**Report on Annual World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty, Washington DC, March 19-23, 2018**

The 2018 annual World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty themed ***Land Governance in an Interconnected World*** was held between the 19– 23 March 2018 at the World Bank headquarters in Washington DC, USA. The conference presents latest research and practice on the diversity of reforms, interventions, and innovations in the land sector around the world. The conference attracted 1,800 participants from governments, academics, civil society, and the private sector.

Under the auspices of the Network of Excellence for Land Governance in Africa (NELGA) project, the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) was represented by Mr. **Charl-Thom Bayer, Head of Department and Sam Mwando Lecturer both from the department of** Land and Property Sciences (DLPS). Both Tommy and Sam are grateful to both NUST and the NELGA project for according them the opportunity to attend and participate at this important and insightful conference.

The conference is an ideal platform for various reasons. One of the most important benefits of attending this annual conference are the vast networking opportunities. This is because, alongside the conference presentations, poster presentations and masterclasses, the conference fosters an atmosphere for participants to meet both formally and informally to forge long lasting professional relationships. The diversity of the carder attending the conference is an opportunity for a higher learning institution such as NUST to tap in the various institutions represented. These opportunities could be in the area of joint research projects, exchange programs, training opportunities for DLPS staff as well as funding opportunities.

Sam Mwando presented a poster (link) titled *“Exploring innovative valuation methods in communal land. The case of Namibia.”* The conference afforded Sam the opportunity to interact with researchers pursuing research in the area of valuation of unregistered land both in rural and urban areas. In addition, these sessions widened Sam’s perspective on what areas of research he can delve into based on some contemporary methodological approaches being applied across the globe. One such session with some interesting research paradigm was the “New tools for applied valuations” and Korea’s mass assessment system of land pricing for taxation, using information communication technology ICT”.

Tommy Bayer presented a paper on *“The Impact of Land Governance on the Economic Development Potential of Small Scale Farmers in Namibia”.* He also chaired a session under the theme, *“Capacity development for land governance”* The session chaired by Tommy highlighted issues of land governance and administration in curricula for higher learning institutions and how this could prepare professionals in the land sector. On the last day of the conference, Tommy and Sam took part in a masterclass titled “Building a continent-wide research network on land: The NELGA experiences and lessons learnt. Tommy presented on behalf of DLPS on the milestones that the Southern Africa NELGA node has achieved thus far. In addition to taking part in the deliberations of NUST representative came back home with some exciting observation.

For instance, the term block chain technology was buzzword at the conference. A number of researchers and indeed the private sector have latched on this global phenomenon known as block chain technologies with so much optimism. While this is a relatively new term within the land sector space, it certainly took prominence during the conference proceeding. Based on the conference discussions, this technology presents both challenges and opportunities for all. As an academic institution that wants to assert itself as a world-class university and the DLPS in particular, research in the area of block chain technologies should be a part of its research strategy in order to participate in the current discourse.

Lastly, the two colleagues also learnt through observation how it could organise similar conferences in Namibia and in Africa for the benefit of informing and influencing policy on land. Tommy and Sam noted the importance of meticulous planning and conference management to achieve the intended goals of a conference.