

GIM INTERVIEWS PROF. DANG HUNG VO, PRESIDENT, VIETNAM ASSOCIATION OF GEODESY, CARTOGRAPHY AND REMOTE SENSING

Land Administration in Vietnam

The third Land Law of Vietnam, enacted in 2003, created transparency in land use and management and facilitated the development of a property market. The price of land is now on the rise in tandem with economic growth. The Vietnamese government is investing 5% to 10% of land revenue in building a Land Administration System (LAS). This month's interviewee has been involved from the outset in building the LAS, from 2002 to 2007 as Vice-Minister at the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment.

What do you see as the essential benefits for Vietnam of a well-functioning Land Administration System?

Vietnam's new LAS, developed following enactment of the second Land Law in 1993, offers many benefits. Firstly, a Land Tenure Certificate (LTC) is issued to current land users, protecting their rights, interests and obligations guaranteed by the state. Secondly, LAS offers the state a management tool, for developing land-use strategies/planning that ensure sustainable development during the current fast-moving industrialisation and modernisation process. Thirdly, matching LAS to market mechanisms makes land administration effectively self-propelling. A good LAS also provides a basis for settling land disputes and complaints, and uncovering and preventing violation of land by users and land officers. However, as the LAS is not yet complete, the above benefits may not yet be equally distributed across the country; they depend on the state of progress of each locality.

How is the process of land administration organised in Vietnam?

Before the decision on renovation in 1986, a land-use system operated in Vietnam in accordance with the state-commanded subsidy economy mechanism. There was thus no land administration in the true sense of the word, apart from land inventory serving tax calculation on agricultural land. The first Land Law, developed and adopted by the National Assembly in 1988, facilitated state allocation of agricultural land from agricultural co-operatives to households, for their permanent use. This transformation from collective to individual rights encouraged agricultural production, and households using land received LTCs. However, the transformation did not lead to specific land administration. Local authorities issued only temporary LTCs and land users did not understand the significance of the LTCs given them. In 1993 the National Assembly adopted the second Land Law, which clearly defined points of the LAS. Firstly, households using land had five rights: land exchange, transfer, lease, inheritance, and mortgage. Secondly, the state conceded the existence of price attached to land, and defined this. Thirdly, LAS was established based on the Land Titling System. The second Land Law was amended and supplemented in 1998 and 2001 to keep in pace with socio-economic development, including progress of a land market. The development of a property market under industrialisation required adaptation to changing labour and investment structures. So that the real effects of economic evolution resulted in the third Land Law, adopted by the National Assembly in 2003. This supports development of detailed and complete LAS, capable of resolving historically complicated land issues, creating publicity and transparency in land use and management, and facilitating the development of a property market.

Can you describe your own involvement in putting land administration on the map in Vietnam?

The core of the new LAS consists of digital cadastral maps fully describing every land parcel, as well as 'open bordered' land areas such as roads, drainage facilities and channels. Attribute data includes legal status, use, price and tax. Cadastral maps may also be integrated with other information, such as water supply, sewage, electricity and phone, to become multipurpose maps facilitating general local administration and providing information needed by communities. I have introduced this approach from the inception of LAS in Vietnam, and it is now accepted. According to a National Assembly resolution of early 2008, Vietnam will complete the issue of LTC by 2010, and the multipurpose LAS by 2015.

For a long time, North and South Vietnam were ruled by different regimes. To what extent do relics of these still remain visible in the process and progress of land administration?

Up until 1954, the LAS for the whole of Vietnam was developed using the French system. From 1954 to 1975 LAS and land policies in the

North and South differed greatly. From 1975 the country was unified, and from 1975 to 1986 land administration and policies were ruled by a unified system based on the state subsidy mechanism. The existing system of land administration has been developed since 1993 and it recognises historic relations of land use; LTCs are issued to current land users. The former discrepancies in land policy and land administration between North and South have almost no impact on current land administration.

Vietnam is a rapidly emerging country; GDP is now 805US\$/year/head and poverty was reduced from 58% in 1993 to 29% in 2002. But the introduction of good land administration is financially demanding. Do you receive or require extra financial support?

Land price is rapidly increasing as the economy grows. The state now makes annual revenue of about US\$1.5 billion from land (this figure was only US\$200 million pre-2000), and uses 5% to 10% of this for building LAS, so that the development of the new LAS faces no financial obstacles. Revenue generation is important because it ensures conformity to standards established by industrialised countries. Vietnam also needs assistance from developed countries and international organisations, especially in order to create LAS that can facilitate sustainable development. From 1992 to 1995 the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Western Australia Government supported a feasibility study on development of a modern LAS. The Swedish government then stepped in to help implement several projects on land-administration reform. To date, the World Bank has offered Official Development Assistance (ODA) amounting to US\$75 million for implementation of the Vietnam Land Administration Project, to be carried out in nine provinces, and then countrywide.

How do you see the role of international organisations such as FIG and ISPRS in establishing Land Administration Systems in what are called developing countries?

Land is a special natural resource; it is where human beings live, it provides material, fuels and food for people, and it also suffers from environmental destruction caused by people and nature. Good land administration will enable proper land use, thus providing people with sufficient food and efficiently preventing environmental disaster. How to access the best LAS is always a big question. FIG and ISPRS, as well as many other international organisations, can help developing countries to answer this by identifying a roadmap towards developing a system most appropriate to the historical and cultural conditions pertaining in each country, whilst meeting the demands of global sustainable development.

Does Vietnam have adequate human resources to establish and maintain a well-functioning Land Administration System? In other words, is there a need for capacity building?

An advanced LAS can only function well when the data is properly updated and the system well maintained, and these requirements depend on the management skills of staff, from central to local level, as well as public awareness. Up to now LAS management capacities have been unsatisfactory and land user awareness lacking. So that as we build the LAS we also need capacity building for land officers and raising public awareness regarding land administration.

How might western countries support developing countries in their need for geo-information?

It is impossible to construct advanced LAS without geo-information technology. Developed western countries possess a high level of information technology, well applied in geo-information technology and land information, and they stay attuned based on the latest advancements in IT. Developing countries need the support of their developed counterparts to find the best technological solutions, adjusted to the particularities of each country whilst staying in line with international trends in IT. Support is also required in implementing solutions, for training technical staff, bringing in theoretical know-how and sharing experience.

The USA remains today the global economic superpower. From the viewpoint of a very rapidly emerging part of Asia, how will the economic landscape look a decade from now?

Some Asian countries have recently demonstrated great achievements in economic development and are forming a group of newly industrialised countries. There are many other economically vigorous countries, such as Russia, China, India and Brazil, and some regional associations of developed and emerging countries; the European Union (EU) is a typical example. The US economy may still be at the top, but Vietnam is now taking big steps forward in economic development. This current picture may evolve over the coming ten years as a result of the creation of strong regional economies such as EU, ASEAN, and the African Union (AU). The world economic map will change concomitantly to form some strong economic centres, be this one country with a powerful economy or a group of countries. The current evolution of the world economy will make the world increasingly 'flat' over the coming decade. The same decade will see Vietnam joining the industrialised world. Land policies will play an important role in mobilising inner forces for development.

Prof. DrSc. Dang Hung Vo, senior advisor, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, 83 Nguyen Chi Thanh Str., Dong Da, Hanoi, e-mail: vo.monre@gmail.com