

Land owners hold power in spatial planning decision

Decisions on spatial planning in Jakarta are mostly determined by whoever owns the land, and are also dependant on the political will of government officials, says an expert.

Tarumanegara University urban and spatial planning expert Suryono Herlambang said that the current spatial planning system in Jakarta was discretionary, due to the rule that whoever owns a plot of land has the authority to decide what goes on it.

The power that land owners wield in regards to their land include making decisions such as elevating or lowering the terrain and constructing buildings, regardless of public use or protest.

“The system we currently have in place is actually good because the authority of the land owners can be overruled by city officials,” Suryono told The Jakarta Post recently.

He added that existing problems were related to the lack of political will from the officials that have the power to overrule.

In other countries, he added, cities have regulatory planning agencies that are able to properly limit the power of land owners in exercising full control over their land, by insisting on dialogue between residents and the local government before decisions are made.

Due to the domineering nature of spatial planning procedures in Jakarta, there have been clashes between housing developers and residents in certain areas over land decisions.

Early this month, hundreds of Kayu Putih residents in East Jakarta held a protest in front of a construction site on Jl. Pulomas Raya, Pulogadung, to oppose the construction of an apartment block and shopping mall on land belonging to city-owned company PT Pulomas Jaya.

The residents claimed that Pulomas Jaya wants to build on an area allocated for water filtration, which is also sometimes used as a public football field.

Protest organizer and head of community unit 3, Lukman Hakim, said that one of the impacts of constructing the complex would be increased flooding in surrounding neighborhoods.

Another protesting resident, Reti de Jong, who is the head of community unit 11 in Pulomas, said that local residents had not been involved in any discussion with Pulomas Jaya over the fate of the land.

Meanwhile, Spatial Planning Agency head Gamal Sinurat said that according to a bylaw on detailed spatial planning, which was endorsed in 2013, the land was meant for housing.

“The land has never been set aside for green open space or a commercial area. It is for housing purposes. The residents have [only] been using it as a soccer field because the company has not undertaken any construction work on the land for years,” he told the Post over the weekend. (dyl)