

Improvements in Land Governance and Land Administration in Transitional Countries of the Post-Soviet Region: Comparative Analysis

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Key words: land administration, post-Soviet countries, governance

SUMMARY

The purpose of this paper is to provide a reflection of policies, status and trends of governance in land tenure and administration in the countries of the former Soviet Union. Assessments of particular countries are made for their comparison according to progress in the fields of land governance and land administration. The assessments are based upon various open sources, primarily datasets, evaluations and rankings provided by comprehensive and reliable studies of international agencies and foundations.

The study outcomes reflect considerable heterogeneity of the countries of the region according to implemented and/or targeted governance practices. Baltic States show much greater advancement in governance, which is clearly correlated with higher level of their democratic development. Cases of the South Caucasus countries prove that effective land governance practices could be achieved even in conditions of limited socioeconomic development if political will and commitment to reforming exists. At the same time, corruption that stays unsolvable problem in many countries of the region is definitely the most harmful barrier to good governance.

The survey indicates that some countries of the region have shown significant achievements in land administration and are among worldwide leaders according to effectiveness of property registration. Such achievements are result of implementation of easy, cheap and efficient services, application of advanced management approaches and modern IC technologies, and provision of qualified and motivated staff.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The importance of land resources for economic and social development of any country is hard to overestimate. There is no necessity to prove the meaning of equitable land tenure, effective land use, responsible land governance, etc for challenging poverty, hardship, hunger, inequality and many other problems, eradication of which is recognized as crucial for further development of mankind by the Millennium Development Goals (*UN Millennium Declaration 2000, I.6,III.13*), and other international sound documents and declarations.

The countries of the post-Soviet region had experienced totalitarian governance, extremely centralized management system, and exclusively state ownership of land and real estate. However, after collapse of the Soviet Union they officially declared shift to the market economy and democracy; though their trajectories of change and essence of economic and land reforms were quite different from each other.

The **purpose** of this paper is to determine the general outcomes of land reforms in the countries of former Soviet space. The emphasis is made on assessment of results of implementation of land administration, and on comparison of experiences of particular countries through internationally recognized practices of good governance in land tenure.

The study applies to a **concept** of good governance for administration and use of land that is elaborated by the international agencies like the UN, the World Bank, etc, as well as by individual scientists and experts (*Bell 2007, Good governance... FAO 2007, Kaufmann & others 2008*). The conceptual framework and major principles of good governance are based upon the values of liberal democracy, guaranteeing the basic civil *liberties* and *rights*, that are best represented and, therefore, traditionally associated with those introduced in the developed countries of the West.

The geographical **region** of this study embraces the territory of the former Soviet Union. Since 1990 the region has undergone dramatic changes, resulting in emergence of 15 new independent countries. Most of them – eleven in number – are united in a political union of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), while three others are part of the European Union (EU). Only Georgia, CIS member until 2008, does not belong to any major political block. These countries could be grouped into 4 sub-regions: the biggest Slavic countries – Russian Federation, Ukraine and Belarus, together with Moldova form the **Western CIS**; all three EU members – Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia – compose the **Baltic** sub-region; Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia belong to **South Caucasus**; Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are part of **Central Asia**.

Except for more or less common political past and similarities in previously introduced administrative and socioeconomic systems, the region carries obvious differences in geographical, population (which makes up slightly more than 400 million people), social, cultural, economic and other traits between particular countries and sub-regions. This fact, very formal at the first sight, is helpful in explanation of many peculiarities of governance styles and trends in particular countries and sub-regions. Complexity and dynamism of the region in the context of its internal constitution, social heterogeneity and development trajectories definitely determine governance patterns presented in the region.

The **sources** used for writing this paper, besides my empirical knowledge and expertise acquired from direct experiences in Georgia and Azerbaijan, consist of scientific literature, policy papers, project reports, guidelines, databases, etc, provided by the agencies and foundations (e.g. the UN Human Development Report, the World Bank & IFC Doing Business, the Bertelsmann foundation, Transparency International). However, the primary source is a technical paper “Good Governance and Natural Resources Tenure in Eastern Europe and CIS Region” (*Salukvadze 2008*), for commissioning of which I would like to express my gratitude to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

2. BACKGROUND: COMMON HERITAGE, DIFFERENT TRANSITIONS

In the Soviet Union the political and economic systems were extremely rigid and ideology-driven. The extreme *centralization* of management and exclusively *state ownership of land* were “trademarks” of the regime. Governance in the USSR was typical for authoritarian rules with high level of corruption, especially state capture, non-transparency of decision-making process, non-participation of the population, secrecy of information, etc.

A burden of authoritarianism, poor governance and corruption was and still continues to be the biggest obstacle for those countries that experienced longer time of Soviet rule (non-Baltic states) and who were incorporated in the system without getting any experience in the market capitalism (e.g. Central Asia). Keeping very strong links with traditional customs and religious dogmas, which establish rigid societal hierarchy, also do not prove to be favorable for transition towards good governance patterns.

After break-up of the Soviet Union and dismantling of the socialist system all countries of the region started political and socioeconomic transitions, though very different in particular cases. The Baltic States, having relatively longer historical experience of independent statehood and capitalist market economy, European political and socio-cultural identity, started early preparation for reintegration into the European Union and NATO. For reaching these objectives they undertook numerous reforms towards adoption of liberal legislations, introduction of democratic institutions, fighting corruption, strengthening market economies, and, more generally, bringing their socioeconomic environments up to the European standards. Harmonization with EU requirements of quality and style of governance in a wide sense, and land governance in particular, was an essential part of these reforms. The transitions of these countries have resulted in their accession to the EU and other international organizations (e.g. NATO, WTO) in the mid 2000s.

The situation is very different in other parts of the region. After gaining independence many countries have become involved in political unrest (e.g. Russia, Georgia, Moldova, Tajikistan) and economic decline. These circumstances significantly damaged development capacities of involved countries, delayed reforms or even cancelled them because of absence of political will and commitment to reform. Some countries (e.g. Belarus, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan) undermine their democratic development by ignoring some of the basic democratic principles and civil liberties (e.g. democratic elections, balanced distribution of political power, existence of free media, etc.), thus setting the ground for authoritarianism. In few other cases democracy and market development are being subjected to redesign (modification) into specific [nationally implemented] models of so called “sovereign democracy” (in Russia, see *Krastev 2006, Lipman 2006*), or “social market economy” (in Belarus, see *Bertelsmann 2008*). However, couple of other countries, such as Georgia and Ukraine, declared their commitment to liberal democracy and market economy. They are seeking accession to NATO and the EU, thus recognizing necessity of consequent reforms, though launching them with different degree of success. These countries admit importance of good governance but not always put proportional efforts into its implementation.

In general, transition to the market economy is more common for the countries of the region than transition to democracy.

3. MACRO POLICIES OF TRANSITION AND TRENDS OF CHANGES

Cardinal changes in land policies in the newly emerged independent ex-Soviet states occurred as a part of overall political and socioeconomic transitions, and were strongly determined by the purposes and actual course of such transitions. Hence, land reforms in each particular country must be examined through a prism of nation-wide macro policies, implemented by governments at certain stage of a state development.

From this perspective, among many different determinants indicating character of transitions in the countries of the region, I apply to three sources that are elaborated by the competent agencies and foundations, and are openly available. These sources are: (i) Bertelsmann foundation studies; (ii) Transparency International’s assessments; and (iii) the World Bank and International Financial Corporation “Doing business” surveys. They provide indices and/or country rankings, allowing measurement of status and trends of governance and their comparison throughout the countries.

Democratic transformation. The combination of democracy and market economy is crucial to a state's long-term viability. It is also crucial for what we call “good governance”. The Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI) is a global ranking system that analyzes and evaluates development and transformation processes in 125 countries (see *Den Wandel gestalten 2010*). It includes all 15 countries of the region and provides with a comprehensive view of how each of these countries is progressing toward democracy and market economy, as well as the quality of their political management.

The BTI's analysis assumes the goal of a consolidated market-based democracy. It analyzes the status of both democratization and market liberalization as it evaluates reformers' actions, decisions and management within a particular setting. The quantitative data collected for the BTI is outlined in two parallel indices: *the Status Index* (SI) and *the Management Index* (M).

Table 1 shows BTI indices of the countries of the region by the situation of 2010; it represents not only SI and M but aggregate score too, which is not provided by the original survey.

Table 1. Post-Soviet country ranking by BTI

| <i>Country</i> | SI | M | SI+M | <i>Country</i> | SI | M | SI+M |
|----------------|-----------|----------|-------------|--|-----------|----------|-------------|
| Estonia | 9.34 | 7.33 | 16.67 | Kyrgyzstan | 4.97 | 4.17 | 9.14 |
| Lithuania | 9.04 | 6.91 | 15.95 | Russian Federation | 5.70 | 3.41 | 9.11 |
| Latvia | 8.51 | 6.68 | 15.19 | Azerbaijan | 4.85 | 4.05 | 8.90 |
| Georgia | 6.03 | 5.68 | 11.71 | Belarus | 4.52 | 3.26 | 7.78 |
| Ukraine | 6.55 | 4.92 | 11.47 | Tajikistan | 3.42 | 2.95 | 6.37 |
| Moldova | 5.93 | 4.49 | 10.42 | Turkmenistan | 3.55 | 2.28 | 5.83 |
| Armenia | 5.75 | 4.36 | 10.11 | Uzbekistan | 3.25 | 2.10 | 5.35 |
| Kazakhstan | 5.24 | 4.70 | 9.94 | <i>Note: SI -Status Index, M -Management Index</i> | | | |

Source: Den Wandel gestalten 2010

It is remarkable that the rating is led by small Estonia, country which has achieved spectacular progress during last decade or so; keeping itself relatively “clean” regarding corruption even in the Soviet times, it made fast and cardinal transformation towards the best Western standards of democracy and good governance. It is one of the leaders in the world for implementation of all embracing e-governance, which is well backed by progressive industrial restructuring towards knowledge-based branches. Estonia is followed by the two other Baltic countries.

BTI's give very clear division of the countries by the sub-regions; it emphasizes big advantage of Baltic states compared to other countries of the region. Georgia and Ukraine, both known for their “Western orientation”, are far behind the Baltic countries but still leading the rating of non-EU states. Meantime, all Central Asian states are in the bottom part.

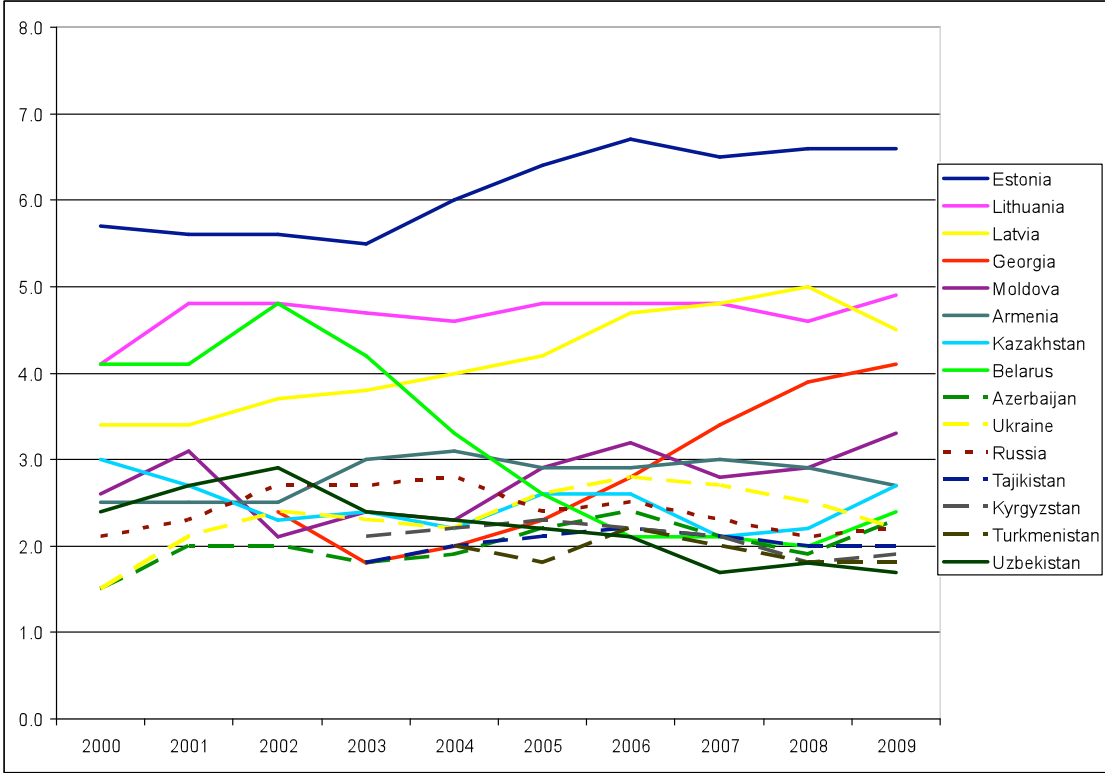
Level of corruption. Corruption, defined as "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain" (*Transparency International 2007*), is the single most harmful barrier to good governance. Transparency International carries out surveys annually and publishes *Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)* ranking the countries of the world according to the degree to which corruption is perceived to exist among public officials and politicians.

Fig. 1 describes an interesting picture of how the corruption is perceived by citizens of different countries and how it has changed during the time, more precisely during the 2000s. Even the highest CPIs in the region are significantly below of that of the world leader New Zealand – 9.4 (*Transparency International 2009*). The unchallenged leader of the region in non-corruption – Estonia – has CPI almost 3 points lower, equaling to 6.6. It is followed

[again] by two other Baltic countries, with indices 4.5-5.0. Only Georgia, effectively fighting corruption during last few years, comes closer to them (CPI= 4.1). All remaining countries (except for Moldova, thanks to last year's jump) are below 3.0. Uzbekistan is ranking as low as 1.7. Other Central Asian countries (except for Kazakhstan), and Russian Federation are also among the bottom five.

An interesting aspect of corruption dynamics is trends of CPI changes: Baltic states and Georgia show an evident inclination to improvement (if not Latvia's last year drop), while indices of other countries of the region are fluctuating or even decreasing year after year.

Fig. 1. Corruption level in the post-Soviet countries, after CPI



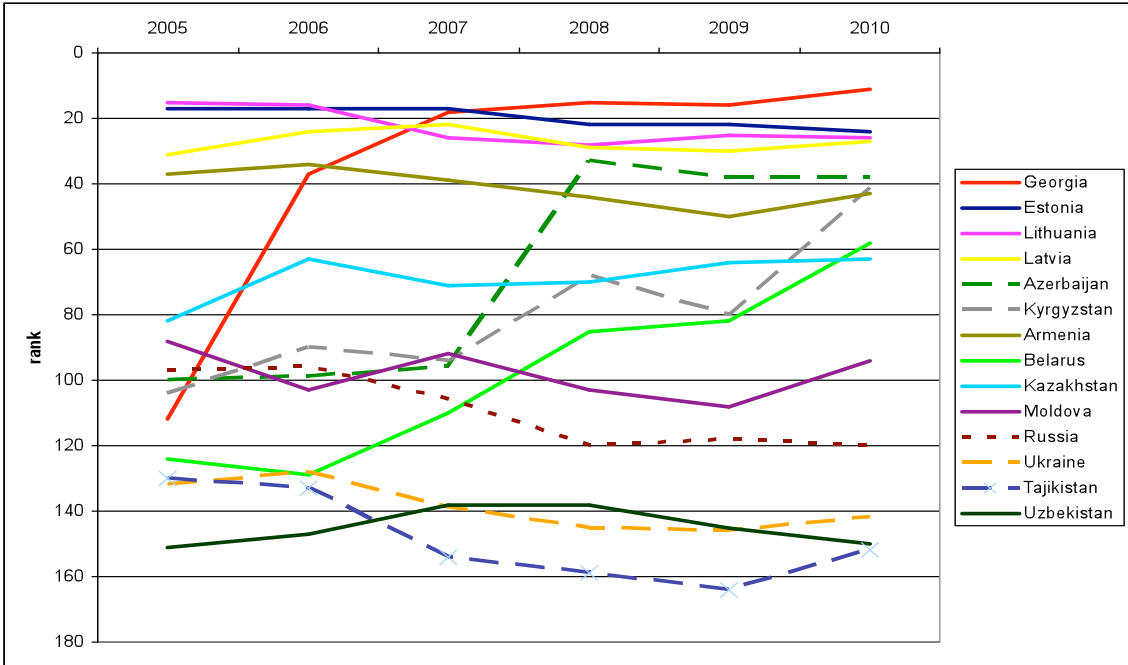
Source: Transparency International 2000-2009 (datasets)

The overall picture on corruption in the region is somewhat threatening: all countries are still far from being free of corruption; however, if Baltic states, and partially Georgia, show more or less acceptable status and positive trends towards improvement, other ex-Soviet countries stay relatively corrupt. In spite of introduction of various anticorruption programs by almost all countries, still there are not enough evidences and only little hope to cardinally change that, perhaps except for a couple of cases (presumably Armenia, Moldova). In general, one can easily observe quite a high compliance of the situation regarding corruption in the region with that of democracy and market transformation.

Business environment. Arranging appropriate conditions for development of business and entrepreneurship has always been one of the most important components for assuring good governance. Free, easy, customer friendly and reasonably regulated business environment is a compulsory precondition for good operation not only for enterprises, especially small and medium, but also for individuals who carry out their businesses.

Doing business conducts annual survey, investigating the regulations that enhance business activity and those that constrain it. It presents quantitative indicators on business regulations and the protection of property rights, and compares them across more than 180 countries. Regulations affecting 10 stages of a business life-cycle are measured as follows: starting a business, dealing with licenses, employing workers, registering property, getting credit, protecting investors, paying taxes, trading across borders, enforcing contracts and closing business (*Doing Business 2009*).

Fig. 2. Country dynamics by convenience and security of business environment (2005-2010)



Source: *Doing business 2005-2010*; **Note:** *Turkmenistan is not covered by the survey*

Registration of property, which is one of cornerstones of land administration systems and very important part of governance in land tenure is discussed in details later on.

Without going into details of each particular component of business environment under investigation, I would like to draw attention to standings of the countries according to business convenience, as well as to observed trends during a relatively short period of the last 6 years. The high rating of all Baltic states among the best 4 countries of the region and top 30 in the world is not a surprise, especially after observing the other two above-presented ratings.

On contrary, Georgia's 11th place among 183 economies in the world, ahead of all countries of the region, together with Azerbaijan's recent appearance and Armenia's stable place in (or very close to) top 40, could be perceived as a big (and positive) amazement. Generally one can detect that economically not very strong and politically fragile countries of South Caucasus succeeded in developing of convenient and reliable business environment, which could be explained mostly by their intention to establish competitive conditions for further economic growth and readiness (including political will) for reforming. Kyrgyzstan and Belarus also made significant last year progress, while other countries of Western CIS and Central Asia continue to occupy bottom parts of the rating.

4. LAND POLICIES AND GOVERNANCE

The general [macro]policies, development strategies and political courses implemented by particular countries strongly influence the state of art in land governance, as well as approaches to introduction and maintenance of land administration systems.

Land reforms. In early 1990's the ex-Soviet countries began cardinal changes of their policies in land tenure and land management. In most of cases this was a transition from state ownership to private ownership of land and the accompanying transition to a land and real property market. The changes in land policies have been implemented through cardinal *land reforms*, which usually envisaged destatization (i.e. taking out from state possession but not necessarily from state ownership) and/or privatization of state owed properties, adoption of new land legislation, introduction of new land administration systems and set up of favorable environment for emergence and development of land market.

The EU accession countries of Baltic sub-region have struggled least with the ideology of a market economy, so privatization of land was not disputed. According to the experts, that have dedicated detailed studies to land reforms and related issues in the region (*see Lerman & others 2004, Giovarelli & Bledsoe 2004*), the South Caucasus countries are leading among other post-Soviet countries in terms of privatization and farm reorganization. Each of these countries has the *political will to privatize* land and move toward market economy. The South Caucasus countries and Moldova devolved some land management responsibility to the local level. In addition, they passed legislation clearly allowing for land transactions.

The Western CIS countries, with the exception of Moldova, are still struggling over meaningful private ownership of agricultural land and the right to sell land, to mortgage land, and to employ land to its best use without interference from the State. All of the Western CIS countries are still primarily farming through large collective-style farms with little benefit afforded to individual landowners. Few land transactions are taking place, and the majority of those land transactions that do occur involve leasing back to the collective farms from which the land was allocated or divided. Slavic countries of Western CIS have lacked the political will to move forward on land reform efforts.

Finally, the Central Asian countries prove to be the least open so far to cardinal land reforms aiming at land privatization, land market development, farm restructuring and decentralization of land management system. Actually all countries of sub-region, except for Kyrgyzstan, still prohibit *de jure* or *de facto*, completely or partially, private ownership on land, keeping land market capabilities underdeveloped and incomplete.

Transition to land market. Alongside with different general land policies and land reforms, the countries of the region showed very different commitment to the introduction and development of liberal land market and market based land relations.

Private ownership is a major component of transition agenda. At the same time, **transferability** of land and real property through market transactions is equally important for economic development and production increase in transition countries. It stimulates flow of resources from less efficient to more efficient users, both in agricultural and urban sectors.

In our region Baltic, South Caucasus countries and Moldova recognize full transferability of land and real property, while other Western CIS states and Central Asia put different regulations on land transfers, thus impeding development of land market. As a result, the countries which assured higher degree of land transferability better succeeded in implementation of relatively active land market with higher rate of property transactions.

In contrast to Western conception of land markets, envisaging transactions with physical land plots, some CIS countries, in particular Russia, Ukraine, Moldova and Kazakhstan, introduced untypical way of land **allocation** to individuals in the form of “land shares” – paper certificates or entitlement. Consequently, these enforced transactions in paper shares along with usual transactions in land plots. Theoretically there is a way to “materialize” such shares into physical plots upon owner’s demand - the land laws of consequent countries provide explicit mechanisms for the conversion of a paper land share into a physical plot. Moldova and Azerbaijan, initially implemented paper land shares in land allocation and later on converted these shares on a mass scale into physical plots. Ukraine is undergoing the similar process of conversion with somewhat smaller scales of implementation. However, the most advanced countries in transition to land market – Baltic states, Armenia and Georgia – directly applied to one-step land allocation strategies, i.e. transferring physical parcels to individual owners.

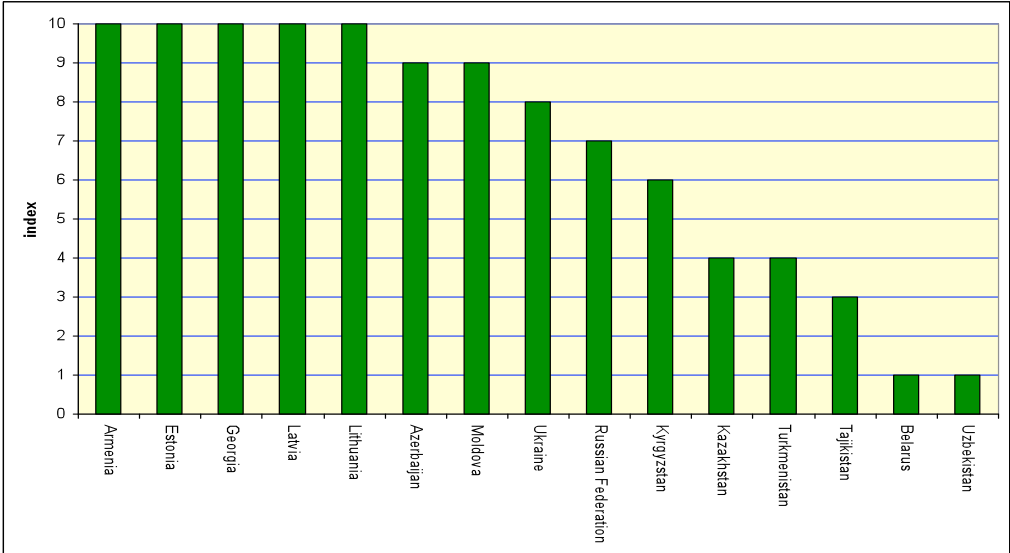
Another important aspect of land reforms was **distribution** of state owned and collectively used land among new private owners. Only Baltic States adopted *restitution* strategy, under which title to land was returned to the original (pre-collectivization, pre-expropriation or pre-nationalization) owners or their heirs.

Reform outcomes. International land experts (*see Lerman & others 2004*) offer interesting and original system of assessment of land policies implemented through land reforms in the countries of the region. It is based on assumption that the ideal model of agriculture in market economies foresees private ownership of all types of land, unlimited transferability,

distribution and/or restitution of land to private owners and allocation of physical parcels. The same principles of liberal land markets should be also applied to urban land. The experts elaborated a measure of assessment, *land-policy index*, allowing scoring land reform outcomes with consequent ranking of countries.

Figure 3 shows ranking of the countries according to four above-mentioned attributes of land policies. In contrast to the original study the final score is a simple sum of points of all four components. It becomes obvious that according to the applied land policy attributes the countries of the region are split into three big groups: Baltic states and two South Caucasus republics (Armenia, Georgia) have high land-policy index (10), which means that these countries have implemented relevant legal environments and land policies towards liberal market development. A few other CIS countries – Azerbaijan, Moldova, Ukraine, Russia and Kyrgyzstan - are close to upper group with intermediate land-policy indices (6-9), showing thus evident trends towards land market. In the meantime, almost all Central Asian countries (except for Kyrgyzstan) and Belarus still adhere to conservative land policies, keeping them distanced from internationally recognized land market standards and requirements.

Fig. 3. Ranking of the countries by land-policy index



Source: Lerman & others 2004

5. GOVERNANCE IN LAND ADMINISTRATION

Effective land administration system¹, especially in the part of title (property rights) registration, is one of the main pillars of good governance, as it assures land (and real property) ownership security, access to financial resources, provides support for land market

¹UN Economic Commission for Europe has adopted the term "Land Administration" to describe the process of recording and disseminating information about the ownership, value and use of land and its associated resources (see Dale 2000).

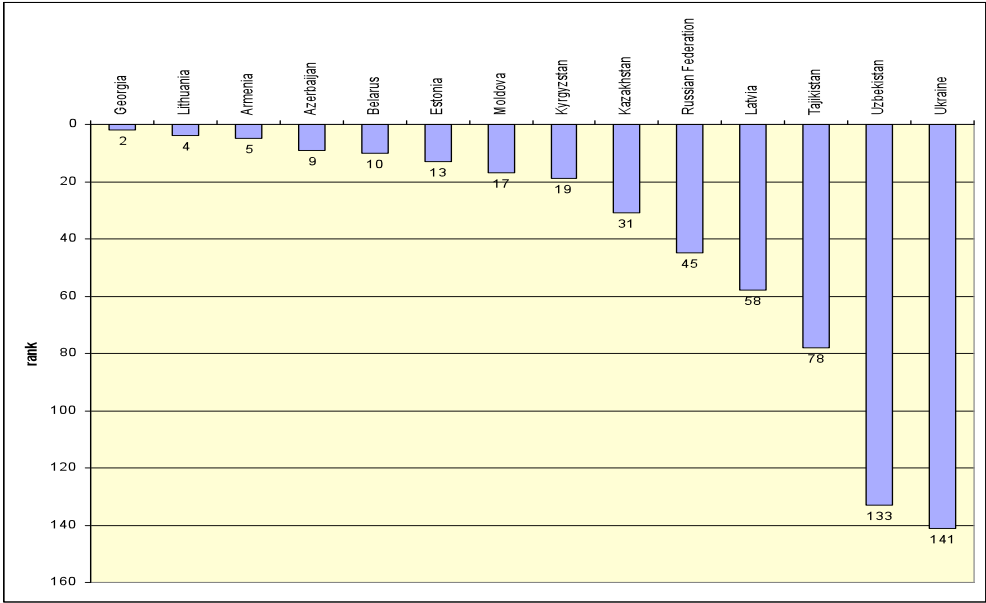
transactions, etc. Actually, on the ground realization of land-policy strategies takes place through land administration.

The ex-Soviet countries developed title registration systems mostly under guidance and assistance of foreign/international donor agencies. Design, efficiency and effectiveness of these systems differ significantly.

Countries that make property registration *simple, fast* and *cheap* have more properties registered formally. That leads to greater access to finance and greater investment opportunities. Compliance of implemented land registration systems with these bench-marks is surveyed and measured in the frames of the World Bank and International Finance Corporation joint project: Doing business. Only one country of the region -Turkmenistan – is not covered by the survey.

The ranking shows that the region is most probably a world-wide leader in implementing efficient and advanced property registration systems - (the survey of 2009, *Doing business 2010*) three countries of the region – Georgia, Lithuania, Armenia are in top 5, and eight out of fifteen (i.e. more than half) are among best 20. Additionally (and surprisingly), all three South Caucasus countries are in top 10. It means that the region takes very seriously an importance of implementation of effective land administration systems, and the above-mentioned countries have established efficient registration systems with only few procedures/steps and few days for document processing, as well as low costs/fees relatively to property value. Such systems are usually convenient and friendly to customers, and this fact indicates the existence of good governance practices in the field of land tenure and land administration in the corresponding countries.

Fig. 4. Ranking of the countries by property registration advance



Source: *Doing Business 201*; **Note:** *Turkmenistan is not covered by the survey*

Table 2 shows the situation in property registration from a standpoint of ease of operations. The parameters, generalized and aggregated, are reflected in the above-shown (see Fig. 4) country's standings. Nonetheless, I tried to offer a simple grouping of 3 surveyed components of property registration system, in order to better indicate its convenience for customers. In my suggestion, *convenient* (green background) is: up to 5 procedures, up to 2 weeks (10 working days), and a cost for registration up to 1% of property value; *inconvenient* (red background) is: more than 8 procedures, more than 2 months (60 days), and a cost over 3% of property value; anything in between convenient and inconvenient applies to *moderate* conditions. Such arbitrary, though simple, division allows scoring of these components for another, more detailed comparison of the countries.

Table 2. Post-Soviet countries by status and trends of property registration

| Country | Property registration in 2010 | | | | Reform dynamics 2004-2010 | | | | Total Score |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------|---------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------|-------------|
| | # of procedures | Time (days) | Cost (% of property value) | Score | # of procedures | Time (days) | Cost (% of property value) | Score | |
| Armenia | 3 | 4 | 0.3 | 6 | cut by 1 | cut by 14 | cut by 0.6 | 3 | 9 |
| Georgia | 2 | 3 | 0 | 6 | cut by 6 | cut by 36 | cut by 2.5 | 3 | 9 |
| Azerbaijan | 4 | 11 | 0.2 | 5 | cut by 3 | cut by 50 | cut by 0.3 | 3 | 8 |
| Belarus | 3 | 18 | 0 | 5 | cut by 4 | cut by 213 | cut by 0.2 | 3 | 8 |
| Lithuania | 2 | 3 | 0.5 | 6 | cut by 1 | no change | cut by 0.4 | 2 | 8 |
| Estonia | 3 | 18 | 0.5 | 5 | cut by 1 | cut by 47 | no change | 2 | 7 |
| Kyrgyzstan | 4 | 5 | 2.8 | 5 | no change | cut by 10 | cut by 2.5 | 2 | 7 |
| Kazakhstan | 5 | 40 | 0.1 | 4 | cut by 3 | cut by 12 | cut by 1.7 | 3 | 7 |
| Moldova | 5 | 5 | 0.9 | 5 | no change | cut by 76 | cut by 0.4 | 2 | 7 |
| Latvia | 6 | 45 | 2 | 3 | cut by 4 | cut by 17 | cut by 0.1 | 3 | 6 |
| Russian Federation | 6 | 43 | 0.1 | 4 | no change | increase by 6 | cut by 0.7 | 0 | 4 |
| Uzbekistan | 12 | 78 | 1.5 | 1 | no change | cut by 19 | cut by 10.3 | 2 | 3 |
| Tajikistan | 6 | 37 | 4.6 | 2 | no change | no change | increase by 2.7 | -1 | 1 |
| Ukraine | 10 | 93 | 2.6 | 1 | increase by 1 | no change | cut by 1.7 | 0 | 1 |
| Turkmenistan | no data available | no data available | no data available | N/A | no data available | no data available | no data available | N/A | N/A |

| | | |
|--|--------------|----------|
| | convenient | 2 points |
| | moderate | 1 point |
| | inconvenient | 0 point |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| improvement | 1 point |
| no change | 0 point |
| deterioration | - 1 point |
| <i>Source: Doing business 2005-2010</i> | |

The table gives much evidence of improvement of registration systems in several countries. More detailed analysis enables us to make the following grouping of improvements: (i) simplify and lower fees; (ii) introduce fast-track procedures and expedite registration by setting time limits at the registry; (iii) make the registry electronic and implement online transactions; (iv) take registration out of the court; (v) make the use of notaries optional or

reduce notarization fees; (vi) use modern IC technologies in operations; (vii) outsource services to accredited users; (viii) remove secrecy from information; (ix) implement “one-stop-shop” principle; (x) preparation and training of skilled managers and qualified liveware.

6. FINAL COMMENTS

The study shows an obvious positive correlation between the character of overall democratic transition and liberal [land] reforms, with quality of land governance and efficiency of introduced land administration systems. Despite of certain degree of subjectivity and arbitrariness of the results of particular surveys and country rankings, one can notice that main outcomes quite obviously replicate each other and emphasize the following common regularities:

- Membership of the EU requires and highly stimulates the introduction of effective (macro) policies, reducing negative processes, like corruption for instance, and achieving of relatively good governance; the trends of system changes are usually positive. Therefore, we see Baltic sub-region as the most stable and advanced among all others from the standpoint of implementation of good and “clean” governance practices. Land administration in general is also of higher quality in this sub-region.
- South Caucasus and Western CIS are highly heterogeneous. Georgia proves to be more advanced in implementing effective policies, however its democracy is still very unstable or “disabled”, as sometimes referred to (*Bertelsmann 2008*). Nonetheless, Georgia succeeded to develop one of the best property registration systems worldwide. Other countries, even when having some progress, are still uncertain in their courses of development, presumably except for Russian Federation, which decided to follow relatively long-term development of peculiar and uncommon systems of specific democracy (“sovereign democracy” in Russia, *Krastev 2006, Lipman 2006*).
- Central Asia stays most conservative, reform-free and thus quite homogeneous sub-region in CIS space. Up to now only Kyrgyzstan and in lesser degree Kazakhstan show some positive signs towards democratic and progressive changes.
- Remarkable is that material wealth has not strongly been correlated with advance in democratic, market and governance fields. Neither has it showed direct linkage with implementation of a good land administration practices. Some less-developed countries (e.g. Armenia, Georgia) show that effective land governance could be achieved in the conditions of limited socioeconomic development, if political will and commitment to reforming exists.
- Spectacular achievements of some countries of the region in property registration are result of implementation of easy, cheap and efficient services, application of advanced management approaches, modern IC technologies, and preparation and employment of qualified and motivated staff.

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2005-up today Professor, Head of Department of Human Geography, Tbilisi State University
2002-up today Visiting lecturer, International Masters Program "*Land Management and Land Tenure*"; Technical University of Munich (TUM)
2000-2007 Co-team leader, GFA-Terra Systems; *Cadastral and Land Register project for Georgia*, co-financed by KfW
1998-1999 Visiting Fulbright Scholar; *Special Program for Urban and Regional Studies (SPURS)*, Department of Urban and Regional Studies (DUSP), Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)
1996-2000 National co-ordinator, GTZ - financed *Land Management project* for Tbilisi, together with the City Hall of Saarbrücken
1993-1995 Head of Land Department, City Hall of Tbilisi
1991-1992 The Swedish Institute visiting scholar- Department of Human Geography, University of Stockholm; Department of Social and Economic Geography, Lund University
1988-2005 Associate Professor, Department of Human Geography, Tbilisi State University
1985 – PhD in Geography from Tbilisi State University
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