



UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

A new property regime in Kyrgyzstan; an investigation into the links between land reform, food security, and economic development

Dekker, H.A.L.

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Dekker, H. A. L. (2001). A new property regime in Kyrgyzstan; an investigation into the links between land reform, food security, and economic development VIATECH

General rights

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: <http://uba.uva.nl/en/contact>, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

CHAPTER 16. CONCLUSIONS AND STATEMENTS

16.1 CONCLUSIONS

16.1.1 GATHERING DATA

There are limiting factors of a personal nature for my research. Personal time and resources form the main constraints. As expatriate consultant I am also constantly reminded of the restricted level of communication that is possible. One can learn a language, one can use interpreters, but even with good knowledge of the language and with the best interpreters available, it is impossible to fully understand and appreciate the conceptual approach of native inhabitants to new circumstances in their country. I am more and more aware of the fact that research is only an attempt to describe factual occurrences. It means that my research is limited to my perspective and the concept that guides my activities and my conclusions. Moreover, the data collected is sometimes contradictory. I have tried to eliminate, as best as possible, inconsistencies in data by comparing data from various sources and by using and evaluating research results of others.

General limitations are that national statistics do not always use the same definitions for the same terms and statistical data are difficult to compare in time because of implicit factors that are ignored or used differently in later statistics. The population is not used to being involved in research and is generally reluctant to submit data on their economic situation and resource use patterns. Familiarity with considerable control on the use of real property by the government, citizens will try to avoid answering questions on real property use and this results in evasive answers. Although not done intentionally, for expatriates it is quite remarkable that sometimes the same person does easily change an opinion in the course of time depending on the circumstances. For farmers familiar with stretching or shrinking the size of land and the cooperative bending of statistical data in favor of the former Soviet farm, questionnaires are just another tool to rewrite reality.

16.1.2 THE METHOD FOR RAPID ASSESSMENT

The method developed in this document for rapid assessment of land reform projects has been used to evaluate the land and agrarian reform project in Kyrgyzstan. The assessment of the project has been carried out in chapters 6 to 14. This project, that started about ten years ago, could provide several signals and some indicators, while other indications of development could be derived from combining sources and observations. For the project of land registration, which is just beyond the preparation phase, the model could not yet contribute to provide much insight.

The method does not claim exclusiveness of the indicators, or statistics and observations used in this document. On the contrary, I expect that using indicators and observations being available for each particular project can assess that project. Nor does the method claim to provide absolute proof of the current situation or future developments. The value of rapid assessment with the method is not in its guarantee of effects about to happen, but rather in the signal function of effects that might happen. Using the method for rapid assessment gives the assurance that some effects easily overlooked or ignored during the busy time of project implementation will get attention. Effectiveness of the project will

increase because inconsistent expectation of assumed relations can be corrected by additional supportive measurements.

In this document, chapters 6 to 14 demonstrate that with the rapid assessment method of a project in which land tenure change is a main element provides insight in the progress in achieving specific goals. It showed for example that in Kyrgyzstan many farmers have taken advantage of the possibility to start single family farms and small agricultural collectives. It showed that the urban population could not yet take advantage of increased prosperity as expected with the introduction of the free market.

It showed that with a relatively simple set of macro-economic indicators and field observations useful information can be gathered to provide signals about what supplementary supportive activities should be developed to make the project (more) effective. For example that the expectation of the development of a real property market without additional supportive measures will not soon come about. Also that the food security situation did not yet reach a satisfactory level. That agricultural infrastructure for marketing of farm products is needed to enable farmers better market access and information and to decrease informal trade with 'table-shops' in cities and small towns.

The method also provided insight in some less desired developments and supported some measurements taken by the government to improve effectiveness of the project. Whether desired or not, the increasing subordination of women is a signal of re-appearing customs from before the Soviet times. As for food security, it showed that the food security situation for the urban population still is a matter of concern.

Finally the method could present project staff several signals to recommend additional helpful activities and to pursue (donor funded) supportive projects to insure a more rapid sustainable benefit of the land and agrarian reform. Examples are in the Kyrgyz case renewed emphasis on land market development, strengthening of the social safety net, facilitate credit possibilities, a wider approach to improvement of food security than focus on food production etc.

The finding of differences in emphasis for acting of the government between a prosperity and a food security paradigm in the model, raises the question why the distinction between the prosperity and the food security paradigm did not play a more prominent role in the project descriptions and in applications of donor supported land tenure change programs.

16.1.3 EFFECTS TAKE TIME

It will take substantial time and effort to verify the results of the land and agrarian reform project to its full extent in Kyrgyzstan. The effect of the new relationship to land, expressed by private ownership, is still alien to most citizens and it must be assumed that a context-specific 'mapping' of the full extent of possibilities will take significant time to result in a behavioral change in the rural population. As mentioned before, normally a generation will pass before results of reform projects are clearly visible. Particulars of behavioral effects resulting from land tenure change are difficult to measure. There is a danger to use once proven but possibly outdated or irrelevant concepts to justify current actions. Indolent linking of context specifics with concept dependencies easily immunizes itself against verification. The assumption that change to more individual and private land tenure will stimulate economic performance in a positive way has increasingly failed to deliver on its promises. The high expectations of change in property regime measured against the objectives of attaining specific social and economic goals have turned out to be more or less failures in

the last decades. Nevertheless the expectation that economic performance is an automatic result of a change to individualized, commodified private property rights can often be found in contemporary donor sponsored projects as motive for land tenure change. It is linked to the strong belief that individual private ownership in modern western societies evolved naturally from primitive communism (as the previous existing various communal property regimes can be characterized), thus freeing the individual from bureaucratic controlling processes and procedures.

16.1.4 IS THERE A BETTER WAY?

Western observers noticed a more socially oriented way of life in the communist society. But as far as I could observe this never influenced their thinking when considering suitable property regimes in those countries after gaining independence. One can question whether such societies – only a few years after independence – are yet ready for the individualistic capitalist type of society and its individualized private property relations proclaimed as the most suitable way to achieve economic development and progress. In several of my assignments I could not avoid the impression that donors encouraged post communist societies too quickly into a direction towards capitalism and free market economies. Donors generally permit insufficient time for the population – and thus their society - to make necessary social and ideological adjustments.

Why not create and introduce a new form of communal property regime with similarities to (primitive) communism instead of the individual private ownership contrasting with the concept of a property regime the population has lived with for so many years under Soviet rule? For Kyrgyzstan this argument is even more poignant. Initially the distributed land was granted to individuals in either rent or lifetime inheritable tenure. It would have been relatively easy to 'transform' this type of tenure to registered land tenure with conditions attached to it in order to establish a property and land tenure regime that would benefit the population as a whole and not only tenants of property rights. One can only guess at the reasons for the Kyrgyz Parliament to convert the land certificates to ownership documents introducing a typical Western style ownership right to agricultural land with the capitalistic commodified notion of land tenure. It now is to be hoped that the process of increasing individualization is not going to weaken the social and economic function of property by an aggressively promoted land registration program of the vast area of commonly used pastureland in the Kyrgyz Republic.

The conclusion is that the land and agrarian reform project in Kyrgyzstan shows characteristics of a project with insufficient consistency maintained to effectively reach the ultimate goal of the project (whether it was primarily increased food security or whether it was improvement of the economy).

16.2 STATEMENTS

16.2.1 PARAGRAPH SPECIFIC STATEMENTS

My research leads to a number of specific statements as made in various paragraphs. The paragraphs are referenced to in parenthesis.

- There is not a formula for land reform projects neither is there a "best" system of land tenure (2.2.5)

- Most of the transactions registered at the Bishkek registration office in 1999, were the result of inheritances, second were first-time registrations (citizens having acquired a right to real property and now willing to process the application for registration or now able to pay the fees involved for registration) (3.1.3).
- The recent institutional changes will not quickly improve land tenure security. Sustainable tenure security can only be perceived after a period of time by a committed government (6.1.5)
- The current level of transfers of real property in Kyrgyzstan does in itself not justify starting a renewal of the land registration system now (6.3.2)
- The Kyrgyz society would have benefited more from other donor funded projects than it will from the Land And Real Estate Registration Project. For economic development specific land market incentives and credit improvement measures would have been an option. For alleviating rural poverty and food security, agricultural credit lines, establishing of centers for extension services for agricultural education, or improvement of agricultural mechanization for small scale farming, would most likely have achieved more than this investment of resources in land registration. (6.3.6)
- The re-emergence of traditional customs in Kyrgyzstan results in fewer women in responsible jobs and limits their access to real property (7.1.3)
- Kyrgyz citizens have taken advantage of the change in their opportunity sets to become private individual owners of rights to land (7.2.1)
- There is a misfit in synchronization between land reform projects and land registration projects, because land reform projects are generally politically motivated, registration projects are often donor fund driven (8.1.3)
- The expressed need for a land registration project is not in line with the evident lack of interest among the Kyrgyz to register (8.1.3)
- Institutions, natural resources, technology, and knowledge define the character of a nation's possible production and possible food security, but the perception of opportunities citizens have determine what is realized (8.2.1)
- Poverty among the population of Kyrgyzstan is on average increasing, incentives for more intensive use of agricultural resources (including house plots) will provide them with a chance to make up for the economic decline (9.2.2)
- Privatized smaller farms use more labor input per ha than associations of peasant farms or large state and collective farms (10.1.2)
- There is a persistent stagnation of the economy in Kyrgyzstan (11.1.1)
- Effects of institutional changes for restructuring of the agriculture in Kyrgyzstan show positive signs, but have not yet delivered (beginning of 2000) on their expectations in respect to economic development. Average living standards in the Republic did not improve and living conditions in rural areas are hardly any better than before independence. However, most farmers became independent farmers making their own decisions on how to manage their farm (12.1.2).
- Taking into account the current persistent economic decline and the poor functioning of markets in the whole country, Kyrgyzstan is not yet structurally food secure (13.1.3)
- The isolation in which the land and real estate project was implemented severely limits its benefit for Kyrgyz society (14.2.2)

- With many countries currently in transition an approach using (imported) property systems partly 'western style' and at the same time still maintaining some of the social features of most communal tenure systems is a thought worthy of trying (15.1.1).
- The Kyrgyz government should provide specific agricultural education and should strongly stimulate modern agricultural technology to improve agricultural production and to give Kyrgyzstan an advantageous position in producing certain export crops (15.1.2)
- Successful projects for land reform or restructuring of the agricultural production must be carried out after extensive investigation of the circumstances in the target country with timely implementation of the various interrelating other supportive activities and policies. (15.1.3).
- In today's Kyrgyzstan too many elements of the standard model are still insufficiently developed to expect a sustainable economic development (15.2.3).
- It pays (considerably) for the exchange of land related data in a country when multi-functional data are managed in a centralized way (15.3.2).
- The effect of a growing gap between those who benefit most from the reform and those who are less fortunate should be eliminated by specific institutional measures taken up by the government (15.4.1).
- In most land reform projects economic development and food security improvement go hand in hand (15.4.2).
- Statistics on agricultural production in Kyrgyzstan from the last decade - when inheritable use rights was the dominant land tenure mode (until November 1998) for farm land - show that this type of land tenure did not impede the development of agricultural production in an extraordinarily negative way (15.4.3).
- The land and agrarian reform project in Kyrgyzstan shows characteristics of a project with insufficient consistency maintained to effectively reach the ultimate goal of the project (whether it was primarily increased food security or whether it was improvement of the economy) (16.1.4).

16.2.2 SUBJECT SPECIFIC STATEMENTS

The statements in this paragraph are of a general character.

- The renewed land registration system in Kyrgyzstan will initially only provides marginal support to the perception of land tenure security.
- In most countries in transition the male population will benefit more from land reform than the female population.
- Many agricultural workers took advantage of the possibility to start their own farm, many urban dwellers obtained ownership rights to their residential property, but few Kyrgyz citizens have yet experienced any further benefits of the land and agrarian reform.
- When economic development is non-existent, land and agrarian reform in dominantly agrarian countries in transition is more beneficial for the rural population than for the urban population.
- In countries in transition, newly developed legal systems should contain socially oriented land tenure regimes with social safety provisions, to compensate for an insufficient social security safety net.

- The model for linkages between institutional change and economic development / food security change, in combination with easily accessible statistical data and other sources of information provides an effective method for rapid assessment of effectiveness of land reform projects.

16.2.3 GENERAL STATEMENTS

Preparing for a challenge also invites one to reflect on experiences and beliefs, which, because of their subjective nature are reflections of a very personal nature. Capturing something of myself, my hobbies, and my beliefs in some statements leads to the following:

My latest experience:

- Preparation for a doctorate is regularly done in A flat, the defense is in B sharp!

What I believe:

- Is God? - derails a religious discussion; God is! - keeps it on track.

On the cadastre agency:

- Those who fail to register, register to fail.

Borrowed from the gun lobby:

- When private property is outlawed, only outlaws will have private property.

On railways:

- For rail travelers there is no difference noticeable between a cubical parabola and a clothoid when used for the transition curve.

Making music:

- A song is balm for the soul, a hymn is balm for life.

My goal:

- It does not matter how many places you traveled; in the end it is the footprint you left that matters.