

The Crucial Importance of Good Land Administration



The issue of land administration is topical for several reasons, writes Ian Dowman in the November/December 2018 edition of *'Geomatics World'*. The publication regularly covers the latest work on land registration and boundary disputes. It is particularly important to consider practical implementation, of course, since land administration practice in the UK is very different than in other parts of the world.

This issue of *Geomatics World* focuses on land administration. This is topical for several reasons. In the last issue of GW, James Kavanagh covered work by the Law Commission and the RICS on land registration and boundary disputes, and both the last issue and this one have reference to this, including an article by Andrew Trigg from HM Land Registry on the practical implementation of land administration in the UK.

Land administration practice in the UK is very different than in other parts of the world. With this in mind, Clarissa Augustinus previews her talk to be given at the RICS on 29 November and highlights the many problems which can arise, and how these are being tackled. She also reminds us that good land administration is critical for the sustainability of the planet and that land has a central role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Our cover image showing the expansion of Colombo in Sri Lanka over a 22-year period dramatically illustrates how urban expansion can cause problems. Papers on land administration are also reviewed by Richard Groom in his look at presentations at the FIG Congress.

Blockchain crops up in several of our articles and is very relevant to land administration but is perhaps not understood by most people. We have tried to give an understandable explanation of what it means and how it works.

Some aspect of our environment is rarely out of the news these days. The October/November issue of the RICS Land Journal features articles on population pressure in Africa's cities and on water running out in South Africa; Gordon Johnston mentions the problems of plastic waste and we also note an upcoming project from the Geovation Hub to encourage refilling of plastic bottles. All these are issues for which solutions can be helped with the use of geospatial data.

The Geospatial Commission will be looking for new ways in which geospatial data can be used to help the environment and to make public services and companies work more efficiently and boost the economy of the UK. Look out for developments when the Geospatial Commissioners are appointed at the end of the year.

We have a report on the UK National Earth Observation Conference (UKNEOC) during which many papers referred to artificial intelligence (AI) or one of its branches such as machine learning or deep learning. The Geospatial Commission will have a particular interest in how AI can be applied to geospatial data. The next issue of GW will feature AI and we will be very interested if readers have examples of how it can leverage more uses of the data.

Another topic covered at the UKNEOC was the skills shortage in geomatics. There were many keen researchers presenting their work, many probably hoping to stay in academia, but industry needs people who have the technical and IT skills, and who also understand the context and importance of geospatial data. We need conversion courses to encourage computer scientists and engineers to work with geospatial data. Is money the barrier?

Readers will see that the past is well covered in this issue with particular mentions for DOS (The Directorate of Overseas Surveys). Surveyors working during the middle decades of the twentieth century needed to be multi-talented in order to be able to make maps, manage survey parties and deal with local problems in remote parts of the globe. The geospatial surveyors of our time could usefully follow that example by using their skills to improve the condition of people in developing countries and implement good practice for land administration and to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Although this issue of GW should pop through your letterboxes well before Christmas, we take this opportunity to wish you an enjoyable holiday season.

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