

New report looks at how other countries manage their land

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Credit: University of Aberdeen

Academics from the University of Aberdeen were part of a team that recently produced a report for the Scottish Land Commission looking at how other countries manage land ownership.

Currently in Scotland, there are no restrictions on how much land a single individual can own, and a concentrated pattern of land ownership exists, particularly in rural areas.

The Scottish Government has stated that its vision is for a fairer – or wider and more equitable – distribution of land in Scotland, where communities and individuals have access to land and there is greater diversity of land ownership. As such, the Scottish Land Commission asked a group of academics to produce a report that would enable them to learn about the experience of other [countries](#) of imposing limits on who can own land and/or how much land, any single individual or entity can own.

Malcolm Combe from the University's law school, and Professor Norman Hutchison from the Business School were both involved in the study, which was led by Dr. Jayne Glass from the University of the Highlands and Islands. The research identified and described restrictions on land ownership in 22 countries that could be used for a meaningful comparison with Scotland.

The team found that the majority of countries they looked at have some form of approval process in place in relation to owning land.

Countries were selected using a set of criteria to identify those with similar legal, economic and geographic contexts to Scotland. Places with strong regulation, governance and transaction processes, low levels of perceived corruption, and a strong [property rights](#) regime were identified and then categorised, considering the range of interventions then cross-checking the findings with experts in each country to ensure accuracy.

Mr Combe said: "When we started this project it was important to find out which countries first and foremost could be compared more readily to Scotland. From my perspective, this involved considering how land transactions were regulated and publicised and also how much respect and protection is afforded to existing property rights in any given place."

Professor Hutchison said: "Land ownership brings a range of valuable

functionings to the owner some of which are financial and some which are not based on a pecuniary return. State intervention in land markets is generally not welcomed by existing landowners as it introduces uncertainty and can often have a negative effect on price or restrict use. However, policy changes targeted at land ownership may benefit the nation if they result in positive economic benefits and improve community wellbeing. This research provides evidence of the practice in similar countries to Scotland."

Mr Combe added: "The work allowed us to demonstrate what other countries do to prevent land fragmentation or control of important strategic land resources by unaccountable owners. This work suggests Scotland would not be going against the grain if it was to introduce similar measures. Now the Scottish Land Commission will have something to consider when developing proposals for further land reform in Scotland."

More information: Research on interventions to manage land markets and limit the concentration of land ownership elsewhere in the world: [landcommission.gov.scot/wp-con ... FINAL-March-2018.pdf](https://landcommission.gov.scot/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/2018-03-29-Research-on-interventions-to-manage-land-markets-and-limit-the-concentration-of-land-ownership-elsewhere-in-the-world-FINAL-March-2018.pdf)

Provided by University of Aberdeen

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