

# The Future of Property Registration

Prediction is a risky business, especially when it concerns the future. Nevertheless, one is free to give it a try once in a while. What will be the tasks of the cadastral surveyor thirty years hence? What are the underlying societal and technological dynamics? To keep it simple, let's limit ourselves to three major ongoing demographic developments: urbanisation, advantage of scale in agriculture, and globalisation.

The concept of the parcel emerged when farming was the main way of life for the majority of people on this planet. Many urban conglomerates, such as Istanbul, Turkey, Tehran, Iran, and Lagos, Nigeria, have grown massively over the last three decades; to date more people live in cities than in rural areas. In a megalopolis one does not see 'parcels' but 'objects', including high-rise buildings, dwellings, petrol stations, railways and roads. Each (part of an) object is a nucleus to which a wide variety of data can be assigned, not only to secure tenure, but also to enable managers and planners to collect tax, guarantee safety and sufficient drinking water, prevent people from starving and respond to emergencies. 3D property boundaries should be measured and registered at cm-level. The attributes assigned to the object should be detailed and include ownership, use and value, number of storeys and so on.

While cities expand at an unprecedented rate, depopulation of rural areas continues. Goods and data move from one part of the world to the other, money even in a split second. Air transport enables sugar-snap peas grown in Kenya to be offered for sale all over the world. To stay competitive, farmers have to produce food on a large scale using heavy machinery. It is widely believed that eradication of poverty can be achieved by formally registering land belonging to small farmers, enabling them to invest through a mortgage. This assumption may however be challenged, since small farmers have a low production capacity which will continue to fall as globalisation progresses. Within one or two generations, adjacent farmlands now owned by hundreds of small farmers will probably be swept together into one big property parcel. The children will move to the cities and the small farmer become extinct. So it doesn't make a lot of sense to invest great effort in improving security of tenure in areas which will always remain rural. In stark contrast is the situation at urban fringes, where the city meets the countryside. Here farmers face the threat of ejection from their land with little or no compensation, and it is of the utmost importance that tenure security is established here without delay.

So much for my humble projections. I finish by drawing your attention to the [article by Bennett and co-authors](#), which constitutes an inspiring thrust behind the continuing dialogue on the future of cadastres. I invite you to contribute.

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<https://www.gim-international.com/content/article/the-future-of-property-registration>

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