Land Portal Development 2014-2017

Business Plan

Executive summary

The Land Portal was set up in 2009 as a partnership project dedicated to supporting the efforts of the rural poor to gain equitable access to land by addressing a fragmentation of information resources on land, which makes it difficult and often prohibitively expensive to draw together reliable evidence in support of programs, advocacy campaigns or policy formulation, especially for grassroots organisations.

The partnership (initiated in 2009) launched the Land Portal website in 2011. In 2012, a full-time coordinator was hired and a strategic review of the project and its long term potential concluded that the need for such a Portal was both real and pressing and that the Portal needed major development to achieve its potential. It specified the establishment of improved institutional and governance arrangements and the revamping of the technical architecture, and emphasized the importance of enhancing the capacity to collaborate with information producers and users, particularly in the Global South.

The purpose of this business plan is set out how the Land Portal will use resources to transform itself from a project into an organization while substantively improving and redefining the nature and the quality of the services offered to its stakeholders.

The plan demonstrates that additional resources will enable the ongoing process of change to continue. It includes detailed and costed plans and a clear strategic framework.

During the last year and with very limited resources, the Portal has prepared for its incorporation as a not-for-profit foundation in the Netherlands. Partners have agreed that the University of Groningen will provide core administration services for the Portal, In addition, a technical advisory group comprising leading personalities with regard to open knowledge has been established, and has already contributed to the specification, tendering and delivery of a new information architecture.

This plan describes in detail how the Land Portal will establish itself as a sustainable and independent organization that provides relevant, timely and easily accessible information to both global and local stakeholders working for equitable, transparent and inclusive land policies. It describes the work requirements for achieving this goal and the approaches to organization, management, recruitment and monitoring and evaluation.

The plan also describes the continuing development of the Portal's services, particularly with regard to the Land Book, which will offer detailed data and other information resources on land issues in, initially, twenty countries. The key to the success of the Land Book will lie in the collaborative arrangements made with local stakeholders to improve their capacity to record and use relevant information. These arrangements, which include both financial and technical support for local level information work, will deliver and make globally accessible a greater depth and quality to local level information about land issues, contributing to more transparent and inclusive land debates and connecting people and organizations. As such, the Portal's collaborative methodologies for developing new services are also central to its efforts to raise its profile and reputation within the communities engaged with land issues that it aims to serve.

Plans for the development of other services are outlined as well as for the accompanying communications, resource mobilization and content development work. If the Portal succeeds in attracting further support, it will both be fully capable of implementing this plan and well-positioned to continue developing the services it provides to those seeking to promote development through the equitable and inclusive use of land.

Background

The connections between effective use of land, the sustainable production of food and forestry products and development are universally accepted. What is more complicated is the range of choices that need to be made to find the best balance between social justice, economic prosperity, local food security and commercial opportunity within an often confused context of competing claims to land use and title and continuously evolving scientific opinion. The processes of reaching suitable practical decisions or developing effective policy in these areas is exacerbated by the extremely fragmented nature of information resources about land. There are many sources of information about land, but their visibility, accessibility, consistency and completeness vary enormously. Finding solid evidence upon which to base policy and practice - whether for highly local interventions or for comparative international studies using aggregated data - involves a lot of work. Poor land users, in particular, face barriers in making their views heard at national, regional and international levels and in finding out about competing plans for the use of their land. In short, work on an already complex but vital development issue is threatened by the lack of good information.

In this context, the Land Portal was created as a collaborative project of the Landtenure.info Consortium and the International Land Coalition (ILC) in 2009. Its aim was to bring together and make more accessible information about land and land tenure from as many sources as possible, including the many organisations worldwide collaborating with the portal's two founder partners. The Land Portal has had the status of a 'project' hosted by the ILC as a hosted entity of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) since 2009, overseen by a steering committee comprising the ILC, IFAD, the Food and Agriculture organization (FAO), L'association pour ameliorer la governance de la terre e des ressources naturelle (AGTER), el Instituto de Estudios del Hambre (IEH), Action Aid (AA) and the International Alliance on Land Tenure (IALTA) based at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands. Since 2012 it has had a full-time coordinator, who is also hosted in the IFAD office. The project was funded by Omidyar Network during the initial development of the Portal from 2010-2011, as well as by ILC, which has continued its annual financial contributions to the project since 2011, drawing on support the ILC receives from IFAD, EC and the Dutch

cooperation. The Portal has also received financial support from the FAO and the World Bank through the provision of dedicated support staff, including two consultants and several interns as well as support for the attendance of the Land Portal coordinator at high profile international meetings including the annual Land and Poverty conference held by the World Bank.

Business Plan

In 2012, a strategic review of the project and its long term potential, involving external reviews as well as detailed discussions with project partners and potential new stakeholders, was initiated. This process ended with the document 'Towards a New Land Portal Strategy', which was presented in June 2013 and subsequently endorsed by the Steering Committee. It concluded that the needs for which the Portal was established were both real and pressing, but that the Portal needed major development if it was going to meet them. This growth needed to cover its institutional and governance arrangements, its technical architecture and its capacity to collaborate with information producers and users in both the Global North and South. Accompanying these internal priorities was a clear need to identify new sources of financial support with which to fund them.

Planning based on the recommendations of the strategic review generated an extensive list of possible activities with an outline of their costs. Achieving this full range of activities remains a long term aspiration of the Portal. However, this business plan focuses on the activities that the Portal, taking into consideration its present capacity and the resources that may be available in the short term, will have the greatest impact and put it on a sustainable path for the long term. These are the need to establish the Portal as a distinct entity capable of running and developing its own affairs; the need to continuously develop the quality and range of information services it provides to its audiences; the related need to build its visibility as a service provider and collaborator among the networks of which it is part; and the need to secure the necessary financial support to achieve these objectives.

The purpose of this plan is to describe the path from the strategic goals to their implementation in each of these priority areas. It will spell out how the achievement of these goals and their impact will be measured and assessed, taking into consideration the Portal's need to constantly be aware of future

opportunities and readiness to evolve even as it copes with a challenging program. However, the plan describes a process, not a static situation. The changes, foreseen in the review, started the moment they were recognized as necessary. With very limited resources and guided by the sense of strategic direction that underpins all the further developments proposed by this plan, a great deal of progress has already been made. A new institutional status, and associated governance arrangements, have been thought through, gained the necessary support of existing stakeholders and are now ready for implementation. A cutting edge approach to a new technical architecture has been specified, been tendered for, been developed and is now ready for launch. Additional sources of potential financial support have been identified, and discussions are underway with a number of them. Some of these sources are more interested in seeing the Portal develop as an organization with the capacity to continuously contribute new ideas and services in this area. Others are particularly interested in the immediate potential of new services to have an impact on the developmental processes they seek to support. Recognizing the differing priorities and interests of potential investors, this plan and the related forecasts distinguishes throughout between the costs and activities related to the organizational development of the Portal and the continuing development of its services, particularly of the proposed new Land Book. These two strands cannot, of course, be entirely separated and are designed to be mutually reinforcing.

Development, Land and the Role of the Portal

'Market' Analysis

Land is bought and sold all the time all over the world and a plethora of information services, provided on a commercial basis, support this market. In many parts of the world, however, these normally straightforward and voluntary transactions may be made more complicated and often more controversial by any of a host of other factors. These include conflicting claims to land ownership and use, the continuing assertion of traditional or indigenous land rights, competing public policies about desired land use, local political influences and many others. Because land is such a key factor in both rural development and in food production, there are many organizations that take a keen interest in the multitude of issues surrounding its ownership and use, seeking to resolve them in line with their own priorities. These range from very local organizations defending particular interests, through a host of non-governmental development organizations, governments at local and national levels and a number of large international organizations seeking to develop appropriate policies at the regional or even the global level. Because of the importance and often contested nature of the issues with which these organizations engage, they often generate significant media interest and are the subject of much formal research.

This large and varied 'land community' and its associated media and research specialists form the main 'market' for the Portal's services. 'Market' is placed in inverted commas as the majority of information produced by and for this community is regarded as a 'public good'. Its production is usually funded on such a basis and its distribution is usually free or, occasionally, at cost. However, even if essentially non-commercial, the information landscape around land issues has many characteristics of a market – multiple producers, competing voices, unequal access determined by resources or distance from key centers.

Portal's Current Position

The Portal's contention has always been that within such a chaotic information environment, with so many producers of information focusing on a single aspect or geographical location, there is a clear role for an information service that brings information together from the many disparate sources and makes it easily available for the main user groups. It has also argued that although information on land can be found on a number of development information sites, no one site brings information from all relevant sources together and, often, the information is not effectively organized or communicated in ways that meet the needs of the 'land community'. Thus, for example, the development research site Eldis (www.eldis.org) consolidates more documents on land rights than the Portal (9217 compared to 1330), but they are all from research sources and do not link to local sources nor to collections of basic data. The 2012 review concluded that the Portal is not yet filling this role; it concluded that, despite successfully bringing information together from many sources, the site was struggling to provide clear structure and navigation for users. In trying to do too much, the Portal was in danger of being of little practical value. In its response to these findings, the Portal is building on two key strengths in order to reinforce its place in the 'market' and enable it to fulfill its desired role.

A primary strength is that the Portal and those who support it are key actors in the community it intends to serve. A fundamental comparative advantage for the Land Portal is the strength of its founding partners, who will remain part of the Land Portal in partnership or key advisory roles after the change of the governance structure has taken effect. The breadth, diversity, capacity and reach of the Land Portal partners and networks brings substantial resources in terms of both gathering and pooling existing information as well as creating and sharing a steady stream of new content. It also positions the Land Portal as a unique intermediary to facilitate exchange and bridge gaps between civil society, governments, and other stakeholders. Its position within the networks of the land community is central to how the Portal will promote itself and its services as well as to the recruitment of its own board and its proposed methodologies for developing new content.
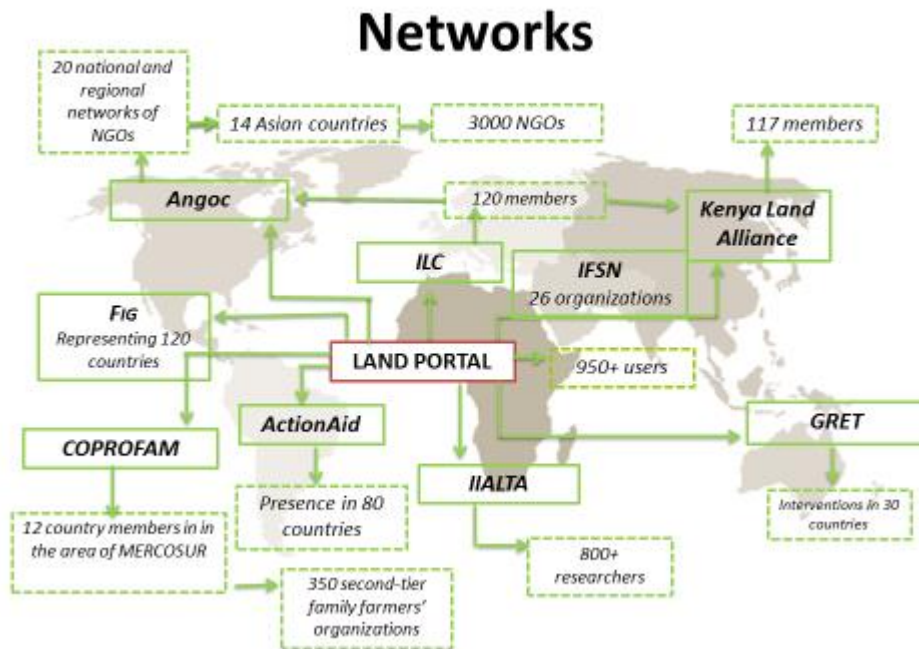
Figure 1 – The Land Portal within its networked environment

The second comparative advantage on which the Portal is building in response to its analysis is the strategic choice of pioneering 'linked open data' technology within the land sector. This not only establishes the Portal as a technical innovator, but also provides a far better information structure for the Portal to use data and metadata from other sources. Crucially, it will enable others in the land community to import material from the Portal for re-use on their platforms. It also positions the Portal within a wider community seeking to improve information flows within the development sector and to increase the transparency and accountability of development assistance.

Strategic Aims

The strategic implications of the 2012 review were set out in the 2013 report referred to above. The key strands of the strategy can be summarized as follows[1]:

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[1] A full copy of this report is available from the Land Portal on request

- 'The goal of the Portal is to become the leading online destination for information, resources, innovations and networking on land issues. Through this it will support more inclusive and informed debate and action on land governance and will increase adoption and up-scaling of best practices and emerging innovation on land tenure'.

- Four main target user groups are identified: practitioners and policy makers; land activists; researchers; media professionals and journalists.

- The Portal commits itself basing its work on the values of:
  - Multi-stakeholderism and partnership, promoting multi-stakeholder participation in land governance
  - Open development - the Portal will be based on open source, open data and open content
  - Local ownership - the Portal will move towards a decentralized and distributed structure

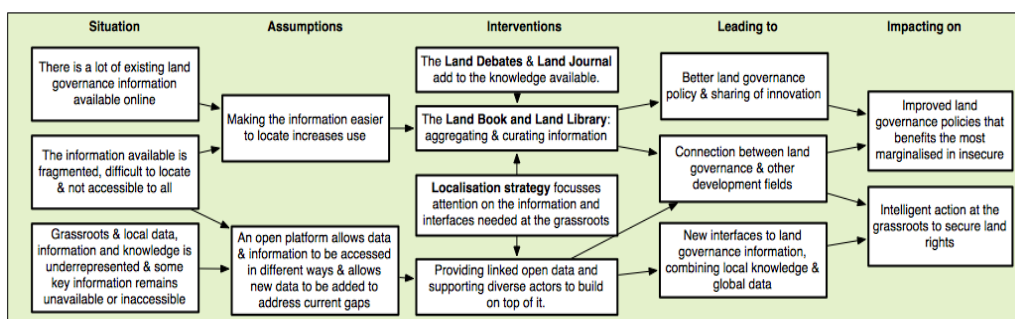- The Portal's work is planned within the context of a coherent theory of change.

Figure 2 – The Land Portal's impact on change

- The identification of four (now five) core product areas in which the Portal can deliver well-defined high quality content – the Land Portal Hub as the point of entry; the Land Book providing comprehensive country and thematic pages building on engagement with local information providers and commitment to linked open data standards; the Land Library as an extremely well structured and searchable on-line repository of documents about land; the Land Debate Institute as a forum for discussion, the sharing of experience and the co-creation of new thinking and practice; and the Land Journal, an open access, peer

reviewed journal aimed at encouraging detailed research and understand of land issues. The interconnected nature of the portal's technology means that work on one part of its core activities – the Hub, the Land Book, the Library, the Debates Institute and the Journal – inevitably contributes in some way to the others. However, as the new Land Portal Hub is ready to launch, the Land Book will become the next site of priority interest. This emphasizes the Portal's commitment to provide services of value to poorer members of the land community in the Global South and, by requiring close collaboration with members of that community, also assists the Portal's marketing strategy of closer engagement with the community it serves.

• The definition of strategic approaches to guide the direction of work on five cross-cutting issues that apply to all of the core product areas: technical development, open platforms and innovation; improving the information ecology; localization and capacity building; communication and community building; and governance and sustainability. All of these relate to the two comparative advantages – being part of the community and technological innovation – identified in the analysis of the Portal's position in relation to the land community above.

Resource Options

National and international donor agencies interested in promoting socially inclusive rural development, especially those with an interest in land, are the key target funding partners for the Portal. The Portal continues to be funded by ILC. Discussions with British, Dutch and German government Aid departments as well as the Canadian IDRC are at varying stages of engagement. Additional funding by a variety of donors is being explored.

The Portal will continue to collaborate with partners in developing larger scale information projects that address the challenge of making development information widely available, which may attract separate funding.

The Portal is also aware of the many changes underway in how 'development' work is conceived and delivered, which has in part been stimulated by new philanthropic organizations looking to support innovation as well as achieve social goals. As a highly networked and decentralized organization pioneering the use of

new information technologies in its sector, the Portal hopes that its work may attract interest and support from such sources.

The Portal will also explore the generation of income by providing reporting services and acting as a media partner for international land-related events. The Portal will provide real-time information to decision makers that promotes transparency in decision making on land, using the latest in information technologies. This will contribute to the academic body of knowledge about these meetings and maintain a trusted information flow to policy-makers on land- related information.

Service Development

This Business Plan has two main components. One is to build on the recent technical development of the Land Hub to ensure that it becomes an information source and partner of choice for key stakeholders on land issues, including development practitioners and policy makers, activists, researchers and media. The other is the evolution of the Portal from a project to its transformation into an organization, following its own strategic direction with the support of strategic partners and, subject to its continuing success in elaborating relevant products and services, sustainable arrangements for its governance, management and further development. This will be discussed below under 'Organizational Development'.

Technical development

The redevelopment of the public interface is virtually complete (except from the Land Library module which will be delivered later in the year). The new Land Portal Hub has gone live in a 'beta' version with the formal launch taking place later in the year as part of the communications splash intended to publicize the new stage of the Portal's life. The Hub has been a priority as, without a good public interface and the underlying technical architecture to develop new tools and applications, the Portal would not have been in a good place to develop the relationships with other stakeholders which are equally to its long term success and sustainability. As the strategic review made very clear, however good its technology, the Portal's future depends on its ability to nurture productive relationships. This applies to its immediate users for whom the Portal should be aim to be an essential source of information and debate, through its newsletters, blogs and on-line debates. It applies even more with partners in the Global South without whose engagement, as producers and consumers of information, as collaborators and as potential board members, the Portal will not be able to achieve its vision, which is *'to improve land governance to benefit those with the most insecure land rights and the greatest vulnerability to landlessness through information and knowledge sharing'*.

The Strategic Review identified five core product areas for the Portal – the Hub, the Land Book, the Library, the Debates Institute and the Journal. The technical architecture of the Portal means that any development of any of the first three also benefits the other two. Likewise, effective communication around any particular

issues brings participants to the site and stimulates the development of the 'Debates' space. Outline plans of action exist for all five product areas and, in the long term, it is intended to invest resources in and fully develop them all. However, resource and capacity constraints mean that choices have been made around priorities. The first priority has been the Hub technical development. The next will be a focus on the content especially to feed the Land Book and the Land Journal.

The Land Portal Hub

Both the Tactical Tech report and the Strategy Document stressed the need for a significant improvement in the Portal's public face, aimed at being much more focused on the needs of intended users. The Strategy Document went further, opening up the potential of, at least with regard to the development sector, pioneering new technological approaches. The option and subsequent decision by the Coordinator to use a linked open data approach (which can be applied to metadata about other information as well as to pure data) for the renewal of the Land Portal Hub has a number of strategic implications for the Portal.

First, it will enable the Portal to meet the recommendations of the two reports and produce a far more impressive and productive public interface for the Portal. This should in turn make the Portal a more credible and attractive partner for those wishing to collaborate on land issues. The process of re-developing the Land Portal Hub also involved a number of design and software development stages which should greatly facilitate the development of all the other products in the future.

Second, the choice of a Linked Open Data approach not only facilitates the use by the Land Portal of data generated by some large international players (both the World Bank and OECD are moving in this direction) but it also enables others to interrogate and re-use material developed on the Land Portal for their own purposes. The Portal thus moves from being a collector and disseminator of information in the traditional mold to being an active and pioneering enabler of an information ecology in which the sharing and reuse of information becomes the norm. This vision includes the capacity to make information available as close to the point of use as possible, via mobile phone apps, as well as developing the

potential for various collaborative processes for information gathering, including crowd sourcing.

This is not just a technical issue. The visibility and accessibility of information about land (or about any other development issue) form part of the power dynamics in which decisions may be taken which disadvantage excluded groups. This reality has inspired a strong movement towards transparency and accountability in the international development community, a trend supported by most major donors. The Portal's pioneering use of technology which enables such transparency greatly strengthens its hand when it comes to advocate openness on the part of others as well as opening up the potential for collaboration with others supporting the same agenda.

The Land Book

The next major development proposed is the Land Book. This will provide country and thematic pages providing direct access to comprehensive and in-depth information on land governance across the world. Country pages will give an overview of existing information, and will also help reveal emerging trends in and gaps in available data. Topic pages will cover particular themes. It is intended to become a widely used global online hub for land governance related information and debate, with up-to-date country level information that is easily accessible, and, because of its licensing arrangements and data structure, fully available for re-use by others.

Although its effectiveness as an information tool depends heavily on the underlying technologies it deploys, its value will lie in its depth of content, which in turn will depend on building successful collaborations with local partner organizations. The Land Book will have significant funds available to provide direct support to local partners for producing information of value to their campaigns for equitable and inclusive land policies. The same information, along with other material gained in the course of building the collaboration, will contribute to the value of the Land Book as a source of information on a global scale. Workshops on data collection and use will further support local information processes, building the capacity of local stakeholders to make their own information visible and to access and use material from external sources. Continuing collaboration with cutting edge open data service providers will enable the Portal to work on some of the technical

challenges that can be foreseen in integrating data from a multitude of often small and sometimes contradictory sources. This will both enable the portal to make full use of Land Book information through its own Hub but also contribute to the technological options available to users within country. The collaborative and supportive approach taken to local information sources will prove vital in ensuring the depth and quality of Land Book country information which will be of value to all the Portal's intended audiences. It will also, through its engagement with disadvantaged groups, its generation of new content and its choices for how that content is structured and shared, improve the quality, transparency and inclusiveness of land debates in the countries of the data's origin. As importantly it will contribute to the development of a vibrant and diverse online community of civil society, advocacy, government agencies, researchers and technology specialists, media players, and private companies that contribute content, share information, exchange good practices and use open data on land to increase transparency and influence land policy at national, regional and international levels. The emergence of such a community will, in and of itself, contribute to the openness and quality of debates about land issues and be a source of ideas and audiences for the continuing development of the Portal.[i]

The Land Journal

Land policies are influenced by information from a range of sources. If much of the Land Portal's focus is on ensuring that local perspectives on land rights and use are fully visible, it is also interested in how such perspectives are understood within more formal processes. In this respect, the role of formal research is important. A number of the Portal's partners are active academic researchers.

In this context, and wanting to see a more open and critical debate on land issues, the Portal is planning to develop an academic open access, peer-reviewed periodical related to land. This will be established and made available online to the Land Portal users without financial, legal, or technical barriers. The journal will be licensed under the Creative Commons open licence and will gain from the knowledge and expertise of the whole land governance community represented on the Land Portal. Journal articles will be made available on the Portal Land Library and the Land Book of countries.

The development of the journal will be led by an existing collaboration between a University wide institute, Globalisation Studies Groningen, and the Groningen Centre for Law and Governance, part of the faculty of law at the University of Groningen. It will benefit from existing work on land issues being carried out at the University and also from the University's extensive range of academic and other contacts, including the participation of its staff in the Land Portal.   The Journal, however, aspires to have a global contributor base. Its editorial board will be established through an open international call. The aim is to develop an authoritative source of research on land issues which both meets the usual criteria for high ranked academic journals and ensures, through its connections with the wider information work of the Land Portal, that the full range of perspectives and concerns are adequately documented.

Although, as is normally the case, articles will be submitted for peer review and publication by their authors without financial consideration, The Portal plans to raise funds to cover the editorial and administrative costs of the journal and also the time of two researchers whose role will be to seek out quality research material and background information aligned to key land debates and to ensure its proper distribution and communication through both the journal and the other channels available to the Portal.

Organizational Development

Organizational Character

Before addressing the new organizational arrangements in detail, it is worth briefly reflecting on the nature of the organization the Land Portal intends to become.

The Portal has worked in a highly distributed and decentralized way since its inception, which shall continue. This enables the Portal to access expertise wherever it is available while encouraging others to engage with the Portal in relation to their position in other organizations, which codifies the role of the Portal as a unifying force among the network of organizations working on land issues.

The plan also takes into account practical considerations. As the Portal seeks funds to support its evolution as an independent organization, it will focus its efforts and resources on activities that contribute directly to the strategic goal of

providing valuable information to those seeking equitable and developmental use of land. In order to accomplish this, the Portal will contract with capable experts, wherever they may be located, though it does not envision employing anyone directly.

The Portal will therefore prioritize long term interest in and commitment to its work as part of the criteria by which individual contractors will be selected. It will also build its identity as a community by actively encouraging and supporting communication among all engaged in work on its behalf, in particular the management team, board members and members of the advisory committee. This will take the form of frequent on-line communication, including the use of virtual meeting software such as Skype or WebEx. The value in face to face networking and discussion is also recognized. At least one major portal meeting will be held each year with the possibility of other, smaller gatherings on specific issues. In addition, all team members will be expected to represent the Portal and to be active in communities of practice related to their specific fields of work, gaining new ideas and aiding wider communication about and interest in the Portal in the process.

Legal Structure

Recognizing that receiving the necessary investment would be unrealistic as long as the Portal remained an informal project, the Steering Group approved the establishment of the Land Portal as a not-for-profit foundation, incorporated under Dutch law. The statutes for this foundation have been drawn up and agreed by the Steering Group. Further to that, a new legal entity was established in September 2014 under Dutch law called the Land Portal Foundation, with its seat in Groningen, the Netherlands.[2]

Governance

The foundation will be the responsibility of a board of directors. Two long term members of the steering group will be the first members of the board of the foundation and may be joined by others elected from the existing steering group. It is planned to recruit another three or four within two months and up to another six over the following eighteen months. The statutes require that the board be constituted by individuals with knowledge and understanding of each of a diverse

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[2] The notary act establishing the Foundation is available from the Land Portal on request

range of organizations including civil society, academia, the private sector, rural producer organizations and those representing indigenous rights. In addition, members with knowledge and experience of development information work, especially involving linked open data will be sought. The intention is also to have a good gender balance and spread of geographical location. The process of board selection will consist of putting out occasional open calls for expressions of interest through networks of stakeholders in the Portal. It is intended that the calls identify a number of candidates who will then be selected by a panel consisting of members of the existing Board.

Although legally responsible for everything the Portal does, it is hoped that the board will not be distracted by endless practical details, but will focus on the strategic role and positioning of the Portal within the land, ICT for development and international development sectors. The board and the Portal management will be supported by an Advisory Group that will have two sets of members, one focused on policy issues, the other on the technological possibilities of the Portal.

A number of long-standing stakeholders in the project are multi-lateral agencies that are not permitted to be in a position of legal responsibility for external organizations. However, they are very willing to see it develop and, in the case of ILC, are still making an essential financial contribution. Moreover, many of these stakeholders are active members of extensive international networks that offer the Portal invaluable access to information and potential collaborators around the world. The Portal aims to maintain the involvement of networks of stakeholders and benefit from their experience. The rules of the foundation therefore allow for a Policy Group to function as part of an Advisory Committee, which will provide strategy and policy guidance to the new foundation without having any formal legal responsibilities.

Similarly, the Portal has established a technical advisory group, which, under the new rules, will form a separate part of the Advisory Committee. This consists of individuals with experience across the full range of the Land Portal's activities, from rural development, NGO management, ICT4D and cutting edge semantic web implementations. These individuals are available to act as sources of advice for Portal staff and have already played a significant role in the assessment of technical bids for the development of the Portal website, the planning meeting with the successful bidder and subsequent peer review of progress.

Participation in all the above groups takes place on a pro bono basis, although full costs of that participation are reimbursed. Group members may undertake paid work for the Portal, but only on the basis of agreed contracts for specific and time limited pieces of work.
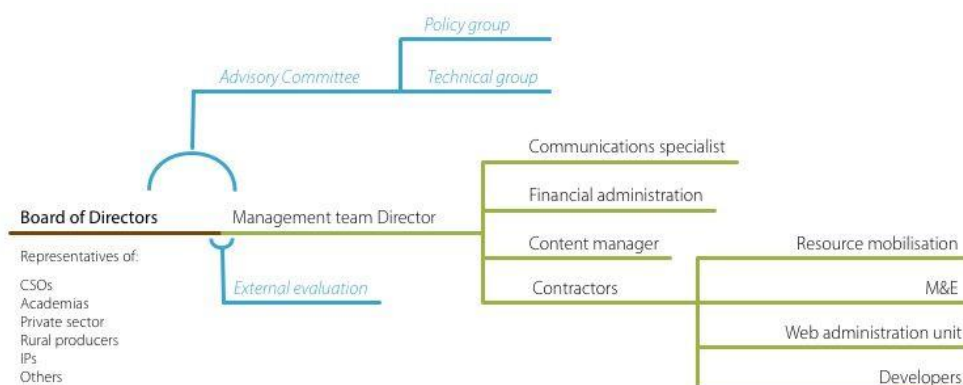

Figure 3 - The Land Portal's Organizational Framework

Administration

The decision to become a legally distinct foundation also means that the Portal will need a new administrative home. It has been agreed that the foundation contracts the University of Groningen to act as the secretariat of the foundation, administering all financial and contractual matters. The secretariat will then contract other individuals and organizations to provide the services the Portal requires. Although some of these will inevitably be very short term, it is intended that the Portal will recruit a core team capable of working together at least in the medium term on issues such as the production, editing and curation of content, continuing web development, communications and community building and resource mobilization. The work planned for this team is described below. Terms of reference for the Coordinator and for that of the rest of the core team are in the process of being agreed in principle and will be developed in detail at a face to face 'procedures' workshop as soon as the system becomes operational. The responsibilities of the board of directors are detailed in the foundation document.

Management Team

Apart from financial management and administration, it is intended to create a small team to deliver the communication, content, technical reliability and continuous development which are central to the core program.

The Coordinator

To achieve the Portal's aims, the role of and support for the Coordinator will be crucial. The current coordinator has led the Portal through its recent review and responded decisively to its recommendations, initiating major change in both organizational and technical developments. It is intended that she remains in charge of the coordination, based in Rome, ideally hosted within one of the Portal's partners, which will give her continuing access to the many land and rural development debates and programs that are hosted there. She will work in close relation with an experienced administrator based, according to the terms of a memorandum of understanding which will be agreed between the parties, at the University of Groningen. The precise duties of this administrator will be defined in an agreement with the University of Groningen, after a face to face meeting with the Coordinator once the person responsible has been identified. It is likely that, acting on instruction from the Coordinator, the administrator will process all contractual issues with the core team and external suppliers; will make payments to all suppliers when due; will keep up-to-date records of all payments made and commitments entered into and track them against agreed budgets. He or she may also service meetings of the foundation's board and become involved with organizing and making arrangements for other internal meetings the Portal may organize from time to time.

It is recognized that circumstances are likely to arise in which the Coordinator will need to call for extra support and advice to properly fulfil – and to be seen to fulfil – her managerial responsibilities. This may involve external professional expertise – around legal or financial matters for example – or it may require the involvement of someone else with responsibility within the Portal, a board member for example, to provide some defined and time-limited support.

Apart from her management role, the Coordinator will take the lead in organizing the work of the Portal, in evaluating its progress, in considering its position in

relation to work on land and development in general and in establishing new relationships and collaborations with other organizations.

Communications and Resource Mobilization Specialist

A key role is that of the Communications and Resource Mobilization Specialist. In line with the recommendations of the strategic review, the portal needs to do more work to promote itself and its services. It also needs to add value to its aggregated content, letting people know what information is becoming available, to which issues it is relevant and how it can be and is being used. It is envisaged that this will involve producing blogs and newsletters, participating in conferences and on-line debates and developing relationships with potential stakeholders and partners. In this latter role and in the need to identify important information emanating from other collaborations and include it in the Portal, it is intended that 30% of this person's time working on the portal will be dedicated to developing the Land Book.

The Portal needs to be able to constantly look ahead and develop new products and relationships which will help it meet its goals. It will therefore not only develop its own new ideas in collaboration with others (see Looking Ahead below) but also scan its immediate environment for opportunities to secure additional support for its work. A budget for continuing 'resource mobilisation' has therefore been allocated. It is envisaged that this be spent on a combination of activities – regular scanning for funding support opportunities, the production of funding applications as appropriate and participation in the planning of more significant new programs in collaboration with partners. The priorities for resource mobilization efforts will be set by the Coordinator, in consultation with the board.

Web Content Manager

The Communications and Resource Mobilization Specialist will also guide and contribute to the growing content on land issues which will be made available via the Portal. As such he or she will work closely with the Web Content Manager. The role of this person, which is envisaged as being less than a full time role, will be to receive data and information from colleagues, from partners and from regular scanning of other possible sources to identify data and information of relevance to the Portal's audiences and to process it so that it appears accompanied by appropriate metadata on the portal.

Web Administrator

Technical reliability will be provided by a web administration role that will cover the functions of systems administrator, software and site maintenance and ensuring data integrity. This has been carried out by a single person to date, but may benefit from identifying others able to provide specialist skills on a regular basis. Because such issues of integration are likely to be particularly pronounced in collaborations with local initiatives, 50% of the budget for this work will also be dedicated in providing support to the Land Book.

Recruitment

The success of all the processes outlined in this plan depends on the quality and commitment of the people tasked with carrying them out. Finding and engaging the best people possible are therefore essential to all the plans of the Portal. For the reasons outlined above, the foundation will have no employees. Apart from the special situation of the Coordinator, discussed above, two possible routes will be available. For everyone working within the remit of the memorandum of understanding with the University of Groningen, there is the potential to be employed by the university according to its established norms. For everyone else there are no such norms. There is no office, no definite 'country' of operation and, in most cases, no offer of full time employment.

In such circumstances, there is little point in creating fixed procedures and expecting people to be able to fit in with them. The first priority is to find people very capable, very well motivated and open to a reasonably long term commitment to the work. This will be based on drawing up good material describing the work in question and the context in which it needs to be carried out. The work will then need to be publicized through relevant country and international networks in which the portal and its stakeholders participate. The responses should then be filtered through first e-mail exchange and then Skype interview. The guiding criteria up to this point are people's experience, likely ability to do the job and availability.

As the number of possible candidates gets narrowed down, a parallel set of questions needs to be explored concerning the contractual arrangements under which a successful candidate may be engaged. The initial documentation should

offer some indication of the gross payments the Portal may be prepared to make but the proportion of this that may be used for wages, overheads or arrangements with employing institutions are likely to vary enormously according to people's status and location. In principle, this should not be of concern to the Portal. Its criteria are whether the arrangements are likely to work and whether they are within budget.

Properly communicated and fairly implemented recruitment processes usually run smoothly, but there is always the possibility of legal or public challenge. For this reason, all correspondence about work allocation should be kept and be available for monitoring if required. Given the nature of networks is that people who are active in them tend to know each other and to gravitate towards the main nodes, it is neither unwelcome nor unlikely that candidates will be known to the Portal or have been involved with it before in some capacity. Where this is the case, it is good practice for this fact to be recorded in the file. For members of the core team, it would also be advisable for candidates under serious consideration to be interviewed by a board member and the final decision taken jointly by the coordinator with that board member.

Monitoring and Evaluative Practice

The Coordinator will ensure that basic monitoring information is kept, both in relation to expenditure against budgets and to the level of on-line and social media engagement with its output. It is possible to envision a number of relevant indicators that would measure the quantity and range of content hosted on the hub, the number and location of users as well as details of how they use the sites and, although possibly harder to track, indicators of citations of portal material and of the re-use of data from the portal on other sites. The Coordinator, in consultation with the board and with funders, will agree which indicators should be used and ensure that evidence is collected and reported accordingly.

External evaluations may be carried out at the request of funders or other core stakeholders. However, what is more important for the Portal's own development both as an organization and in terms of its products and services is that it builds a strong evaluative culture into its working practices. The purpose of such a culture is not to have evaluation for its own sake but to review the effectiveness of the organization and make changes or respond to new opportunities as necessary.

The Portal is working in a complex, often contested multi-stakeholder environment and using constantly evolving technology to do so. It needs to be continuously thinking about its position, its value and the quality of its relationships and products and, in particular, the extent to which it is achieving its key goals. In the process the quantitative feedback offered by the monitoring information is of value but nothing like sufficient. The portal needs to know how its material is being valued and used by key audiences and what they would like to see done differently or better. Evaluative analysis of progress should therefore be part of the job of everyone involved in the portal and be a regular feature of team meetings and board meetings. The depth of the process and the quality of its documentation can be strengthened by involving an individual who is aware of the work of the Portal and the environment in which it works to act as an occasional but regular external guide to the process. This person could periodically review internal evaluative work, interview external stakeholders and collaborators of the portal and produce short reports to the board. Provision for such work has been made in the budget.

Resource Mobilization and Management

Anticipated income and its sources and proposed expenditure have already been discussed in this plan. However, in summary:

The Portal's current funding (2014) consists of USD 130,000 provided by ILC (drawing on grant funds the ILC receives from IFAD, which continues into 2015). There are positive signals that ILC and IFAD remain committed to support the Portal; in particular, the ILC Council (it's executive body) confirmed the relevance of ILC's support to the project at the June 2014 session In the short term it is being used to cover the core running costs of the Portal as a project. At this level, this support could be used to cover the minimal running costs of running the new organization, thus enabling the Portal to take on new (funded commitments) to develop new services for its key audiences. Ideally, as and when full funding to support the Portal as a new organization is agreed, this money will be used primarily to continue preparatory and pilot work on those other potential core activities for which neither detailed plans nor budgets are provided in this plan. The aim of this preparatory work will be to reach a better position to demonstrate the value of these activities to potential funders in future.[3]

The Portal is seeking new investment of USD 500,000 a year for three years to cover virtually the full costs of its core programme, excluding the Land Book. This will enable the Portal to establish itself as an independent organization, to promote its visibility and the use of its services, maintain and generate content for and about the Land Portal Hub and to work on developing further support for the Portal and the new services it wants to develop.

Finally, the Portal is seeking USD 1.9 million, which will allow the full development of the Land Book. As indicated above, much of this money will be spent in developing information resources for and with local partners. Apart from its direct

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[3] The Portal has received in-kind support of the FAO and the World Bank, through consultants and volunteers as well as support for the attendance of the Land Portal coordinator at the annual Land and Poverty conference held by the World Bank and is expecting this support to continue also.

value to its target audiences, the successful completion of this project will greatly affect the Foundation's standing, its network of relationships and its options for long term sustainability.

The costs permit the full delivery of everything outlined in this plan. For tax and legal reasons the Land Portal Foundation will not be an employer. People will therefore be contracted to work for it through a variety of arrangements and the costs indicated refer to the amount that is budgeted for each role. This includes allowance for office costs and, where appropriate, employer's tax liabilities and so do not simply reflect what will be paid to individuals. Where the work required can be seen as research taking place in the public domain, it is more efficient to pay for it as a grant to the research institute carrying out the research as this avoids the tax issues that can arise with the provision of a contracted service. The costs for the core program, the land book and the land journal are displayed separately to make it clearer to funders which resources are aimed at the particular activities that they may be interested in supporting.

In conclusion, the financial analysis demonstrates that, if fully supported, the Foundation would have the capacity to achieve all the developments described in this plan and be in a good position for further growth and development at the end of the period. However, the various components are not completely dependent on each other. Lesser levels of support could still allow the development of important new services which would in turn serve to reinforce arguments for further support in the longer term.

Looking Further Ahead

As indicated above, the Land Portal will include further resource mobilization as part of its core activities. As such, it will always be ready to assess new opportunities. Strategically, however, it will be most interested in pursuing collaborations with other agencies, in particular those involving partnerships with information providers and users in the Global South. Compared to most other pioneers of Linked Open Data in the development field, the Land Portal, being small itself, is fully aware of both the potential value and dangers (confidentiality, local political risk) of work with local level data and will have more experience of working responsibly with small data sets. It is also very ready to work with local organizations to develop their capacity to contribute to and make use of this emerging international data environment. In the process it can widen the range of voices present in global land debates as well as encourage such contacts to become involved in the Portal's own development.

The Portal has already been involved in a number of conversations about possible future collaborations. Over the last several months, the Land Portal worked with other data service providers (IDS knowledge services, FAO Open AGRIS, the Global Rangeland Platform amongst others) to advocate for agreed standards for open and interoperable data and to actively promote inter-sectoral dialogue and collaboration with information providers within and beyond the land sector. In the process it explored the potential for bringing significant ICT for Development (ICTD) expertise into the Portal and for networking with existing open knowledge and grassroots ICTD communities. This led to the 'Pledge for investments into a Linked Open Data Infrastructure for Agricultural Development' (http://landportal.info/resource/global/pledge-investments-linked-open-data-infrastructure-agricultural-development), which functions both as a statement of philosophy and intent and as a basis for future collaboration between the signatories.

The Land Portal also participated in the joint GODAN-CIARD Consultation on Open Agricultural Knowledge for Development, which took place in Rome in April 2014. The objectives of the consultation were to:

- Review progress, achievements and future prospects of all international initiatives related to open data and knowledge in agriculture, especially including CIARD and GODAN

- Consider experiences of selected national systems and international/regional agencies in development of effective policies and practices in opening agricultural knowledge and data

- Discuss and agree structure and governance for CIARD and GODAN

- Define a program of action for the next 2 years in relation to strengthening advocacy, policy frameworks and mandates, and institutional/human capacities.

The rationale for the Land Portal's participation in this kind of initiative is to share lessons learned, as well as seeking networking and outreach opportunities among grassroots ICTD communities beyond the land governance sector. The potential for practical collaboration was also explored. The Portal's resource mobilization efforts are therefore intended to promote the financial sustainability of the Portal but are also firmly grounded within the strategic directions and alliances recommended by the review. There is a lot of potential for the further development of this work.