

# UCT's Lesego Bantsheng wins Corobrik's Landscape Architecture Award

University of Cape Town (UCT) landscape architecture student Lesego Bantsheng has won Corobrik's Most Innovative Final Year Landscape Architecture Award for 2018 for her thesis 'Pula! a Ene: Rain! Let it Rain - Occupying Land in Restituted Barolong Homelands'.



Allin Dangers and Werner Oelofse of Corobrik are pictured with the 2018 winner of the Corobrik Most Innovative Final Year Landscape Architecture Award, Lesego Bantsheng.

Her thesis examines traditional village settlements in South Africa's North West province and how they are battling to adapt to the current realities of land ownership, resulting in permanent settlements rather than the traditional migratory settlement patterns. This is further exacerbated by population increase and global warming, proving to be a problem for subsistence farmers. Bantsheng focuses on finding a strategy to re-envision these traditional settlements by looking at how the communities in these areas relate to shared communal space.

For this particular project Bantsheng took the decision to present a strategy rather than the traditional architectural landscape design. She looked at the story of the Barolong Boo Rra Tshidi clan of the Tswana tribe who have settled in Makgobistad - a large village in the northern part of the North West province.

"I realised that a lot of people don't know what to do about the existing rural areas," explained Bantsheng. "Most of these areas have reached maximum capacity and the idea of rural to urban migration is not completely correct. There is a migration but it's between the two areas, people are returning to rural areas."

With this in mind, Bantsheng considered the rural village pattern, traditional farming, community structure, and interaction with public spaces. This informed a strategy that embraces both traditional constructs and contemporary environmental land management practices.

## Water security

The first element to address was water, particularly as this is becoming such a scarce resource. She proposed designing water retention systems and ways to replenish aquifers. She then looked at the current lekgotla system where village leaders discuss matters and suggested communities nominate individuals for leadership roles to ensure that open communication between different settlements continues.

She finally looked at the use of space. Where people residing in towns and cities might require a park for relaxation, the need in these traditional areas is more pastoral: “The suggested model is rather larger yards for individuals where farming can take place and water can be harvested.”

Commenting on her thesis, Bantsheng said: “It was an innovative process and I believe the result was innovative. I didn’t expect to win but am very grateful for the guidance of my supervisor, Tarna Klitzner, as well as my lecturer, Julian Raxworthy.”

All graduating students in the UCT Master of Landscape Architecture programme are eligible for the annual award. Bantsheng was awarded the R6,000 top prize with Mapula Maponya taking home the R4,000 second-place prize for her thesis, entitled ‘The Revelatory Landscape: Archiving Memory Through Indigenous Narrative and Cosmology’.

## Impact of colonialisation

Maponya also looked at traditional land use and the impact of colonialisation that has resulted in current economic and social inequality.

“My project studied the role of Cape Town’s topographic landscape in defining cultural identity,” explained Mapula. “It looks at the Khoi-Khoi and colonial relationships with the stars and this landscape.”

The site analysed is located on a golf course adjacent to the confluence of the Black and Liesbeek river in Observatory, Cape Town.

“My dissertation topic and site choice were influenced by navigational routes used by these societies to interact with the land. Today, this site is under threat of development which I believe is inappropriate considering its ecological and historical value.”