

COMMISSION 7 AND THE BATHURST DECLARATION – THE JOINT INITIATIVE WITH FAO ON THE MULTI-LINGUAL THESAURUS

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ABSTRACT

One of the most significant developments in the recent history of the FIG has been its promotion of and support for the work of the United Nations in the global surveying community. The Bathurst Declaration and subsequent Round Table discussions between FIG and five United Nations' and various bilateral agencies in Melbourne in October 1999 are the most recent high-level evidence of this intention.

The Declaration and Round Table have identified in particular a set of areas which the Commissions, including Commission 7, are well placed to provide input into. Commission 7's workplan, agreed in 1998 in Brighton, already picks up on several of these key areas.

This paper reviews the Commission's contribution to date in the fields of its three main Working Groups into the cadastre (chaired by Jurg Kaufmann of Switzerland), man-land relations (Paul van der Molen, the Netherlands), and land markets (Andras Ossko, Hungary). The paper also points to new initiatives within the Commission, and in particular the co-operation with the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organisation in preparing the English version of the Multi-lingual Dictionary on Land related issues.

COMMISSION 7'S WORK

Commission 7 is focussing its efforts in three main areas for the period 1998-2002.

These are as follows:

- 1. Working Group 7.1**, Reforming the Cadastre (chaired by Jurg Kaufmann – Switzerland; deputy Tommy Osterberg – Sweden; secretary – Daniel Steudler - Switzerland)
Task Force 7.1.1, Definition of Commission 7 ISO Standards (Winfried Hawerk)
- 2. Working Group 7.2**, Land Ownership in the 21st Century: Access to Land (chaired by Paul van der Molen)
Task Force 7.2.1, Women's Access to Land (Agneta Ericsson - Sweden, Sue Nicholls – Canada)

3. Working Group 7.3, Land Markets (chaired by Andras Ossko – Hungary; secretary Peter Dent – UK)

The particular feature of the Annual Meeting that has become the Commission's trademark, the one day international symposium, focussed in 1999 at the Bay of Islands on the work of Agneta Ericsson's Task Force on Women's Access to Land. Agneta. Our Swedish delegate, with Sue Nichols from Canada in particular generated a great deal of light on the subject. The material was considered of such quality by the New Zealand Institute that it has been formally published in the Institute's *Survey Quarterly*, a notable first for those involved and a real achievement. The collected and edited papers are being published with support for the Dutch Kadastre through the Commission's vice chair, Paul van der Molen.

By the time this paper is read, the second annual meeting will have taken place in Hamburg, Germany. This one day international symposium is on the very topical subject of Land Markets and is organised and chaired by Andras Ossko from Hungary.

A strong contingent of Commission 7 delegates took an active part in the Bathurst Workshop on "Land Tenure and Cadastral Infrastructures for Sustainable Development". The Workshop included representatives from 25 different countries and five United Nations related agencies: the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Habitat (Centre for Human Settlements), Division for Sustainable Development, Food and Agriculture Organisation, Economic Commission for Africa, and World Bank. The Bathurst Workshop was followed by an International Conference in Melbourne and Round Table discussions on future co-operation between FIG's Commissions and the UN and other agencies represented. The outcome of the Workshop, The Bathurst Declaration, has been widely reported internationally, and is the subject of a separate paper by Professor Williamson during the Prague Working Week.

The directions of the Declaration have already had a great deal of influence on the work of Commission 7 and will help to focus our thinking for some years to come.

INITIATIVES WITH UNFAO – THE MULTILINGUAL THESAURUS

The first major initiative between the Commission and a UN agency since the Bathurst Declaration and the Round Table discussions on future co-operation is the preparation of the English language version of a multilingual thesaurus on land related terms. The history of this initiative originally dates from a bulletin on terminology that was prepared in 1979 for the Global Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development.¹ The bulletin consisted of an alphabetical list of seven hundred terms followed by their translations into each of the five principal FAO languages.

An original French publication recently prepared for FAO forms the basis for the FAO/FIG English and forthcoming Spanish versions. The English thesaurus will therefore be the second version to be published. It preserves the original French version's structure and includes a significant number of equivalent terms that are used in common. It is envisaged when the third version, in Spanish, is completed, that the

¹ Terminology Bulletin No 35, 1979, Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, Department of General Affairs and Information, FAO, Rome

integration of the three versions will provide a very useful resource. The text is not a conventional thesaurus, with synonyms and antonyms, but it will allow cross-referencing of similar concepts and ideas to help readers to understand better the similarities and the differences between the approaches in these three important linguistic and legal traditions.

The definitions identified also cross-refer to other UN organisation prepared terminologies, and to FIG publications in this field, particularly the Multi-Lingual Dictionary and to various others that have provided definitions.

The thesaurus is designed to help people from a wide range of backgrounds understand land-related terminology and to provide an appropriate tool for as wide a range of the interested public as possible. It goes beyond the simple definitions of the original bulletin. Where appropriate, each entry includes also a presentation of key background information to ensure that the reader has as clear an understanding as possible. In some cases specific terms have different meanings according to circumstances. These are pointed out as appropriate. Illustrative examples are provided where it helps to clarify the sense and use of the term.

In a rapidly developing field of activity, new trends of thought supplement and change existing concepts and ideas that have been central to land issues. The thesaurus therefore includes relevant concepts and ideas, both long established and recent, and provides the reader with recommended references and bibliographies to enable quick access to the most relevant published works.

The work aims to achieve two main objectives.

Firstly, it aims to contribute to greater rigour in the analysis and the application of land related issues by the more disciplined use of key concepts and notions. Secondly, it seeks to help standardise the use of land related terms in the English speaking regions (and in the other linguistic regions covered by the multilingual thesaurus).

The thesaurus also clarifies multiple meanings of terms and expressions and provides context for their different uses, thus helping to inform and preserve cultural diversity.

The thesaurus is not an exhaustive document. Land related matters touch on many areas of study including particularly law, geography, agronomy, sociology, economics and marketing. These linkages are difficult to specify because boundaries between these areas are vague. The geographical area of reference of the thesaurus is global since the examples provided covers all of the continents. The English version, however, has a preference for countries with an English language and English Common Law background.

The thesaurus should not be considered a completed work. These initial preparations are therefore conceived as the start of an ongoing process, and this will be particularly encouraged by designing the text for use on the world wide web, complete with links into relevant sites that illustrate particular terms. An FAO website will be a dedicated gateway to the thesaurus and will include a mailbox facility that will allow everyone to forward their own comments, criticisms and suggestions for consideration for inclusion.

The thesaurus will also be published both in traditional format and CD-Rom.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE THESAURUS

The preparation of the English version of the thesaurus started with the selection of the key terms and expressions that form the core of the work. This process initially involved the analysis and review of appropriate terms from the original French version. The resulting list was then supplemented by terms and expressions appropriate to those countries with a common background in English Common Law. As with the French version, the preparation has involved wide consultation with the different services of FAO concerned with land related problems. It has also involved a broad external consultation involving a large number of specialists with collective experience from all parts of the world.

The structure of the English version of the thesaurus follows that of the French by dividing the entries into chapters. Each chapter, except the first, which is general and looks at the key players, the resources and the legal rights in land, groups together the ideas and concepts that belong to a particular “field” of land issues. Chapter II deals with issues of space, chapter III with policies, procedures and tools, chapter IV with information systems, chapter V with taxation and economics aspects, chapter VI with non-state regulation, and chapter VII with aspects of land that apply specifically to agricultural, pastoral and forestry activities.

This is designed to allow easy access to the definitions and explanations of the terms and expressions, some of which the reader may not know in advance, or may be unfamiliar with. The operational advantage of this classificatory system is accompanied by a degree of arbitrariness in the location of terms in the paper based edition of this thesaurus, although cross-referencing between “fields” is used to help reduce this problem. The digital and internet-based versions of the thesaurus are designed around a database that minimises this problem.

The definitions of the terms and expressions have been referenced where appropriate to the literature with the assistance of experts in the different areas. The literature referred to ranges from the very general, including general and specialist dictionaries, reference works and manuals, to the specific, including case studies and theses. This English version of the thesaurus provides a flavour of the breadth of experience in those countries that have a background of English language and English Common Law traditions, including those in Europe, in the Americas, in Africa, in Asia and in Australasia. It makes no claims, however, to providing a systematic analysis covering all of these areas. It should, of course, be emphasised that the structure and interactions of relevant legal frames, let alone the practicalities of their implementation, are often very distinct from one jurisdiction to another. Care should therefore be taken when using the thesaurus to check on specific local usage and custom. Ultimately the versions of the thesaurus written in various languages will touch on all of the regions of the globe.

Critical review of drafts by appropriate specialists has allowed the improvement of the work throughout the process of preparation. It is hoped that subsequent versions of the thesaurus will enable its acknowledged initial limitations to be progressively overcome.

INITIATIVES WITH UNFAO – WOMEN AND WEALTH

The second major area of co-operation between Commission 7 and FAO is in making an assessment of women's access to wealth. This arose from a statement in the original Bathurst Declaration that "There is also a need to provide women with equal access rights to land recognising women account for half the world's total population but they own only 1% of the world's wealth."

This frequently quoted statement is understood to date from the 1980's but, so far as is known, has never been the subject of an objective assessment. Although it is acknowledged as prima facie incorrect by most authorities, the lack of any authoritative alternative has enabled this emotive and inaccurate assessment, without proper foundation, to be widely quoted and to help formulate attitudes and policies.

Following discussions with FAO about the desirability of correcting this situation, Commission 7, through Professor Ian Williamson and a researcher at the University of Melbourne, have started work on generating a true picture of the situation.

CONCLUSION

Commission 7's commitment to supporting the development of FIG's relationships with UN organisations and their work, is broadly evidenced by its current workplan and priorities. These all focus on very topical areas from an international perspective.

The two projects currently under way, where specific support is being provided, send the message that FIG and the Commissions have the capacity to mobilise resources to implement successfully projects of mutual interest.

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