



# Regional planning in the land reform literature: a gap to be bridged

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CRITICAL SURVEY!

Regional planning in the land reform literature: a gap to be bridged

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## Regional planning in the land reform literature: a gap to be bridged

### Abstract:

This work reviews recent research efforts in the area of land reform in the developing world and comparatively evaluates different planning approaches per country. The historical antecedents, socio-economic circumstances, legal framework and different degrees of governmental intervention influencing the access to land in the countryside are covered. A snapshot of empirical findings in a group of developing countries highlights the need to systematically adopt regional planning strategies that are able to maximise the positive socio-economic impacts of the schemes. It is also concluded that a combination of market and non-market approaches to land reform could be beneficial for developmental purposes.

Key words: Land reform, planning, regional development, developing countries.

JEL: O21, Q15, R14, R52.

### 1. Introduction: the terms of the debate

In the developing world, state-led land reform has long been viewed as instrumental for providing low incomers with access to land. In the last few decades, a non-interventionist, market-based approach has been adopted by an increasing number of developing countries as a means to both reduce poverty and secure property rights for the landless. Accordingly, there has been a steadily growth in research concerned with market-based land reform (for instance, BORRAS, 2003; DEININGER et al, 2004; BRINK et al, 2005). Although many aspects of this complex research body can be (and have been) criticised (NETO, 2004; MEDEIROS, 2007; PEREIRA, 2007), the fact remains that this literature has not, as yet, been well integrated into the

existing and very substantial body of research on regional planning in developing economies (see, for instance, DALE, 2000; BARRET et al, 2005; KAY, 2006).

Regional planning involves the efficient employment of a range of pro-growth resources across areas significantly larger than individual cities that in some instances are designed to bridge the urban/non-urban divide. Being the areas close to urban centres and coexisting with urban and rural livelihoods, peri-urban fringes are regions under increasing pressure, as they are in a transition phase (from the physical land use to the socio-economic structures) and have increasingly become the focus of unregulated occupations of land in developing countries. Therefore, a vital element in the regional planning process in this context is to lay down a strategy to achieve the socio-economic goals of land reform, whereby a need has arisen to integrate regional planning and land reform policy.

While researchers have recognised a call for disentangling the effects of various aspects of land reform, and tracing the influence on socio-economic outcomes of different degrees of government intervention on land issues, there is a dearth of research that has drawn lessons from a regional planning perspective. Also, different approaches to the role of the state versus the role of land markets have been reported in the literature. However, by integrating the findings of separate studies (ARIMAH, 2003; BAHIGWA et al, 2005; HERRERA and ROUBAUD, 2005; IKEJIOFOR, 2005, and others), the contentious field of the foregoing review is that the studies of land reform can be usefully informed through the existing literature on regional planning and that such studies can potentially make an important contribution to the broader body of knowledge concerned with sustainable socio-economic development in less developed economies.

This article is divided into seven sections. In this introductory section we present the paper objectives and its main themes. The second section traces the literature on the historical

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4 antecedents of land reform in developing countries. In the third section prevalent works on the  
5 socio-economic circumstances influencing the access to land are covered. The fourth section  
6 scrutinises the body of literature on governmental intervention whereas the fifth extracts different  
7 approaches to land reform from a sample of developing countries. In the sixth section we  
8 comment on contemporary scholarly research focusing on the role of regional planning. The last  
9 section summarises the paper and gives final remarks.  
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## 21 2. Historical background: tracking back the roots of land reform

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23 A retrospective analysis of land redistribution initiatives in the literature<sup>2</sup> helps  
24 explaining the current countryside and peri-urban landownership structure in developing  
25 countries, as well as an observed need to pursue regional planning endeavours to develop these  
26 areas. For instance, THIESENHUSEN (1995) explains how early ‘revolutionary’ reforms in  
27 Latin America had far reaching consequences for development and poverty alleviation among the  
28 *campesinos* (subsistence farmers in the Spanish-speaking world) and why the results of the  
29 reforms have influenced the current debate of land reform in that continent. FINAN (2007) draws  
30 attention to the fact that recent increases of agriculture output in Peru have been chiefly ascribed  
31 to the 1969 agrarian reform, when vast properties were expropriated by the Peruvian government  
32 and the resulting plots being redistributed to groups of former farm workers.  
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47 GOULD (2006) and MUSYOKA (2006) argue in analogous fashion that a systematic  
48 interpretation of challenges facing people attempting to obtain land regularization in rural  
49 settlements requires examining the historical facts and events leading to the creation of those  
50 settlements. In the cases of Guatemala and Kenya, respectively, continuous processes of  
51 displacement of indigenous people from high quality lands as a means to implement agrarian  
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4 policies were a frequent course of action during colonial times. As in Latin America  
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6 (THIESENHUSEN, 1995), it is reported that a highly inequitable landholding structure has  
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8 resulted that became a source of conflict involving landless and landowners. In order to appease  
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10 the contenders, governments have attempted to develop more appropriate land policies and  
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12 legislation, such as property rights restitution and redistribution schemes.  
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16 Analyses of previous experiences with land reform as a means to assess the potential for  
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18 implementation of successful schemes are found in a range of contributions, although past  
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20 schemes have scarcely adopted regional planning as a means to seek the best location according  
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22 to the needs of settlers and landowners. In the view of DEININGER et al. (2004), for instance,  
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24 governments' approaches to land issues tend to shift substantially over time, dependant upon  
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26 political as well as economic motivations. Among given examples are the cases of Peru,  
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28 Nicaragua, Honduras, and Cuba, where large pieces of land were redistributed exclusively to  
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30 local farm workers in the decades following the Second World War, but agricultural outputs in  
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32 reformed farms were far less than expected basically owing to a lack of complimentary  
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34 infrastructure and pervasive labour problems.  
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40 An opposing point is made by BORRAS (2005), for whom the failure of past  
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42 government interventions in the countryside should not be judged only by the level of production  
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44 in settled areas, but also by the fact that the programmes did not aim at eliminating the persistent  
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46 land monopoly as the main underlying cause of poverty and social unrest throughout the years. In  
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48 a similar vein, PETRAS and VELTMEYER (2007) set forth that a long record of violence by the  
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50 state against the peasantry fighting for arable land inspired the land reform programmes of the  
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52 1960s and 1970s in Latin America. Still on the same grounds, ASSIES (2006) recalls the scant  
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54 results entailing the 1953 land reform in Bolivia to exemplify how biased legal provisions for  
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4 land redistribution have been contested over time and JUSTINIANO (2002) explains how the  
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6 1996 INRA Act was deemed to meet the same fate as previous arrangements for favouring  
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8 traditionally dominant groups like the rural elites that produced cotton for the international  
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10 market in the eastern part of the district of Santa Cruz.  
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14 The progressive change of the state's role in land issues has also been the subject of  
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16 much academic debate. WEGREN (2007) gives an overview of Russian's intervention in  
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18 agriculture during both the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, showing that land policies in Russia  
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20 have seen state withdrawal in some respects, whereas in other policy realms the state has become  
21  
22 even more interventionist. A corresponding study was made by DAS (2007) about the history of  
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24 government intervention in India. The author finds that some of the reasons that made capitalism  
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26 the dominant mode of production in rural areas in the past still play a role in the modern Indian  
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28 state, hindering a successful government approach to the agrarian question.  
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33 Therefore, landholding structures are believed to have evolved over time as a result of a  
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35 milieu of factors. On the other hand, there has also been a shift in planning and governance  
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37 exercises away from traditional land use and intense state intervention towards more  
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39 collaborative private/state initiatives. As observed by HUDALAH et al (2007: 513), 'these  
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41 innovative approaches have been an inevitable consequence of the increasing role of actors  
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43 beyond government agencies in decision-making processes and the implementation of spatial  
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45 development frameworks in peri-urban areas'. Accordingly, for a range of studies in the  
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47 academy, government approaches to land reform have been shaped one way or the other by  
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49 historical factors, although commentators do not necessarily share the same views about the  
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51 extent to which such events have reflected in planning practices capable of positively affecting  
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53 the path of socio-economic development in exurban or peri-urban areas. Given a wide research  
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tradition on the socio-economic factors involving land policy, however, it seems prudent to review it for guidance prior to an assessment of the approaches to land reform in developing countries.

3. Seeking the socio-economic determinants of land allocation

Contributions from the academy abound that identify close links between the access to property rights and the well-being of countryside dwellers (RAVALLION and CHEN, 2004; BARRETT et al., 2005; FINAN, 2007; PETRAS and VELTMEYER, 2007). Also, a number of studies suggest that the arrows of causality run in both directions and there are a variety of perspectives on the matter. In some cases the situation in these areas is believed to depend on the socio-economic condition in urban or peri-urban centres and the overall state of the economy. The role of regional planning to achieve broader socio-economic development is, however, an issue that requires more attention by the literature on land reform, owing to the expected social gains of planning the framework to bring about an overall increase in profitability in the redistributed land.

Undoubtedly, much investigation has been conducted on the social and economic effects of the allocation of property rights. FINAN (2007) looks at implications of the conditions of Peruvian small farmers for the sustainability of the export agriculture in coastal regions of Peru. The size of redistributed plots is also believed to make a difference, as seen in RAVALLION and CHEN (2004). For the authors, sustained rates of poverty reduction in rural China were a clear response to changes in the landholding structure from collective large sized farms to smaller family-based units. BARRETT et al. (2005) provide further evidence from a wide range of countries that equity in land allocation is positively associated with decreased poverty rates.

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5 A second group of studies focuses on the effects of socio-economic conditions on the  
6 success of property rights redistribution. As before, no explicit reference is made on dealing with  
7 problems such as poverty and deprivation within a framework of regional planning so as to  
8 reinforce complementarity between state/market approaches, particularly in the case of joint  
9 actions required by the development of equipments as schools and hospitals, or transportations  
10 infrastructure (commonly called as hard infrastructure & hard policy approaches) and in the case  
11 of the development of professional development skills that will improve labour productivity  
12 (commonly called as soft policy approaches).  
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23 The effect of land's rights on the rural economy is corroborated by evidence from  
24 CHALAMWONG and FEDER's (1988) study in Thailand, where increased credit supply was  
25 found as the primary benefit from formalised landownership. Titling stimulated higher  
26 investment in farms and as a result higher agricultural productivity. In three of the four Thai  
27 provinces analysed, households' investments in their land significantly improved with  
28 accessibility to title. GOULD (2006) uses a case study approach to assess the impacts of land  
29 regularization programmes in Guatemala. The results show that the predicted benefits of the  
30 reforms were strongly constrained by socio-economic elements, specifically in frontier regions.  
31 Continuing rural unrest is also reported following the Guatemalan reforms (THIESENHUSEN,  
32 1995). Also in the Philippines, where roughly half of the country's workers have been employed  
33 in the agricultural sector, the rural economy has caused a remarkable impact on the Filipino  
34 political institutions (BORRAS, 2005). However, most of rural workers' needs have been  
35 overlooked by the 1988 reform and poverty remains widespread, as possession and/or control  
36 over agricultural lands continued chiefly monopolised by rich landed classes.  
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The strategic role of organised groups also permeates a considerable part of the literature, mostly Marxist in orientation. Approaches of the kind have been taken by scholars including PETRAS and VELTMEYER (2007), who believe that class struggle over state power in Latin America is a fundamental avenue to social change in the non-metropolitan ambience. In Brazil, the actions of the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) in organising land invasions abound in the literature (HOEFLE, 2006; MEDEIROS, 2007). Yet a more nuanced, non-Marxist view of the matter is described by DESMARAIS (2008). The author explores the expansion of social movements and their commitment to represent land-related interests of non-urban communities in the policy-making process. One way or another, scholars with both Marxist and non-Marxist conceptions of land reallocation expect popular involvement in land reallocation to play a part, even though they give little or no attention to the use of planning to release the tensions arising from the concentration of land and the resulting need of establishing more balanced policies through consensus and monitoring goals of policies being implemented.

In short, a large body of research demonstrates that changes in the landholding structure can have an impact on the socio-economic status of countryside populations, and such evidence has in itself made land reform a highly debatable issue in academic circles. On the flip side, various country case studies seem to confirm the reverse hypothesis that land reform initiatives might be shaped by intense socio-economic pressure, owing mainly to high levels of deprivation and social exclusion. Notwithstanding, the literature lacks studies that clearly point out to the role of regional planning in improving the mechanisms of high quality land reallocation to secure sustainable growth in the countryside, for example, by encouraging the redistribution of lands that mutually reinforce one another's profitability. This role necessarily includes designing legislation leading to a well-planned transfer of property rights.

#### 4. The legal framework and scope for government intervention

In general, the legal aspect on land redistribution has been widely examined by scholars from different perspectives. In general, the scope of governmental involvement in the issue is defined as the main catalyst for social and economic advancement. Yet some have stressed that private sector initiatives are quintessential to supplement/complement government interventions. HUDALAH et al (2007) notice that although private corporations function to fill the gaps caused by shortcomings of the state, 'they tend to take action only in the areas that are directly connected to their interests'. Consequently, private/state analyses are commonly reported, including in transitional peripheral areas, where the land market is characterized by high levels of uncertainty and widespread conflicts. Views on the matter vary across academic writings in terms of methodology and coverage, although there is little reference to the fact that regional planning can play a part in coordinating seemingly opposing (market/non-market) approaches to land reform through, for instance, shaping the purchase of subsidised land by target groups in selected areas of the region while at the same time designing infrastructure programmes and establishing zoning and other land use regulations to complement the market mechanisms.

In broad lines, study contents comprise but are not limited to the background or initial experiences involving statutory regulation of land use, as well as the measurable impacts of the proposed legislation to land development and future policy challenges. CHIMHOWU and WOODHOUSE (2006), for instance, view that equitable allocation does not discard non-state alternatives. Their article draws on the example of some African countries that have reaffirmed customary rights other than legal arrangements as the legitimate form of securing access to land

by the poor. Additionally, BARRETT et al. (2005) explicit that the type of rules a country adopts would matter less than the effective enforcement and monitoring of those rules.

As approaches to land reform change over time, commentators also vacillate between liberal interpretations of property rights and more interventionist visions of the issue. In comparing instances of success or failure by the state, by civil society and by international organisations, KAY (2006) asserts that governments still have an active role to play in tackling the problems of marginality and social exclusion in Latin America. LI and YAO (2002) characterise China's current landholding structure as a state response to the market's unsuccessful attempts to provide egalitarian land distribution and to impede emerging land markets from inciting further concentration of land in favour of a powerful minority. BORRAS (2003) renders a pro-state critique of recent market-oriented incursions into land policy, stressing that previous experiences have fallen short of expectations. Similarly, ASSIES (2006) views current market-driven legislation with ample limitations on its application and conclude that caution must be taken before departing from classic state-led approaches to land reform.

On the opposite side of the debate, DEININGER et al. (2004) argue that much of the inequality observed in land distribution has derived from former non-market interventions. Their argument is based on a comprehensive survey conducted in Colombia to compare the effectiveness of land markets and land reform. Interventionist land reform, they so concluded, was by far less effective than were land markets in conveying land to the landless, although they admit there might have been some exceptions. Dysfunctions of state administrations have also been cited among the causes of government failure to tackle the difficulties facing peasants (XIANDE, 2003). However, a wide step away from the state control over land markets is advocated by NETO (2004), who salutes the market-based programmes as a useful alternative to

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4 conventional forms of state intervention in the non-urban sector. FRASER (2007) takes a hybrid  
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6 position in arguing that distinctive geo-historical contexts might in some cases lead governments  
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8 to combine market-led approaches with direct forms of intervention in laying down regulations  
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10 for land use.  
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14 A great divide in the literature is thus observed that casts either the government or the  
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16 market itself as culpable for landownership imperfections. However, mainstream scholarship  
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18 concurs to the perception that neither the markets nor the state alone are likely to be able to  
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20 overcome the detrimental effects of land concentration. Conceptually, we argue that it is not  
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22 primarily from the deficiencies of the price mechanism that the need for regional planning arises,  
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24 but from the inadequacies of land redistribution patterns for socio-economic growth that can  
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26 develop in the absence of planning. The land market could work perfectly transferring property  
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28 rights, but it still might not bring about an efficient use of resources to make the land productive  
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30 and profitable. In order to reach this, more integrated soft and hard policies need to be developed  
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32 at a regional scale, that link the national and the local interests through an efficient planning of  
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34 strengths and weaknesses.  
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40 Hence, assuming that land reform is by no means the only factor in determining socio-  
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42 economic development, an argument can be constructed on the grounds that regional planning  
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44 could perform a role in combining market and non-market interactions to encourage a greater  
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46 variety of economic activities in order to raise the income of land reform beneficiaries.  
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48 Accordingly, extensive coordination with different sectors would be a sine qua non condition for  
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50 the pursuit of integrated projects and thus close the development gap between urban and non-  
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52 urban areas. A range of joint strategies is hence believed to provide the basis for socio-economic  
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54 development, through for instance infrastructure development and educational programmes  
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(addressing both soft and hard policy actions through regional planning initiatives). In considering this question, a step could be to consider how to improve the quality of resources by better using the social capital and by changing the education and training of the labour force to meet the future requirements of the regional economy. The next section examines how land reform schemes in developing countries have addressed the issue of regional development.

5. Land reform in the developing world: brief overview

Land reform has occurred in the developing world as an important step in achieving economic development. Yet approaches have varied in terms of the degree to which governments intervene. For reasons outlined in the introduction, the following survey of land reform initiatives does not restrict discussion of the socio-economic impacts of the schemes, especially where there is sound evidence of these impacts. The role of the state is also given special attention. Information and data provided by a range of studies (e.g. VALLETTA, 2002; BORRAS, 2003; DEININGER et al, 2004; BRINK et al, 2005) are used as an input for a comparative analysis of land reform in a selected group of countries.

Although in some countries of Eastern Europe collective structures of production have barely contributed to economic growth, mainland China stands as a good example of a transitional economy that succeeded in this matter without allowing private sales of rural land in their processes of land reform (HO and SPOOR, 2006). An intermediary step was taken by Ukraine to change the country's common land tenure structure into a lease system in order to give peasants the right to work small parcels of land. Poverty decreased as the system provided rural workers with a stable income for the term of the lease (VALLETTA, 2002). At the opposite end of the spectrum, Belarus was openly committed to the privatisation of lands in the 1990s. The

country saw deep declines in agricultural output leading to a scanty GDP growth after an intense privatisation process of rural lands (SWINNEN, 2003). Thus, by looking at the transition experience, the question might be raised whether state-free negotiation of land is a pre-requisite for sustainable regional development, all other factors equal.

In non-transitional economies as well, the purchase and sale of properties do not tell much about the success of land reform driven by market rules. For instance, formal land markets in the 1980s in Kenya could not meet the landless' huge demand for land, what caused the development of informal settlements and non-compliance with property rights' legislation (MUSYOKA, 2006). Hence analysts believe that more infrastructure investments by the state would have facilitated the setting-up process of family farms while expediting the combat of poverty in that African country. Another interesting case from Africa involves the 1995 Rural Development Programme (RDP), put in place in South Africa to mitigate extreme poverty and land concentration resulting from the apartheid regime. The standard idea was to offer loans at subsidize interest rates for the landless to buy land on the market. BRINK et al. (2005) examined changes in basic socio-economic indicators in the areas reached by the RDP to find a very slow increase in the household expenditure level, but also an increase in severe poverty and inequality indexes.

In Asia, most countries have legal restrictions to land rentals and formal land markets have developed only recently. In the Philippines however, the very first prototype of land reform of a free market kind was implemented in 1988 under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Programme (CARP). The scheme came into being in the form of voluntary land transfer schemes through lease contracts. Although the programme achieved reasonable land redistribution, agricultural development in CARP areas has been slow and poverty still abound in targeted areas



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4 because most economically productive lands remain in the hands of powerful landowners  
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6 (BORRAS, 2003).  
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9 Similarly, administrative redistributions of property rights abound in Latin America,  
10 where free land market projects have increasingly been designed with a view to replace direct  
11 government intervention through land expropriation. However, unintended consequences have  
12 derived from insufficient public investments as a complement to market-led land distribution  
13 schemes. An analysis of a 1998 World Bank-funded land regularization project in Guatemala  
14 gives an example of how the expected benefits of land markets' allocation of property rights can  
15 be severely constrained by socio-economic factors alongside a lack of robust government  
16 strategies in the agricultural frontier region of Petén (GOULD, 2006). More specifically, land-  
17 attached investments have not been sufficient to overcome the absence of strong markets in the  
18 region capable of absorbing the crops produced in settlements.  
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33 Colombia has also made an option for land reform giving attention to subsidized  
34 transactions of land, as regulated by Law 160 of 1994. According to the scheme, the government  
35 has been responsible solely to provide loans and a range of basic post-land purchase support  
36 services, but the marginal status of most acquired properties has required many more resources  
37 than anticipated and high interest rates have led to defaults in loan paybacks. However,  
38 contrasting views are found about the success of the scheme in Colombia. While DEININGER et  
39 al. (2004) understand that the land market was more effective in transferring land to the poor than  
40 had been administrative land reform, BORRAS (2005) argues that the pace of socio-economic  
41 development has been slow and uncertain as substantial increments in agricultural output and  
42 employment are still to be seen.  
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5 In Brazil, market-led land reform programmes have been introduced since mid-1990s in  
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7 order to stimulate land transactions between major landowners and the landless in non-urban  
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9 areas (PEREIRA, 2007). The programmes' main goal has been to fight countryside poverty  
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11 resulting from the country's high level of land concentration. However, major infrastructure  
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13 strategies and other state-supported activities in the areas reached by the programmes have been  
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15 less than sufficient (BORRAS, 2003). So far, results have been meagre in terms of poverty  
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17 alleviation and the Brazilian countryside exhibits slow socio-economic development. At the same  
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19 time, organised groups of low-income people continue invading exurban lands as well as peri-  
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21 urban properties in order to force land expropriation by the state (MEDEIROS, 2007).  
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26 By the same token, Bolivia launched the National Agrarian Reform Service Act (INRA)  
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28 in 1996, establishing public auctions for surplus land. Access to land has been made preferential  
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30 for indigenous groups and landless peasants. The INRA Act counts on a taxation system over  
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32 land use to provide local governments with funds to support production in the settlements.  
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34 However, the government has failed to fully enforce the tax legislation and the pattern of access  
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36 to land has not significantly been altered. The availability of World Bank's funds also led  
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38 Ecuador (under the PROTIERRAS programme)  
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40 and Peru to design property rights redistribution schemes according to market forces, but socio-  
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42 economic results in both countries have not been disparate from prevalent results in their Latin  
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44 American counterparts.  
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49 In a somewhat different fashion, the Agrarian Development Institute in Costa Rica has  
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51 purchased and redistributed land for the creation of small-sized settlements in addition to offering  
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53 a range of infrastructure services to help family farms succeed in the agricultural market.  
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55 However, the amount of public investments has not been homogeneously allocated and income  
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inequality in the countryside remains a matter of concern. Finally, mixed results in terms of socio-economic equity can be found in diverse South Asian countries, as a series of World Bank reports have pointed out, where the scope of government intervention has varied considerably. Table 1 summarizes the approach to land reform and its socio-economic impacts in a selected group of developing countries.<sup>3</sup>

[Table 1 about here]

To sum up so far: the pendulum swings and will probably continue to swing between more and less state intervention, even in models relying on land market mechanisms. Nonetheless, the above discussion indicates that great care must be taken in considering which findings from studies of land reform may be applicable to a particular context. Moreover, the above summary of the recent trend in adopting market-based schemes as well as former state-led approaches presents a bleak picture, clearly lacking in success stories.<sup>4</sup>

In view of this and the previously mentioned arguments, it stands to reason that an absence of concerted actions has contributed to the failure of either market or non-market attempts to reduce poverty. And as stated in the previous sections, the adoption of regional planning coupled with land reform policy could have contributed to a more efficient use of the settlements' resources and to an improved quality of labour whereby yielding higher standards of living in the region. However, despite extensive and often opposite assessments of various land reform attempts in the literature, there is very limited evidence of the study and implementation of comprehensive regional planning as a key vehicle to spur wider socio-economic development in developing countries.

## 6. Regional planning in support of socio-economic development

As seen from our countries sample, the problem of slow socio-economic development has persisted notwithstanding numerous land reform initiatives that counted on different degrees of government interposition in land-related issues. In many cases, observers have reported serious obstacles to the expansion of the regional economy, concluding that infrastructure constraints impose high barriers to entry for low incomers. Arguably, this unveils a lack of planning at the regional level to encourage private investments benefiting the redistributed areas through strategies such as the creation of a system of subsidies, grants or rebates, thus creating the conditions that are particularly attractive to firms setting up in the regions, with high multiplier effects. As mentioned before, the integration of regional planning and land reform efforts is paramount for developmental intents. Being a category of land use planning, regional planning involves designing and placing infrastructure and other pro-growth activities in a regional outreach. However, the use of the literature on regional planning to land reform in developing countries first requires a determined effort to make some sense out of a seemingly divergent set of studies and empirical findings.

Much attention has been given by this literature to the need for housing and access to basic services, such as piped water, sewage and electricity, by the poor living not only in the countryside but also along the fringes of large cities. Particularly if it is considered that the creation of market economies will be at the basis of more sustainable land reforms and the proximity to existent markets might be a plus in such dynamics, peri-urban areas might be seen as some of the most suitable places to enable a land reform capable of sustaining these deprived populations through time. However, the areas beyond the redistributed settlements have not

significantly been reached by the expected benefits of land reform. As a result, a series of problems have involved the governance of peri-urban spaces. Difficulties range from severe resource constraints facing local and central governments, to the absolute lack of governance institutions in these areas that could bridge this gap.

Despite some advancements in the condition of peri-urban populations, it has been noted in the literature a clear mismatch between unregulated peri-urban sprawls and elementary land use planning instruments such as zoning, density distribution and equitable provision of public services. MORELLO et al. (2003), for example, discuss the conflict between rural and urban development in Argentine settlements outside Buenos Aires, stressing the lack of planning over the expansion process of suburban agglomerations. In India, the management of these inordinate mixed areas is particularly intricate as most of them are situated beyond the administrative limits of the city and are commonly not rendered as specific zones for planning. However, an infrastructure-led growth model has been proposed by KENNEDY (2007), whose dominant strategy is based on public–private partnerships to attract investments to Indian peri-urban areas through regional industrial policies.

This literature has also recognised the importance of identifying the elements contributing to inveterate poverty in urban and peri-urban areas, as in HERRERA and ROUBAUD (2005). The possibility of entering the job market, as well as infrastructure features in the location, have been rendered as relevant factors leading to exit from chronic deprivation. A panel data analysis in that regard was performed by ARIMAH (2003) on the provision of primary infrastructure in African countries. The author’s investigation imparted that public sector expenditure is a significant variable explaining intercity differences in the provision of basic infrastructure, such as water, sewerage, sanitation, electricity and telecommunication services. A

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4 similar analysis was made for Israel by PORTNOV (2002), who looked at intra-urban differences  
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6 in income levels, founding the distribution of income across population groups to be a function of  
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8 housing and commuting expenses, among other determinants. The work proposed a series of  
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10 development strategies that include ameliorating peripheries' physical infrastructure. However,  
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12 the great majority of such studies cover urban areas where infrastructure efforts by the state have  
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14 been concentrated upon.  
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18 Some academic debates on the private/state relationship seem to be adamant that peri-  
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20 urban areas cannot change significantly without the support of the state. For instance, while  
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22 approaching the peri-urbanisation surge in East Asia, HUDALAH et al (2007) mentioned that the  
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24 national government in countries like Thailand and China has upgraded peri-urban areas through  
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26 the provision of infrastructure for industries. The authors pay attention to the fact that the  
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28 government has played a part not only as an instigator but also the developer of pro-growth peri-  
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30 urbanisation through local state-owned business organisations. Additionally, the literature unveils  
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32 that the state has adopted principles such as decentralisation and the rule of law in association  
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34 with planning strategies to encourage private investment. For instance, decentralization to combat  
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36 poverty has been emphasised in the Ugandan Plan for Modernization of Agriculture  
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38 (BAHIIGWA and WOODHOUSE, 2005).  
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45 For the segment of the literature dealing with the countryside, the integration of exurban  
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47 areas into economic growth processes requires the creation of territorial policy networks in the  
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49 different state structures and scales of intervention, the economy and society. DALE (2000) has  
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51 already sustained that regional development programmes could be more effective should  
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53 governments opt for more flexible instruments such as decentralised planning processes, coupled  
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55 with monitoring systems and coordination, so as to encourage initiatives from below. On the  
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other hand, SONN (2007) points out that it is recommendable in some cases that national authorities take precautions during the planning-making process not to allow local governments to channel resources into their own backyards. Most such studies corroborate with the idea that for strategic planning to become an effective tool, there must be a will to reconcile local and regional interests. Conclusions converge towards the need of a suited space for planned conjunct actions to map out the actual situation and specify the goals and means required for achieving environment-friendly regional development.

Opening space for comprehensive planning initiatives has been a common recommendation arising from the literature examining diverse aspects of land policy in the developing world. Examples abound. The goal of providing affordable housing following processes of land delivery in Nigeria has been examined by IKEJIOFOR (2005), who stressed the need for an institutional capacity to meet the government's policy commitments to socio-economic development. Whilst assessing the role of municipalities in fighting poverty, PARNELL (2004) realises the increasing importance of creating better organisational interfaces between political and administrative functions to answer the critical question of how to foster distributive justice. As slum relocation has become a huge challenge facing crowded cities in Thailand, VIRATKAPAN et al. (2004) acknowledge the requirement of specialised activities at the formulation and consolidation stages of the projects. For China, a policy package has been proposed by TAO and XU (2007), to address the challenge of rural land tenure insecurity in a holistic manner, covering local urban planning and land use planning. Concerns of the kind have also been raised by DE GRASSI (2007), who focuses on new methods of planning for application in the African agriculture and concludes that pro-poor planning strategies require contextualisation with aspects of contemporary politics and society.

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5 From the previous accounts, it is inferable that recent planning studies on developing  
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7 countries tend to emphasise urban contexts as opposed to countryside settings. In particular, the  
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9 peri-urban space has received less than enough attention, despite the fact that settlements in  
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11 peripheral zones have rapidly been occupied by low-incomers without appropriate infrastructure  
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13 services, resulting in increased social discontent and conflict. As a result, the literature has not  
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15 reported clear-cut findings or unambiguous lessons from planning strategies adopted in the  
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17 general context of land reform, particularly as regards the role of the state and the market. With  
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19 the interdependency between public investment and private economic activity, land reform  
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21 policies could have fostered better results in the regional level, had such interdependency been  
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23 taken in greater account.  
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28 In fact, a lack of strategic planning has been noted in both state-led, administrative land  
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30 reform and market-driven, negotiated schemes. Under the former approach, state intervention  
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32 based mainly on land expropriation does not ensure that the expropriated properties are suitable  
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34 for agricultural purposes. Under the latter, market failures may obstruct low-income individuals'  
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36 access to productive land. In both cases, deficient local infrastructure in settled areas as well as  
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38 long distances to dynamic markets have followed the implementation of the schemes. In addition,  
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40 the regions beyond the redistributed settlements have not significantly been reached by the  
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42 expected benefits of the reform and hence the impacts of the schemes for the regional economy  
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44 have been uncertain.  
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49 Finally, from the literature review, it is not possible to say how acquainted governments  
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51 in the developing world are with the importance of regional planning for the success of land  
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53 reform, despite ample evidence of the persistence of deprivation associated with inequitable  
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55 distributions of property rights. It can be pointed out, however, that no matter what kind of land  
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4 reform programmes have been disseminated, they have to a large extent been detached from  
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6 comprehensive planning strategies, such as influencing industrial location, specialisation or  
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8 diversification of activities in settled areas, improvement of the population's labour skills  
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10 encouragement of tertiary industries, and so forth, which poses the sternest challenges for those  
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12 governments willing to ameliorate the situation in the countryside through the use of soft and  
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14 hard policy. Thus, more studies are needed to bridge a perceived gap in the cutting edge of  
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16 research concerning the role of regional planning in land reform.  
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23 7. The literature at a glance: conclusions and final remarks  
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26 This survey of the literature has ranged over a wide area in the field of land reform in  
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28 developing countries. Some factors analysed are apparently disparate, but all are in some way  
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30 related to the regional development status of the countries. For some topics the developmental  
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32 implications of land reform were clear, whereas for others only punctual impacts could be  
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34 credited to the scope of state intervention in land issues. Nonetheless, mainstream academic  
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36 studies fall short of fully answering questions about the role regional planning could perform in  
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38 integrating market and non-market channels to undertake one of the greatest long-term challenges  
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40 facing developing countries, namely redistributing land along with inaugurating a pro-growth  
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42 trend in the countryside.  
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47 As was made clear along the review, this work has distanced itself from the cycle of  
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49 market-based versus state-led critiques that have formed the original impetus of many studies.  
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51 While we would not wish to foreclose the debates about the extent of the state's intervention in  
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53 the area or on how to interpret its impacts, we have not limited ourselves to a narrow approach to  
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55 this matter. Yet we intended to provide a short compendium of existing research efforts in the  
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4 areas of land reform and planning, with a view to pointing out that different policy approaches  
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6 have not been able to magnify the pro-growth benefits of current land reform in the developing  
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8 world. The following table summarises the main issues addressed in our review.  
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13 [Table 2 about here]  
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18 Undoubtedly, much research has been carried out on developing countries, where  
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20 different degrees of state intervention on land issues have been observed. A snapshot of empirical  
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22 findings in a group of such countries has shown scarce evidence of the systematic use of planning  
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24 strategies associated with land reform, particularly negotiated land reform, although more limited  
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26 plan-based approaches have been reported to harness basic deficiencies in land allocation,  
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28 particularly in urban and periurban spaces. As a result, the various land reform attempts have  
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30 never completely eliminated the structural blockages to socio-economic development in the  
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32 countryside, a socially inclusive advancement that neither market forces alone nor isolated  
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34 government intervention have had full capacity to foment.  
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39 Although prudence needs to be employed in comparisons of land reform approaches  
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41 between countries, due to striking dissimilarities in terms of socio-economic factors, the  
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43 characteristics of their legal systems, and many other country-specific elements, the possibility of  
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45 applying comprehensive regional planning as a mechanism to reconcile the conflicts of interests  
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47 over land ownership and mutually enhance the economic benefits of land reform in countryside  
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49 and periurban areas must by no means be discarded, if the socially desirable goals of socio-  
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51 economic development and property rights security in developing countries are to be achieved.  
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Table 1: Land negotiation and government intervention in selected countries

	Market-based land negotiation	Scope of government intervention	Effect to rural economy
Belarus	▫Yes (formal land market)	▫Regulation of land privatisation	▫Low rates of rural economic growth
Bolivia	▫Mixed (public auctions of surplus land)	▫Taxation system to support settlements	▫Limited rural poverty decrease
Brazil	▫Yes (free negotiation of land)	▫Loans and limited support services	▫Limited rural poverty decrease
China	▫None (common tenure structure)	▫Regulation, basic support and overview	▫Increased overall economic growth
Colombia	▫Yes (subsidized land transactions)	▫Loans and basic support services	▫Slow rural development
Costa Rica	▫Mixed (land acquisition and redistribution)	▫Infrastructure services limited to some areas	▫Small-scale redistribution of wealth
Ecuador	▫Mixed (land acquisition fund)	▫Registration and basic support services	▫Unsustained poverty alleviation
Guatemala	▫Yes (land market allocations)	▫Loans and regularisation of land	▫Limited rural poverty decrease
Kenya	▫Mixed (restitution and redistribution)	▫Limited support services	▫Limited rural poverty decrease
Peru	▫Yes (free negotiation of land)	▫Limited government investments	▫Increased social inequality
Philippines	▫Yes (voluntary land lease contracts)	▫Loan regulation and limited support services	▫Slow rural development
South Africa	▫Yes (free negotiation of land)	▫Loans and limited support services	▫Household income increase mostly urban
Ukraine	▫Mixed (land lease system)	▫Regulation and overview of land use	▫Moderate rural poverty decrease



Table 2. Highlights of the literature: land policy and planning

Issues	Developing countries in general	Brazil
Historical underpinnings	<p>Historical circumstances explain the evolution of rural land systems</p> <p>Former approaches did not focus on eliminating the persistent land monopolies</p> <p>Failure of past government interventions as underlying cause of rural poverty and unrest</p> <p>Past experiences affected government approaches to rural land issues</p> <p>The shaping of rural policy seeks to reverse historical tendencies to land concentration</p>	<p>Past social and economic crises have aggravated the living conditions of the peasantry</p> <p>Displacement of family farmers among the main causes of inequities in rural land structures</p> <p>Earlier land reform attempts subject to extensive and often critical assessments</p> <p>Negative impacts of land concentration overlooked by former government approaches</p> <p>Rural poverty historically perceived as an obstacle to developmental efforts</p>
Socio-economic determinants	<p>Access to arable land positively associated with decreased poverty rates</p> <p>Socio-economic pressure, e.g. rural deprivation and conflict, influences land reform initiatives</p> <p>Organised peasant movements play a part in land reallocation</p> <p>Scant rural development undermines the success of land redistribution schemes</p> <p>Equitable land redistribution likely to improve the socio-economic status of rural populations</p>	<p>The spread of deforestation as a consequence of land concentration</p> <p>Farm and non-farm activities have measurable effects on rural poverty rate</p> <p>Conflicts involving the peasantry and landowners as a result of failed land reform processes</p> <p>The role of the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) in forcing land de-concentration</p> <p>Settled families' agricultural production affects regional development</p>
Legal framework	<p>Legislative provisions define the range of governmental involvement in rural economy</p> <p>Access to land mainly an issue of national policy</p> <p>Little evidence of rural development as a result of isolated rural policy</p> <p>Improvements in rural legislation believed to foster better living conditions</p> <p>Negative and positive implications observed in market-driven land reform legislation</p>	<p>Contradictions within legal framework lead to various types of violence in the countryside</p> <p>Property rights not secured to targeted groups by land reform regulation</p> <p>Socio-economic impacts originally intended by the programmes also uncertain</p> <p>Slowness of the judiciary contributes to increasing costs of land expropriation</p> <p>Current legislation mainly market oriented</p>

Table 2. (Cont'd)

Issues	Developing countries in general	Brazil
Degree of state intervention	<p>Opposing views on proper extent of government intervention in the rural sphere</p> <p>Inequality in landownership as deriving from former non-market interventions</p> <p>Effectiveness of interventionist land reform in comparison with land markets in reallocating land</p> <p>Markets forces or state intervention alone are not sufficient to eliminate rural poverty</p> <p>Joint strategies with multiple actors believed to be an efficient developmental tool</p>	<p>Deployment of market mechanisms to stimulate land access seen as neo-liberal</p> <p>Distortions within state apparatuses weaken the effectiveness of land reform programmes</p> <p>State intervention does not guarantee quality of expropriated land</p> <p>Loan-based land programmes as a convenient justification for not spending in redistributed land</p> <p>Market forces or state intervention alone have limited capacity to foment social inclusion</p>
Land policy	<p>Land policy formulation dependant upon country-specific reasons</p> <p>Governments' approach shifts over time</p> <p>Land regularization and restitution, also expropriation</p> <p>Examples of rural properties for collective use</p> <p>State-market hybrid land transfer schemes</p> <p>Market-based approaches to land redistribution</p>	<p>Contemporary programmes are mostly market-based</p> <p>Land Bill Programme (PCT) provides loans and stimulate the purchase of rural land</p> <p>National Programme of Assistance to Family Farms (PRONAF), a post-purchase loans-based scheme</p> <p>Programmes paying little attention to beneficiaries' quality of life in the settlements</p>
Regional planning	<p>Recent planning literature as limited mostly to urban areas as opposed to rural areas</p> <p>Countryside development believed to have links with infrastructure investments and basic services</p> <p>Absence of comprehensive actions, but instances of pro-poor cooperative partnerships</p> <p>Decentralisation, coordination and participation as essential to diminish rural deprivation</p> <p>Sustained rural development unlikely without territorial policy networks</p>	<p>Limited evidence in the literature of the use of regional planning instruments</p> <p>Land redistribution schemes implemented without adequate on-site improvements</p> <p>Deficient local infrastructure in settlements in addition to long distances to dynamic markets</p> <p>Technological advancements not benefiting most family-based units</p> <p>Persistent post-purchase difficulties and lack of comprehensive regional planning</p>

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<sup>1</sup> Supported by the Programme AlBan, the European Union Programme of High Level Scholarships for Latin America, scholarship no. E07D402641BR.

<sup>2</sup> There is a fundamental difference in the literature between land tenure reforms (changes in land tenure rules without necessarily redistributing land) and land reforms (policy initiatives aiming at redistributing land). This article focuses on the latter.

<sup>3</sup> Also, a comparison of the % of rural population with access to sanitation facilities in those countries gives an idea of their socio-economic situation. Belarus: 97.0; Costa Rica: 95.0; Ukraine: 83.0; Guatemala: 79.0; Philippines: 72.0; Ecuador: 72.0; China: 59.0; Colombia: 58.0; South Africa: 49.0; Kenya: 48.0; Brazil: 37.0; Peru: 36.0; Bolivia: 22.0. Source: The World Bank, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> A comprehensive view of the factors leading to the negative results of land reform in various developing countries, or the reasons for their relative success in some cases, can be found in Powelson and Stock's *The Peasant Betrayed: agriculture and land reform in the Third World* (1987), Oelgeschlager, Gunn and Hain publishers, Boston. For Latin America more specifically, please see W. C. Thiesenhusen's *Broken Promises: Agrarian Reform and the Latin American Campesino* (1995), Westview Press.