



AN ANALYSIS OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMPLETE SYSTEMATIC LAND REGISTRATION PROGRAM (PTSL) IN BATU BARA REGENCY

Nala Septiliana¹, Siti Hazzah Nur. R², Adang Aldhila³

^{1,2} Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia.

³ Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia

Email: adangaldhila@umsu.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The Complete Systematic Land Registration (PTSL) program is designed to provide legal certainty over land, yet its implementation in Batu Bara Regency faces challenges regarding substantive community participation. This study aims to identify the forms and dynamics of community participation in each stage of PTSL. Using a descriptive qualitative method with data collected through in-depth interviews, passive participatory observation, and documentation, the study finds that community participation remains procedural and passive. Communities engage in submitting documents, attending socializations, and receiving certificates but are nearly absent from decision-making, monitoring, and evaluation. Enthusiasm for the program's benefits (free, fast) is not matched by a deep understanding of post-certification rights and obligations. Referring to Arnstein's Ladder of Participation, community participation is positioned at the informing and placation levels (tokenism), not yet reaching partnership. Main obstacles include limited access to information, low levels of understanding, and weak institutional coordination (e.g., between BPN and Bapenda). This study concludes that quantitative certificate achievements do not guarantee substantive participation. Community empowerment strategies and a transformation of power relations are necessary for PTSL to truly realize equitable legal certainty.

Keywords: Community Participation; Legal Certainty; Land Disputes; Batu Bara Regency

ABSTRAK

Program Pendaftaran Tanah Sistematis Lengkap (PTSL) dirancang untuk memberikan kepastian hukum pertanahan, namun pelaksanaannya di Kabupaten Batu Bara menghadapi tantangan partisipasi substantif masyarakat. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengidentifikasi bentuk dan dinamika partisipasi masyarakat dalam setiap tahapan PTSL. Menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif dengan pengumpulan data melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipasi pasif, dan dokumentasi, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa partisipasi masyarakat masih bersifat prosedural dan pasif. Masyarakat terlibat dalam menyerahkan dokumen, menghadiri sosialisasi, dan menerima sertifikat, tetapi nyaris tidak terlibat dalam pengambilan keputusan serta pemantauan dan evaluasi. Antusiasme terhadap manfaat program (gratis,

cepat) tidak diimbangi pemahaman mendalam tentang hak dan kewajiban pasca-sertifikasi. Merujuk pada Tangga Partisipasi Arnstein, posisi partisipasi masyarakat berada pada tingkat *informing dan placation (tokenism)*, belum mencapai kemitraan. Kendala utama meliputi keterbatasan akses informasi, rendahnya pemahaman, dan lemahnya koordinasi kelembagaan (misalnya BPN dengan Bapenda). Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa capaian kuantitatif sertifikat tidak menjamin partisipasi substantif. Diperlukan strategi pemberdayaan masyarakat dan transformasi relasi kuasa agar PTSL benar-benar mewujudkan kepastian hukum yang berkeadilan.

Kata kunci: Partisipasi Masyarakat; Kepastian Hukum; Sengketa Tanah; Kabupaten Batu Bara

INTRODUCTION

Land plays a fundamental role in sustaining people's lives, both as a place to establish housing and as a source of livelihood through the utilization of cultivated land. Beyond its function as a physical asset, land provides the foundation for plantation development and various forms of infrastructure that support human survival. Therefore, the protection of individuals' land rights is a prerequisite for creating a sense of security and promoting community welfare. However, the situation in Indonesia indicates that legal uncertainty concerning land ownership remains a persistent problem. One of the most prominent land-related issues is land conflict, as has occurred in Batu Bara Regency. Septiliana and Nur (2024) confirmed that plantation disputes generally arise between local communities and companies holding Cultivation Rights Titles (Hak Guna Usaha or HGU), involving issues such as the unauthorized harvesting of plantation products and land misuse. In Batu Bara Regency, a specific problem arose when land belonging to a farmers' group was cultivated by PT Socfindo due to the farmers' lack of legally valid proof of ownership. This situation has been exacerbated by limited public understanding, financial constraints, and insufficient guidance from the local government regarding the land certification process. These conflicts ultimately stem from one fundamental issue: the land has not been legally registered.

Public policy is essential for addressing existing problems and public issues (Adang Aldhila et al., 2021). In response to these land-related problems, the Ministry of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning/National Land Agency (ATR/BPN) introduced the Complete Systematic Land Registration Program (Pendaftaran Tanah Sistematis Lengkap or PTSL) in 2017. The program is regulated under Regulation of the Minister of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning/Head of the National Land Agency Number 6 of 2018 concerning the Complete Systematic Land Registration Adjudication Committee. It constitutes a national strategic policy aimed at accelerating land registration throughout Indonesia. At the national level, the program has achieved significant progress, with a target of completing the

registration of 5.1 million land parcels in 2025 (Laksono, 2025). In Batu Bara Regency, the PTSL Program was implemented in 15 priority villages in 2026, including Sumber Tani, Mekar Baru, Petatal, and Pulau Sejuk Villages. Its legal framework includes Regulation of the Minister of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning/Head of the National Land Agency Number 6 of 2018 concerning the PTSL Adjudication Committee and Batu Bara Regent Regulation Number 88 of 2023 concerning the Reduction of Land and Building Rights Acquisition Duty (Bea Perolehan Hak atas Tanah dan Bangunan or BPHTB) for participants in the Complete Systematic Land Registration Program. The establishment of this policy framework demonstrates the government's commitment to ensuring legal certainty in land ownership.

Despite the availability of a policy framework, the implementation of the PTSL Program continues to encounter serious challenges. Hasanah et al. (2025) identified several major obstacles, including limited human resources, complex bureaucratic procedures, inadequate mapping infrastructure, and insufficient public understanding and participation. These challenges directly affect the effectiveness of the program, resulting in delays in meeting certification targets, the emergence of land disputes, and the unequal realization of legal certainty. In Batu Bara Regency, these obstacles have become increasingly evident. Observations indicate that many farmers do not possess legally valid proof of land ownership due to limited knowledge, financial constraints, and insufficient guidance from the local government. This situation is consistent with the findings of Rachmawati (2021), who stated that land registration remains constrained by high costs, limited public understanding of the purpose of registration, and complicated procedures that discourage people from registering their land. Putri and Darmadi (2025) and also Pangastiti and Mudiparwanto (2025) identified additional barriers to public participation, including inheritance-related land disputes and misconceptions regarding the objectives of the program. From a theoretical perspective, these conditions reflect a gap between the opportunity provided by the government through the PTSL policy and the willingness and ability of the community to participate.

The most critical gap identified in Batu Bara Regency concerns the low quality of substantive community participation in the PTSL Program. Conceptually, participation refers to an individual's mental and emotional involvement in a group situation to support the achievement of shared objectives and assume responsibility for those objectives (Marhum & Meronda, 2021). Cohen and Uphoff (1980), as well as Marhum & Meronda (2021), proposed four indicators of participation: participation in decision-making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and the utilization of program outcomes. However, field conditions indicate that communities in Batu Bara Regency tend to participate only procedurally rather than

mentally and emotionally. Community involvement remains limited in substantive activities, such as maintaining land boundaries, providing accurate information, understanding the legal consequences of certificate ownership, and providing evaluative feedback. Hamdi (2015) distinguished passive participation, which involves accepting a situation without active involvement, from active participation, which encompasses social awareness and a willingness to make sacrifices. The conditions in Batu Bara Regency more closely reflect passive participation, which may result in superficial compliance rather than authentic participation.

The most concrete indication of limited substantive participation is the weakness of information-based interaction between implementing agencies and the community. One clear example is that many certificate holders in Batu Bara Regency were unaware of their outstanding obligation to pay the Land and Building Rights Acquisition Duty due to weak coordination between the National Land Agency and the Regional Revenue Agency (Kantor Berita Buruh, 2015). According to Afifah et al. (2025), local government commitment, cross-sector coordination, and community participation are key factors determining the success of a policy. This case demonstrates that community members have merely become passive recipients of land certificates without fully understanding the associated rights and obligations. From the perspective of Arnstein (1969) ladder of citizen participation, this condition falls within the levels of “informing” or “placation,” in which the government provides information in a one-way manner without creating meaningful opportunities for public involvement. Referring to the theory of political participation proposed by Huntington et al. (1976), the essence of participation as an effort by citizens to influence government decision-making is lost when the community is not actively involved in substantive stages, including decisions concerning land boundaries, data verification, and program evaluation.

Unless this issue is promptly identified and addressed, the PTSL Program may result only in mass land certification without fostering legal awareness or a sense of ownership among community members. Consequently, future land conflicts may increase because communities may perceive that they were not fairly and transparently involved in the process. Therefore, it is important to comprehensively identify the forms and dynamics of community participation at each stage of the PTSL Program as an initial step toward understanding the underlying causes of the low quality of participation. On this basis, this study proposes the following research question: “What are the forms and dynamics of community participation at each stage of the implementation of the Complete Systematic Land Registration Program (PTSL) in Batu Bara Regency?” Accordingly, this study aims to identify the forms of

community participation in decision-making, program implementation, the utilization of program outcomes, and evaluation at each stage of the PTSL Program in Batu Bara Regency.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design to understand the subjective meanings underlying community participation in the Complete Systematic Land Registration Program or Pendaftaran Tanah Sistematis Lengkap (PTSL) in Batu Bara Regency. Sugiyono (2008) explains that, in qualitative research, the researcher serves as a human instrument who is responsible for planning the study, collecting and analysing data, and drawing conclusions. Qualitative researchers must possess a strong theoretical foundation and broad knowledge to formulate relevant questions, analyse the data, and interpret the realities being investigated. The study was conducted at the Batu Bara Regency Office of the National Land Agency (BPN). Data were collected through three main techniques. First, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore participants' direct experiences, emotions, and motivations, including their responses to the implementation of the PTSL Program. Second, passive participant observation was carried out during PTSL socialisation activities, the display of juridical data on public notice boards, and the inspection of boundary markers in the field. Third, documentation, including meeting attendance lists, photographs of activities, and official reports, was examined to identify participation dynamics and potential conflicts. The researcher served as the primary research instrument and was supported by an interview guide covering participants' knowledge of PTSL, experiences related to costs, and relationships with village officials. The data were analysed thematically through data reduction, data presentation in narrative form and simple matrices, and conclusion drawing. Data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation were cross-validated through source and method triangulation to ensure the credibility of the findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

a. Institutional and Procedural Context

This study found that the implementation of the Complete Systematic Land Registration Program (Pendaftaran Tanah Sistematis Lengkap, PTSL) in Batu Bara Regency cannot be separated from its relatively recent institutional context. Batu Bara Regency was established as an autonomous region following its separation from Asahan Regency pursuant to Law Number 5 of 2007. However, the regency only established a representative office of the Ministry of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning/National Land Agency (ATR/BPN) in 2021. This condition has directly affected institutional capacity and the coverage of land

administration services in the region. It also reinforces the argument presented in the background section that the element of opportunity provided by the government continues to face structural challenges at the local level.

In 2026, the Batu Bara Regency ATR/BPN Office demonstrated its commitment to accelerating land registration by administering the oath of office to the Adjudication Committee on 15 April 2026. This measure was taken following changes in the committee's composition, which were intended to optimise performance and achieve the established targets. The Head of the Batu Bara Regency ATR/BPN Office stated that the adjustment to the committee's structure was based on an evaluation of the previous committee's performance and the need to respond to operational requirements in the field.

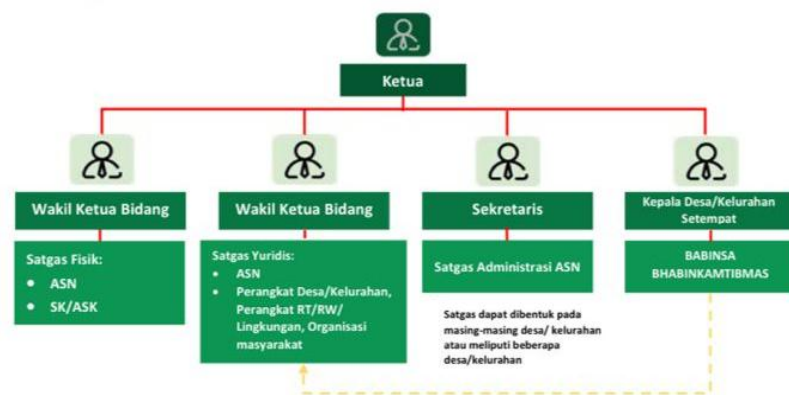


Figure 1 Organizational Structure of the PTSL Adjudication Committee, 2023

Source: Petunjuk Teknis PTSL Kementerian ATR/BPN

The Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the Complete Systematic Land Registration Program (Pendaftaran Tanah Sistematis Lengkap, PTSL) in Batu Bara Regency consists of six stages:

1. Socialisation: The National Land Agency (BPN) conducts programme socialisation activities at the village and subdistrict levels.
2. Public Awareness and Guidance: The committee provides information and guidance concerning the rights and obligations of programme participants.
3. Land Measurement: Authorised officers simultaneously measure the physical boundaries and dimensions of land parcels.
4. Adjudication Committee Hearing: The committee examines and verifies the juridical and physical data of each land parcel.
5. Public Announcement: Land data are publicly announced to provide an opportunity for objections and to prevent potential disputes.

6. Certificate Issuance: Land certificates are issued and distributed to the community. For unresolved or residual cases, certificates are delivered directly through a door-to-door service.

This process emphasises accessibility, procedural transparency, and ease of service delivery to the community.



Figure 2 Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the Complete Systematic Land Registration Program (PTSL) in Batu Bara Regency

Source: BPN Kabupaten Batu Bara, 2026

Although a procedural framework has been established, the field findings confirm the gaps previously identified in the background of the study. The Secretary of the Batu Bara Regency Branch Executive Council of the Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mining, Oil, Gas, and General Workers’ Unions of the Confederation of Indonesian Prosperity Trade Unions (DPC FSB NIKEUBA KSBSI) reported a potential loss of regional revenue of up to IDR 7 billion due to weak coordination between the Batu Bara Regency Representative Office of the National Land Agency (BPN) and the Regional Revenue Agency (Bapenda). This situation has resulted in many certificate holders being unaware of their outstanding tax obligations. Furthermore, the Batu Bara Regency BPN was reported to have never submitted data on participants with outstanding Duty on the Acquisition of Land and Building Rights (BPHTB) liabilities to the Batu Bara Regency Government through Bapenda, as required by applicable regulations. The required data include participants’ identities, the area and location of the land, and certificate numbers, which should be submitted quarterly. This finding provides the most concrete empirical evidence of the low level of informational participation hypothesised in the background of the study. It also confirms that community members remain passive

recipients of the programme without a complete understanding of the associated legal consequences.

This finding is consistent with Masnah, (2021), who emphasised that the successful implementation of PTSL is strongly influenced by the role of organisations, particularly extension officers, in delivering information to communities in villages designated as PTSL locations. Without effective communication, the objective of PTSL to provide legal certainty and legal protection for community land rights cannot be optimally achieved. Interviews with residents of Batu Bara Regency confirmed that their understanding of the purpose and objectives of PTSL remained limited. This condition directly contributed to the low quality of substantive participation, as described in the theoretical framework of Cohen and Uphoff (1980).

b. Forms of Community Participation at Each Stage of PTSL

1) Participation in the Decision -Making Stage

\ The results of in-depth interviews with residents in several locations across Batu Bara Regency showed that community involvement in the decision-making stage remained highly limited. A resident of Benteng Village, Talawi Subdistrict, stated that they only gained an understanding of the PTSL programme when the administrative process was already under way, rather than during the planning stage. A similar experience was reported by another resident of Benteng Village, who learned about the programme from village officials but had never been involved in any planning discussions.

Participant observation during socialisation activities showed that communication tended to be one-way, from officers to community members. There were no adequate discussion or deliberation forums to address implementation mechanisms or potential field-level constraints. This condition reflects what Arnstein (1969) describes as the “Informing” level, which is the lowest level within the Degrees of Tokenism category. At this level, community members receive information about the programme and their rights, but no adequate feedback mechanism is provided. This finding directly confirms the argument presented in the background of the study that the essence of political participation as a means of controlling and influencing public policy, as proposed by Huntington and Nelson (1994), has not yet been realised in the implementation of PTSL in Batu Bara Regency.

This finding is also consistent with Putri’s (2025) research in Jepara Regency, which revealed that the participatory methods applied in PTSL had not fully succeeded in attracting public interest. Consequently, community involvement in measurement and verification processes was often minimal. Therefore, the gap between quantitative achievements and the

quality of participation identified in the background of the study was empirically demonstrated at the most fundamental stage of the programme, namely decision-making.

2) Participation in the Implementation Stage

The findings concerning participation in the programme implementation stage indicate that community participation was predominantly procedural and passive. Residents' activities were generally limited to three actions:

- a) submitting documents requested by officers;
- b) attending socialisation meetings; and
- c) receiving completed land certificates.

This finding directly confirms the problem identified in the background of the study, namely that community involvement remains weak in substantive stages and more closely reflects passive participation, as categorised by Hamdi (2015).

An important finding emerged from an interview with a resident of Sumber Tani Village, Datuk Tanah Datar Subdistrict, who stated that they only learned that the certification process had been completed when officers delivered the certificate through a door-to-door service. This condition indicates that community members were not actively involved in monitoring programme implementation in the field. Officers from the Batu Bara Regency Representative Land Office explained that the door-to-door approach was implemented to accelerate the completion and distribution of residual PTSL certificates while bringing services closer to the community. However, this physical proximity was not accompanied by adequate informational and participatory engagement.

This finding is consistent with Nurrizki et al. (2025), whose study on community-based land consolidation found that low community participation resulted from limited understanding of the economic benefits offered by the programme and a crisis of trust in the government as the initiator of the activity. Similarly, research conducted in Balangan Regency, South Kalimantan, showed that community involvement and participation remained within the Degrees of Tokenism category, particularly the fifth rung of Arnstein's ladder, namely Placation. At this level, community participation still requires intensive assistance from the local Land Office team.

3) Participation in the Benefits Utilisation Stage

Data collected through interviews showed that community members were generally enthusiastic about receiving land certificates issued through the PTSL programme. A resident of Benteng Village stated that, without PTSL, they would not have been able to independently

obtain a land certificate due to their limited financial capacity. Community members also considered the PTSL programme highly beneficial, particularly for low-income and lower-middle-income groups. They viewed the process as relatively fast, transparent, and satisfactory. A resident of Sumber Tani Village also expressed gratitude for the service received and stated that the land certificate had been waited for a long time since the initial PTSL application.

This enthusiasm is an important finding that reinforces the argument presented in the background of the study that community willingness exists, although it has not yet developed into substantive participation. Further interviews, however, revealed that the use of certificates remained limited to the possession of legal documents and had not been accompanied by a comprehensive understanding of post-certification rights and obligations. This condition indicates that the programme has achieved quantitative certification targets without developing a strong sense of ownership or comprehensive legal awareness, precisely as anticipated in the background of the study.

4) Participation in the Monitoring and Evaluation Stage

Community participation in the programme evaluation stage was almost entirely absent. The Batu Bara Representative Land Office conducted monitoring meetings concerning service delivery and the completion of residual PTSL cases. However, these evaluation forums were internal institutional activities involving technical divisions and did not include representatives of the community as programme beneficiaries. This condition directly contradicts the participation indicators proposed by Cohen and Uphoff (1980) and Marhum and Meronda (2021), which require community involvement in programme monitoring and evaluation.

The absence of participatory evaluation mechanisms also confirms that PTSL implementation in Batu Bara Regency has not yet reflected the essence of political participation as an effort by citizens to influence governmental decision-making, as proposed by Huntington and Nelson (1994). Instead, participation remains confined to the level of tokenism described by Arnstein (1969).

c. Social Dynamics in the Implementation of PTSL

1) Factors Inhibiting Community Participation

This study identified three main factors that inhibited the quality of community participation. These factors also confirm the theoretical framework of Marhum and Meronda (2021) concerning the determinants of participation.

First, community members had varying levels of education. Several informants reported difficulties in understanding land administration documents and the procedures they were required to follow. This finding is consistent with Aulia (2024), who found that limited public awareness of the importance of land certification was one of the main problems in PTSL implementation. It also confirms the argument presented in the background of the study that the community's ability to participate remains a significant constraint.

Second, access to information was limited. Not all villages received adequate information or socialisation regarding the PTSL programme. As a result, many residents only learned about the programme after the administrative process had begun or even after the certificates had been issued. Studies conducted in Pekanbaru and Jambi also reported similar findings. Low levels of public awareness and compliance resulted from limited understanding of the benefits of certification, procedural complexity, and distrust rooted in previous bureaucratic experiences. This condition further strengthens the evidence of low informational participation, which constitutes a central issue in the background of the study.

Third, land boundary disputes and incomplete juridical documents created significant barriers. Aulia (2024), in a study conducted in Jepara Regency, also identified these two factors as technical constraints that limited community participation. This finding is relevant to the context of Batu Bara Regency described in the background of the study, particularly the dispute between farmer groups and PT Socfindo resulting from weak evidence of legal ownership.

2) Factors Inhibiting Community Participation

This study also identified several factors that supported community participation. Three supporting factors provided important contextual insights for the analysis. First, the Batu Bara Land Office implemented a door-to-door service. This method facilitated the delivery of residual certificates to community members without requiring them to visit the Land Office. However, the improved physical accessibility of the service was not accompanied by equally accessible information or adequate participatory mechanisms. Second, the programme was provided without direct certification fees. The absence of fees significantly assisted low-income residents. One informant explicitly stated that, without PTSL, they would not have been able to register their land due to financial limitations. Third, residents appreciated the relatively fast and transparent process. They considered the certificate application process through PTSL efficient and satisfactory. This appreciation reinforces the argument that

community willingness exists, but has not been channelled into substantive participation because of the structural and informational barriers previously identified.

d. The Position of Community Participation within the Theoretical Framework

1) The Gap between Procedural and Substantive Participation

The findings of this study empirically confirm the gaps identified in the background of the study. Referring to Yusuf's (2019) concept of participation, which requires mental and emotional involvement, the findings in Batu Bara Regency show that community members were primarily involved in procedural activities, such as submitting documents, attending socialisation meetings, and receiving certificates. These activities were not accompanied by a comprehensive understanding of post-certification rights and obligations. Consequently, the programme primarily achieved quantitative certification targets without developing a strong sense of ownership or comprehensive legal awareness.

Based on the four participation indicators proposed by Cohen and Uphoff (1980), this study identified significant disparities in the quality of community participation at each stage of PTSL implementation in Batu Bara Regency.

For the decision-making indicator, the quality of community participation was very low. This condition was reflected in the one-way communication pattern used by officers during socialisation activities. There were no adequate discussion or deliberation forums that allowed community members to express their aspirations, raise critical questions, or participate in formulating programme implementation mechanisms. Community members merely received information and had no opportunity to influence decisions directly related to their land, such as the determination of land parcel boundaries or measurement schedules. This condition confirms that, at the most fundamental stage of the programme, participation as a form of mental and emotional involvement had not been realised.

For the implementation indicator, the quality of community participation was low and predominantly procedural. Community involvement was limited to three administrative activities: submitting documents requested by officers, attending socialisation meetings, and receiving completed certificates. No evidence was found of community initiatives to participate actively in land measurement, juridical data verification, or boundary maintenance. A resident of Sumber Tani Village only learned that the certification process had been completed when officers delivered the certificate through a door-to-door service. This finding indicates that the community was not involved in monitoring programme implementation in the field. Instead, community members were positioned only as the final recipients of procedures determined entirely by the programme organisers.

For the benefits utilisation indicator, the quality of participation was moderate but remained superficial. Community members demonstrated considerable enthusiasm for receiving certificates issued through the PTSL programme. A resident of Benteng Village, for example, stated that they would not have been able to independently obtain a land certificate without PTSL because of their limited financial capacity. Residents of Sumber Tani Village also expressed appreciation for the fast, transparent, and satisfactory process.

Further interviews, however, revealed that the use of certificates remained limited to the possession of legal documents. Community members had not developed a comprehensive understanding of post-certification rights and obligations, including BPHTB payment obligations and the potential use of certificates to access economic capital. Therefore, the community received the physical benefits of the programme but did not fully benefit from it in a substantive sense.

For the monitoring and evaluation indicator, the quality of community participation was again very low. The Batu Bara Representative Land Office conducted monitoring meetings concerning service delivery and the completion of residual PTSL cases. However, these evaluation forums remained internal institutional activities involving only technical divisions. Community representatives, as programme beneficiaries, were not included.

There were no structured complaint mechanisms, participatory satisfaction surveys, or joint evaluation forums involving programme organisers and community members. In the framework of Cohen and Uphoff (1980), evaluation constitutes a major pillar of participation because it enables community members to provide feedback for programme improvement. The absence of such mechanisms confirms that PTSL implementation in Batu Bara Regency continues to position community members as programme objects rather than subjects who have the right to assess and influence the quality of the services they receive. Overall, these four indicators show that community participation in PTSL implementation in Batu Bara Regency remains at the level of tokenism within Arnstein's (1969) Ladder of Citizen Participation. Community involvement is predominantly symbolic and procedural and has not reached the level of Citizen Power, which requires an equal partnership between government institutions and citizens throughout every stage of the programme.

2) Position on Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation

One of the most significant findings of this study is the identification of the position of community participation in Batu Bara Regency within Arnstein's (1969) Ladder of Citizen Participation. The findings show that community participation in PTSL implementation is positioned at the Informing and Placation levels within the Degrees of Tokenism category. At

the Informing level, authorities provide information through one-way communication without establishing adequate feedback mechanisms. At the Placation level, community members are given limited opportunities to participate but do not possess sufficient power to influence decisions. PTSL implementation in the study area has not reached the Partnership level, where community members and government institutions share decision-making authority.

This finding is consistent with research conducted in Balangan Regency, South Kalimantan, which also positioned community participation in PTSL within the Degrees of Tokenism category. Therefore, the finding is not merely specific to a single local case. It indicates a potentially systemic pattern in PTSL implementation. Although the programme is formally designed to promote participation, its implementation remains far from the ideal of Citizen Power, which constitutes the central principle of Arnstein's participation ladder.

3) Confirmation of the Research Question

Overall, the findings answer the research question presented in the background of the study: "What are the forms and dynamics of community participation at each stage of PTSL implementation in Batu Bara Regency?" The identified form of participation was predominantly passive and procedural. Community members participated in the implementation stage by submitting documents, attending socialisation meetings, and receiving certificates. They also participated in the benefits utilisation stage by receiving the legal benefits of certificate ownership. However, their involvement in the decision-making and evaluation stages was almost entirely absent.

The dynamics of participation indicate that community enthusiasm for the programme's benefits was relatively high, particularly because the programme was free of direct certification fees and the process was considered fast. Nevertheless, the quality of substantive participation remained low. Community members functioned primarily as recipients of programme benefits rather than as active subjects. This condition was reflected in their lack of involvement in decisions concerning land boundaries, data verification, and programme implementation mechanisms. It was also demonstrated by the absence of evaluative feedback mechanisms through which community members could communicate their assessments and concerns to programme organisers.

e. Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of public participation studies in land policy by demonstrating that participation cannot be achieved solely by providing opportunities and facilitating physical access, such as free services and door-to-door certificate delivery. Meaningful participation requires investment in community capacity

building and the transformation of power relations between the state and citizens. The findings also enrich the framework proposed by Marhum and Meronda (2021) by demonstrating that community willingness and ability cannot be adequately addressed solely through the provision of opportunities. Instead, an integrated empowerment strategy is required to strengthen community knowledge, capacity, and influence within the programme.

The findings confirm that the quantitative achievement of PTSL targets should not be used as the sole indicator of programme success. Central and regional governments need to develop substantive participation indicators that measure the extent of community involvement in decision-making, monitoring, evaluation, and the utilisation of programme outcomes. Specifically, for the implementation of PTSL in Batu Bara Regency in 2026, more intensive public information and extension strategies are required. A structured coordination mechanism between BPN and Bapenda is also necessary to address the identified information gap. Without these improvements, PTSL may continue to produce mass land certification while creating latent risks of future land disputes.

f. Research Limitations and Future Research Agenda

This study has several limitations. The research locations were limited to the Batu Bara Regency Land Office and several villages. Therefore, the findings may not represent all communities in Batu Bara Regency, which are characterised by geographical, social, and economic diversity. In addition, the relatively short research period limited the researcher's ability to observe the dynamics of participation longitudinally. Further research is required to examine the extent to which the findings from Batu Bara Regency can be applied to other regions with different socioeconomic and institutional characteristics. Comparative studies across regencies and municipalities would be valuable for identifying the key factors that distinguish successful and unsuccessful community participation in PTSL implementation. Future research may specifically focus on developing a participation model that is appropriate to local contexts. Such research is necessary because community participation in PTSL should constitute an effort by citizens to influence governmental decision-making. This essential dimension of participation remains largely absent from the current implementation of PTSL in Batu Bara Regency.

CONCLUSION

The quality of community participation shows significant disparities across the various stages of PTSL implementation. At the decision-making stage, participation was very low, as communication remained one-way and no deliberative forum was available. At the

implementation stage, participation was largely procedural and limited to submitting documents, attending socialisation activities, and receiving land certificates. At the benefits utilisation stage, community enthusiasm was relatively high. However, public understanding of post-certification rights and obligations remained limited. Meanwhile, participation in the monitoring and evaluation stage was almost entirely absent because evaluation forums were conducted internally without involving community representatives.

The dynamics of participation indicate that community willingness was relatively high, as reflected in public appreciation of the programme's accessibility and exemption from direct certification fees. However, community ability remained limited due to educational constraints, restricted access to information, and land boundary disputes. Weak coordination between BPN and Bapenda, which resulted in community members being unaware of their outstanding BPHTB obligations, provides concrete evidence of the low level of informational participation.

Within Arnstein's (1969) Ladder of Citizen Participation, community participation was positioned at the Informing and Placation levels within the Degrees of Tokenism category and had not yet reached the level of Citizen Power. Therefore, the implementation of PTSL in Batu Bara Regency requires fundamental improvements, including the development of participatory deliberation mechanisms, stronger coordination between BPN and Bapenda, the implementation of dialogical extension strategies, and the establishment of evaluation forums involving community representatives. Without these improvements, the programme may function merely as an administrative project without achieving substantive legal certainty and agrarian awareness.

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