

The Development of a Cadastral System from a Policy Reform Perspective: the Case of the Hellenic Cadastre

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SUMMARY

In the mid-'90s, the Hellenic State initiated an ambitious national scale cadastral mapping program, according to the prominent cadastral exemplar of its time to establish the Hellenic Cadastre System (HCS) with the goal to replace the country's main land registry system, the Registrations and Mortgages System (RMS). Several deficiencies have been detected in the RMS, such as the paper and person-based organization and maintenance of the system, the incomplete registration of property rights, the lack of a cadastral map, the insufficient security of land transactions and the lack of additional information for properties to facilitate land policy, environmental protection and real property taxation.

The paper explores the case of the development of a new digital cadastral system to replace an existing person- and paper-based land registration system through the lens of policy reform. Public policy reforms are deliberate government efforts to effect change in a policy domain and deliver public goods to citizens. There are three different levels of change that are involved in the reform process (Tsoukas, 2012). The first level of change is problem-solving and involves the adoption of technical measures to improve current organizational practices that forestall a system from being effective. The second order of change commonly refers to an organizational transformation that alters an organization's "governing values" aiming to improve the delivery of a collective good. Last, the third-order change is the policy reform which alters drastically the foundational rules of a policy domain, as part of a broader political endeavor to modernize a country's institutions. Ideally, the three types of change should be nested within one another in ascending order, starting with the more localized, technical, and aligned with existing values and institutional-field meaning systems (Tsoukas 2012) before progressing to radical second and third-order changes.

The study is informed by a review of selected official documents as well as of interviews. Findings

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show a lack of an incremental approach in the long-established land registry policy domain in Greece: from problem-solving through the modification of procedures or adoption of technical measures to improve the existing RMS, through the organizational transformation of the partly privately run MOs', to policy reform. Instead, through the initiation of the HCS, a paradigmatic change was prioritized, which from a policy reform perspective, constitutes a 3rd order policy change. It's the movement from one paradigm (deed and paper-based registry system) to another paradigm (property based digital cadastral system), to redefine the country's land registry policy domain. A paradigmatic policy change is often accumulated with anomalies (Hall, 1993) and it's uncertain whether it can be effective (Tsoukas 2012, Hall, 1993), neglecting the embeddedness of the reform into the broader institutional field and leading to higher degrees of complexity, conflict, and recursivity. The case of the HC constitutes a rich setting and a promising context for the empirical study of large-scale change, which the development of a new land registry system involves, contributing to the relevant scholarly literature of land administration and public policy.

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