

# **IMPROVING THE MODE OF ACADEMIC NETWORKING TO SCALE UP LAND EDUCATION IN AFRICA**

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**Keywords:** Academic network, academic partnership, Africa, education, capacity development, land administration, land management, networking, partnerships

## **SUMMARY**

Typical problems faced by people in Africa today include the lack of access to land, land tenure insecurity, ineffective land administrations systems, inefficient land governance and the lack of approaches that are locally adaptable to solving the local problems in the continent (among many other land-related challenges). Academic institutions in African that offer educational programmes in land administration and land management play critical roles in training and research in the continent. However, most of them lack opportunities to learn from best practices around the world and often work in isolation from each other. Effective building and exchange of land-related knowledge among scholars are crucial for Africa. It provides the opportunity for the scholars to do more collaborative research and innovate ways to convert their research results into practical products that has policy relevance as well as socioeconomic and environmental values. Considering the need to scale up knowledge and capacity for the efficient use and management of land and natural resources in Africa, this paper explores a new mode of academic networking that is capable of scaling up land education in Africa.

The paper analyses some of the existing networks in order to improve mode for scaling up land education land related research in Africa. It looks to identify areas for improvements in academia to include academic activism, youth mentoring, women empowerment, and investment in land by the networks. The paper also calls for making the networks active, efficient, and responsive to the land education needs of the continent. Finally, the paper calls for a borderless Africa that would allow for free-flow of networking activities between Africans; and remove the immigration walls that are holding back African academics from freely interacting with each other.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

‘Across the African continent, there is need to understand the changing role of land and natural resource tenure in all countries to improve knowledge management strategies and approaches towards a pro-poor land and natural resource agenda’ (Chigbu et al., 2019a: p. viii). This implies improving the capacity development on land. It also means an urgent need to boost education on land and natural resource management in Africa to improve and innovate their pursuit of solutions to local problems. Typical problems faced by people in Africa today include the lack of access to land, land tenure insecurity, ineffective land administrations systems, inefficient land governance and the lack of approaches that are locally adaptable to solving the local problems in the continent (among many other land-related challenges). ‘To address these problems, strategies and tools for increasing poor people’s access to secure land and natural resources is crucial’ (Chigbu et al., 2018a: p. 4). ‘Equally concerning is the limited impact that research outputs have on land governance practise in Africa’ (Chigbu et al., 2019b: p. 3). Hence, there is a need for a research centred concept (and agenda) capable of catalysing innovative research, policies and good practise on land governance in Africa. This is why the African Union (AU) recognised the need for African educational institutions to embark on good quality research on land to directly produce the knowledge needed for tackling the many land problems facing the continent (AUC-ECA-AfDB Consortium, 2010). However, fully assuming this role has not been easy for many African Higher Education institutions (and related research and teaching institutions) because they often face socio-economic, institutional and capacity challenges.

Academic institutions in African (notably, the universities) that offer educational programmes in land administration and land management (and other land-related programmes) play critical roles in training and research in the continent. However, “most of them lack opportunities to learn from best practices around the world and often work in isolation from each other” (Chigbu et al., 2018a: p. 3). They create in inter-university networking as a way to engage in education services (including research) to generate ‘new insights, concepts, methodologies and educational background material’ they need in delivering land-related education (Chigbu et al., 2018a: p. 4). These university networking engagements usually take the form of collaborations or partnerships.

Networking (or getting into networks) is crucial for African universities offering land-related programmes because it acts as a ‘very effective mediums of access to globally available information on widely varying issues, play a major role in this new age’ (Jamal, 1995). The efficient and effective building and exchange of land-related knowledge among scholars

(including students, researchers, lecturers, academic administrators, policymakers and educators) are crucial for Africa. It provides the opportunity for scholars in the continent to do more collaborative research and innovate ways to convert their research results into practical products that has policy relevance (and socioeconomic and environmental values).

Considering the need to scale up knowledge and capacity for the efficient use (and management) of land and natural resources in Africa, this paper explores a new mode of academic networking that is capable of scaling up land education in Africa. The approach to the arguments presented in the paper is fourfold. Apart from its introduction and conclusion, the paper begins first by tracing the relationship between land and education in Africa; and identifying land education and framing it in the African context. Second, it uses available literature on the subject to survey the predominant mode of academic networking that exist in Africa (and between Africa and others). Third, it identifies areas for improvement in any new mode of an academic driven network for scaling up land education in the continent. Fourth, it argues for a borderless Africa as policy implication for improving networking on the continent.

## **2. THE AFRICAN LENSES OF LAND, EDUCATION AND NETWORKS**

### **2.1 Land, Education and Networks Have Always Had Relationships**

Land tenure, especially in societies where customary tenure systems are still actively in practice, was a bundle of rights, including knowledge. In these societies, which prevalently found in Africa, Land is much more than real estate. It is both a heritage and the life-support system that must be passed on from generation to generation to ensure continuity and sustainability. This makes land (and all its associated issues) to have both real (estate) and informational (knowledge) dimensions. So, land is knowledge and those who hold it long enough become knowledgeable about issues that relate to land. Knowledge or education aside, networks are critical aspects of life in traditional African societies. According to Ojike (1946: p. 110) who studied the African behavioural linkages to land in the late 1930s, once land allocation secured, landowners “can build a home, raise a family, join clubs, and participate in other forms of social, political, and religious behaviours.” This reflects not only the influence land plays as a factor of development and livelihood; it also shows that having land allows access to networking. Hence, land is a factor of education and networking in traditional African societies. Traditional societies aside, not much has changed, except that people no longer have access to land as was the case in traditional societies. The challenge of lack of access to land in contemporary Africa means that the those who statutorily have titles to land are more secure, have privileges that others do not have (e.g. mortgage) and if held long enough develop land rights knowledge that allows them to sustain their landholdings. This means that, vaguely or firmly, land has some level of associations with education and networking and vice versa. Hence, why this paper considers land education an issue worth investigating.

### **2.2 What are Meant By ‘Land Education’ and ‘Academic Network’?**

Land education is a term that puts accounts of land at the centre of capacity development in the holding, using, putting to development; and governing and making land policies that can benefit people in specific jurisdictions. Chambers (2008: p. 113) referred to land education as the ‘curriculum of place’. By referring to it in this way, Chambers (2008: p. 125) who studied the

Nations communities in Northwest Territories in Canada, identified four dimensions of the curriculum of place to include: a *sense of time*, *enskillment*, *education of attention*, and *wayfinding*. In the context of Africa, *sense of time* relates to education that relates to the history of the continent (colonisation); *enskillment* connotes to the urgent need for the continent to develop its needed capacities for its future development, *education of attention* relates to awareness creation; and *wayfinding* entails knowledge search for its sustainability. Of these dimensions, *sense of time* and *wayfinding* reflect place-based education (Cincera et al., 2019). Place-based education is a concept and practice that seek to enable communities to allow the engagement of learners and their teachers to join them in solving their local problems (Khadka et al., 2020). Africa's experience of North-South academic partnerships or networking have focused on model similar to place-based education — a situation whereby none African based professors or researchers (and their students) have been welcome to participate in researches about Africa (or teach in Africa) to help solve particular problems in the continent (Chigbu et al., 2015). *Enskillment* and *education of attention* reflect conventional education (Duran et al., 2019). However, the four dimensions have linkages to networking. Tuck et al. (2014) agreed with these dimensions, and further deconstructed *land education* as the capacity to advance educational practices and research on land-related concerns. In the context of academics, a 'network is a virtual community of those involved in teaching and research at tertiary institutions' (Whital, 2019: p. 1). The networking can be between institutions or individuals — usually, to the advancement of research and teaching through collaboration. This can lead to improvements in methods, teaching content, and the general knowledge and skills of members of the network or their professions or societies. It can occur at a global, continental, sub-continental, national or regional level local level. Both land education and networking are parts and parcel of the land policy agenda of the African Union (AU).

### **2.3 Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa Acknowledges Land Education and Academic Networking**

Land education, as has been constructed in this paper, puts focus on educational activities (including teaching and research) that engages knowledge building and knowledge sharing as a set of relations and conditions. This is per the *Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa*<sup>1</sup> (AUC-ECA-AfDB Consortium, 2010: p. 25), which acknowledges the need for filling the 'capacity gap' in the land sectors in the continent using 'long term strategies and programmes' that can 'deal with capacity constraints'. The *Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa* directly calls for intensifying capacity building and capacity development on land issues in the continent. This is a call for intensifying *land education* in Africa. It supports multiple measures for achieving its goals of developing capacities in the African land sector, including academic networking.

## **3. THE MODE OF ACADEMIC NETWORKING BY AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES**

### **3.1 The Most Prominent Land Focused Networks in Africa**

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<sup>1</sup> This Framework and Guidelines is a commitment of African governments in land policy formulation and implementation. Its goal is to engage development partners in resource mobilization and capacity building in support of land policy development and implementation in Africa.

Literature search on land-related academic driven networks was conducted with a focus on the four key elements (or categories) of land resource (land, forest, mineral and water resources). After the elimination of fully non-academic (or subsidiaries of academic) driven networks, ten most prominent networks were identified. They are listed below and described in Table 1. They include African Urban Planning Research Network (AUPRN), Africa Groundwater Network (AGW-Net), Network for Industrially Contaminated Land in Africa (NICOLA), African Mining Network (AMN), Network of Excellence on Land Governance in Africa (NELGA), Association of African Planning Schools (AAPS), LANDNET Africa, African Model Forest Network (AMFN), East African Land Administration Network (EALAN), and Network of Land Governance Researchers in Africa (NELGRA).

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Table 1: A list of the most prominent land (and related) academic driven networks currently active in Africa

Networks	Type		Land focus				Geography				Membership		<b>Relevant information or remarks about the network</b>
	Project	Program	Land	Forest	Mineral	Water	East	North	South	West	Individual	Institutional	
AGW-Net													Partially academic: Creates awareness of the value of groundwater (and contribute to capacity building in groundwater) in Africa.
NICOLA													Partially academic: Creates a platform for development, application and dissemination of sustainable land management practices, knowledge and technologies.
AMN													Partially academic: It was established to develop and build relationships across Africa's mining community, and give the world a preview of what is happening in mining in Africa.
NELGA													Entirely academic: Works to enhance training, research and connect African scholars working on land issues.
AAPS													Entirely academic: Aims to facilitate the exchange of information between African planning schools and link African and international planning schools.
LANDNET Africa													Partially academic: Creates a forum for academics, civil society organisations and policymakers to co-create solutions to land challenges in Africa.
AMFN													Partially academic: Facilitates the development of a pan-African network of model forests representative of Africa's resource wealth and diversity.
EALAN													Entirely academic: It was established to create a platform for academic and knowledge exchange in land administration.
NELGRA													Entirely academic: Its objective is to promote knowledge sharing among African academics researching on land issues.
AUPRN													Entirely academic: Creates a forum for researchers, planners, policymakers, and post-graduate students to exchange information and discussion on issues related to urban and regional planning in Africa.

The shaded<sup>2</sup> portions in Table 1 are indicative (or presence) of the particular type, land focus, geographical leaning and membership forms that apply to the different organisations. Table 1 does not, in any way, represent the full list of academic networks on land in Africa. Almost all of the networks represented in the table have their corresponding sub-continental network branches. There may also a host of other networks not available online. Most certainly, there are a host of many networks on land that may not be academic driven. However, for the sake of this paper, these networks have been identified to be the most active based on documentary evidence and online presence. Based on Table 1, the active networks that are fully active at the moment are the NELGA, EALAN, NELGRA and AUPRN. Of these 4 NELGA is programme-based while the rest (and all the other networks) are project-based.

NELGA has been considered a programme-based network because it emanated from a mandated programme of the African Land Policy Centre (ALPC). Hence, it consists of a bundle of different projects. The rest are project-based not because they are temporary (all the listed networks are operating on a permanent base). They are project-based because they have been undertaken outside the formal mandate of a continental or sub-continental government<sup>3</sup>. In general, of the ten networks, 1 of them focuses on mineral resources, one on water, two on planning, one on forest, and five on land.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, out the ten most visible, EALAN (the only visible sub-continental network) and NELGA are the most active. The following subsections provide information about NELGA and EALAN

#### **4. DESCRIPTION OF NOTABLE LAND FOCUSED ACADEMIC NETWORKS AND GENERAL NETWORKING MODES IN AFRICA**

##### **4.1 NELGA — Network of Excellence on Land Governance in Africa**

As a path to actualising the goals of the Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa, the ALPC (Formerly African Land Policy Initiative)<sup>5</sup> started the NELGA<sup>6</sup>. The objectives of NELGA (see Strengthening Advisory Capacities for Land Governance in Africa Programme or SLGA, 2018) include Enhancing training opportunities and curricula on land governance in Africa; Promoting demand-driven research on land policy issues; Connecting scholars and researchers across Africa through academic networks; and creating data and information for monitoring and evaluation on land policy reforms.

Being a network, NELGA is expected to contribute to the building of a robust continental network on land governance by undertaking the following six essential functions: (1) Improve land-related curricula in graduate and post-graduate training courses in quantity and quality. (2) Provide and facilitate academic education and training for African land professional and practitioners. (3) Define an agenda for research and conduct applied research on land-related issues pertinent to the AU agenda on land. (4) Develop a repository for data, indicators and information, in close cooperation with the ALPC and governments. (5) Promote knowledge management, dissemination and networking in support of land policy and governance in Africa

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<sup>2</sup> Any shaded part indicates the presence of the corresponding attribute as shown in the table.

<sup>3</sup> No in-country or national land network was considered in this survey as the focus of the paper is on Africa.

<sup>4</sup> Although there are other networks in the continent (beyond what has been presented in Table 1, this list represents the most visible and active ones).

<sup>5</sup> The African Land Policy Centre is the institution that has been mandated to spearhead the implementation of the African Union's Agenda on Land that aims at improving land policy the continent.

<sup>6</sup> Improving the Mode of Academic Networking to Scale up Land Education in Africa (10241)

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and research on land governance. Currently NELGA has more than 50 partner institutions across Africa. NELGA was established by the ALPC to strengthen human and institutional capacities for the implementation of the AU agenda on land.

FIGAWB established NELGA in cooperation with Germany, World Bank and other partners.

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by enhancing the community of practice for land policy experts. (6) Design appropriate monitoring and evaluation systems, and implement pilots to facilitate tracking of land-related initiatives

Figure 1: Map showing the NELGA institutions and their locations across Africa



Source: SLGA (2018)

As shown in Figure 1, Within Africa, there are NELGA nodes which constitute sub-continental coordinating institutions for the network. Then there are also partner institutions which are institutions involved in the network. However, the network as a body (NELGA) is supported by institutions from outside the continent – mainly universities from the Global North. In summary, NELGA is “striving to improve education and training for good land governance across Africa” (SLGA, 2018: p. 1). This is in accordance with propping up the land education in Africa using an approach that will depend partly on knowledge building and knowledge sharing within the continent and across the world.

## Improving the Mode of Academic Networking to Scale up Land Education in Africa (10241) **A Case of A Continental Academic Network: NELGA Southern Africa Node**

Recently, a project on Land Governance in Southern Africa was conducted by the NELGA node for the Southern Africa region established 2017 at the Namibia University of Science and Technology's (NUST), Department of Land and Property Science (DPLS), Windhoek, Namibia. The project involved a Scoping Study on Land Governance in Southern Africa as a kind of flagship serving a number of different purposes. The project led to:

- The facilitation of networking between the NELGA partners within the region;
- The motivation of cross-border collaborative research and education exchange in the land governance arena;
- Conduction of a baseline study of land governance within the region, and thereby, facilitating further research cooperation and innovation towards meeting the key land governance challenges faced within the countries and the region as a whole. This also include educational and curricula innovations within the area of land governance.

To provide the country studies, each of the eight participating countries formed a team of academics from one or more research institutions and appointed a team leader. The country reports were provided based on a template adapted from the Land governance Assessment Framework (Wold Bank, 2012). The reports also addressed the key land governance challenges within the country context. The country scoping studies were presented and discussed at a symposium held at NUST 3-4 September 2019. The studies are summarised in a Synthesis Report on Land Governance in Southern Africa. All material is available at the symposium website <http://landsymposium.nust.na/>

## 4.2 EALAN — Eastern African Land Administration Network

EALAN was formed by Universities in the Eastern part of Africa to create a platform for academic and knowledge exchange. It aims to allow its members (staff and students of its universities) to exchange knowledge and experience for provision of quality services to achieve sound land policies and governance in the region. Ultimately, EALAN envisions a society where people-centred land reforms are implemented. The Members strive to improve and strengthen their capacity to provide their products and services to clients in the Great Lakes Region of Africa. EALAN also envisions a Society where land administration supports good governance, and all land rights are recognised.<sup>7</sup> The members of EALAN are Oda Bultum University (Ethiopia), Ardhi University (Tanzania), Bahir Dar University (Ethiopia), Ines-Ruhengeri (Rwanda), Makerere University (Uganda), Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources for Development (Kenya), Technical University of Kenya, Université Évangélique En Afrique (Democratic Republic of Congo), University of Burundi, University of Juba (South Sudan), University of Nairobi (Kenya), University of Rwanda, University of Woldia (Ethiopia).<sup>8</sup>

### A Case of Sub-Continental Academic Network Project: The SEALAN

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<sup>7</sup> These statements were directly culled from the official website of EALAN.

<sup>8</sup> This list was culled from the official website of EALAN.

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EP NUFFIC is supporting the project entitled “Strengthening the regional EALAN network to build capacity in Land Administration and Land Governance in the Great Lakes Region” (SEALAN). The project is jointly implemented by EALAN and ITC, the Faculty of Geoinformation Science and Earth Observation of the University of Twente in the Netherlands. Work packages of the EALAN project includes:

- Short Courses for Land Professionals to enhance professionalism in land administration practice by offering innovative short term and tailor made trainings in the region.
- University collaborations in education to revise and link long-term curricula with the focus themes and to labour market needs.
- Collaborative Research to develop a shared research agenda to enhance existing collaboration arrangements tools, to develop and apply skills in undertaking collaborative research and its dissemination and to ensure that gender is embedded into all current and future EALAN research activities.

The wide activities of EALAN can be found at <https://ealan-network.org/>

#### **4.3. Description of the Current Model of the Networks**

In order to grasp the modes being used by contemporary academic networks in Africa to achieve their objectives, it is necessary first to deconstruct the goals of these networks and their methods of achieving those goals. Evidence from several papers that have dealt on the activities of academic networks on land in Africa shows that the possible objectives for academic networking are many. They include participation, search for solutions to land problems, financial sourcing for research projects, women empowerment in land knowledge and career, and improvement in techniques for land management (see Duran et al., 2019; Chigbu et al., 2017/2018b; Platt et al., 2020). Other goals include investing in land and natural resource, mentoring younger generations in land issues, leveraging person-to-person or individual networking, policy engagement in the land sector, knowledge dissemination, knowledge co-creation, knowledge exchanges, curricula content improvements, improvement in research outputs, engagement in academic activism, youth empowerment in land knowledge and career, and academic experience and tourism (see Chigbu and Amaefule, 2014; van Aalst et al., 2018; Huggins and Prokop, 2017; Chigbu et al., 2019b). Table 2 shows how the prominent land and land-related academic networks in Africa relate to the possible goals in academic networking and their methods, as evidenced in literature or from their official websites.

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Table 2: The goals and methods of networking of the most prominent land (and related) academic driven networks in Africa

From Table 2, it is possible to infer that the aspects of networking in land matters that need much improvement lies in activities of *engagement in academic activism* and *investment in land and natural resource*. There is total neglect of the benefits of activism (especially on critical issues such as climate change and land rights). Getting involved in network-oriented investments can help to form funding foundations for future research. Currently, most of the networks depend either on foreign aid or government funding for their activities. Another mostly untapped aspect of networking in African land issues are the aspects of *youth and empowerment* in land knowledge and career and direct *mentoring of younger generations* of land focused academics on land issues. These three aspects are crucial for tapping the potentials in land education in Africa, for two significant reasons. First, Africa is a continent of youths, and the best empowerment is to capacitate the youth and mentor them to lead in the future land sectors. Second, Africa is yet to tap into the potentials of women leaders and academics. Any support to ensure that women benefit fully from the networking activities will be crucial to knowledge sharing on land, as well as capacitating women academics to provide the needed knowledge for gender-sensitive development in the land sector.

Five key areas where the networks seem to be highly engaged are in the aspects of *participation in the land sector, finding solutions to land problems, leveraging person-to-person or individual networking, policy engagement in the land sector, improved research output on land; and academic experience and tourism*. Although the networks are fully engaged in these activities, the big question is whether the quality of the results from these activities is effective. Even though the little progress has been made (especially in the area of research), the outcomes have not been responsive to the needs of the continent (see Bankole and Assefa, 2017; Simpkin et al., 2019; Owolewa et al., 2020). Unlike in research, the aspect of *leveraging person-to-person or individual networking* and *academic experience* (sometimes called academic tourism) are the most active aspect of networking. Considering the scenarios shown in Table 2, there are still need to improve the current situation of networking in Africa.

## 5. CRITICAL AREAS IN IMPROVING ACADEMIC NETWORKING FOR SCALING UP LAND EDUCATION

The question that arises from previous sections is, how best can the research networks on land in Africa be made to become more result-oriented, especially in scaling up land education in the continent? This paper argues that existing signs of progress should be improved and the areas of inactivity should be spurred into value-adding activities. In order to do this, new modes of academic networking are necessary to motivate progress in land education on the continent. As a way of going forward on this argument, this paper presents a structured set of guidelines necessary for improving the existing state of academic networking in Africa. In this regard, the discussion focuses critical untapped areas of networking activities in Africa.

### 5.1 Engaging in Academic Activism

The land rights and women's empowerment situation in Africa is worth promoting through academia. The same applies to issues of climate change and the environment. Marcus and Oransky (2017) noted that 'scientists who accept funding with the tacit agreement that they keep their mouths shut about the government are far more threatening to an independent academy than those who speak their minds'. Networks in Africa can use their platform to lobby

~~for improvements in the land sector through non-physical protest activism. They can engage in scientific activism through writing and publication. This can mean using evidence-based research to call to attention the aspects of the continents land problems that need an urgent response from governments, private sectors and individuals. "The expression element in~~  
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activism entails the communication of realities, ideas and emotions for transformative change –whether environmental, social, cultural, political or economic” (Chigbu and Amaefule, 2014: p. 6). This part of activism can be utilised by land networks in Africa to create awareness of land problems and how to solve it. A reasonable blend of activism is necessary for land focused academics and researchers on making an impact on their societies. This is important because the unique ways in which activists view societal concerns can help make land-related investigations (and their results) more human and practical. For instance, on the issue of environment, social scientists (from academia) tend to see it as a human right issue. Activists, on their part, tend to view it as a natural right issue. In this regard, activists would argue that the environment, both in parts and wholeness, constitutes an abundance of a diverse range of natural systems for humans to live in, depend on, experience and enjoy (Chigbu and Amaefule, 2014: p. 8.)

## **5.2 Empowering Women with Land Knowledge and Supporting their Career**

‘The African Gender and Development Indexes show that women’s exposure to land ownership and use tilts more towards them suffering land wrongs than enjoying land rights’ (Chigbu, 2020: p. 159). This makes addressing women’s land rights a social issue, as well as a capacitation matter. It cannot be left to activists alone to negotiate governments into improved actions on the matter. Academics are contributing by conducting research and disseminating them to African policymakers. However, land focused academic networks have an opportunity to directly support women (both youth and established women) to use their platforms to engage with land authorities and improve their leadership capacities to negotiate for women’s rights. Although all the land focused networks identified in this paper do organise workshops that discuss women’s matters, it is important that the networks channel resources to women’s leadership and networking within the continent to ensure better women-specific knowledge building and sharing on land experiences. This would enable to further their land knowledge and career ambitions to ensure that they become empowered in higher education (and research) driven issues on women’s land rights.

## **5.3 Mentoring the Youth in land knowledge and activities**

The future of land sector activities such as technical administration of land, agriculture, management of natural resources (among many others) will depend on the involvement of the youth in Africa. Hence, young people who are willing and prepared to balance risk and reward in order to deliver the healthy food we need in a way that gives them take up the future leadership in the African land sectors demands education through strong mentoring initiatives. Many of the networks on land (even though they may involve the participation of youth) are not consciously programmed to transfer knowledge and skills to youths who are involved in the land sector activities. Networks offer an opportunity to bridge this gap by mentoring and supporting younger professionals in the land sector to proactively contribute their land knowledge to ongoing efforts to improve land governance in the continent.

## **5.4 Investment in Land and Natural Resource**

Of all the networks examined in this paper, not one of have them have made a direct investment in natural resources. For instance, buying land to build their own offices to enhance physical

~~visibility or in social investment in the land sector in Africa. Another reason to invest in land and natural resources by a land-related network is to ensure that they create an investment foundation upon which they can save funding or earn funding for future projects.~~ The current state of networking in Africa is that the networks are too focused on external aid or support  
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coming from Europe and North America. The implication is that they are more active whenever there is a fund available from their external partners and become inactive when such funds dry out. To improve this situation, it may be necessary for networks to make land investments that can enable them to sustain their networks in the future. The process of forming and coordinating a network on land is ‘an entrepreneurial activity that involves unpredictability and often goal ambiguity’ (Ahoba-Sam and Charles, 2019: p. 144).

## **6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS: FREEING BORDERS TO ENHANCE NETWORKING**

Academics in land education all over Africa are increasingly recognising that the only way to come up with innovative solutions to the complex challenges Africa faces is to ‘transcend boundaries — knowledge and physical boundaries’ (Kupe, 2020). This is the primary reason why these academic networks exist. Individual academics engage in various collaborations through their involvement in the continental and sub-continental networks in Africa (Ahoba-Sam and Charles, 2019). However, the space within (and between) which the network needs to be free from restrictions that make networking impossible. However, they face enormous problems due to the strong border controls that exist between countries and regions in Africa. The removal of borders for academics would free up the sharing of knowledge and academic experiences. ‘For universities and knowledge creation institutions, it offers the untold potential to increase local and continental collaboration in a number of ways’ (Kupe, 2020).

This is a policy issue that relates to academic immigration, migration and mobility (Dellas and Streck, 2012). It demands the official recognition of partnerships between universities by African governments. This is already in place with the initiatives that brought NELGA into reality in the continent. However, how it is leveraged by these networks depends on the ability of members of the networks to freely move around and share experiences in the continent. The potentials for borderless academic networking in Africa include across-the-border distance education, shared lectures, and joint degree programmes, to mention a few. As Kupe (2020) put it:

‘One of the best ways to free knowledge is to break down the disciplinary borders through transdisciplinary approaches to knowledge creation. Another set of boundaries and borders limits the physical movement of students and academics in the world. There are firm financial boundaries and border and immigration controls that many nations impose on each other. Border controls, which enable orderly mobility, are legitimate; every nation needs them. The problem is they often hinder the intellectual interactions and intersections necessary to maximise the knowledge cross-pollination that could be used to change the world. Cumbersome visa regimes should give way to a global academic and student passport or a global visa acceptable to all. Borders and boundaries go against the notion that knowledge and ideas know no borders. Knowledge and university communities should be enabled to flow freely across borders and boundaries, unhindered and unfettered’.

The point here is that there is a need to free knowledge from human-made shackles that limit academic networking on land matters in Africa. It will enable academics (in general) gain the freedom to leverage knowledge through networking interactions. However, this is only possible if African countries introduce better immigration rules that allow free passage of citizens from one country to another. Thereby facilitating network interconnections and activities that build and share land knowledge. It is very challenging to coordinate a network in a continent like Africa, where there is high heterogeneity in education cultures and values. This is why the networks, in the first place, are meant to help break the barriers that hinder

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continent. It can also lead to a reduction in the over-dependence on European and North American universities for collaborative research.

## 7. CONCLUSION

This paper sought to argue for a way to enhance knowledge and capacity for the efficient use in land and natural resources through improved networking in Africa. It has made this argument by describing why networking between academics (both institutions and individuals) are necessary for Africa and should be sustained. However, it investigated some of the existing networks to find new mode for improving them to contribute to scaling up land education in the continent. In this regard, the paper identified areas for improvements in academic to include academic activism, youth mentoring, women empowerment, and investment in land by the networks. The paper also recognised the policy implications for making the networks active, efficient, and responsive to the land education needs of the continent.

To ensure a supportive policy environment to put the recommendations of the paper into practice, the paper called for a borderless Africa that would allow for free-flow of networking activities between Africans; and remove the immigration walls that are holding back African academics from freely interacting with each other. It is essential to acknowledge that boundaries and borders already exist within African universities due to academic borders caused by the organisation of knowledge into unique disciplines. In some cases, too much focus on disciplines differences within universities has led to knowledge environment becoming ‘hard-bound spaces instead of fluid avenues that enable critical thinking, inquiry and the development of problem-solving skills’ (Kupe, 2020). Removing this barrier will allow networks to grow and develop into a freer, more mobile and sustainable knowledge building environments. This is precisely what Africa needs today, especially in its growing land sectors.

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- African Model Forest Network (AMFN). Official website is available accessible via <https://imfn.net/about/regional-networks/african-model-forest-network/>
- East African Land Administration Network (SEALAN). Official website is available accessible via <https://ealan-network.org>
- Network of Land Governance Researchers in Africa (NELGRA). Official website is available accessible via

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FIG<sup>9</sup> Some information were culled from these websites to provide exact description of the Networks.

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