

Towards Effective Land Administration: What Is Striking About the Digital Transformation for Land Administration in Developing Context

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SUMMARY

One of the recognized activities for good land governance is land administration. Despite the appreciation of the importance of land administration, experience shows there to be a systematic underestimation of the complexity in the establishment and maintenance of these systems. Grass roots pilots and bottom-up local initiatives face limitations when it comes to the integration to the land administration system in place. Donor projects aimed at building country-wide systems, without plans for sustainable long-term maintenance will, and do, fail. Sustainable land administration is shown to be premised on the building, training, and maintenance of a land administration system with its capacity and related institutions. These institutions carry the longer term, 30-40 year, view that is needed to effectively complete, update, upgrade, and protect the integrity of a national system. In more recent times, this has come to include recognition of the importance of ICT capacity and its related professionals, processes, and products.

The challenge is how to create a sustained effort to establish and maintain this ICT infrastructure and capacity long term. In developed contexts, ICT, for a long period, already is recognised as a full professional discipline, alongside from surveyors and conveyors. It is often represented at the highest management level in roles such as CTO and CIO. A modern land administration organisation is expected to be able to take the lead in ICT developments. Hence, a national strategy for the coordinated introduction of ICT infrastructures is relevant, with interoperability being a centrepiece. Meanwhile, in developing contexts, whilst there is (mostly) representation in UN organisations – there is much less representation in professional organisations such as the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG), or in standardisation organisations like the ISO. Whilst this is both due to the costs involved and due to a lack of technical capacity. Developing contexts, including many countries in Africa, would benefit from engagement in these initiatives and in return the organisations would also benefit.

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This paper presents experiences and lessons learnt of ICT system developments in support of sustainable land administration and ICT development in Africa, taking recent examples from Rwanda, Benin and Mozambique. Findings from the paper show that in some developing contexts the importance of an integration of land administration and ICT functions, amongst other aspects that build towards sustainable land governance, at the longer term peril are neglected.

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