

The Big Swing

The role of the surveyor is changing. Seen in a global perspective, there is a big swing that could be labelled 'From Measurement to Management'. This of course does not imply that measurement is no longer a discipline relevant to surveying. The change is mainly in response to technological development. Collection of data is now easier, while data assessment, interpretation and management still require highly skilled professionals. The role is undergoing change towards managing measurement.

But the change from measurement to management also means that surveyors, as experts in managing land and properties, will increasingly contribute to building sustainable societies. Surveyors play a key role in supporting an efficient land market and effective land-use management, functions that underpin development and innovation for social justice, economic growth and environmental sustainability. This big swing implies a change from land surveyor to land professional.

International development over the last ten to fifteen years in the area of cadastre has been remarkable, leading to a more holistic understanding of land administration in support of sustainable development. Recently this has developed further into land governance in support of the global agenda, such as meeting the Millennium Development Goals. This is enabled through, for example, partnership between the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG) and UN agencies such as FAO, UN-HABITAT, and especially the World Bank. Such partnership is a driving engine and should also enable better understanding of the everyday work of the surveying profession in contributing to society.

Land governance is about the policies, processes and institutions by which land, property and natural resources are managed. This includes decisions on access to land, land rights, land use, and land development. Land governance, then, plays a key role in responding to the new challenges in terms of climate change, natural disaster and rapid urban growth. Surveyors have a key role to play in the global agenda: no development will take place without a spatial dimension, and none will happen without the footprint of the surveyor.

So the big swing implies the role of the surveyor changing; while remaining key providers and managers of spatial data, they will increasingly become custodians of the people-to-land relationship in support of sustainability and facing global challenges.