

THE POTENTIAL USE OF CELLULAR PHONE TECHNOLOGY IN MAINTAINING AN UP-TO-DATE REGISTER OF LAND TRANSACTIONS FOR THE URBAN POOR

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SUMMARY

This article investigates the concept of using cell-phone technology for obtaining information about unofficial (off-register) transfers in land as are commonly undertaken by the urban poor in South Africa. Since the introduction of social housing programmes in South Africa after the democratic elections in 1994, mass land distribution and housing projects have been undertaken. Formal transfer of these properties has been discouraged by policy (such as a moratorium on transfers for a period of years), and the inaccessibility of land professionals and formal processes to the poor. From the disuse of formal transfer mechanisms one can conclude that these fail, at least in part, to meet the needs of this segment of society. Cell- (mobile) phone technology penetrates urban poverty more than other interactive technologies such as the internet, largely due to the lack of access to computers and the 'digital divide'. The aim of this article is exploratory. It investigates the potential use of cell-phone technology as a means to inform authorities that a transfer of property has taken place informally or semi-formally. Such information could pave the way for a process of formal registration and hence aid the upkeep of the deeds registration system. Research into the potential use of the cell-phone as an information and communication technology (ICT) tool of land administration, particularly in the developing world, is undertaken. It is envisaged that a more detailed investigation will follow, which will include an analysis of organisational and legislative capacity. Further study in which the use of cell-phone technology in land administration is tested, taking into consideration structural/organisational factors as well as socio-economic and cultural factors and motivating factors for use, may be required.

KEYWORDS

Land registration, land tenure, cadastral systems, e-registration, m-registration, e-governance.

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