

The Complexities of Annual Reserved Land Leasing in Indonesia: Insights From A Specific Local Context

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Abstract: Taking economic benefits from reserved land became a considerable business for many local governments worldwide, including the Bima Regency Government, through an annual leasing policy. Besides its success story, which can increase regional original income, the policy implementation also leaves complicated problems, often characterized by the tension of the struggle for management rights and negative accusations regarding the auction process, which needs to be more transparent. This article discusses an empirical case about the tension of actor relations in the scramble for limited resources in a local context, where the authors conducted in-depth interviews with several informants who were selected through purposive sampling techniques, including those in charge, directors, and leaders of the Regency Level Committee, as well as individual participants, both those who won and lost in the annual leasing auction. Although the land leasing policy can increase local original income and provide opportunities for landless residents to engage in agricultural activities, the auction practice is often marked by a need for more transparency and conflicts of interest. Such a conflict is especially evident in the uneven auction process, which tends to trigger stakeholder tensions. This policy has yet to be entirely successful in supporting land conservation for long-term agricultural production regarding the threat of land degradation due to excessive exploitation.
Keywords: Auction; Land; Lease; Struggle; Tension.

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Introduction

This article explores the implementation dynamics of a state land use policy in Bima Regency, West Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia, namely the "Former Village Apparatus Collateral Land [*Tanah Eks Jaminan Aparat Desa*]," which is categorized as one type of regional reserved land. Such land is allocated through an annual leasing program as regulated in Regent Regulation No. 30/2019.

The term "reserved land for rural areas development" is not new in the universe of "land administration and management." However, it has been widely applied in various regions in several countries, such as the States of Victoria, New South Wales, and Western Australia, with the term "Crown Land Reserves," meaning a certain type of land owned and managed by the State Government for the public interest.

The settlement of reserved land ownership status is usually adopted to land that (a) has intrinsic value for the community or high conservation value that must be preserved and maintained for the benefit of future generations and (b) for core business needs or sources of service provision from state institutions in the public sector and local governments (Department of Planning, 2023).

In the State of Victoria, under the Crown Land Reserves Act 1978, for instance, the Department of Environment and Primary Industries' Local Management Committees manage over 1200 types of reserved land: (i) land held under leases and licenses; (ii) community-managed nature reserves; (iii) land held publicly for environmental conservation purposes; (iv) land within the public road network; and (v) other unallocated land (Reserve Manager, n.d.), can be in the form of coastal areas; railway lines; public halls;

mechanical institutions; sports fields; public parks, playgrounds, caravans; performance arenas; horse racing arenas; botanical gardens; and other public facilities (Lockstone-Binney et al., 2016).

An example of the establishment of reserved land, specifically for agricultural production needs, can be found in the Province of British Columbia, Canada, with the implementation of the "Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR)" in 1972, where land that has potential value for the agricultural and grazing sectors has been limited to excessive use. The provision becomes a regulatory limitation on the use of private property, thereby reducing the owner's freedom to maximize economic benefits from the land he controls. The ultimate goal of the restriction is to preserve certain land that will be prospectively used for agricultural production in the future so that the ALR system reflects a form of zoning (Gillis, 1980). Not only managed by government institutions themselves, taking economic benefits from reserved land for development or agricultural goals can also be achieved by implementing an annual leasing program (Adenuga et al., 2024).

In the context of Bima Regency, state land with management rights given to local authorities is the "Former Village Apparatus Collateral Land." In contrast, before Law No. 6/2014 on Villages (the Village Law) was enacted, officials utilized this land as a source of family livelihood due to the lack of remuneration they received from the Central Government or Regional Government. In the Bima language, this land is called "*Dana Ngaha*"; in Java, it is called "*Tanah Bengkok*." After the implementation of the village law, officials' salaries could be taken from the Village Fund treasury so that the ownership and management status of "*Dana Ngaha*" has been returned to the

Bima Regency Government. The existence of this land, believed by most people, is spread across 191 villages in Bima Regency and several sub-districts in Bima City with varying areas.

To take some economic advantages of the land, the local government leases it out once a year to qualified individuals from among the Non-Civil Servant citizens, the Indonesian National Army, and the Indonesian National Police through an open auction process handled by the Regency Level Committee with personnel composition from representatives of the Revenue Management Financial and Regional Asset Agency, the Government Administration Section of the Regional Secretariat, the Legal Section of the Regional Secretariat, and other related parties (Bupati Bima, 2019). Every year, the committee repeatedly auctions 1,588 packages from a total land area of 179.74 hectares: land in the Bima City area of as many as 47 packages of 21.89 hectares and 1541 packages of 157.85 hectares in the Bima Regency area (ILY, 2021).

In addition to its success story that can increase the regional original income, the annual leasing of the reserved land also leaves complicated problems. It is often colored by tension over the struggle for management rights and negative accusations regarding the auction process that is not transparent. On that basis, this article discusses an empirical case about the relationship tensions between actors in the hunt for limited resources or the struggle for management rights of state land that intersects with the domain of implementing the annual leasing policy for the "Former Village Apparatus Collateral Land" as one type of reserved land for development owned by the Bima Regency Government.

The questions that guided the authors during the field data search are: (1) How is the mechanism and transparency in the auction process of reserved land carried out by the Bima Regency Government? (2) What is the socio-economic impact of the annual leasing program on local communities, especially farmers and non-officials? (3) What are the dynamics of conflict and tension between actors in managing and utilizing reserved land in Bima Regency? (4) What are the main challenges faced in implementing the annual leasing policy, and what solutions can be taken to overcome them? (5) To what extent does the reserved land leasing policy implementation support the goal of land conservation for future agricultural production?

Reserved land for development is an essential topic in the study of land governance and development planning. Several research streams, including "ground lease," have developed to understand the complexities of managing such land. This research stream focuses on "the legal, economic, and social aspects of land lease agreements" and their implications for land use and development. Prior studies explored various forms of land lease contracts, particularly the differences between short-term and long-term leases and how land lease policies can affect land ownership and natural resource management (Adenuga et al., 2021).

Previous studies evaluated the "economic impacts" of land lease agreements on landowners and tenants. Land leases can provide a source of income for landowners but can also pose risks to tenants if the deal is not protected by adequate law. These studies examine the social impacts of land leases, including

how they affect the distribution of wealth and access to resources in society. In addition, the stream investigates “the role of land leases in sustainable development,” namely how land lease agreements can be designed to support sustainable development goals, such as environmental conservation and poverty reduction, and how land lease policies can be integrated with broader land use policies.

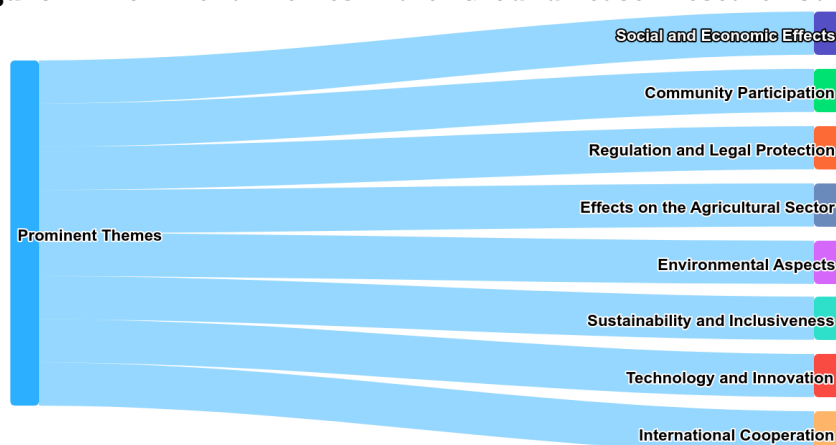
Reserved land has become a major business for many local governments in various parts of the world because it can be transacted in the market if the state mediates the process. After acquiring land, local governments can lease it for various purposes to other parties through one-on-one negotiations or open auctions (Tao et al., 2010). The government leases land use rights based on factors such as land characteristics, geographical location of the land, regional economic development, government finances, political use of the regional head's position, and so on (Cheng, 2021; Cheng & Luo, 2022).

Land leasing is a policy instrument that leads to a limited time division between the pool of public landowners' rights and land leaseholders (Artioli, 2021; Suchoń & Baum, 2013; Wu et al., 2019).

Government agencies can use such a mechanism to implement active land policies that guide better allocation of land for specific projects and more precise control of building activities (Gerber et al., 2017). Many government authorities have launched leasehold programs based on the idea that such programs will allow for equitable harvesting of land values for the benefit of all (Altes, 2019). In a democratic society, one special characteristic of public land leasing policy is that government institutions as landowners are not only driven by the intention of pursuing profit alone but are also motivated by the interests or substantive needs of their citizens as “consumer-voters” (Tiebout, 1956).

Undeniably, land leasing policies for reserved land have become an essential topic in global discourse, given the increasing pressure on land for urban development, infrastructure, and agriculture. Research on this policy covers social, economic, legal, environmental, technological, and international cooperation dimensions (Cotula, 2012; Deininger & Byerlee, 2012), as presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Prominent Themes in the “Ground Lease” Research Stream



Source: Authors' Work (2024)

Research focusing on the "social and economic impacts" of land leasing policies explores how these policies affect local communities, especially when compared to traditional land tenure systems. Land leasing can bring significant economic benefits, such as easier access to capital for tenants and the potential for increased investment by landowners. However, these impacts are only sometimes positive. Land leasing policies often ignore the interests of local communities, which can lead to increased economic and social inequality (Oya, 2013; Peters, 2004).

Another frequently reported negative impact is social displacement, where communities that previously had a close relationship with their land experience alienation due to the loss of ownership or control over the land. Community well-being is a significant indicator of the policy's social and economic impacts. While land leasing can increase income and access to infrastructure, it can also cause dislocation and structural changes in communities, ultimately affecting quality of life. Furthermore, the economic effects of land leasing policies are often more beneficial to outside investors than to local communities who are tenants or whose land is leased.

The "community participation" theme in land leasing policies is significant because low participation often leads to unfair and noninclusive policy implementation. In some countries, local communities are actively involved in discussions and negotiations, which increases transparency and ensures that their interests are protected. However, in many cases, especially in developing countries, local communities often need more say in decision-making, resulting in policies that do not meet their needs and

desires (Borras et al., 2010; Wily, 2012). "Community empowerment" is also an essential aspect of participation. When local communities are involved in the decision-making process, they are more likely to be able to manage the impacts of the policy, whether in economic, social, or environmental terms. Effective participation can increase government and landowner accountability, reduce the risk of conflict, and promote social justice.

The "regulatory framework and legal protection" underlying land leasing policies are key to ensuring fair and effective policy implementation. In some countries, land laws are well-designed to protect the rights of tenants and landowners, including effective dispute resolution mechanisms. However, in other countries, existing regulations are not strong enough to protect the interests of the parties involved, which can lead to abuse of power, forced evictions, or land conflicts (Deininger et al., 2011; Hall, 2011). Differences in regulatory systems can affect investment attractiveness in the land leasing sector. Countries with clear regulations and strong legal protections tend to be more attractive to investors, as legal and conflict risks are lower. Conversely, countries with weak regulations inevitably need help attracting sustainable investment.

Land leasing policies significantly impact the "agricultural sector," especially in the context of sustainable food production and food security. Land leasing has helped increase agricultural productivity in some countries by introducing new technologies and investments. However, the policy can undermine local food security, especially when leased land is used to produce non-food commodities or exports that do not benefit local communities.

The impact on "environmental sustainability" is also an important concern. Intensive land use for commercial agriculture under leasing schemes can lead to environmental degradation, such as decreased soil fertility, deforestation, and decreased water quality. Land leasing policies induce unsustainable agricultural practices without proper regulation, negatively impacting local ecosystems (Cotula, 2011; Davis et al., 2015).

Research on the "environmental impact" of land leasing policies is increasingly relevant amidst growing global awareness of climate change and natural resource conservation. Unregulated land leasing policies can lead to overexploitation of natural resources, which damages ecosystems and reduces the land's capacity to support future life. Conversely, with proper planning and strong regulation, these policies can support conservation efforts, for example, by supporting land use for forest conservation or organic farming. Environmental conservation can be achieved through land leasing policies that encourage environmentally friendly land use practices. However, the challenge often faced is the lack of effective regulatory enforcement and monitoring, which leads to violations of environmental principles.

The "sustainability and inclusivity" theme in land leasing policies is becoming prominent in an increasingly connected and complex global context. Policies that support sustainability should focus on more than just environmental, social, and economic aspects. Inclusive land leasing policies should ensure that all groups, especially vulnerable ones such as small farmers, indigenous peoples, and women, receive equitable benefits from land leasing. Inclusivity also means providing

equitable access to land and resources for all members of society without discrimination. Land leasing policies designed with inclusive principles are more successful in the long run, reducing the risk of social conflict and increasing economic and political stability (Borras et al., 2012; Vermeulen & Cotula, 2010).

"Technology and innovation" significantly improve efficiency, transparency, and fairness in implementing land leasing policies. Using technologies such as geographic information systems (GIS), digital mapping, and blockchain can help in more efficient and transparent land management. These technologies enable the collection of more accurate data on land ownership, land conditions, and land use, which can support better policy-making. Innovations in "land management" can include using technology to monitor compliance with environmental regulations and ensure that the land leasing process is conducted fairly and openly. Applying these technologies will reduce corruption and abuse of power and increase community participation in decision-making processes (Lengoiboni et al., 2010).

Finally, "international cooperation" is a glorious component in implementing land leasing policies, especially in the context of globalization and international trade. Cooperation between countries can help develop a framework for implementing equitable and sustainable land leasing policies. International agreements and guidelines from international organizations can provide standards and principles that countries can adopt to ensure their land leasing policies align with sustainable development goals (Palmer et al., 2009; Zoomers, 2010). International cooperation can also help transfer

technology and knowledge, which are important for enhancing the capacity of countries to manage their land leasing policies. Countries that engage in international cooperation tend to have better land leasing policies, as they can learn from the experiences of other countries and adopt best practices.

In summary, prior studies on the implementation of reserved land leasing policies worldwide cover a variety of complex and interrelated themes. Social and economic effects, community participation, regulation, legal protection, impacts on the agricultural sector, environmental aspects, sustainability and inclusiveness, technology and innovation, and international cooperation are all important elements to be considered in developing and implementing land leasing policies. Continued research in these areas will be essential to ensure that land leasing policies are economically beneficial but also fair, sustainable, and inclusive for all parties involved.

Methods

This article employs a case study approach to investigate a particular issue and find answers to multiple questions through in-depth interviews with several key informants (Creswell, 2013; Webley, 2012) to obtain detailed data (Gerring, 2007). These interviews were conducted with certain informants, including those in charge, directors, and leaders of the Regency Level Committee, as well as individual participants, both those who won and lost in the annual leasing auction. They were selected through purposive sampling based on their experience and positions (Mack et al., 2005).

Initial interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, starting with the SW (Regency-Level Committee Officer),

who oversaw the land auction process. This informant provided insight into the procedural aspects and challenges of ensuring transparency and fairness. Subsequent interviews were conducted with the FA (Regency-Level Committee Member), who offered perspectives on the decision-making process and internal dynamics influencing the auction outcome.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the auction process, interviews were also carried out with the winning and losing bidders. MH (Winning Bidder I) provided a detailed account of his experience, including the strategies used to win the land and his views on the transparency of the process. In contrast, the losing bidder, HH, raised concerns about the fairness of the auction, highlighting allegations of irregularities and potential bias. Further interviews with the other winning (AB & ZY) and losing (MI & RA) bidders allowed for comparing experiences, revealing patterns of satisfaction and dissatisfaction that formed the basis for the broader analysis.

The research also involved interviews with community members, including villagers affected by the land leasing policy. These interviews were critical to understanding the socio-economic impacts of the policy at the grassroots level. Village heads (ML & IM) and community leaders (AM) provided context on the historical and cultural significance of the land. At the same time, environmental activists and agricultural experts contributed technical insights on the long-term implications of the policy for land use and sustainability.

To contextualize the findings within a broader governance framework, interviews were conducted with AL (Regency Level Committee Chairperson), who shared an official perspective on the

objectives and challenges of the land leasing policy. Additional interviews with agricultural experts (ES), small-scale entrepreneurs (EY), environmental activists (AR), and academics (SA) helped connect the research to current academic debates and policy discussions, ensuring that the analysis was grounded in both practical and theoretical considerations.

To triangulate the various data that had been collected, the authors used secondary sources or relevant written documents, including journal articles, books, and government documents (Finnegan, 2006). Various data collected through these approaches or techniques are then studied using thematic qualitative data analysis methods where the collected data is prepared, categorized, interpreted, and presented using text (Boulton & Hammersley, 2006).

Results

The results are presented systematically to answer the primary issues related to the annual leasing of reserved land in Bima Regency. They highlight essential aspects of the auction process, the socio-economic impacts caused, the dynamics of conflict among stakeholders, the challenges faced in implementing the policy, and the effectiveness of this policy in preserving agricultural land. Each section is supported by interview excerpts from key informants, including government officials, auction participants, and community members, which provide an in-depth understanding of the complexities that have surfaced.

Mechanism and Transparency in the Auction Process of Reserved Land

The auction mechanism of reserved land conducted by the Bima Regency Government every year in October still

faces various problems related to transparency and fairness. Although the auction aims to distribute ex-collateral land fairly and increase Regional Original Income, this process must run under the principles of transparency. One of the main problems faced is the appointment of auction winners based on something other than the highest bid but suspected of having hidden interests from certain individuals. A real example of the problem can be seen in the 2021 auction case, where the highest bidder for ex-collateral land in Monggo Village, Muhtar, with a bid of IDR 8,000,000, lost to Muhsin, who only bid IDR 4,550,000. A similar incident also occurred in Rabakodo Village, where the highest bid of IDR 10,000,000 was lost to a bid of IDR 9,750,000. These cases show a lack of transparency in the auction process, which raises suspicions of a conspiracy to win for certain parties.

SW, as the person in charge of the Regency Level Committee, explained, "We tried our best to ensure that this auction was carried out under existing regulations. Every step has been set out in a clear procedure, and we tried to inform all relevant parties" (Interview on March 6, 2024). However, some participants felt the process needed more transparency, especially in announcing the auction results and assessment criteria. As a real example, in the 2021 auction, the highest bidder for ex-collateral land in Monggo Village, Muhtar, who offered IDR 8,000,000, lost to a bidder with a lower bid of IDR 4,550,000. A similar case occurred in Rabakodo Village, where the highest bidder of IDR 10,000,000 lost to another bidder with a value of IDR 9,750,000. This dissatisfaction indicates a negative perception among the losing participants, who felt they were not given a fair chance.

HH, a losing bidder, stated, "I felt that there was something wrong with the

process. We were not told why we lost, and how the assessment was carried out. It felt like everything was set up from the start" (Interview on March 31, 2024). This view highlights the suspicion among participants about the integrity of the bidding process. On the other hand, MH, the winning bidder, said, "I managed to win this bid because I followed all the procedures set and tried to fulfill all the requirements. However, I understand that many are disappointed, and there may be room for improvement in this system to make it more transparent" (Interview on April 7, 2024). Although some felt they had benefited, they also realized that transparency in the bidding process needed to be improved.

Both cases indicate structural problems in the implementation of the auction of reserved land for development in Bima Regency. The lack of transparency and bias revealed in the auction process indicates fundamental problems in the governance of regional assets. These problems not only impact the loss of potential local revenue but also damage public trust in the integrity of the local government in managing strategic assets. Therefore, improvements in the mechanism and transparency of the auction process are urgent to ensure that the management of reserved land runs under the principles of justice, accountability, and transparency. The finding aligns with the theory of power imbalance in the management of public assets, where parties with greater access and influence tend to manipulate the process for personal gain. This kind of practice violates the principles of good public administration and creates dissatisfaction and potential conflict among the community who feel disadvantaged.

Furthermore, this study also found the practice of private control over former collateral land that should have been government assets. An example is the 15-hectare former collateral land in Woro Village that has never been included in the auction list since 2013 and has been privately controlled by one of the lawyers in the Bima area. This asset transfer is strongly suspected to be a conspiracy between individuals in the Bima Regency Government's assets section and parties close to the authorities. It indicates a serious violation of the principles of regional asset governance and highlights the need for reform to prevent similar practices in the future.

Reflection on the mechanisms and transparency in the auction process for reserved land in Bima Regency reveals fundamental problems that harm the local government regarding revenue and injure public trust. The imbalance of power in the management of public assets, as shown by cases of the highest losing bid and private control of former collateral land, reflects a serious violation of the principles of justice and accountability. This condition demands a more transparent and fair reform of asset governance so that public trust can be restored and the potential for social conflict can be minimized. Without clear remedial measures, the land auction process in Bima Regency will continue to face challenges that could hamper regional development.

Socio-Economic Impacts of the Reserved Land Leasing Program on Local Communities

The reserved land leasing program has significantly impacted local communities, especially those who do not have private land but are allowed to farm through this land auction policy. In some

cases, the program provides opportunities for small farmers and underprivileged communities to access land previously difficult to obtain, thereby improving their economic welfare. However, it also presents challenges and uncertainties that affect their socio-economic conditions.

One of the positive impacts felt by the local community is increased employment opportunities and income. For residents who do not have land, the program provides access to work on auctioned land, which can then be used for farming. A villager who managed to get land through this program, AB, said, "The program enables me to work on land that I did not have before. By farming on the land, I can meet my family's needs and even have some left over to sell to the market" (Interview on April 21, 2024). The statement reflects how the land auction program can be an essential instrument in improving the economic welfare of landless communities.

However, not all auction participants feel these positive impacts equally. Several residents said that even though they gained access to land, the benefits were only sometimes commensurate with the costs they had to pay, especially land leasing and initial capital for farming. One farmer, JH, expressed his concern, "We have to spend quite a lot of money to rent this land, and with the fluctuating price of the harvest, the profits are often not much. Sometimes, the capital we spend is not returned with adequate profits" (Interview on July 10, 2024). Although the program opens up access to land, other economic factors limit small farmers' potential profits.

There are other concerns regarding the sustainability of access to land leased through this program. Several residents who successfully won the land auction initially lost the opportunity to lease the

land again the following year because they lost out to other bidders with greater capital. "Initially, I could lease this land, but I lost the auction the following year because another bidder was willing to pay more. Now, I do not know where else to farm," a former auction participant, ZY, complained (Interview on May 11, 2024). This situation illustrates the uncertainty local communities face in relying on this program as a long-term source of livelihood.

In addition to economic challenges, the land leasing program also impacts social dynamics in local communities. In some cases, competition to obtain land through auctions has caused tensions among villagers. A village head, ML, explained, "Competition to obtain land through the program sometimes causes conflict between residents. Some feel unfair because they lost the auction, while others feel they benefited because they have access to better information and capital" (Interview on May 26, 2024). The statement underscores how a program aimed at improving welfare can inadvertently exacerbate social tensions at the community level.

There is also a positive aspect of social development where the program provides opportunities for residents to work together in farmer groups or cooperatives to optimize the management of land they obtain through auctions. AB stated, "With this program, we formed farmer groups to work together on the land we obtained. This makes us more solid and can help each other in capital and labor" (Interview on April 21, 2024). This experience shows that the program can foster community solidarity and cooperation despite the challenges.

In conclusion, the reserved land leasing program has complex socio-economic impacts on local communities in

Bima Regency. On the one hand, this program opens up opportunities for landless communities to improve their economic welfare through access to agricultural land. However, this program also presents challenges related to high leasing costs, uncertainty of long-term access, and potential social conflict. Therefore, there needs to be an evaluation and improvement in implementing this program to be more equitable and sustainable and provide maximum benefits to the people who need it most.

Dynamics of Conflict and Tension in Actor Relations in the Management of Reserved Land

Managing reserved land in Bima Regency has become a source of conflict and tension among the various actors involved. The dynamics of the conflict reflect the complexity of the interaction between the government, local communities, and other actors in managing and utilizing the land. This tension is triggered by economic competition, unclear regulations, personal interests, and the imbalance of power at the local level.

One of the main aspects of the conflict is the difference in interests between the government and the local community. The Bima Regency Government aims to maximize local revenue by auctioning reserved land. However, local communities, especially those who do not have land, rely on access to the land as their main source of livelihood. The difference in interests often causes tension, especially when government decisions are considered unfair or detrimental to the community.

For example, in several cases, the government has been accused of prioritizing the interests of entrepreneurs,

village officials, or parties with large capital in the auction process. A resident involved in the auction process but lost RA stated, "We feel that the government is more biased towards entrepreneurs with large capital. Small communities like us often do not get the same opportunity to access the land" (Interview on June 15, 2024). It confirms dissatisfaction among local communities with government policies that are not in their interests.

Tensions also arise from the need for more communication between the local government and the community. FA, as a member of the Regency Level Committee, said, "Often, the community feels that they are not given enough information about this policy, and this raises suspicion and dissatisfaction. We need to be more active in conveying information and involving them in this process" (Interview on March 28, 2024). The lack of community involvement in decision-making has exacerbated tensions, especially when the policy directly impacts their daily lives.

In addition, unclear regulations are a significant source of conflict too. In some cases, land auction rules and procedures must be properly socialized to the community, resulting in clarity and certainty. As a result, the community often feels that the auction process needs to be more transparent, which tends to be detrimental to them. A village head, IM, said, "We often do not get clear information about the auction rules and procedures. This confuses the community and makes them feel like they are not being given a fair chance" (Interview on June 22, 2024). This ambiguity exacerbates tensions between the government and local communities, which can ultimately lead to open conflict. AL, as the Head of the Regency Level Committee, admitted, "We are often in a difficult

position, having to balance the government's interests with the needs of the community. It is common for us to face protests from residents who feel this policy is unfair" (Interview on May 13, 2024). This statement highlights the complexity of the role of the regency government, which must accommodate various interests, often with limited resources.

Furthermore, the power dynamics between the actors involved also play a significant role in this conflict. Actors with access to power and resources, such as government officials or big people in business, often have an advantage in the land auction process. They can use their influence to manipulate the process or secure the land they want, while small communities who do not have the same access often feel disadvantaged. A farmer, MI, complained, "We know that there is a game behind the scenes. Government officials and big businessmen often work together to win the auction, while we small people can only watch from the sidelines" (Interview on July 1, 2024). This power imbalance creates a sense of injustice in the community and deepens existing conflicts.

At the local level, conflicts occur between residents who successfully win the auction and those who lose. A participant who lost the auction, RA, stated, "I feel like I was treated unfairly. Those who won seemed to have access first, and we, the little ones, were just victims" (Interview on June 15, 2024). These conflicts are not only individual but also create tensions at the community level, where there is widespread injustice and dissatisfaction. Competition between residents to gain access to land through auctions often creates tensions within the community. In some cases, residents who were previously good neighbors became

enemies because they felt they were disadvantaged in the auction process. A community leader, AM, noted, "We used to live in harmony, but since this land auction, many have become enemies because they feel cheated. Relations between residents have become tense, and there are often fights" (Interview on July 20, 2024). These tensions reflect the social impacts of the reserved land leasing program, which, although well-intentioned, can divide local communities.

Not all conflicts are caused by ill will or self-interest alone. There are also structural and systemic factors that contribute to the dynamics of these conflicts. For example, the lack of coordination between various government agencies at the regional level and the lack of capacity of local governments to manage reserved land effectively all contribute to the emergence of conflicts. AL, Head of the Regency Level Committee, admitted, "We face many obstacles in managing the reserved land, ranging from lack of coordination to complicated bureaucratic issues. It makes the process slow and often causes dissatisfaction in the community" (Interview on May 13, 2024). The statement underscores the importance of systemic improvements in managing reserved land to reduce conflicts and tensions.

Addressing these dynamics of conflict and tension requires a comprehensive and inclusive approach. First, efforts are needed to improve transparency and fairness in the land auction process. It can be done through better socialization, implementation of clear and consistent rules, and independent supervision of the auction process. Second, efforts need to be made to strengthen the capacity of local governments to manage reserved land,

including through training, improving coordination between agencies, and simplifying bureaucratic procedures. Third, it is important to involve all stakeholders in decision-making regarding land management to ensure that the interests of all parties are represented and taken into account.

In the long term, these efforts are expected to reduce existing conflicts and tensions and create a more equitable and sustainable governance of reserved land. However, this change will be challenging and requires commitment from all parties involved to achieve the desired results. With improvements in its management, it is hoped that local communities will feel more involved and benefit. At the same time, the government and entrepreneurs can achieve their goals without causing conflicts that are detrimental to all parties.

Challenges in Implementing Reserved Land Leasing Policy

Implementing the reserved land leasing policy is not free from various complex challenges. These challenges include technical, social, and economic aspects that overall affect the effectiveness and sustainability of the program. Various solutions have been proposed by stakeholders, including the community, government, and academics, to improve and perfect existing policies.

One of the main challenges is the technical aspect, which has a significant influence. The land auction process is often disrupted by inadequate infrastructure, such as road access, irrigation networks, and other agricultural facilities. This results in the land being auctioned, often needing to be optimally used by the community that won the auction. A farmer involved in the land lease program, DI, expressed his

difficulties: "The land I got through the auction did not have sufficient water access, and the road to the land was very bad. These factors make it difficult us to make maximum use of the land" (Interview on May 29, 2024). Such technical challenges require serious attention from the government to ensure that the land being auctioned is truly ready for use.

On the other hand, social challenges also play a significant role in implementing the policy. Land leasing programs often cause social conflicts among communities, especially regarding land distribution and resource access. Competition between residents to gain access to land through auctions often creates tensions within communities, which can break up previously harmonious social relationships. A community leader, AM, noted, "The land auction has caused many conflicts in our village. People who used to be friends are now enemies because they feel disadvantaged in the process" (Interview on July 20, 2024). This social tension shows the significance of the government's role in managing and mediating conflicts arising from the land leasing policy.

In addition to social challenges, economic challenges are important factors that must be considered when implementing land leasing policies. Many farmers and small business people need help utilizing land they obtain through auctions. The high cost of obtaining land through auctions and the investment required to manage and develop the land is often a heavy burden for those with limited resources. A smallholder farmer, DI, stated, "Even though I managed to win the auction, I had difficulty raising enough capital to manage the land. The costs involved are very high, and the results are

not necessarily comparable" (Interview on May 29, 2024). These challenges indicate that land leasing policies need to be accompanied by financial and technical support for small communities so that they can make optimal use of the land they obtain.

Stakeholders have proposed various solutions to address these challenges. First, the government must invest in infrastructure development supporting land use to address technical challenges. It includes constructing roads, irrigation networks, and other agricultural facilities to help communities and entrepreneurs manage land more effectively. In addition, there needs to be a technical assistance program for farmers and small entrepreneurs to utilize the land they own optimally. An agricultural expert, ES, who was involved in this program, suggested, "The government should provide adequate infrastructure and technical assistance programs for farmers and small entrepreneurs. This will help them overcome existing challenges and increase the productivity of the land they manage" (Interview on July 24, 2024).

Second, in dealing with social challenges, the government needs to facilitate dialogue and mediation between parties involved in conflicts related to land leasing. The government can form a mediation team consisting of community representatives, religious leaders, and government officials to resolve conflicts that arise. In addition, transparency in the auction and distribution process of land needs to be improved to reduce existing social tensions. A village head, ML, suggested, "We need to increase transparency in the land auction process and involve more community representatives in decision-making. This will help reduce conflicts and tensions in

the community" (Interview on May 26, 2024).

Third, to address economic challenges, there needs to be stronger financial support for small communities involved in the land leasing program. The government can provide more affordable financing schemes, such as soft loans or subsidies, for farmers and small entrepreneurs so that they can access the capital needed to manage their land. In addition, training and capacity-building programs also need to be provided so that communities can improve their skills in managing land productively. A small entrepreneur, EY, suggested, "We need easier access to financing and adequate training so that we can manage our land better. This will help us maximize the potential of the land we have" (Interview on July 18, 2024).

In the long term, these solutions are expected to overcome the challenges in implementing the reserved land leasing policy and create a more equitable, transparent, and sustainable program. With regulatory improvements, infrastructure development, community capacity building, and financial support, this policy can provide greater benefits to all parties involved, especially local communities that have felt its direct impact. However, the successful implementation of this policy still requires commitment from all parties involved to work together and find joint solutions to the various existing challenges.

Impact of Annual Leasing Policy on Land Conservation for Agricultural Production

The annual auction policy in Bima Regency significantly impacts land conservation for agricultural production. The policy aims to optimize the use of land owned by the local government. However,

its implementation raises various challenges and complex impacts on the sustainability of agricultural production in the region.

One of the positive impacts is it can encourage local farmers to continue using the leased land as productive agricultural land. With the opportunity to rent land through the auction process, farmers who previously did not have access to agricultural land can now manage the land and increase their production yields. A farmer, AB, who participated in this program said, "With the land auction, I can rent previously unused land and use it to plant rice. It helps me and my family meet our daily needs" (Interview on April 21, 2024).

However, the policy also has several negative impacts that need attention. One of the problems is the decline in land quality due to excessive exploitation. Many farmers who rent land maximize land use in the short term without considering its long-term sustainability. A local agricultural expert, ES, explained, "Farmers who rent land through auctions often ignore sustainable agricultural practices. They focus on quick results without considering the long-term impact on soil fertility" (Interview on July 24, 2024). As a result, previously fertile land can experience degradation, reducing its potential productivity in the future.

The auction policy also poses challenges in terms of land use rotation. Because land is rented for a relatively short period, farmers often feel they need more incentive to implement good crop rotation practices, which are important for maintaining soil fertility. "In this annual auction system, farmers feel they do not have the time or interest to do proper crop rotation. They tend to plant the same crops every year, which, of course, damages soil

structure and reduces productivity in the long term," said ES, an agronomist involved in this study (Interview on July 24, 2024).

In addition to the socio-economic challenges, the policy also impacts land conservation efforts in an ecological context. Uncontrolled land use without adequate supervision can cause environmental damage, such as soil erosion, loss of biodiversity, and decreased water quality. A local environmental activist, AR, emphasized, "If land continues to be exploited without policies that support conservation, we will face the risk of losing fertile agricultural land in the future. The impact will be on food production and the balance of the ecosystem" (Interview on July 31, 2024).

Recognizing these challenges, several parties have proposed solutions to improve the impact of the auction policy on land conservation. One proposed solution is the implementation of stricter regulations regarding sustainable agricultural practices for land tenants. The government is expected to set specific conditions in land leasing contracts that require implementing environmentally friendly agricultural techniques, such as crop rotation, organic fertilizers, and erosion prevention. AL, Head of the Regency Level Committee, stated, "We are considering implementing stricter regulations for land tenants to help maintain the land's sustainability. It is important to ensure that the land remains productive in the long term" (Interview on May 13, 2024).

The government is also encouraged to provide training and technical assistance for farmers who rent land. These interventions improved farmers' understanding of sustainable agricultural practices and how to maintain soil fertility.

An academic involved in the training program, SA, emphasized, "Education and assistance are very important so that farmers comprehend that they have a responsibility to maintain the land they manage. With a good understanding, we can reduce land degradation risk" (Interview on July 9, 2024).

Financial support is an important factor in encouraging land conservation too. The government can incentivize farmers who implement sustainable practices, such as subsidies for organic fertilizers or technical assistance for water and soil management. "There must be clear incentives for farmers to maintain land sustainability. If they know that they will be supported to do so, they will be more motivated to implement good techniques" (Interview on July 9, 2024), SA added.

In the long term, the impact of the annual auction policy on land conservation for agricultural production depends largely on how the policy is implemented and supported by effective regulations and supporting programs. With better monitoring, education, and the right incentives, this policy can maintain and increase agricultural land productivity while maintaining ecological balance and long-term sustainability. However, without significant changes in the way this policy is implemented, there is a risk that valuable agricultural land could suffer serious degradation, threatening the future of agriculture in the region.

In summary, although the policy of reserved land leasing in Bima Regency is designed to support regional development and preserve agricultural land, its implementation in the field still faces various challenges. The lack of transparency in the auction process, the unfair distribution of economic benefits, and the conflict dynamics among the

actors involved reflect the need for governance and policy implementation improvements. These findings invite us to reflect on the importance of a more inclusive and transparent approach to the decision-making process, as well as the need for stricter supervision to ensure that the objectives of this policy are truly achieved and do not sacrifice the welfare of local communities and environmental sustainability.

Discussion

This part discusses the theoretical contributions and practical implications of our study. The article enriches the literature on land governance and public policy transparency by revealing how non-transparency and conflict of interest can affect the effectiveness of policies at the local level. In terms of practical implications, the findings highlight the need for reforms in auction procedures and community engagement, as well as the significance of stricter monitoring to ensure that the initial objectives of the policy, such as agricultural land conservation and economic justice, can be optimally achieved.

The study helps broaden, deepen, and enrich our understanding of the various issues related to the reserved land leasing policy, the dynamics of actor conflicts in land management, and the socio-economic impacts that arise as a result of the policy's implementation. Through an in-depth analysis, it provides theoretical contributions in several key dimensions relevant to the study of public policy, resource conflict, and political economy.

One of the primary contributions is strengthening public policy theory, especially in the local context in Indonesia, due to the reserved land leasing policy adopted by the Bima Regency Government

being unique and rich in specific local dynamics. By analyzing the implementation of the policy, our research contributes to public policy theory by showing that the success or failure of a policy depends not only on the policy's design but also on contextual factors such as local political power, social structure, and economic dynamics (Grindle, 2007; Ostrom, 2005). The land leasing policy affects the economy and creates social tension and conflict between various interested actors. The authors then underline the significance of a contextual approach in public policy studies, which considers local dynamics and does not simply rely on models or theories developed elsewhere.

The dynamics of the conflict that arise in managing reserved land also contribute to the theory of conflict and resolution in resource management. The conflict is not simply the result of differences in interests between actors. However, it is also influenced by structural factors such as unfair land distribution, lack of transparency in the auction process, and unequal political power. The exploration adds insight into conflict theory by showing that the causes of resource conflicts are often rooted in the power structure and injustice embedded in the social system. In addition, our research makes a theoretical contribution in terms of how such conflicts can be managed or resolved. One important finding is that more than technocratic or legalistic solutions are needed to resolve complex conflicts; a more comprehensive approach that includes dialogue between actors, community participation, and reconciliation of different interests is needed (Borras & Franco, 2013; Peluso & Lund, 2011).

This study also makes significant theoretical contributions to the field of political economy, particularly in understanding how land leasing policies can affect social and economic inequalities in society. By analyzing the socio-economic impacts of certain policies, the findings confirm how policies that appear to be economically neutral can deepen existing inequalities. Our research enriches political economy theory by showing how local economic and political power can influence the distribution of resources and economic opportunities in society (Harvey, 2007; Stiglitz, 2012). For example, the study found that large investors benefit more from land auctions than small farmers, deepening existing inequalities. It provides theoretical implications that economic policies that are designed without considering the distribution of economic power can risk exacerbating social injustice.

Another theoretical contribution is the development of environmental and sustainability policy theory. The land leasing policy adopted by the Bima Regency Government impacts socio-economic aspects and has significant implications for agricultural land's environment and long-term sustainability. The authors underscore how unsustainable agricultural practices promoted by land auction policies can result in land degradation, loss of soil fertility, and long-term risks to local food security (Foley et al., 2011; Tilman et al., 2011). To overcome these issues, environmental policies should be designed with sustainable practices in mind and integrate sustainability principles at every implementation stage. A strong regulatory framework and continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms must support effective environmental policies.

It also contributes to the theory of community participation and involvement in public resource management. One important finding is that lacking community participation in the land auction process can create distrust and dissatisfaction, ultimately triggering conflict (Arnstein, 1969; Pretty, 1995). Therefore, the study enriches the theory of participation by showing the importance of community involvement at every stage of the decision-making process, especially in the context of resource management, which has a broad impact on the lives of local communities.

Finally, this article contributes to regional development theory and policy, especially in remote or underdeveloped areas such as Bima Regency. Analyzing land leasing policy as part of regional development strategies shows that development policies that must be better integrated with local needs can cause complex and diverse problems. These findings provide theoretical implications that regional development policies must be designed with a holistic and inclusive approach, focusing on economic aspects and considering community social, cultural, and environmental factors (Rodrik, 2004; Scott & Storper, 2007).

Overall, the study's theoretical contributions are very broad and diverse, covering various fields of study relevant to public policy, resource conflicts, political economy, the environment, community participation, and regional development. It provides a deeper understanding of the existing issues and offers new perspectives and analytical frameworks that other researchers can use to explore similar problems in different contexts.

Meanwhile, this study's implications are very important, both from a practical and theoretical perspective, because they provide insights that can be used by

policymakers, researchers, and the wider community to understand and overcome the various challenges associated with reserved land leasing policies, resource management conflicts, and their socio-economic and environmental impacts. These implications cover various dimensions relevant to policy development, resource management, and community welfare.

This research has significant implications for policymakers, especially in designing and implementing land lease policies for development reserves. The research findings show that the policy has complex positive and negative impacts on various aspects of community life. Therefore, policymakers need to consider several important things. First, *there is a need for transparency and accountability*. One of the main findings is the lack of transparency in the land auction process, which can lead to distrust and dissatisfaction among the community. Policymakers must improve transparency and accountability at every stage of the auction process, including in pricing, bid evaluation, and announcement of auction winners. It can be done by implementing independent audit mechanisms, supervision by the community, and the publication of complete and easily accessible information (Krahmann, 2003; Teisman et al., 2009). Second, *the importance of community participation*. The study shows that the lack of community participation in decision-making related to land lease policies can trigger conflict and social tension. Therefore, policymakers must integrate community participation at every stage of the policy process, from planning to evaluation (Arnstein, 1969; Pretty, 1995). Actively involving the community can increase the legitimacy of the policy and help identify potential problems early on

and find more effective solutions. Third, policy adjustments to local conditions. The findings highlight the importance of policy adjustments to local conditions, including the area's social, economic, and political structures. Policymakers must understand that effective policies in one area will only necessarily be successful in other areas with proper adjustments. Therefore, a flexible and adaptive policy approach is essential, which can be adjusted to local needs and characteristics (Grindle, 2004; Rondinelli, 2003). Lastly, *protection for vulnerable groups*. This study shows that less empowered groups, such as small farmers and landless communities, are often victims of unfair policies. Policymakers must ensure that land leasing policies benefit certain groups and provide fair protection and opportunities for vulnerable groups. It can be done by providing incentives or support for small farmers and implementing regulations that protect their rights.

This study also has considerable implications for resource management, particularly in reserved land management. These implications cover environmental sustainability, distributive justice, and resource use efficiency. The first is *environmental sustainability*. The study shows that unsustainable land use practices can negatively impact the environment, including land degradation and loss of soil fertility. Therefore, resource managers must apply sustainability principles in land management by ensuring that agricultural and other land use practices are carried out sustainably and do not damage the environment (Foley et al., 2005; Tilman et al., 2002). It includes strict monitoring of fertilizer and pesticide use and applying soil conservation techniques. Second, *resource distribution justice*. This study

highlights the importance of justice in resource distribution (Fraser, 2009; Rawls, 1971), particularly in the context of land auctions. Resource managers need to ensure that land distribution is carried out fairly and does not only benefit certain groups with economic or political power. It can be achieved by implementing transparent and accountable auction mechanisms and providing greater access to less empowered groups. Third, *resource use efficiency*. The findings also indicate a need to improve the efficiency of reserved land use. Resource managers must ensure that leased land is used optimally for its intended purpose and not misused for personal gain or speculation. It requires strict monitoring of land use and the application of sanctions for violations.

From a community welfare perspective, our research provides profound implications for how land leasing policies can affect local communities' social and economic lives—first, *reducing social and economic inequality*. It shows that land leasing policies can exacerbate social and economic inequality if not implemented properly. Therefore, the government and related parties must reduce existing inequalities by providing greater access to less empowered groups (Piketty, 2014), such as small farmers and landless communities, to participate in land auctions. Second, *increasing economic welfare*. One of the important findings is that land leasing policies can provide new economic opportunities for local communities, especially those who do not own land. However, to achieve this condition, the policy must be implemented to ensure that economic benefits are distributed fairly and not only enjoyed by certain groups. The government can support this by providing training and

technical support for small farmers to use the leased land productively. Third, *strengthening social cohesion*. This study also highlights the potential for social conflict due to land leasing policies. The government and related parties must develop effective conflict resolution mechanisms involving all stakeholders to address this social conflict (Galtung, 2018; Lederach, 1997). It can help prevent conflict and strengthen social cohesion, improving social stability and welfare.

This study opens up several opportunities for further research in land leasing policies and studying resource conflicts and community well-being. First, cross-regional comparative studies to understand how land leasing policies are implemented in different contexts and how the outcomes differ from one region to another. Such studies can help identify best practices that can be adopted in other regions and uncover factors that influence the success or failure of such policies. Second, explore social and cultural factors that influence conflict dynamics and implementation of land leasing policies. It includes studies on social norms, local power structures, and cultural identities in shaping community responses to such policies. Finally, developing inclusive and sustainable policy models to design more inclusive and sustainable policy models that can be adapted to different local contexts. Further research can focus on developing and testing these policy models and evaluating their effectiveness in reducing inequalities, preventing conflict, and improving community well-being.

In summary, these implications are broad and relevant to various stakeholders, including policymakers, resource managers, local communities, and researchers. The findings provide new insights into the dynamics of land leasing

policies and their impacts and offer practical and theoretical guidance that can improve resource management and community welfare.

Conclusion

This article has revealed several important dynamics related to implementing the policy of leasing land used as collateral by village officials in the Bima Regency. Based on the analysis of five problem formulations, the authors conclude several main points that can be used as guidelines in formulating future policies.

Transparency and Auction Mechanism: Transparency in the land auction mechanism is still a problem that needs to be improved. Although official procedures have been implemented, dissatisfaction and perceptions of unfairness among auction participants indicate that there is still room to improve accountability and community participation in the process. Strengthening transparency mechanisms, including community involvement in supervision, will be essential to increase public trust.

Socio-Economic Impacts on Local Communities: The land leasing policy has unevenly impacted local communities. While certain groups, especially those with better access to information and resources, benefit from this policy, others, especially farmers and non-officials, suffer losses. Therefore, a more inclusive and equitable policy is needed to ensure that the benefits of this program can be felt by all levels of society, not just by a handful of parties.

Dynamics of Conflict and Tension Between Actors: This study also highlights conflict dynamics and tension between various actors in managing and utilizing land formerly guaranteed by village officials. This tension arises due to the

unclear division of authority and the need for an effective conflict resolution mechanism. Therefore, local governments are advised to strengthen coordination between institutions and develop mediation mechanisms involving all relevant parties to reduce the potential for conflict.

Challenges in Policy Implementation: Implementing this land leasing policy is inseparable from various challenges, including ineffective coordination between levels of government and limited resources and institutional capacity at the local level. To overcome these challenges, efforts are needed to strengthen the capacity of local governments through adequate training and budget allocation so that the policy can be implemented more effectively.

Contribution to Agricultural Land Conservation: Implementing the land leasing policy can potentially threaten the preservation of agricultural land in Bima Regency. Land conversion that occurs as a result of the policy can reduce the area of land available for agricultural production in the future. Therefore, stricter protection policies are needed to maintain agriculture's sustainability, including determining agricultural zones that cannot be converted and increasing supervision of land use.

Overall, this study provides important insights into the complexities and challenges of implementing a land leasing policy at the local level. The findings above are not only relevant to Bima Regency but also to other regions facing similar situations. Thus, the results can be used as a reference for improving public policies that are more transparent, inclusive, and sustainable, as well as for developing more effective conflict

resolution mechanisms in the context of natural resource management.

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