

THE EVOLUTION OF MODERN CADASTRES

Prof. Ian WILLIAMSON, Australia

ABSTRACT

Today's modern cadastres have evolved from the European cadastres of the 18th and 19th Centuries, with the French Napoleonic Cadastre and the 'Maria Theresia Cadastre' introduced by the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy having the major influence. This influence spread to much of the non-English speaking world. However it was not until the last 20 years or so that the English speaking world (particularly in Canada, then the USA and then Australia) also "discovered" cadastres and started systematically applying cadastral principles to their land administration systems. The result is that today virtually every country world wide is aware of the importance of cadastres to some degree.

The role of cadastres in documenting property rights and in supporting the operation of land markets has been increasingly utilised by The World Bank and other international finance and aid organisations during this period. The importance of cadastres in support of land markets gained momentum over the last two decades:

- with the collapse of Communism economies and the rush to establish market economies;
- the fall of apartheid in Southern Africa and elsewhere; and
- the de-colonisation of many countries with their subsequent desire to establish land administration systems which served all society rather than an expatriate or local elite.

The considerable attention that land administration, and particularly the core cadastres, have received in recent times has resulted in a great deal of activity world-wide to better understand cadastral systems. There have been conferences, workshops, books, journal articles, academic courses and declarations on all aspects of cadastres, with the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG) playing a key role. All this activity has improved our understanding of the cadastral concept and the role of cadastres in society. This paper provides an insight into the evolution of cadastral thinking over the last 20 years or so. It will highlight initiatives such as the FIG Statement on the Cadastre in 1995, the UN-FIG Bogor Declaration on Cadastral Reform in 1996, the FIG Cadastre 2014 in 1998 and the UN-FIG Bathurst Declaration on Land Administration for Sustainable Development in 1999.

CONTACT

Prof. Ian Williamson
Director, United Nations Liaison, International Federation of Surveyors
Professor of Surveying and Land Information
The University of Melbourne
Department of Geomatics
Parkville
Victoria 3052
AUSTRALIA
Tel. + 61 3 9344 4431
Fax + 61 3 9347 4128
Email: ianpw@unimelb.edu.au