

ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVES ON PARCEL ELASTICITY IN POLAND

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A commonplace conundrum found in Poland, as well as other countries, lies in discrepancies between formal records of land ownership and informal uses of land that point to local challenges administrative institutions and civil society. In Poland, a well-known unique case in central and eastern Europe regarding collectivization, researchers reported discrepancies as high as 40% with considerable variation between regions. This paper examines how differing perceptions of accuracy offer an indicator of these challenges, especially between formal administrative records of the land cadastre and informal civil society land tenure. Comparing accuracy perceptions in three counties (*powiaty*) in different regions in Poland aids distinguishing the discrepancies. The paper proceeds by broadening Verdery's concept of land elasticity beyond her consideration of post-socialist parcel restitution to consider these discrepancies as indicative of larger issues. Specifically, this research suggests that differing political society and civil society perceptions of accuracy indicate both the degree of elasticity and the local significance of discrepancies. The research draws on studies of three counties (*powiaty*) in different regions in Poland. The assessment of the empirical evidence also points to elasticity's significance for other interactions involving formal state institutions and informal civil society arrangements. Local institutions and participants develop different strategies that seek to optimise respective outcomes in these interactions, surreptitiously choosing between fulfilling mandates and optimizing socio-economic situations. Therein lies interesting issues to consider related to larger issues surrounding land ownership and use rights in transition countries.

Key words: Poland, cadastre, tenure, accuracy, elasticity, land, rural.

INTRODUCTION

The re-institution of private property rights has been central in transformations since 1989 from communist and socialist regimes (Burawoy & Verdery, 1999). However a noticeable lag between policy, implementation, and affect has been especially pronounced. Indeed, the processes of transformation in central and eastern Europe reveal discrepancies between formally institutionalised practices of organising

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