



Message from the Land Portal Coordinator

These past three months, the Land Portal has focused on developing a multiplicity of services, while moving forward in our efforts to create a Linked Open Data ecosystem on land.

We just returned from a participation in a vibrant World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty, where we had the opportunity to meet with the Legend partnership and many other partners and potential partners, all of whom expressed enthusiasm for the role the Land Portal is currently playing, as well as its potential to become a catalyst for action on achieving land rights for the most vulnerable.

This last week, we piloted an exciting new service we are providing to land-related events. We served as a media partner for the World Forum on Access to Land (WFAL), which took place in Valencia, Spain, from March 31 – April 2, bringing together more than 400 land stakeholders from 70 countries. The Land

Portal promoted this conference widely, enhancing its visibility significantly.

Another service we are providing is the facilitation of highly substantive online debates that get to the bottom of serious issues facing the land governance community. Most recently, we helped the GLTN to [gather grassroots experiences using their Gender Evaluation Criteria](#). Other relevant discussions are in the pipeline in the coming months.

Additionally, by publishing news and information on the Land Portal, we are helping the entire land community to make their content more visible and discoverable. We publish blogs from key players and all the latest land publications. We now publish news digests in four languages, which are distributed to over 15,000 targeted stakeholders in English, French, Portuguese and Spanish. Please contact us if you would be interested in posting land-related blogs, news or information, which we will promote through social media and in our news digests.

While continuously updating the global site is essential, the main innovation planned as part of the Land Book is to enable a significant change in the production and use of local content. We aim to stimulate data collection and use at the country level by building the capacity of our local partners to gather and manage information, while at the same time expanding the range of information available on the Land Portal.

We are working towards establishing an information ecosystem based on Linked Open Data. We support our partners, especially those from the global South, to harmonize their taxonomies, data models and metadata values, to make their content more discoverable and machine readable. All these efforts increase interoperability of content. We work with existing land-focused organisations and networks to further develop their capacity to gather and use

data. Similarly, we help other information providers to enhance their services by providing focused information related to land issues. The aim is to contribute to the growth of a LOD ecosystem in which the independent nodes have the resilience to function independently, rather than being tied to a dependent relationship with others.

Last November, we issued a call for expressions of interest to serve as data hubs as part of this localization strategy. We received 20 applications, mostly from Africa, but also Latin America and Asia. In January and February we entered into discussions with 9 potential partners. The Land Portal is now entering into agreements with three organizations to focus our efforts in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). We will be entering into additional agreements in the near future.

Moreover, we are in the process of making good on our commitment to develop more comprehensive country and topic portfolios, including a number of pages on each topic, such as for indigenous peoples and women's land rights, thus responding to both a need from the land community and a wealth of statistics and information available.

This work is not just based upon our own opinions. We care about the interests and needs of our users, and thus we have made a significant effort to engage the entire land community in this endeavor by carrying out two surveys. The first survey focused on the Land Portal Country Profiles and Indicators, with the aim of adjusting country pages and related content according to the needs of the Land Portal users. We [received responses from almost 200 key land governance stakeholders](#), which helped us to focus our efforts in a way that will lead to a durable product that meets their needs. Moreover, we undertook a survey to assess the top level taxonomic terms for all three services of the Land Portal, through discussions with leading experts and researchers in the land

community.

Finally, we also made significant efforts to consolidate and build a solid land taxonomy to make sure that content becomes available in the form of linked open data (LOD). In light of the Linked Open Data work the Land Portal services are based on, it is important for the discoverability of the content to use controlled vocabularies.

All land-related organizations and platforms can reuse the systems we have put in place. We are attempting to respond to the needs of the land governance community, and we will do everything in our power to make the Land Portal become an effective system that benefits everyone.

Laura Meggiolaro



Land Portal Taxonomy a Major Advance Towards Linked Open Data

The Land Portal has just completed a major review and adjustment of its taxonomy that should greatly improve its users' ability to categorize, search for, and find content on the site in multiple languages. By aligning the Portal's Topics list with AGROVOC, a database published by FAO of over 32,000 concepts in 23 languages on land, food, agriculture, environment, and other related topics, the Portal is making it easier to index documents along a standard vocabulary of land terms that is actively contributed to by a global community of experts. The process, which was assisted by a taxonomy expert, involved a careful analysis of land concepts using inputs from the original Land Portal, AGROVOC, and the Multilingual Land Tenure Thesaurus in order to merge them into a comprehensive list of the most important land terms, and organize them into a system with synonyms and hierarchies in the Portal's content management system (Drupal).

The land terms thesaurus in AGROVOC is also the first of its kind for AGROVOC—a list of land concepts, translations, and definitions that pulls concepts from AGROVOC and resides inside of it through a dedicated concept scheme. The Land Portal team is currently working with Open Development Mekong to translate the taxonomy list and add terms to the AGROVOC land vocabulary in the languages of the region.

Overview of the 2016 Land Book data ingestion process

By Marcello Demaria, Land Portal Researcher and Data Analyst

In order to reduce the fragmentation of land related information and to provide a constantly up-to-date service for the global land community, the Land Portal team is working towards enhancing data ingestion procedures, the process for which is two-fold: existing Land Book indicators will be updated with more recent values and new indicators and datasets will be ingested.

Two datasets, including the OECD *Social Institutions and Gender Index* (SIGI) and the FAO *Land and Gender* dataset, were updated extensively, which required the Land Portal to create importers, which are currently being tested. New importers for both new and existing indicators from *FAOSTAT* and the World Bank are working and have already been tested. New indicators from *FAOSTAT* will provide a more accurate picture of land use, with additional information on permanent crops, permanent pasture and meadows and organic agriculture – and water consumption (*Water withdrawal for agriculture as a % of total water withdrawal*). New indicators from the World Bank will contribute to shedding some light on each country's socio-economic environment (*GDP, GDP per-capita, GINI index, access to water sources*). Two indicators – the *Control of Corruption* and the *Rule of Law* from the World Bank *World Governance indicators* (WGI) dataset – have been added to describe important aspects of institutional quality. In total, importers for more than 80 indicators have been updated and tested. If we also consider the set of indicators from the *Land Matrix*, the importer of which is currently at its final stage of the testing phase, importers for nearly 100 indicators have been tested and updated.

The new ingestion will increase notably the total number of indicators hosted on the *Land Book*, bringing it from 100 to around 150 indicators. Just to cite some of the new indicators, the Land Book will soon include the suite of [Agricultural Science and Technology Indicators](#) (ASTI) by IFPRI and CGIAR (the importer of which is already completed); information at the country level about the extension, recognition and legal security of *Indigenous and Community Land* from the [Land Mark Map](#); The [RRI indicators on forest tenure](#) at the country level; Data from the [Land governance programme map](#) of the Global Donor Platform [as well as the country scorecards on land tenure security produced by LGAF](#). Interestingly, many data providers showed a strong interest in sharing data and information with the *Land Portal*. Since not all data providers are able

to provide – and to maintain in the long run – a working API, we developed a new and simplified protocol for data ingestion which allows to overcome the lack of technical capacity and to reduce the time required for the data ingestion, also facilitating the accessibility of data in commonly used formats such as excel or CSV.

The new data ingestion process, which shows the constant commitment of the Land Portal in providing a more accurate and vivid picture of land dynamics at different levels, will be completed in a short time. Yet, also some challenges can be identified. In particular, having new and updated data alone will not improve the visualization tools on the Land Book. Given that the amount of data is about to increase, existing visualization tools must be improved to unlock the full potential of new data, a process that will begin as soon as all importers are completed. Another challenge we are facing is to make data easily downloadable in commonly used formats such as excel or CSV. The above-mentioned simplified protocol for data ingestion will facilitate this task. Additionally, the present data architecture of the Land Book allows for collecting data only at the country level, so that more granulated information (i.e. *at the local and regional level*) is not yet ingestible on the Portal. We are exploring potential solutions to make this possible.



The Land Portal at the World Bank Conference on Land & Poverty

Leon Verstappen, Chair of the Land Portal Foundation, Laura Meggiolaro, Coordinator and Neil Sorensen, Communications and Resource Mobilization Specialist, represented the Land Portal at the World Bank Conference in Washington DC from 13 to 18 of March. Together with Terry Parnell from Open Development Mekong, the Land Portal team hosted a masterclass about the Land Portal localization strategy and how it has been implemented in the Mekong region. Laura Meggiolaro was also invited to present a progress report as part of the UK Department for International Development's (DFID) program [Land: Enhancing Governance for Economic Development \(LEGEND\)](#) partnership meeting. This event proved to be an important networking opportunity for the Land Portal team, resulting in a great number of bilateral meetings with representatives of land concerned organizations, while also demonstrating that the Land Portal is playing an important and relevant function in the land governance community.

New promotional materials were specifically developed for this conference, including

a bi-fold flyer with information about the Land Portal and its strategy and a flyer describing the [Land Portal's work on Linked Open Data and Land Governance](#).

Three Hub Partnerships in Latin America and the Caribbean

The Land Portal is entering into partnerships to establish three hubs in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) to build up capacity and provide support to organizations to better structure and expose their data.

The Instituto Para el Desarrollo Rural de Sudamérica (IPDRS), an independent civil society initiative, working to provide a regional perspective on rural development in South America will be providing land-related information on land for the Land Library and Land Debate sections of the Land Portal, enhancing metadata records and harmonizing vocabularies according to Linked Open Data, providing country narratives for covering Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia and Paraguay, as well as one regional landing page on land issues in South America, and will facilitate an online discussions on issues related to land governance in South America. Habitat for Humanity International - Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Area Office (HFHI-LAC) will work with the Land Portal through their website www.Suelourbano.org on organizing information on best practices for land tools as well as providing focused country information in Brazil, Bolivia, the Dominican Republic and Honduras. Sulá Batsú, a social enterprise based in Costa Rica whose main objective is to strengthen organizations and cooperatives, community networks and social movements in Central America, will provide information on gender and land rights in the region, and will facilitate a discussion on these issues.



“The poor and minorities in Cambodia are **losing land due to corruption** by the powerful, who are undermining the legal system.”

- Doung Samphors *Star Kampuchea Cambodia*



The Land Portal as Media Partner for the World Forum on Access to Land (WFAL)

The Land Portal acted as a media partner for the recent [World Forum on Access to Land](#) (WFAL), which took place in Valencia, Spain, from March 30th to April 2nd. Neil Sorensen and Lisette Meij represented the Land Portal during the conference, and provided a range of media services promoting the conference. The support focused on social media promotion via Twitter and Facebook, but also highlighting the conference on the Land Portal. During the conference, the team followed the conference closely, creating share graphics - pictures of speakers intervening with quotes, along the name and title of the speaker (pictured above), an innovative practice that gained significant visibility for the conference. Moreover, the Land Portal engaged the communications teams from conference partners, including the FAO, IFAD, IFOAM and the ILC, who subsequently contributed to the conference promotion. Additionally, the Land Portal team created short videos in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese from a dozen speakers, immediately [uploading them on YouTube](#) and promoting them widely, while embedding them on the Land Portal.

New Members of the Land Portal Foundation Team



Henrique Pires dos Santos, Senior Researcher

Henrique Pires dos Santos joined the Land Portal as a Senior Researcher in February 2016. He is member of ACTUAR - Association for the Cooperation and Development, a partner in this project, and he will support the Land Portal in its mission particularly focusing in the Portuguese Speaking Countries Community (CPLP), involving CSOs, NGOs and grassroots organizations as well as local communities, the academia, companies and public bodies in the Land Portal. Henrique holds a BSc in crop production, a Lic. (MSc) in agricultural management and extension and an MSc in knowledge and innovation management, and he is developing doctoral research in philosophy of action concerning the sociocybernetics of praxiology. He has extensive experience in project design, coordination, management and evaluation (ST&I), in participatory processes facilitation and in networks and clusters organization and governance, and in open access, open knowledge and open innovation for the development.



Carlos Tejo Alonso, Data Officer

Carlos Tejo Alonso joined the Land Portal as Data Officer in January 2016. He is a Linked Open Data specialist with wide knowledge and expertise in semantic web technologies, computer science, software design and development, human computer interaction, productivity and networking. Previously, he worked for 7 years at the Fundación CTIC as a researcher of the Semantic Technologies Unit in the R&D Department, and has taken part in several national and European R&D projects and initiatives. He holds a Masters of Science in Engineering and Computing Science from the University of Oviedo.



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