

How Does the ‘new Normal’ Impact Land Administration?

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SUMMARY

Global thought leaders have been quick to examine what a ‘new normal’ might mean for national economies and the organisations operating within them. For Sneader and Singhai (2020), cross-cutting themes include operating ‘at distance’, contactless business, resilience, efficacy, increased government intervention, and other structural changes to various sectors. In this paper, we examine what these themes may mean for those organisations operating within the land administration sectors, at various levels – local, national, and global. We consider both the short and medium term, and also consider differences between those country contexts where digital infrastructures were already in place pre-covid19, against those in more developing contexts, where person-to-person dealings, including those with governments, were more the norm. Our approach utilizes case experiences and documentation from various country contexts, from prior to and during 2020. Findings suggest that those country contexts with mature digital infrastructure have readily adapted to new working conditions: whilst operationally, workforces have been decentralised from central office to homes, consumer land information searches and related transactions experienced minimal disruption. This has applied to both public and private sector organisations. The situation is less clear for those contexts where digital infrastructures are less mature: sporadic lockdown and control measures have impacted on land administration certainly, however, potentially not to the degree first envisioned. Looking ahead, despite some short-term slowdown, the impacts of ‘new normal’ appears to offer the opportunity to accelerate land administration initiatives that were already underway pre-pandemic, both in developed and developed contexts, with respect to full digital transformation of land data, processes, transactions, and management activities.

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