abandoned areas relies more on administrative data and third-party reports, without being balanced with adequate field verification. This condition has the potential to cause a discrepancy between the data and factual conditions in the field.

In terms of bureaucratic structure, the results of the study show that there is a fragmentation of authority between central and regional agencies in the implementation of land and abandoned area control policies. Although the provincial government has an important role in coordination and supervision, the authority to determine the status of abandoned land still rests with the central government. This fragmentation causes the decision-making process to be relatively long and requires intensive coordination across levels of government. In practice, the coordination mechanism has not run optimally, especially in terms of data exchange and policy synchronization between agencies.

The research also revealed that standard operating procedures (SOPs) in the implementation of policies are available, but their implementation is not yet fully consistent in the field. The difference in understanding between the apparatus regarding the stages of control and the criteria for determining abandoned land causes variations in the implementation of policies. This shows that policy communication, both vertically and horizontally, still needs to be strengthened so that all implementers have a uniform understanding of policy objectives and mechanisms.

In addition, the results of the study show that the problem of land disputes is a significant obstacle in the implementation of land and abandoned area management policies in South Sumatra Province. Many lands and areas that are indicated to be abandoned are in a dispute status between rights holders, communities, and other third parties. This condition creates legal uncertainty and makes implementing officials tend to be cautious in taking control actions, so that the policy process is delayed.

The study also found that the level of compliance of rights and permit holders with land use obligations still varies. Some rights holders have shown a commitment to act on the government's warnings and recommendations, but others have not shown an adequate response. The lack of firm and consistent sanctions in the implementation of policies also affects the low driving force of policies in changing the behavior of rights or permit holders.

Overall, the results of the study show that the implementation of land and abandoned area management policies in South Sumatra Province has been running, but its effectiveness is still limited by limited institutional capacity, fragmentation of bureaucratic structures, weak coordination between agencies, and the complexity of land dispute problems. These findings confirm that the successful implementation of policies depends not only on the existence of

regulations, but also on the ability of implementing institutions to manage resources and bureaucratic structures effectively.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study show that the implementation of land and abandoned area management policies in South Sumatra Province has been running in accordance with the applicable regulatory framework, but has not reached the optimal level of effectiveness. This finding is in line with the view of Edwards III (1980) who stated that the success of policy implementation is not solely determined by the existence of formal policies, but is highly dependent on the capacity of implementing institutions and bureaucratic structural conditions. In the context of this study, although Government Regulation Number 20 of 2021 has provided a clear legal basis, the limitation of institutional capacity is the main inhibiting factor in translating policies into concrete actions in the field.

From the perspective of institutional capacity, the limitation of human resources both in terms of number and technical competence shows that implementing institutions are not fully prepared to manage the complexity of land and abandoned land management policies. Grindle (1997) emphasized that institutional capacity includes the ability of organizations to manage resources, information, and authority effectively. The findings of this study show that the weak capacity has an impact on the slow process of identification, evaluation, and monitoring of abandoned areas, especially in areas with a wide geographical coverage such as South Sumatra Province.

In addition to human resource capacity, limited facilities, infrastructure, and budgets also reinforce the argument that policy implementation requires adequate institutional support. The reliance on administrative data without intensive field verification points to a gap between policy design and implementation reality. This condition is in line with the view of Mazmanian and Sabatier (1983) who stated that implementation failures are often caused by the inability of policies to adapt to the conditions of the implementation environment.

The fragmented bureaucratic structure is another important finding in this study. The fragmentation of authority between the central and regional governments, especially in determining the status of abandoned land, creates a long and layered decision-making process. Edwards III (1980) identified fragmentation as one of the characteristics of bureaucratic structures that can hinder policy implementation if it is not balanced with effective coordination mechanisms. The findings of this study show that coordination across sectors and across levels of government has not been optimal, especially in terms of data exchange and policy synchronization.

The availability of standard operating procedures (SOPs) in the implementation of land and abandoned area management policies has not fully guaranteed consistency in implementation in the field. The difference in understanding between the apparatus on the stages of control and the criteria for abandoned land reflects the weak communication of policy. Within the Edwards III framework, unclear and inconsistent communication can lead to information

distortion and discrepancies in interpretation, ultimately affecting policy implementation performance.

The land dispute problems found in this study show that the implementation of land policy cannot be separated from the social and legal context that surrounds it. Land disputes create legal uncertainty that makes implementing officials be defensive and tend to avoid disciplinary actions. This finding corroborates the results of previous research which stated that agrarian conflicts are one of the main obstacles in the implementation of land policy in Indonesia (Haposan 2013; Sulistianti 2013).

In addition, the varying levels of compliance of rights and permit holders indicate that land and abandoned area management policies have not been fully able to change the behavior of the actors targeted by the policy. The consistent weak application of sanctions reduces the coercion of policies and strengthens the tendency of rights holders to delay land use. This shows that the disposition of policy implementers and political commitments are important factors that need to be strengthened so that policies can run effectively.

Overall, this discussion emphasizes that the implementation of land and abandoned area management policies is a complex and multidimensional process. Policy success is determined not only by good regulation, but also by adequate institutional capacity, a coordinated bureaucratic structure, effective policy communication, and conducive social and legal environmental support. The findings of this study reinforce the relevance of the George C. Edwards III policy implementation model in analyzing land policy in Indonesia, while demonstrating the need for a more comprehensive institutional approach in the implementation of land and abandoned area management policies at the regional level.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results and discussion of the research, it can be concluded that the implementation of land and abandoned area management policies in South Sumatra Province has been carried out in accordance with the applicable regulatory framework, especially Government Regulation Number 20 of 2021. The local government through the implementing institution has carried out policy stages ranging from inventory to evaluation of abandoned areas. However, the effectiveness of the implementation of the policy has not been fully optimal. Limited institutional capacity, especially in terms of human resources, budget support, and infrastructure, is still a major obstacle in the implementation of policies on the ground. In addition, the fragmented bureaucratic structure and weak coordination across sectors and levels of government have slowed down the process of controlling and utilizing land and abandoned areas.

This study also concludes that land disputes and legal uncertainty are significant inhibiting factors in policy implementation. Implementing officials tend to be cautious in taking control actions when dealing with land objects that are in dispute status, so that the policy process is delayed. On the other hand, the level of compliance of rights and permit holders with land use obligations still

varies, which shows that the control policy has not been fully able to consistently encourage changes in the behavior of policy targets.

Based on these conclusions, this study recommends the need to strengthen the institutional capacity of implementing institutions through improving the quality and quantity of human resources, especially in the technical field of land and spatial data management. Local governments also need to increase budget support and supporting facilities so that field supervision and verification activities can be carried out more intensively and sustainably. In addition, improving the bureaucratic structure through strengthening coordination mechanisms across sectors and across levels of government is an important step to reduce the fragmentation of authority in policy implementation.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

The next recommendation is the need to improve the mechanism for handling land disputes so that they do not become the main obstacle in the control process. The government needs to encourage regulatory clarity and strengthen synergy between land agencies, law enforcement officials, and local governments in resolving agrarian conflicts. In addition, the application of strict and consistent sanctions against rights or permits holders who abandon land needs to be strengthened so that the control policy has a more effective impetus in encouraging optimal and equitable land use.

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