



Political Will of the Head of Badan Pertanahan Nasional Bogor Regency I against Land Mafia Cases through the Implementation of Electronic Certificates 2020-2024

Eka Krisna Cahya Darmawan¹, Ridwan¹

¹Veteran National Development University Jakarta

*Corresponding Author: Eka Krisna Cahya Darmawan

Email: ekakhrisna37@gmail.com



Article Info

Article history:

Received 7 April 2025

Received in revised form 11 June 2025

Accepted 27 June 2025

Keywords:

Political Will

Land Mafia

Electronic Certificates

BPN Bogor District I

Agrarian reform

Abstract

The land mafia issue in Indonesia, including in Bogor Regency, threatens agrarian justice and legal certainty over land ownership. Weak transparency and accountability in the land system, along with the involvement of unscrupulous BPN officials, worsen the situation. This study analyzes the political will of the Head of the National Land Agency (BPN) of Bogor District I in addressing land mafia cases through the implementation of electronic land certificates. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through documentation and in-depth interviews. The study applies Brinkerhoff's political will framework, which includes indicators of public commitment, resource mobilization, policy consistency, and stakeholder engagement. Findings reveal that the success of electronic certificates is strongly influenced by the leadership and commitment of the Head of BPN Bogor I in supporting land digitization as a systemic measure against land mafia practices. Beyond technological innovation, electronic certificates serve as a local strategy for agrarian reform and legal enforcement. This research recommends strengthening institutional synergy, improving public digital literacy, and ensuring transparency in land certificate issuance to support sustainable land governance.

Introduction

The land mafia case in Indonesia is a very complex case and has threatened the justice and order of land tenure in each region. Agrarian conflicts in Indonesia in 2023 have caused 241 conflict eruptions, which seized an area of 638,188 hectares of agricultural land, customary territories, capture areas, and settlements of 135,608 families. A total of 110 conflict eruptions have victimized 608 land rights defenders as a result of repressive approaches in agrarian conflict areas. This figure tops six other Asian countries, namely India, Cambodia, the Philippines, Bangladesh and Nepal. Indonesia accounts for 74% of total incidents, 94% of total individual victims and 84% of total affected households (kpa.or.id, 2024).

According to Atnike Sigiro, Chairperson of Komnas HAM, the increasing trend of agrarian conflict has become a special concern. "Agrarian issues will be the most consulted issue in 2023", KPA's 2023 Year-End Note that agrarian conflicts in the Jokowi era were higher (2939 cases) than in the SBY era (1354 cases). (kpa.or.id, 2024).

Bogor Regency is one of the districts with rapid economic growth in West Java, so it is not immune from land mafia cases that harm the community and investors. In 2020 there were more than 1,000 reports of land dispute cases in Bogor Regency, indicating the high level of land conflict in this area (BPN, 2020). Resolving this phenomenon requires *political will* support from the Head of the Bogor District National Land Agency I as a form of institutional commitment in handling these cases. Politics related to the land sector is always related to the

interests of certain individuals or groups who seek to take advantage of existing legal loopholes in controlling illegal land (Ministry of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning, 2021; Ramadhani, 2021; Rose-Ackerman, 2024).

However, not only illegal land, the forms of crime in the land sector are varied and complex, such as the creation of multiple certificates, certificate forgery, and intimidation and violence. This is exacerbated by the lack of transparency and accountability in the land certification process. According to Presidential Regulation No. 20 of 2025, the National Land Agency of Bogor District I plays an important role in dealing with this, because the impact if the land mafia is left unchecked and given facilities will result in huge losses for landowners. These losses include material losses such as spending money on lawyers, fighting the mafia, legal proceedings, and compensation. There is also the loss of legal uncertainty creating a decrease in public confidence in legal entities to take care of land certificates or insecurity with their land rights (Permadi, 2024; Yudianto & Santiago, 2024; Tesfaye et al., 2023).

According to the study center of Commission II of the House of Representatives, Indonesia ranks at the top in terms of land issues. In a working meeting (raker) with Commission II DPR RI, the Ministry of ATR / BPN explained that the number of land disputes in 2021 reached 8,111 cases. Of the total land cases, BPN was only able to resolve 1,591 cases (berkas.dpr.go.id, 2022). Forgery of land certificates, multiple certificates, and the land mafia are the main problems that often arise at the Bogor Regency National Land Agency I, it results in a lack of public trust in the Bogor Regency BPN agency. One example in 2022 there was a case of abuse of power by unscrupulous Bogor District BPN I employees who were involved in the land mafia case, there were six people: 1) Male initials DK (49), Chairman of the Adjudication Committee of PTSL Kantah BPN Bogor District; 2) Male initials RGT (25), PTSL Officer; 3) Male initials AG (23), PTSL Officer; 4) Male initials AR (28), PTSL Officer; 5) Male initials SP alias BK (31), Calo; 6) Male initials MT alias KMR (30), Broker.

A total of six people were made suspects by the Bogor District Police for falsifying land certificates for the systematic land registration program (PTSL). This case involved a BPN official with the initials DK (49) as the Head of the PTSL Adjudication Committee of the Bogor District BPN Office I who worked with several brokers, so the Bogor District Police and the Ministry of ATR / BPN moved to dismantle the land mafia practice (Sidabutar, 2024)

Officials of BPN Bogor District I have been working with PTSL officers in urban villages and brokers to issue fake certificates. The land mafia wanted to replace people's certificates with fake data ordered by brokers so that the land certificates overlapped. This has caused victims to suffer losses of up to Rp 10 billion, where the Bogor Regency Police have found 25 certificates belonging to victims, one of whom owns 5,300 hectares of land with a total nominal value of around Rp 5 billion (BPN, 2022).

One indicator of weak *political will* is the low level of validation of land parcel data, which is the main prerequisite for issuing electronic land certificates. Without accurate validation, digital certificates can actually strengthen false claims and exacerbate land conflicts. The following presents data on the progress of mapping and validation of land parcels in Bogor district from 2020 to 2024:

Table 1. Total Coverage Of Validated Mapped Land Parcels

Year	Total registered parcels	Mapped parcels	% mapped	Validated field	% validated
2020	986.100	871.613	88,39%	556.480	56,4%
2021	990.000	900.000	90,91%	620.000	62,6%

2022	993.000	925.000	93,16%	685.000	68,9%
2023	996.000	945.000	94,89%	730.000	73,3%
2024	998.000	960.000	96,19%	765.000	76,6%

Source: Bogor District BPN Performance Report I, 2024

Table 1 shows that although the number of mapped parcels has increased significantly, the number of validated parcels is still relatively low at below 80%. This means that there is still a considerable administrative gap for land mafia practices to manipulate ownership status or submit false claims through a system that has not been thoroughly validated.

For example, in one of the cases interviewed by researchers, a resident with the initials SW (48) who had bought land in Cimanggis, Bogor Regency since 1989 actually lost his ownership rights due to the practice of falsifying documents by the company that claimed the land through the recommendation of the village head. When she asked the head of BPN Bogor District I for clarification, no adequate information was provided, and the settlement process was instead thrown to other parties such as GTRA (Agrarian Reform Task Force) or the courts.

In the context of this problem, along with the development of technological advances and communication systems can have an impact on changes in all sectors of both the public and private sectors which trigger the development of digital innovation in overcoming any problems in the public service system. The Ministry of ATR / BPN does not remain silent with the rampant advancement of technology and communication systems today Electronic-based land registration is an inevitable innovation from the development of technology and communication. Technological transformation has changed the land registration system from paper to electronic. The implementation of electronic certificates is expected to eradicate land mafia cases that occur in Bogor Regency. Electronic certificates offer a more transparent and integrated system, thus minimizing the potential for fraud and conflicts related to land ownership (Permen ATR/BPN No. 1 of 2021 concerning Electronic Certificates, 2021).

Based on the background description, this research formulates the following general questions: How is the *political will* of the Head of the Bogor Regency National Land Agency I in overcoming the rampant cases of land mafia with the implementation of the electronic land certificate policy.

This research is focused on analyzing the *political will* of the head of the National Land Agency in overcoming the increasing number of land mafia cases in Bogor Regency through the implementation of an electronic land certificate policy, which aims to create transparency, accountability and efficiency in the land system. The main focus of this research is to understand how the commitment and actions of the Head of BPN Bogor District I can reduce land mafia practices and increase public confidence in digitally integrated land services.

Methods

This research examines the political will of the Head of the National Land Agency (BPN) of Bogor District I in addressing land mafia cases by implementing the electronic land certificate policy. The primary theoretical framework employed is the concept of Political Will by (Brinkerhoff & Crosby, 2002), which posits that political will is reflected through concrete actions, allocation of resources, willingness to take risks, and public involvement in policy execution. In the context of land administration, institutional commitment to combating the land mafia must be evident in implementing electronic certificates as an innovation in public service delivery.

To enrich the analysis, this study utilizes Foucault's Theory of Power Relations (Foucault, 1977), which suggests that power operates through formal structures and complex social

relations among state actors (such as BPN), the community, and the land mafia. In this framework, electronic certificates are interpreted as instruments of power restructuring that reduce opportunities for manipulation of land data by vested interests.

The concept of the land mafia is central to this study. It refers to organized land-related crimes involving a network of actors who unlawfully acquire or control land through systematic and deliberate illegal means. These include document forgery, illegal occupation, legal manipulation, case fabrication, collusion with corrupt officials, corporate crimes, and the fraudulent buying and selling of land (Cahyaningrum, 2021).

Previous studies provide relevant comparisons, such as (Fajarina, 2021) who investigated local government political will in asset certification, and (Salma & Adjie, 2023) who explored dispute resolution mechanisms involving land mafias. However, no prior research has specifically examined the political will of BPN leadership in implementing electronic certificates as an anti-corruption measure in conflict-prone areas such as Bogor District. This study adopts a qualitative research method through a case study approach to explore the surge of land mafia cases in Bogor District I between 2020 and 2024. Data analysis is conducted inductively, with patterns and meanings constructed based on empirical findings (Abdussamad et al., 2024).

Data collection techniques include interviews, observation, and literature review. Observation is employed to understand the socio-political dynamics between BPN officials and the local community. This involves direct observation of land measurement and mapping activities and service delivery processes at the BPN office. Observations are conducted without altering the natural setting (Abdussamad et al., 2024). Interviews are conducted using a semi-structured format for BPN staff and unstructured formats for community members. The research includes at least the following sources: 1) Officials or staff of the BPN Bogor District I, particularly the Division of Dispute, Conflict, and Case Handling; 2) Community members affected by land mafia practices or land disputes; Community volunteers engaged in anti-land mafia activities.

Visitors utilizing public services at the BPN Bogor District I office

The literature review examines scholarly works, government documents, reports, news articles, and books related to political will and land governance, allowing for comparative analysis with other government agencies' responses to similar issues.

Data analysis follows the interactive model proposed (Mb & Huberman, 2007). consisting of three key steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Interview data are filtered to focus on indicators of political will shown by the Head of BPN in addressing rampant land mafia practices. Observation data are similarly reduced, concentrating on policy strategies, institutional performance, inter-agency collaboration, and community perceptions.

The narrative text presents findings, facilitating a more straightforward interpretation and conclusion (Mb & Huberman, 2007). Initial conclusions are treated as provisional and subject to revision pending further validation. Researchers are expected to remain open to new insights and skeptical of early findings until sufficient evidence is obtained. Conclusions will assess the leadership of the Head of BPN Bogor District I in upholding institutional integrity and public service quality to foster a land governance environment free from mafia interference. The success or failure of the political will is ultimately measured by the public's perception of BPN services and the extent to which land mafia practices persist within the agency's scope.

Results and Discussion

The National Land Agency (BPN) has a constitutional and administrative mandate as a state institution that manages land administration nationally, including at the regional level through

District/City Land Offices. In Bogor District I, BPN is at the forefront of maintaining legality and justice in land tenure.

Based on the Ministry's Strategic Plan (Renstra), the Bogor District Land Office I has formulated a framework and funding plan for the period 2020 to 2024. In 2020, the main theme is Quality Improvement. This focuses on improving service quality, strengthening human resources, and improving administrative systems as a solid initial foundation for the implementation of further programs. Entering 2021, the theme shifted to Quality Improvement Towards Digital Transformation. At this stage, the ministry began to direct its efforts towards infrastructure preparation and digitization of work processes to support more efficient, transparent, and integrated land services (BPN, 2025).

Furthermore, the years 2022 and 2023 mark an important period in the application of information technology with the theme Electronic Based. In these two years, BPN Bogor District I intensively implements electronic systems in land data management, accountable certification, and makes this institution a superior, international standard, and trusted institution in land management.

In the implementation of these activities, the success of the program is strongly influenced by the *political will* of the Head of the Bogor District I National Land Agency. This *political will* can be interpreted as the political will and strong commitment of the leadership in encouraging the implementation of strategic policies, especially in the application of electronic land certificates widely and evenly. This commitment shows full support for improving the integrity, transparency and effectiveness of land services as an effort to reduce the number of land mafia cases that have become a significant challenge in the Bogor Regency area.

However, the implementation of bureaucratic reform in the Bogor District Land Office has not yet reached the expected level of effectiveness, because there are still several strategic obstacles that hinder such progress. Based on the findings in this study, some of the main problems faced include, among others, the mindset and work culture of some apparatus are not fully in line with the demands of change, especially in internalizing a culture of excellent service, high levels of compliance and discipline, and adaptation to advances in information technology which are now widely used in the implementation of land services.

In addition, the number of service arrears that are still quite significant is one of the main obstacles that requires special handling and monitoring so that backlogs can be minimized and services to the public are more effective and efficient. Furthermore, the implementation of the Integrity Zone is not yet optimal, so the commitment to the implementation of clean, transparent and quality governance still needs to be strengthened in order to create services that are free from corrupt and collusive practices (Kadir & Laela, 2023; Kapti et al., 2019; Adiananto et al., 2024). Implementation of the Government Internal Control System (SPIP), tiered supervision, and risk management in supervision are still not running optimally, which can pose a risk of weaknesses in internal control and potential irregularities in carrying out tasks.

Management of Human Resources (HR) is not yet optimal, where HR needs in the work unit have not been fully met according to workload, the number of competent employees is still limited, and the method of measuring employee professionalism is still manual and has not been carried out thoroughly, thus affecting the quality of service and organizational performance. The implementation of better quality performance management has not been running effectively is also a major problem, starting from the planning stage, target alignment (alignment and cascading), to the process of monitoring, evaluation, and reporting that has not

been optimal, so that it has an impact on performance management that has not been maximized.

Budget allocations that have not fully met the needs of work units, both for management support, facilities and infrastructure, and services, have caused limitations in supporting the implementation of Bureaucratic Reform as a whole. These problems are challenges that must be addressed immediately so that the implementation of Bureaucratic Reform in the Bogor District Land Office I can run better and more effectively. This research also confirms the importance of leadership, especially the *political will* of the Head of the Land Office, in directing and encouraging changes in strategies and policies that can improve organizational performance and public services. (Bogor District BPN I Performance Report, 2023)

The implementation of policies in improving the quality of land parcels. The strategy of the survey and mapping section is to continue the PTSL program and improve the quality of maps, both spatial and intellectual. The results of the author's observations after following the survey and mapping section team show a strong commitment by BPN Bogor Regency I in the process of accelerating the PTSL program thoroughly and accurately. The implementation of the policy also prioritizes service satisfaction in the community, such as if there is an error in mapping, the team will re-measure until it is in accordance with the system and community requests without charging a cent.

The Ministry of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning/National Land Agency (ATR/BPN) has designed a strategic framework through four main perspectives: consumer, stakeholder, internal, and managerial. These perspectives are visualized in the national policy strategy diagram covering Objective 1 to Objective 3. Each objective targets fundamental aspects of land services, ranging from land rights management, sustainable spatial planning, to efficient public service governance. Goal 1 underscores the importance of land management in order to realize people's welfare. The strategic target lies in the aspects of land tenure, ownership, use and utilization that have legal certainty and high productivity. In this context, national programs such as the Complete Systematic Land Registration (PTSL) and electronic certificates are key instruments used by the government to ensure that all land parcels are recorded legally and transparently.

Goal 2 in the national strategy framework relates to equitable, safe and sustainable spatial planning. In the author's experience participating in land measurement activities, measurement activities also serve as the basis for adjustments between land use and regional spatial planning. With the availability of accurate geospatial data, the government can harmonize spatial plans with real conditions on the ground, thereby reducing the risk of overlapping land use and agrarian conflicts. The ATR/BPN policy strategy schema serves as the foundation for national policy direction, while documentation of land measurement activities shows that the strategy has been translated into concrete action on the ground. Alignment between policy direction and implementation is key in realizing land services that are quality, fair, and have a direct impact on community welfare.

However, according to interviewee SW (48) the performance management perspective is not in line with the vision and mission, according to SW (48) the Head of BPN Bogor District I does not have substantive power in making decisions and only carries out administrative formalities without regard to material truth. In other words, as long as the documents look "complete" on paper, the BPN will approve the transfer process without verifying whether the documents were obtained legally or by manipulation. From the perspective of good governance, this indicates that BPN Bogor District I is not optimally implementing the principles of accountability, transparency, and efficiency in public services. The Head of BPN,

as the highest authority in the district, should be able to ensure that all administrative procedures are running properly.

However, this statement is not in line with what was conveyed by S (45) as a Land Certificate Issuance Staff of the Bogor District I National Land Agency, according to S (45) in the process of making up to the issuance of land certificates is procedural and follows applicable guidelines in accordance with Law Number 5 of 1960 concerning Basic Regulations on Agrarian Principles (UUPA) which regulates land rights, obligations, and procedures for registration and recognition of land rights, which are the basis for making land deeds. According to S (45) all forms of land certificate processing services include: new land registration services, transfer of rights registration services, land rights certificate issuance services, certificate extension and renewal services always uphold the principles of accountability, transparency, and efficiency in public services.

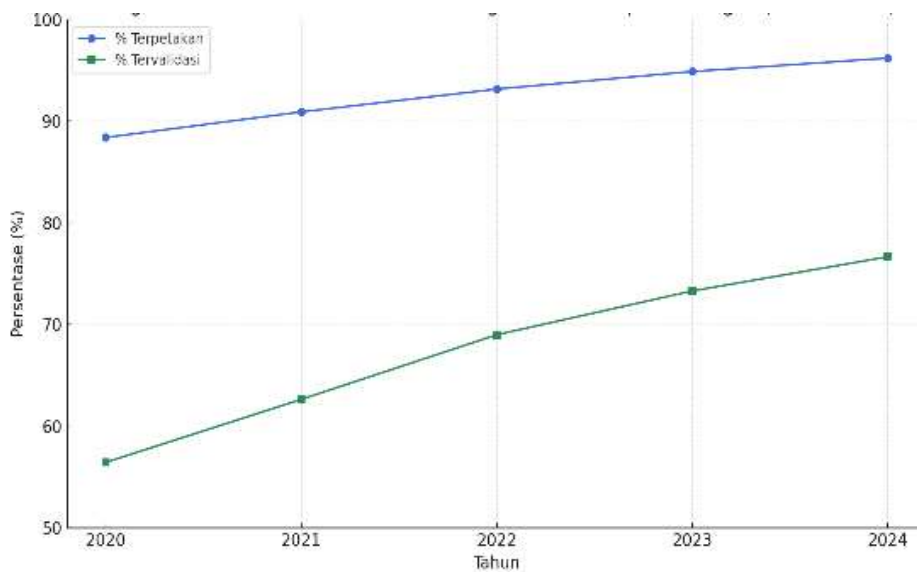


Figure 1. Progress chart of mapping and validation of Bogor Regency land parcels 2020 - 2024

Source: Bogor District BPN Performance Report I, 2024

The data in Figure 1 of the graph shows a progressive increase in the mapping and validation of land parcels in Bogor District during the period 2020 to 2024. 2020 was the starting point where 88.39% of parcels were mapped out of a total of 986,100 registered parcels, but only 56.4% were juridically and physically validated. In subsequent years, estimates show that the number of mapped parcels continued to increase with an average growth of about 2% per year.

The gap between mapping and validation remains quite wide. By 2024, although almost all parcels have been mapped (96.19%), validation has only reached 76.6%. This means that around 23% of land parcels are still prone to disputes, cannot be entered into the electronic system, and have the potential to become an entry point for land mafia practices, as revealed in interviews with victims of land dispute cases.

According to Y, land that is prone to potential entry of land mafia practices is land that is not validated and does not have a certificate, such land is more easily acquired by certain elements because it does not have strong legality. In addition, Interviewee (SW) as a victim also stated that the land in question and 40 other victims located in Kp. Cimanggis is land that was not validated at BPN Bogor District I which was purchased from PT L.E and acquired by PT JGKR. The land was deliberately targeted by unscrupulous people because at the time of purchase PT L.E had promised to divide the 30 hectares of land owned by 40 people in 1989. However, the

person concerned reneged on this promise, so that in 2021 the land was acquired by unscrupulous PT L.E who collaborated with local village officials to sell the land to PT JGKR.

The victim has reported the case to BPN Bogor District I, but until now it has not shown a bright spot. According to SW (48), the head of BPN Bogor District I and his staff have made various efforts to involve GTRA (Agrarian Reform Task Force). However, the involvement of unscrupulous village officials who have full power makes this problem complicated and difficult to resolve so that steps must be taken through a court lawsuit.

In addition, SW (48) has reported this case to the National Police Criminal Investigation Unit (Bareskrim Polri), but there is no resolution from the relevant parties. In addition, SW (48) believes that the frequent changes in the Head of BPN Bogor District I from the period 2020 to 2025 have made SW (48) assume that the involvement of internal BPN District I personnel in the land mafia case that befell her has made the Head of the Bogor District I National Land Agency uncomfortable in maintaining her position.

It is easier for village officials to abuse their power in the land sector because village laws place village heads or officials as the main actors in resolving land conflicts at the local level, active members of the Agrarian Reform Task Force (GTRA), providers of ownership administration information, and main partners in implementing PTSL (Minister of ATR/BPN Regulation No. 6/2018 on Systematic Land Registration). 6/2018 on Complete Systematic Land Registration (PTSL). makes the Agrarian Reform Task Force (GTRA) not just a forum, but an active task force with clear authority and deadlines in resolving systemic agrarian conflicts (Salim, M.N., Utami, 2019) . Furthermore, strengthening the legal framework involves reviewing and clarifying village authority in the Village Law and PTSL regulations so that it is not misused. The role of village officials in land certification should be administrative with supervision from BPN and local governments (Novita, 2022).

As a result of this land mafia practice, victims suffered huge economic and social losses. The land that was previously used for catfish farming, Islamic boarding school education, and living quarters now cannot function as it should. The community feels afraid, especially the land guard who is often visited by mass organizations. Meanwhile, the legal process submitted to the Police Headquarters Criminal Investigation Unit did not result in any process. This indicates the weak legal protection and ineffectiveness of law enforcement agencies in handling land mafia cases. Another loss is the loss of public trust in BPN as the protector of land rights. When state institutions are unable to perform their duties fairly and transparently, people lose their legal grip and tend to surrender to informal powers such as the land mafia.

Electronic certificates, as explained in the theoretical framework in the previous chapter, are an effort to modernize land services with the aim of improving efficiency, accuracy and security of ownership data. However, if BPN as the main implementer is not committed to upholding these principles, then this innovation will fail at the implementation level. Digitalization is not just about software or information systems, but also about political will and public service ethics.

In the case of Bogor District I, BPN's unpreparedness is not only technical, but also structural and cultural. The absence of *political will* from the leadership of the institution has caused the entire structure under it to run without direction, and tend to prioritize short-term interests. *Political will* here involves not only the courage to make unpopular decisions, but also the courage to fight a system that has long been corrupt and distorted the purpose of the existence of public institutions.

The role of BPN as the land authority in this case is far from desirable. Weak leadership, absence of internal supervision, lack of accountability, and indications of favoritism towards

developers are clear indicators that BPN has not carried out its mandate optimally. Without a serious overhaul of its structure, work culture and leadership, the BPN will continue to be an institution that fails to fulfill its function as the main pillar of agrarian justice in Indonesia.

Rethinking Political Will in Digital Agrarian Reform

Digital reform has become the normative grammar of state modernization in the Global South, including in Indonesia. The widespread belief that digitization—particularly of bureaucratic services such as land registration—can solve entrenched problems of corruption, inefficiency, and illegality has permeated policy circles, international development discourses, and even scholarly narratives (van Dijck et al., 2018; Kitchin, 2014). Within this narrative, the electronic land certificate system rolled out by BPN in Bogor District I has been heralded as a leap toward a more transparent, efficient, and just land governance regime. However, this research reveals that the optimism surrounding digital land certification is, at best, dangerously premature and, at worst, structurally misleading. Without recalibrating our understanding of political will—not as a declarative posture but as a material force that transforms institutional DNA—digital reforms risk becoming the latest costume worn by an unreformed and complicit bureaucracy.

The first analytical misstep in the dominant discourse is the assumption that political will can be inferred from the adoption of digital technologies. Brinkerhoff (2000) rightly cautions that political will must be evidenced not by policy pronouncements or budget allocations, but by sustained institutional commitment to disrupt embedded power relations, allocate adequate enforcement capacities, and defend reform against political backlash. In the case of BPN Bogor District I, what appears at first glance as political will—strategic documents, mapping progress, and pilot electronic certificate deployments—is belied by institutional inconsistency, high leadership turnover, and a chronic inability to enforce policy integrity at the local level (Brinkerhoff & Crosby, 2002; Grindle, 2004). As our field data shows, mapping may have reached over 96%, but validation—a far more critical marker of legal certainty—still lags at 76%, creating ample room for manipulation, forgery, and contestation. Thus, reform is enacted symbolically but not substantively—a performance of modernization without its moral or legal obligations (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

This disjunction is not simply a matter of capacity but of institutional design and political economy. As Migdal (2001) and Bayart, Ellis, and Hibou (1999) contend, postcolonial bureaucracies are often fragmented entities in which formal institutions coexist—and compete—with informal networks, patron-client relations, and illicit markets. Nowhere is this more evident than in Indonesia’s land sector, where legal ambiguity, regulatory overlap, and historical dispossession have created a landscape fertile for mafia practices (Cahyaningrum, 2021; Salma & Adjie, 2023). The collusion between BPN staff, village officials, and land brokers—as seen in the 2022 PTSL case—demonstrates that the land mafia is not a peripheral threat but a core actor within the bureaucratic structure itself. To speak of “eradication” under these conditions, without addressing internal complicity, is to speak in bad faith.

Moreover, digitization in such environments does not operate as a neutral technical upgrade. As Foucault (1977) theorized, technologies of governance are also technologies of discipline and domination; they encode assumptions, delimit actions, and create new forms of exclusion. The conversion of land claims into electronic entries may appear to enhance accuracy and transparency, but in contexts where foundational data is already contested, such conversions can ossify false claims into authoritative truth (Peluso, 1995; Li, 2014). The case of SW (48) underscores this point poignantly. Her historical ownership was nullified not by the absence of documentation, but by a system that elevated manipulated data over lived reality. In this sense, electronic certification risks becoming a tool of bureaucratic epistemicide—a mechanism that

erases indigenous and customary claims under the guise of digital objectivity (Barry, 2013; Peluso & Lund, 2011).

It is here that the dominant policy narratives betray a second analytical fallacy: that digitization equals depoliticization. As Ferguson (1994) warned in his critique of development discourse, technical reforms are often deployed precisely to mask political struggles and conflicts of interest. In Indonesia, electronic land certificates are being implemented in a political economy still shaped by the legacies of Suharto-era land centralization, the fragmentation of decentralization reforms (Hadiz, 2004), and the opportunistic interpretation of the Village Law (UU No. 6/2014), which grants village officials an outsized role in land administration. These officials, nominally custodians of community interests, have often become brokers of illegal acquisition—co-producing documents, approving fraudulent claims, and laundering illegality into the system (Novita, 2022; Salim & Utami, 2019). Their institutional position is structurally ambiguous: they are both arbiters and accomplices. Without clear lines of authority, oversight, and sanction, this ambiguity becomes a gateway for legal subversion.

What compounds the problem is the internal incoherence of BPN's own apparatus. Reports indicate that internal supervision mechanisms—such as the SPIP (Sistem Pengendalian Intern Pemerintah), integrity zones, and tiered monitoring—exist more in form than function (BPN Bogor, 2023). Human resource development remains rudimentary; performance appraisals are manual; and leadership appointments are subject to political and clientelist influences rather than professional merit (Pritchett et al., 2013; Andrews et al., 2017). In such an environment, it is not surprising that reform tools—like electronic certificates—fail to generate systemic transformation. Instead, as Scott (1998) might argue, they impose a “high-modernist” logic that disregards local complexity and plural legal traditions in favor of a bureaucratic simplification that is blind to justice.

This institutional malaise creates a paradox: the more the state digitizes, the less responsive it may become. Citizens who once relied on personal knowledge of bureaucrats or informal brokers now confront impersonal systems that are equally opaque but harder to contest. As Titeca and de Herdt (2010) argue, when the legitimacy of the state declines, transactionalism replaces accountability. Land disputes are no longer addressed through procedural justice but through informal negotiations, bribes, or threats. The case of the victims in Cimanggis, whose land was appropriated through collusion between developers and local officials, reflects a terrifying norm: legality can be fabricated, and illegality can be certified.

This situation demands a radical rethinking of political will—not as rhetorical support or isolated leadership charisma, but as a structural ethic. Political will must manifest as a deliberate disruption of the institutional arrangements that reproduce impunity. It must include stable leadership with performance-based tenure, legal and administrative insulation of village authorities from certification processes, and institutional integration of civil society actors—such as participatory mapping groups like JKPP—into formal validation mechanisms (Lucas & Warren, 2013; Ribot, 2004). Furthermore, digital systems must not replace human oversight but augment it. The quality of data must be ground-truthed through community verification, historical triangulation, and independent audits. Otherwise, the system merely automates injustice.

Additionally, we must reject the seductive notion that land governance reform is primarily about efficiency. Land is not a bureaucratic variable; it is a social relation, a mode of production, and a political claim (Borras & Franco, 2010; Peluso & Lund, 2011). When the state fails to treat it as such—when it treats land as mere inventory to be certified and registered—it severs itself from the very populations it claims to serve. What is needed is not

just a better digital system but a new political imagination—one that links technology to rights, transparency to accountability, and reform to justice.

Conclusion

This research confirms that the political will of the Head of the Bogor District National Land Office I plays a central role in the success or failure of efforts to eradicate the land mafia through the implementation of electronic certificates. The findings show that while structurally the land digitization policy has been designed nationally and supported by infrastructure, implementation at the local level still faces serious challenges in terms of leadership, data validation, and service system integrity.

The commitment of the Head of BPN Bogor District I to service digitization has been reflected in the launch of electronic certificates and the integration of the PTSL program. However, inconsistencies in implementation, lack of internal oversight, and involvement of non-state actors such as village officials indicate that the political will is not yet fully transformative. Without bold leadership, digital reforms in the land system are prone to becoming mere administrative formalities.

This research is important because it fills a void in public policy studies, especially those that link the political will of the local bureaucracy with the digitalization of public services in the agrarian sector. By combining theoretical approaches and field interviews, the findings provide a concrete picture of the challenges of digital policy implementation in an environment that is still overshadowed by conflicts of interest and land mafia practices. The results of this study show that electronic certificates will only have a significant impact if they are accompanied by comprehensive institutional reforms and strong and sustained leadership commitment.

Acknowledgment

I want to express my deepest gratitude to my beloved parents for their prayers, moral support, and encouragement throughout my studies and research. I also express my sincere appreciation to Dr. Ridwan, S.Sos, M.Si CIQnR, my supervisor, who has provided meaningful and helpful guidance, critical input, and scientific guidance throughout the research process. I want to express my special thanks to my colleague Defina Listianti, who has accompanied and assisted me in the data collection process to ensure the smooth running of this research. I would also like to thank my colleagues Devi Agni Rahmasari, Farriellea Ramadhani, M. Iqbal Nursalim, and Bimo Putra Bayu for their assistance in data collection and obtaining informants, which was very helpful for this research. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to all other parties who have contributed but cannot be mentioned individually.

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