

Ktimatologio



The term cadastre – in a variety of spellings – is the name used in Western countries for a register of land rights. The term stems from *katastikhon*, which is ancient Greek meaning ‘down the line’, i.e. a list or register. In modern Greek, though, the word ‘cadastre’ is not current. Instead *Ktimatologio* is used, a compound noun in which *Ktimato* means landowner. Since its foundation in 1996 Ktimatologio, the Greek cadastre, has completed only 8,400km² and settled a meagre 7 million rights, while the total area of Greece is 132,000km² on which over 37 million rights are vested. Despite receiving over USD100 million in EU support in the early 1990s, progress has been lean, as Dimitris Kaloudiotis, who has been president of the National Cadastre and Survey (NCMA) since May 2013, admits. The lack of an apt cadastre is a hurdle to growth and development as it

encumbers collection of property taxes, deters foreign investors, hampers privatisation of state assets, and leaks huge investment sums to lawyers to settle disputes. In rural areas, where things have not changed much through the ages, disputes arise because deeds may define boundaries using descriptions such as ‘from the tree to the stream’ or ‘where you can hear a donkey on the path’ or ‘three olive trees near the well.’ *The New York Times* (May 26, 2013) attributes the terrible state of Ktimatologio to a complex of flaws. Most records are still written in pen and logged in by last names. There are no lot numbers and there is no clarity on boundaries, zoning or how many people have rights to the same lot. The article also quotes NCMA’s president Kaloudiotis: “If you calculated the total deeds that are registered, the country would be twice as big as it is.” Another expert rhymes, “There has been a lot of money spent, and no one knows where it went.” In a Greek newspaper, NCMA’s president attributes the delays to past legacy. Greece is a patchwork of islands and landscapes where the peculiar land registry systems and institutions of the past persist. Together with localism and clientelism, this resulted in mixed and dispersed systems which were not abandoned following the launch of Ktimatologio in 1996. Added to this, consortia specialising in cadastral survey were not formed, allowing inexperienced contractors to respond to tenders. They devoted considerable effort to competition and quarrels, leading to over 300 lawsuits “so that the award of survey projects tendered even back in 2008 is still pending”. In response to pressure from the EU, IMF and ECB to speed up progress, a law has been passed aimed at eliminating old conflicts and preventing new ones. Tendering will take no longer than 12 months, the officers now have the necessary skills and Ktimatologio has reached technical, administrative and planning maturity, according to NCMA’s president. By 2020 the entire country should be surveyed and all rights registered. Let’s cross our fingers.