

How Much Does ‘Privatization of Land’ Mean for Developing a Cadastral System?

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Key words: Cadastre; Land management; privatization, Ethiopia

SUMMARY

In some countries such as Ethiopia and Vietnam land is still under public ownership. On the other hand, many countries have been making actual efforts and progress in providing a cadastral system regardless of the manner of land ownership. Even at a time when the system of registration of land is being carried out, it is common to face certain doubts on the part of certain sections of society. For example, with respect to the Ethiopian cadastral system which is arguably the largest land administration program carried out since towards the beginning of this century in Africa, and possibly the world (see Deininger et al 2011), I have encountered common opinions and questions such as “why do we talk about cadastre in Ethiopia where the land is owned by the government?” While the people who ask this question tend to be the favourites of private ownership of land, those who are against it also ask: “Why do we provide for a cadastral system?” “Does not this tantamount to allowing private ownership of land against the constitution?” From these contrasting concerns, I came to realise that there is something which is fundamentally misleading people. I think these dilemmas are common to many countries in a related or similar situation in land administration. I am also strongly convinced that these kinds of dilemmas would frequently trap with the efforts at establishing a sound cadastral system in a specific country, or its further development when it is already set up. With the view to share my views on these questions here, I tried to examine the questions from the perspective of what I call ‘the use perspective argument’ and ‘the classification perspective argument.’ Both arguments showed that a cadastral system does not considerably depend on the regime of ownership. I conclude that the system can well be established under different circumstances including under systems of public ownership of land.