Achieving Success and Sustainability Through Significance: a Cross-Case Analysis of Cadastral Systems Development in Europe and Africa

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SUMMARY

A framework for guiding cadastral systems development towards success is used to assess the process of development in four different cases: Germany, the Netherlands, Mozambique, and South Africa. It is cautioned that development initiatives that do not take land rights-holders' context-specific needs into consideration may lack significance for them. This leads to a lack of engagement with the new development, compromising its sustainability and contributing to its overall failure. The developed framework serves to avoid this problem by highlighting certain elements that should be addressed to improve the significance of the process and outcomes, leading to sustainability and hence enduring success.

In our research, cadastral systems development is understood to transcend conventional descriptions of the cadastre to incorporate customary land administration systems that lack precision and are not time-constrained. It is shown that the concept of a cadastral system linking people, land and rights can apply equally in registered and off-register scenarios.

Rich, qualitative data is gathered via one-on-one interviews and through secondary, published sources. Using a progressive case study approach, the data is assessed against the conceptual framework regarding how well each element is addressed in the particular cases. New elements are allowed to emerge from the data, which highlights the sensitivity of the approach to context-specific nuances in each case.

Ten recommendations are presented for cadastral systems development particularly in (but not limited to) customary land rights contexts. The first relates to alignment between the theory underlying development and the understanding of the land rights-holders. The second is for greater awareness of climate change and disaster management to feature in cadastral systems development.

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The third is for cadastral agencies to operate (semi)independently of the state to safeguard land issues against corruptive political influences. The fourth is for land reform to be managed by inter-departmental organisations within government (if the third recommendation is not heeded), rather than for different departments to be handling different components. The fifth is for the cadastre (land parcel boundaries and extents) and land record (land registries and other institutions to record land rights and holders) to be integrated under one organisation, or to be very well inter-linked, to avoid duplication of information. The sixth is for capacity enhancement to be built into development plans. The seventh is for the safety of participants, non-participants, land rights-holders, affected communities, and all other stakeholders to be given a prominent position in development planning. The eighth is that all cadastral systems development processes must include comprehensive, transparent, well-defined reviews throughout the process. The ninth is for a single, clear policy to guide land reform. The final recommendation is to use the conceptual framework to guide cadastral systems development to promote success and sustainability by improving significance.