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UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

Kaofela Re Chabana Sa Khomo: Imagining the Lesotho National Museum and Art Gallery through the lens of Multiculturalism.

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A Research Report submitted to the Department of History of Art and Heritage Studies, Wits School of Arts, Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Heritage Studies by coursework and research report.

Supervisor

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Date

April 2021

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Abstract

After many years of uncertainties and attempts, Lesotho kick-started the establishment of the first national museum in the capital town of Maseru. This is a turnkey project intended for research, collection, conservation, and management of the cultural heritage of Basotho. However, in the context of Lesotho, the word ‘Basotho’ often seems inadequate to convey the complex histories and ideas bound up within it. It has been used to erroneously depict Lesotho and Basotho as culturally and linguistically homogenous. This study explores how Lesotho can adopt the notion of multiculturalism in a national museum to define and reshape its history in the contemporary era. Given that the notion of a museum is of European origin, the research focused on the planned national museum and considered how it can position itself within an African context, so as not to reproduce European/ colonial museum models that have been criticized within the museum practice in the contemporary era. Taking a qualitative approach, the research draws from the context of museums in Africa and Lesotho, to explore possible, appropriate models of curating diversity. This research argues that these models should take consideration of the museum's diverse audience, in the pursuit of a multicultural museum.

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Abbreviations

CCIs	Creative and Cultural Industries
DAC	Department of Arts and Culture
DOC	Department of Culture
ICOM	International Council of Museums
LNM	Lesotho National Museum
LEC	Lesotho Evangelical Church
LHDA	Lesotho Highlands Development Authority
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTEC	Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Culture
NAC	National Arts Council
NSDP	National Strategic Development Plan
PEMS	Paris Evangelical Mission Society
SNP	Sehlabathebe National Park
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VANSA	Visual Arts Network South Africa
WAM	Wits Art Museum

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Introduction

The Lesotho National Museum and Art Gallery (LNM), which is currently under construction is the first of its kind in Lesotho. The construction of this museum has fueled public expectation for social change, sparking a conversation around the museum's potential for social good in the form of collections, exhibitions, conservation, oral performances, education programmes, and other initiatives. This research looks at whether the museum will be able to adequately represent the diversity of Basotho and secondly, what strategies it will employ to achieve this, given that the word 'Basotho' often seems inadequate to convey the complex histories and ideas bound within it. The representation of diversity is important because the challenges of inclusion are at the center of current global debates due to colonial legacies, whereby contemporary societies still feel the issue has not been addressed adequately. Though the notion of a museum is largely of European origin, new museums in Africa, as institutions that link with communities and societies can make a contribution to creating inclusive multicultural societies. This study explores how Lesotho can adopt the notion of multiculturalism in a national museum to define and reshape its history in the contemporary era. It argues that such an approach can better position this museum within its local cultural and social (African) context and avoid reproducing a museum based on European models and ideals. The study contributes to emerging contemporary global debates around the definition of museums and discussions on the role and relevance of museums within local communities. For Lesotho, a small but multicultural country, which is often inaccurately described as linguistically and culturally homogenous, the representation of diversity in the museum is crucial as encapsulated in the Sesotho term "*Kaofela Re Chabana sa Khomo*" (unity in diversity). In addressing this idea, I use the new national museum as a platform to argue that museums should implement programs that serve the minority adequately.

Context and background

After many years of uncertainties and attempts, in 2015 Lesotho started the establishment of the first National Museum in the capital town Maseru facilitated by the Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Culture (MTEC). Now completing its first phase, this is a turnkey project intended for research, collection, conservation, and management of culture and heritage of Basotho. The emphasis is that the museum will be utilized for strengthening the protection of historical, cultural and natural artifacts. Given that, Lesotho has been the only country within southern Africa without a national museum and other cultural infrastructures such as art galleries, craft centers etc., the museum will focus on conservation and promotion of the country's cultural heritage to both local and international visitors.

This is a very imperative initiative, considering the shifting roles of museums, which are now seen the world over as the agents of social change and are trusted in empowering diversity and inclusion in their communities. It might have taken a long time for Lesotho to pull up this project together but there is no time like the present for museums to demonstrate their relevance in the construction of social, cultural and political realities of modern societies. The potential of museums to create meaningful experiences for people of all origins and backgrounds is central to their social value. It also helps with the celebration of the diversity of perspectives that make up the communities and the overcoming of bias in what they display and the stories they tell. In preparation for the establishment of this museum, there has been ongoing public mobilization such as stakeholder workshops aimed at consulting the public about the government's intentions.

It has been emphasized repeatedly and publicly by the officials that this is a national museum for 'Basotho'. Yet, historically narratives related to nation-building in Lesotho suggest that initially, the present-day meaning of 'Basotho' might not be as we understand it. Lesotho's colonial experience caused cultural disruption resulting in some form of detachment and memory amnesia, as well as the perceptions of Basotho as one unified

group, linguistically and culturally. It is evident that different ethnic and linguistic groups submitted to the leadership of king Moshoeshoe 1 who coalesced his nation from various sociolinguistic groups, under the umbrella term Basotho. Therefore, modern-day Lesotho is a result of the mid-nineteenth century unification of several groups of the Bantu ethnicity under the lead of the Basotho group and king Moshoeshoe 1. This diversity is not always acknowledged or given the same space as the larger Basotho group. The minorities in Lesotho comprise of Batlokoa, and Nguni groups (Ndebele, Zulu, Xhosa and Baphuthi) speaking languages relatively related to Xhosa and Zulu. The Batlokoa are mostly found in Mokhotlong district, which is in North-eastern part of Lesotho. Though they are still Basotho, culturally they do things differently as they have their own language called Setlokoa, which is another Sotho dialect. All of these groups are beneficiaries of a legacy of inclusiveness left by King Moshoeshoe 1 and form part of the contemporary Basotho nation.

These different ethnic groups, however, retained their own languages and cultural practices. However, the Basotho (Sesotho speaking) as a dominant national group continue to privilege their identity, language, history, culture, literature, myths and religion, over that of the smaller groups. These ethnic minorities are marginalised and underrepresented in the present museums of Lesotho and all of them, except for Baphuthi are not represented in the existing museums in Lesotho. The Baphuthi constitutes a very small minority group in Lesotho and are currently found in the South-Eastern part of the country in Daliwe, Mount Moorosi, Qhuthing, Sinxondo, Makoae and Qachasnek as well as in South Africa in the Eastern Cape province.

Thus, Lesotho's diverse history has been denied both in colonial and post-colonial contexts. This is because the colonial regime introduced divide and rule through policies and these were inherited and perpetuated after independence from British colonial rule in 1967. Working with some of these minority communities, my experience as a cultural officer in the Department of Culture (DOC) has made me aware of the subconscious exclusion of cultural diversity and multiculturalism. This inspired my interest in carrying out this research. Using the case of a new museum in Lesotho, this research’s main aim is to explore emerging ways of museum-making in the postcolonial era. This study serves

as a deliberate action to find new ways of practicing multiculturalism that can be deployed to acknowledge formerly marginalised groups.[1] I explore alternative models of exhibiting diverse national cultures in post-colonial contexts and how such models can reshape culture and identity on a national scale to avoid power dynamics that can create disparities within the museums and their visitors.

This is in response to the critique on the history of museums on the continent, most of which were established during the colonial and apartheid era, and are faced with a challenge to transform themselves into relevant institutions in the current society. Studies have shown how museums still struggle for change and efforts to transform societies in the postcolonial moments (Coombes 2003, Arinze 1998, Dubin 2006). The history of museums on the continent shows how they were handmaidens to colonialism and became bastions of racial science and facilitated misappropriation and misrepresentation of African societies, people and cultures. International exhibitions during the colonial period were used to show off the eroticism and backwardness of different colonies (Dubow 2006). However, by the end of the 19th-century museums were seen as institutions of power and instruments of education, enlightenment and social salvation. Given this history of museums on the continent, the challenge of change and relevance remains a central issue to be addressed.

The prevailing scenario calls for retrospection and new ways of structuring museums to accommodate formerly marginalised groups. Taking advantage of the current conversations around the national museum in Lesotho, the main purpose of the study is to look at the possibilities of what the new museum may become. It looks into how the museum can address historical gaps and makes sure that the museum is widely representative of the country's diversity. Considering that this is the first museum of its kind in the country, and drawing from other local, and African cultural institutions, this study sought to understand how the national museum can avoid being a replica of colonial museums, and instead be a truly African museum, that adequately represents all diversities.

[1] I am referring to Baphuthi, Xhoza, Zulu, Ndebele and Batlokoa

Furthermore, if the goal of the museum is to memorialise, present, and shape culture and identity on a national scale, it is important to navigate the possibility for a multiplicity of stories. The question is how can diversity be engaged in avoiding the dominance of singular cultural narrative in LNM. There is a need to make provision for other cultures as a way of accommodating and addressing historical imbalances. This will lead to the revitalisation of the country's cultural sector; the provision alternatives, as well as the attraction of a broader audience to the museum. Therefore, the objective of the study is to get a more comprehensive sense of Lesotho's broader cultural landscape to explore appropriate models of curating this nation's diverse culture in public spaces.

The majority of museums in Africa were established during the colonial era and were modeled on their European counterparts. Most museums stemmed from private collections of particular individuals' own interests and wealth. The European Enlightenment created a society curious about the world while at the same time preoccupied with the concept of nation. This posed the question of what constitutes national cultural heritage, and in the contemporary postcolonial era, the question that is still a subject of debate. Annie Coombes (2009:234) states that museums were often mobilised in the name of national coherence and, as sites that produced knowledge of the colonial subjects, a project which was in line with promoting the concept of a homogenous national identity and unity. Therefore, the word nation in its copied national identity sense is even more problematic hence; the best approach is to seek those characteristics of Basotho's own culture that may benefit from reinforcement in an institution serving all people, chief among them being a "commodious concept of culture in an inclusive definition of nationhood" (Coombes 2009).

In response to their colonial histories, a growing number of museums are addressing diversity with the new urgency of de-coloniality in the contemporary museum. Museums are seeking to explore new practices, working collaboratively with local communities and indigenous or minority groups. In Nana Poku's words (2015:6) decoloniality means "both resisting the reproduction of colonial taxonomies while stimulating simultaneously vindicating radical multiplicity". It is a double movement that advocates for change in learning while opposing the stereotypes instilled through colonialism. The emphasis is on

rewriting and reconfiguration of the contemporary African heritage. Older museums in Africa with settler history are reforming themselves in the contemporary, attempting to offer new forms of museum making, and new narratives and images relevant to their societies. Tony Bennett (2006:35) argues that in the contemporary context, museums account for new modes of citizenship such as multiculturalism and therefore they have become 'differencing machines', meaning museums have an authoritative voice that can contribute to change. However, Lesotho is developing a national museum for the first time in its history while other nations are restructuring their contemporary museums and galleries. Therefore, this creates curiosity as to what kind of a national museum is Lesotho contemplating in the midst of these debates and changes in museums in Africa. How do we shape the differencing practices that are intended to overcome the racial and ethnic divisions that museums have historically portrayed in our country?

The history of museums in Lesotho is similar to elsewhere in Africa, where museums were established by settlers or colonial officials from Europe, Christian missionaries and academics. Stephen Gill, the long-time curator at Morija museum (a mission established museum in Lesotho) states that the foundation for museums in Lesotho began during the early 19th century pioneered by missionaries and they were conceived primarily as institutions based upon collections of historical, ethnographic, paleontological, and geological aspects (Gill, 2015:26). However, museums established during the colonial era are questionable based on their foundational motives. As a result, most of these old museums are going through restructuring in an attempt to move away from the burdens of colonial ideologies like 'othering', for example through venturing into documenting contemporary life and artifacts. In Lesotho, besides the museums which were pioneered by the missionaries, there are other few small yet significant museums/ exhibition spaces; such as the Mochochonono Museum at the Thaba Bosiu Historical Site, the Lets'eng Diamond Museum by the Letseng Diamond Mining company, the Matsieng Royal Museum and Archive; as well as site museums at National Parks such as the Sehlabathebe National Park (SNP) site museum, the Metolong site museum, the Liphofung site museum and the Katse Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA) site Museum.

In all of these museums present in the country, there is no representation of the minority who have been part of Lesotho since the emergence of the Basotho nation. Their culture has been silenced. In spite of being a diverse society, several events that have shaped the present-day society of Lesotho have failed to retain the old systems of diversity even in the post-colonial as the nation continue to promote a single narrative that does not accommodate diversity. As a new project, the LNM needs to create programs and exhibitions that inclusively reflect the experiences of the minority groups. Therefore, this study serves to identify the historical gaps that could affect the management of LNM in the future as a way of avoiding repeating history as well as reinventing the wheel. This study seeks to influence decision making and offer suggestions that will play a significant role in defining and shaping the future curatorial approach of LNM in terms of multiculturalism.

According to Joanne Sharp (2005: 1007), what is essential in integrating excluded populations into the social mainstream history is to assist them in finding their voices to validate their particular histories and traditions as a way of establishing a collective memory and to give the expression of their experiences, aspirations and to build self-confidence. The general sense here is that they have been sidelined within the cultural heritage landscape. Sharp (2005) writes that when dealing with communities who have been marginalised, a key strategy in overcoming this sense of non-recognition is to solidify their history so that it becomes visible in some form. In this sense, the past is a keystone upon which the present and future can be built (Sharp 2005).

Thus, the main focus of the current study is investigating ways in which can multiculturalism can be considered towards the representation of the history of Lesotho to include minority groups through a Museum. This will assist in understanding the concept of multiculturalism and its applicability. In pursuance of the status quo, my research question is two-fold:

- What kind of collection/ narrative does the museum currently hold to allow multiculturalism display strategies?

- To further understand how multiculturalism has been applied, which examples of other museums have applied this concept that we can engage to inform LNM's curatorial strategies?

Chapter Outline

In order to address the aforementioned questions, this study is designed and structured into five chapters.

The first **Chapter** looks at the conceptual framework informing this study. The chapter explores and unpacks the concept multiculturalism, to find out how the histories of Lesotho relate to theories and literature of multiculturalism more broadly. The chapter then reviews existing minority representations in Lesotho in order to further my claims.

Chapter two traces the development of the upcoming national museum in detail. In this chapter, I analyse the project's intentions as a case study. Following this, the chapter outlines and discusses demonstrations that highlight different interventions and experimental exhibitions that foster cultural diversity in museum spaces working towards multiculturalism's applicability. The chapter draws from museums elsewhere, looking at how they have adopted multiculturalism and how these experiences can inform the LNM's approach.

C**hapter three** focuses on curatorial strategies that destabilise the conventional displays that can influence LNM's curatorial aesthetics and the museum's relevance. These include ideas around exhibitions and communities, access, collaboration and community engagement a fundamental premise of multiculturalism.

Based on the gathered data, **chapter four** analyses the LNM programs so far to determine whether they are adequately representing Basotho and responsive to the diversity of the nation.

Chapter five articulates the overall analysis, leading to recommendations and proposed possible approaches and ideologies that the new museum may adopt to become a truly

African museum. Part of the analysis and recommendations are intended to be shared with the department of culture to contribute towards the informed implementation of future strategies/ exhibitions/ programs framed around multiculturalism and decolonial alternatives.

Methodology

This study predominantly adopts a qualitative research paradigm in the form of a case study design to examine both primary and secondary data sources and provide an analysis focusing on the LNM project. The study employs qualitative approaches to collect definitions, descriptions, views and perceptions. Qualitative methods used in this research refer to the engagement with archival sources on exhibitions, curatorial projects and workshops. These included archival material such as reports, brochures and event programs to gain a deeper understanding of the case study. All the archival work complemented interviews with selected respondents as a means of tracking and understanding further the process, plans and activities related to the case.

I took a close look at the Department of Culture's initiatives towards orientating the Basotho community about the museum project. For this, I drew from stakeholder workshops which were meant to provoke the participants and collect ideas and advise providing a way forward. These meetings encompassed broad participants and were used to announce the intentions of the ministry as well as stimulate dialogue between consultants and the creative community. This was used as a platform for consultants to make their presentations both verbal and visual as well as incorporate ideas from the public. The engagements at these stakeholder meetings were very useful in giving me the perceptions and desires of ordinary citizens on the museum project.

I undertook site visits to the museum project and examined related primary records related to the site. This was complemented by a survey of relevant literature to familiarise myself with ongoing and current debates in the field of heritage. This study thus entailed a desktop study and evaluation of the relevant documents written about the institution, to draw data, facts and conclusions. The most crucial documents that I relied on included the *Master Plan and the Social History Narrative Exhibition*. The documents embody the

institution’s decisions thus they gave me a better understanding and overview of the project's direction/ future plans and aspects.

To gain more insight into the project, I also conducted semi-formal interviews with a selection of professionals who have been involved in the project or played key institutional roles in the broader aspects of this study. In particular, I had interviews with Tokelo Mapena – who is the LNM Project manager and Leqaphela Liphoto – a Historian within the Department of Culture, as well as Steven Gill- the curator of Morija museum and Libandla *La baPhuthi* representative. This allowed me to gain further insights of the project.

The texts that I analysed for this study include journal articles, books, essays, newspapers. These texts and web searches helped in the analysis of particular concepts and broader sentiments. Since the practice is relatively new and even less widely written about, I engaged with case studies to compare and contrast different practices of multiculturalism where it has been employed. The above-mentioned sources helped me to get a broad sense of various curatorial initiatives and the LNM concept in general. Therefore, using LNM as a platform I am arguing that contemporary curatorial methods that promote cultural diversity should be deployed.

CHAPTER 1

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Multiculturalism

This study is formulated around the concept of multiculturalism and how it can be deployed to redress the historical mistakes in Lesotho involving cultural diversity. The movement associated with the term multiculturalism first appeared in countries, which found themselves faced with distinct cultural groups, mainly the United States of America (USA) and Canada (Myambo 2010). Multiculturalism can be understood as a body of thought attempting to advocate for cultural diversity existence, promotion and protection in terms of equality, recognition, freedom, and justice. When addressing the issue of equality, multiculturalism theorists such as Coombes (2005), Myambo (2010), and Mishra and Kumar (2014) call for equal treatment of minority groups in the public arena. The emphasis is that minorities should be treated equally like the rest of society while still possessing their different cultural rights. In essence, these minorities represent practices, views, and ways of life that are different, but most times are marginalised, disapproved or discouraged by the dominant culture of wider society.

Postcolonial and postmodern theories gave rise to debates questioning exclusionary practices and narratives resulting from colonial legacies, showing how multiculturalism has become one of the buzzwords in the wake of approaches and initiatives that may redress the impacts of colonialism. According to Mishra and Kumar (2014:64), scholars who explore the term and its different uses; multiculturalism refers to a broad array of theories, attitudes, beliefs, norms, practices, and policies that seek to provide public recognition of and support for the accommodation of non-dominant cultural groups. By non-dominant groups, Mishra and Kumar (2014) refer to counter-publics or the small groups that have been marginalised by the hegemonic groups. These groups differ and range from immigrants, indigenous people, historically settled minorities and national minorities, homosexuals among other marginalised populations.

Annie Coombes (2009) in *Museums and the Formation of National and Cultural Identities* asserts that since the beginning, which is the late 19th and beginning 20th centuries, there has been an emergence of a cluster of intellectual and political movements led by minorities and indigenous people fighting for all different aspects of freedom in the world. Therefore, the western notion of multiculturalism has been used as an umbrella term to characterise the moral and political claims of a wide range of marginalised groups. It shines a light on not only claims of identity and culture but on economic and political interests (Coombes 2009).

In Africa, the most profound movement is Pan African movement well known for its influential philosophies in both Africa and the diaspora. The Pan African movement as per The black Scholar[2] (2008), was about the development of ideologies of the liberation struggle and encouraging collective African solidarity to fight colonialism. One can assume it is still maintained and responsible for shaping and promoting contemporary African notions such as decolonisation and Africaneity, subsequently giving rise to multiculturalism. Therefore, for this study multiculturalism sits against the backdrop of the Pan African movement speaking to multiethnic and multilingual African societies,

Tandiwe Myambo (2010) in *The Limits of Rainbow Nation Multiculturalism in New South Africa* writes about how during the transition to democratic South Africa, a full-bodied theory of multiculturalism ideology was deployed to bring people together. Even so, she argues that this ideology is only effective in the immaterial (illusionary) sense of forming a democratic inclusive for South Africa's multicultural population but fails to address socioeconomic (material) disparity specifically land ownership. According to Myambo (2010), the government of South Africa via ANC did not holistically and practically adopt the concept of radical multiculturalism as it is applied to redress social equality, leaving other aspects such as economic and cultural equality and redress. Using some texts to

[2] The Black Scholar in *Rethinking Pan Africanism for the 21st century,* can be interpreted as black intellectual movement which was launched by great W.E.B Dubois in the 1900. Through its ideologies of African unity, it linked black Africans and the diaspora in fight for black power against colonial oppression. In Africa, it remained influential and was led by the prominent African leaders such as Kwame Nkumar, Julias Nyerere and Oliver Tambo.

point out the concept's limitations Myambo calls for attempts to reformulate and reconfigure a liberated space that makes up the new South Africa.

These texts helped to stimulate my thinking of the applicability of the concept regarding local contexts. The traditional multiculturalism in Lesotho was not forced it was considered a norm and subscribed to voluntary decisions by different ethnic groups as they submitted to the leadership of one king under the umbrella term Basotho. Historical dynamics made Lesotho a culturally diverse nation-state as much as they accepted the overall Basotho identity and they still speak their own languages and follow their own cultural practices. Ndebele, Xhosa and Zulu groups in Lesotho submitted to the royal house of Moshoeshoe 1 as the representative of the state's authority. However, they resisted assimilation into Basotho culture and retained their own customs and local leadership. On the other hand, the Basotho royal authority did not attempt to erase these cultures but lived with a tolerance of others that created a peaceful coexistence between these ethnic groups.

In terms of recognition, Mishra and Kumar (2014) underline that multiculturalism influences the celebration of difference in public culture and political discourse because it accommodates socio-cultural differences of the marginalised groups in a way that changes dominant patterns of representation and communication to include minorities. It recognises the nature of the minorities/counter publics and their contributions and therefore emphasises their importance to the rest of the community. Furthermore, the concept of multiculturalism calls for the necessary freedom and environment suitable for and that opportune diversity. It allows groups to express their identities and practices as part of the cultural and human rights norm.

In summary, it is evident that multiculturalism is mobilisation that is about responding to and addressing challenges associated with state oppression and discrimination. It is also concerned with socio-cultural expression and is sometimes even extended to political and economic interests of the minorities. With this in mind, for Lesotho, the question is through the LNM how can MTEC generate new visual and social practices as well as situate the museum's curatorial practice within decolonisation and multiculturalism and thus be agents of change. Recent debates over nationality and citizenship identity always entail opposing totalising frameworks of representation in the museum spaces. Drawing from

Tony Bennet's (2006) 'Exhibitionary complex' other experts have called it 'museum effect',i.e; how the LNM museum as an institution can be a new instrument of contemporary innovation by deploying its authority and influence. The museum can foster a 'self-fashioning' spirit in these democratic citizens by offering counter-memory and reconcile the discrepancies caused by colonialism.

The big question is why the museum is being established. Is it because Lesotho is the only African country without a national museum or is it because it has been a pending project for a long time. Whatever the reasons, there is no time like the present for museums whereby worldwide they are striving to demonstrate their relevance by engaging constructively in the political, cultural, social and economic realities of modern society. However, as a new museum being established in the current context, it should consider going beyond the basic museum's role of safeguarding.

During the period of this research, I had an opportunity to be part of the team that is reviewing Lesotho's 2005 Cultural Policy and I learned that the department has the intentions of including and acknowledging the minorities in the new cultural policy, something that has never been done before. Taking advantage of this positive move, it is imperative to understand how MTEC can employ the notion of multiculturalism in the new museum as a way of responding to and addressing some of the challenges that are associated with recognition and underrepresentation the minority.

In conclusion, multiculturalism endorses the idea of difference and heterogeneity and is embodied in the concept of diversity. It is found in most cases whereby diverse cultural communities categorised as minorities or majorities coexist with the nation-state. Cultural diversity is the presence of a variety of cultures and cultural perspectives within society. It encapsulates the recognition of different artistic, literacy, musical, moral and other traditions, as it allows cultural exchange and experiment. Ayanda Ngcobo (2018) has argued that diversity is a central concern of almost all social, political and cultural theorists. Their common argument is that thinking, perception and way of life differ from culture to culture, society to society and they oppose the foundational uniformity of knowledge.

1.2. Decolonisation

Museums worldwide are recognising, adopting and embracing the concept of decolonisation, as a process of responding to aspects of their practices inherited from the colonial era. As indicated before, most museums were established during the colonial era and the legacies of this past continue to be a challenge. The concept of decoloniality allows museums to challenge their colonial past. Decoloniality offers alternatives to the problems arising in the post-colonial era left by the colonial teachings. Audre Lorde (1984) has argued that one cannot dismantle the 'master's house' (colonial discourse) using the empire's 'tools' (knowledge). Lorde argues that we need to question, redefine, perform and construct things in the nations' own relevant way to bring about change.

The illustrations attempted later in this study show that recent museums are designed to celebrate the opposite as they are more of monuments to democracy for they are founded on values that promote social justice and advocacy, human dignity and freedom. We also witness the coexistence of narratives that are also more about the experience than content and or objects. Some of these new museums not easily recognisable ('unmuseum' like), often associated with not valuing objects so much, they are encouraging reflection and contemplation as key to meaning-making.

Some critical social theorists such as Walter Mignolo (2009), Thembinkosi Goniwe (2012) and Nana Poku (2015) have argued for resistance of dominant systems in knowledge production and for the need to find ways to destabilise and disrupt western epistemologies. Museums are spaces for people to engage with themselves personally and locate themselves in the present. Schmidt (2013) maintains that they are meant to free the minds of people and allow differences to sit peacefully. The new museology brings together a diverse range of museums and urges museums to live with diversity, by allowing counter-narrative and different ways of being and of remembering to coexist. According to Schmidt (2013), newer museums that participate in non-racialism do not privilege one race. Overall, they are perceived to be creating moments of hope, performing concepts differently in the present and are praised to rethinking the practice and power of museology in general.

Colonial museums seem to have integrated and embraced decolonial thinking shift, taking up a new role as spaces to narrate history, circulate cultural memories and address modern socio-political tensions through curatorial and artistic interventions. Such museums are now discursive spaces and one can see the diversified form of museums and exhibition spaces, offering a unique blend of cultural heritage. The statement below by Lerato Bereng cited in Leila Hall (2013) article emphasises the need to rewrite and de/contextualise knowledge in our own meaning, relevant to our underlying issues.

> *The definitions of what we consider 'art' or 'literature' were born elsewhere and brought here, and they have not been assimilated properly with the culture. Our generation is in a unique position. We are in a sense defining things for the very first time in a Lesotho context, and it is important for us to carve out niches and definitions so that they have immediate resonance to our context. We need to think of new ways –Lesotho ways-of doing things (Bereng 2013, Morija Museum Blog)*

Felicity Bodenstein and Camilla Pagani (2014) believe that museums are the keepers of memories like the human body, mind or language. It is obvious that they play a key role in contemporary production and the circulation of selected memories. While the revitalisation of colonial buildings and spaces provides spatial intervention to conserve memory and to produce a new attraction, by replacing old exhibitionary complex, museums function as the new cultural capitals of post-colonial nation-states, adding to the existing value of these sites, and increasing ownership and guardianship of objects.

In conclusion, the postcolonial and decolonial turns have been accompanied by the claims of cultural minorities for identity recognition all around the world subjecting, ethnographic museums to new critical perspectives in terms of their goals and roles. Since the beginning of the 21st century, several museums have taken different paths towards post-coloniality by adopting a range of strategies with the aim of canceling out, neutralising or indeed critically exposing colonial roots (Bodenstein and Pagani 2014). Characterised by new displays, a wave of refurbishments, message renovations, name modifications, new foundations and relocations, new museums are reshaping the ethnographic museum landscape across Africa and Europe. In an attempt to come out of the shadow of the colonial legacy, many ethnographic museums now reinvent themselves by implementing policies of recognition for previously marginalised groups and attempt to

repair historical wrongs. Institutions have begun to provide a space within which their own practice can be interrogated and whereby new museology allows familiarisation with difference and domestic multiplicity.

1.3. A short history of Basotho formation

When looking into the literature of Lesotho's historical heritage and tracing geopolitical factors, we see the amalgamation of diverse people into a kingdom and their conscious decision to retain their assimilated identity as the Basotho ruled by their own chiefs. There is a need to delve into the pre-colonial context if we are to be able to assess the presence or absence of change in the colonial era and analyse the character and origins of how matters were deployed, engaged, and appropriated. To understand the birth and present state of existence of Lesotho as a nation-state, I reflect on the history and origins of the kingdom of Lesotho, which can be traced back to the pre-colonial era in order to analyse the character, identity and origins of changes.

When outlining the idiographic historical review Gill (1993:16) states that the people who are today called southern Sotho, Tswana and Pedi all originated from one cultural cluster situated in south-central and western Transvaal. As per archeological studies, the ancestors of these southern ethnic groups were probably heterogeneous as they were a mixture of Khoisan and early Iron Age peoples. History indicates that a lot of intersections and intermingling occurred between these societies, which often lived side by side (Gill 1993).

Basotho generally speak the language Sesotho although some speak *Sephuthi, Xhosa*, as well as *Zulu* as a mother tongue. Sesotho is also used by large numbers of Southern Sotho speakers in the Free State province of South Africa, and as a result, it designates a common ancestry. Sesotho may also be used to distinguish the ways and customs of the Basotho from other people's cultures. Moshoeshoe 1 might have claimed political domination over extensive territory but he did so by virtue of the fact that the forefathers of the groups who recognised his authority had occupied those lands characterised by self-conscious social change. Remnants of population groups that were devastated by

havoc of wars and famine were forced to be clustered together in settlements on mountains and ridges suitable for defense during warfare. Moshoeshoe1 settled in Qiloane plateau known as Thaba-Bosiu due to attacks. Today, Thaba-Bosiu remains a symbol of hope and unity as well as revered as sacred by Basotho to this day. The Baphuthi, numerous refugees and other dispersed clans accepted Moshoeshoe 1's protection and leadership but they however settled at their own fortress known as Mount Moorosi plateau in the Southern parts of Lesotho.

In his book, *Maseru: An illustrated History*, David Ambrose (1993:26) contends that the first group of people who lived in what is today called Maseru were Nguni speaking, Amazizi who became known as Maphetla (pioneers). They enjoyed good relations with the San (Baroa) whom they found already inhabiting the area. However, they eventually moved southwards into the country now known as Qhuthing and Qachasnek. Their migration into Lesotho is said to have been a gradual process that spread over seven to eight generations. The third group of Amazizi who followed them are the Baphuthi. All spoke languages that were closely related to what is now Zulu and Xhosa. They mingled with a small group of Bafokeng who spoke one of the ancestral dialects of Lesotho (Ambrose 1993).

Elizabeth Eldredge in *Power in Colonial Africa* (2007:31) notes the effect of British colonisation in Lesotho and highlights that what the British assumed was the cultural superiority base of dominant western discourse and ideologies. The colonisers sought to exclude the old order which is in language and in everyday habits and practices as part of the project of colonial authority to destabilise African cultural systems and to undermine and replace them as they did not allow coexistence. They attributed the colonial state greater powers and influence in political, economic, social and cultural spheres of activity among the colonised. It has been argued that virtually the entire world has been shaped by the colonial experience through the historical actions of people individually and collectively as colonisers or as colonised. The colonial experience in Lesotho destabilised the peaceful co-existence among Basotho and other smaller groups, as had been intended by Moshoeshoe 1.

1.4. Types of Museums and a Short history of museums in Lesotho.

Compared to other countries in Southern Africa, there is scant literature on the development of museums in Lesotho. Though there have been a few museums as highlighted in the previous sections, not much has been written about museums in Lesotho. One of the only few writings on museum in Lesotho is the work of Zachery Rosen (2018) who wrote his thesis about the LNM titled *Re-remembering the Nation*: *Constructing National Identity through Lesotho National Museum.* Rosen learned about the establishment of the first museum in Lesotho while traveling in Lesotho on the mission of 'Peace Corp'. In his essay, he was concerned with situating the museum in the general historical contexts of politics, economics, monarchy, identity and diversity. Making comparisons with other similar African museums he discussed the challenges and opportunities that may arise as the government of Lesotho works to establish the national museum.

Another important work is Tokelo Mapena's MA thesis (2017) titled the *cultural policy and the minority cultures in Lesotho* which focuses on the intangible cultural heritage, arguing that the minorities are not represented in Lesotho within our legal frameworks, citing the case of Baphuthi living heritage. This study will complement Mapena's argument as it offers curatorial recommendations of the minorities using the LNM.

Furthermore, Valerie Vowles (1985) from United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) prepared a report which offers insights about the long journey of the development of the national museum in Lesotho in the previous years. Steven Gill has also recently published what is perhaps the most comprehensive publication on the history of the development of museums in Lesotho. His book *Museums Lesotho: Building Upon the Legacy: An inquiry into the idea & reality of a National Museum in Lesotho* (2015)*,* provides an informative narrative on the making of the museum in the country*.* Gill (2015) writes about the legacy of museums in Lesotho tracing their historical development in particular missionary endeavors. He also raises his concerns about the preparedness of the government and insists on the need for LNM to

run in parallel with other private museums[3] that already exist in the country. These works contributed to my knowledge about the foundation of LNM.

The museum is defined as “a non-profit making, permanent institution in the service of society and of its development and open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purpose of study, education, and enjoyment” (International Council of Museum ICOM, 2007). Most of the institutions construct their policy framework based on this classic definition and come up with meaning relevant to their institutional missions. Museums have transformed to the point whereby objects or collections once so central to museums are considered of secondary importance today. As argued by Barbara Gimblett (2007:40), a museum is no longer seen as a container but as the activity itself. Museums tend to vary according to their historical origins, philosophies and differing roles in society and they do not lend themselves to rigid classification. Certain museums provide for a specialist audience like societies or schools and have particular responsibilities for a defined geographic area such as city or region. Sometimes museums are classified according to the source of their funding (e.g. state, private) and sometimes analysis of museums is based on the nature of collections. Depending on whether their perspectives are based on nationalistic, religious or political they may offer alternative interpretations of artistic, historical or scientific collections. In this study, only the basic types of museums will be discussed.

This section focuses on tracking the establishment of museums in Lesotho so as to acquire an understanding of where the country might be heading. According to David Maxwell (2008:328), missionaries were regarded not only as agents for spreading western religious beliefs to non-western cultures, but also played an important role as collectors of African cultural materials. It is not surprising to find out that some of their collections found their way into institutions such as universities and public museums.[4] Museums have been established in many countries around Africa often by settlers or colonial officials from Europe, Christian missionaries, and academics and therefore

[3] Such as Morija Museum, Masitise Cave museum and Matsieng Royal museum.
[4] To mention few, university museums include Wits Art Museum, while public museums include Bloemfontein National Museum, Morija Museum, Museum of Africa and others.

Lesotho is not an exception. These institutions took a wide variety of forms usually with an emphasis upon collections of material artifacts, strongly associated with scientific research, exploration of the culture of man, nature, and art.

Unlike other Southern African countries, Gill (2015) points out that missionaries were invited by Moshoeshoe as his advisers and to work among the Basotho. Whether this is fact or not, is an argument open for debate. However, the truth is missionaries interfered with Basotho cultural affairs and traditional settings just like elsewhere in Africa as noted in historiography. During Moshoeshoe 1's reign, Basotho fought a series of wars with the Boers of the Orange Free State resulting in land dispossession. It is the pressure of constant wars and disturbances that caused Moshoeshoe to seek out advice from the missionaries. The missionaries accepted Moshoeshoe 1's invitation and three young French missionaries who belonged to the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS) arrived in 1833 and he placed them in Morija (Pheko 2017).

According to Gill (2015:26), the foundation for museums in Lesotho began during the early 19th century pioneered by missionaries and they were conceived primarily as institutions based upon collections of historical, ethnographical, paleontological, and geological objects. The beginning of museums in Lesotho started not only with collections of objects[5] but also with the development of written documentation. Local permanent collections within Lesotho began to emerge in the late 1800s and much of the collecting was carried out by missionaries, government officials, teachers, or traders in their spare time. Out of their expeditions emerged what was called *'Musee de Morija'* present-day *Morija Museum and Archives*. The motivation behind collections was that the material circumstances of the Basotho during that time were facing extinction and needed to be preserved for future generations (Gill 2015).

The *Morija Museum and Archives* was formally established in 1956 to house the collections of the two prominent European missionary families, the Dieterlen and Ellenberger who collected ethnographical, historical material, paleontological and geological specimens. Morija is the first missionary settlement in Lesotho established by

[5] Historical, cultural, scientific and artistic objects.

Thomas Arbousset, Eugene Casalis and Constant Gosselin in 1833. These Frenchmen had been sent by the PEMS to the Kingdom of Lesotho to assist the London missionary society in bringing about 'civilisation'. The Morija museum, Lesotho's first museum was reflective of the vision and expectation of museum enthusiasts of the time like Ellenberger. The driving force behind the project returned to France but the museum survived (Gill 2015:32).

The European explorers Ellenberger and Dieterlen might have claimed that the enthusiasm behind their collection was to preserve the Basotho material culture for future generations however, evidence suggests more. Historically to some these objects were mere 'curiosities', and in most cases, they were significant components used to study and understand man and nature using scientific methods of inquiry. This is justified when Gill (2015:26) notes that some objects from Lesotho were taken to European and South African exhibitions or museums to help outsiders understand new geographical regions and cultures, that had not been discovered by Europeans. Some of these collections by missionaries from Lesotho can be traced to the Museum of Africa in Johannesburg, Cape Town, France, and Britain (Gill 2015). Discovering, classifying, hierarchising, and subjugating art or objects representing cultures seem to have been part of a larger project of the colonial enterprise.

Another small museum that was created by Ellenberger is called *Masitise Cave* House, built directly into a rock in the Quthing district. The Cave House was built in 1866 by Ellenberger's grandparents as a residence and he enhanced it; today it functions as a museum and it 'displays' local history and culture of the people who live around this place including Ellenberger family photos. It is said that the Cave House was part of a larger nature reserve that had been declared by the government in 1938. It is a historic house with a cast of dinosaur footprints in the ceiling. However, it is not clear whether it began to function as a museum while Ellenberger was still alive or after his death. Masitise Cave House is part of the PEMS old Missions house where Ellenberger carried out preaching service for years (Gill 2015:40).

Masitise Cave was developed by the missionary, Ellenberger in 1866 after he settled at Masitise area upon Chief Moorosi's invitation. It is said that the villagers helped

Ellenberger to build the huts for his family. However, it seemed the huts were not adequate to accommodate all the members of his family. Thus, he decided to transform the cave to become his residence house. It seems the cave already served as a historical place because it is said that the San people lived there for so many years before it became his home. The cave was excavated and built by Ellenberger, together with the assistance of both Phuthi and Basotho who lived there.

This museum began to serve as a site museum under a colonial administration in 1934 and it received an annual grant from the government. After independence, this site was proclaimed as a National Monument and Nature reserve. Like most of the old museums in Africa, it has been facing challenges including funds, theft, degradation of the original materials, leaks, and damage of the structure. It is under the administration of a church (Lesotho Evangelical Church) just like any other missionary establishment in the country. In 2003, it received a fund from the US Embassy for cultural preservation which improved its status as a heritage and tourist center. Also, Gill (2015:69) notes that in 2010 Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Culture (MTEC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Lesotho Evangelical Church (LEC) regarding the church's Heritage Institutions Morija Museum and Masitise Cave House museum to formalize their partnership (Gill 2015).

Looking into the displays of the museum, generally, they chronologically depicts the *Ellenberger settler history and the cave development*. The information was sourced from Ellenberger's archives in France. It also tells about Ellenberger's printing business and how he played a pivotal role in printing in Lesotho. Few exhibits housed here are 'reflective' of the cultures of the BaPhuthi as well as the natural history found in the far south of Lesotho. The other section focuses *on the relationship between Ellenberger and the Baphuthi* basically how Ellenberger convinced Moorosi to be placed under British protection and how this part of the south region was joined to Lesotho under one jurisdiction (Gill 2015).

Besides the museums which were pioneered by the missionaries, there is *Mochochonono Museum*, which opened in 2016 at Thaba Bosiu historical site. The small exhibition is a government initiative in exhibiting historical and cultural artifacts, photographs, and

general information about Thaba bosiu. The Thaba-bosiu (national monument) holds great historical significance as the birthplace of the Basotho nation; it serves as a residence and military stronghold of Moshoeshoe 1- the kingdom's founding father. The site museum found at the foot of the mountain provides an interactive multimedia presentation of the monument. The cultural site includes a centerpiece of Moshoeshoe 1 statue, traditional village, amphitheatre, and chalets. There is not much in the way of artifacts, but the information panels about the history, culture, and customs of the Basotho.

Furthermore, *Matsieng Royal Archives, Museum and Information* Centre is a royal compound adjoining archives and a small museum display established in 2012. It houses pre-colonial and post-colonial records relating to the chieftainship in Lesotho, books as well as cultural objects. Situated at Matsieng Royal village (palace), the museum/archive is non-governmental organisation intended to preserve the royal collection, information, and documents that have been accumulated to be accessible to the public. Matsieng became the royal capital during the colonial period (1858) and has been the traditional home for Lesotho's royalty since independence.

Lastly, *Letse'ng Diamond Discovery Centre* established in 2019, is the recently built museum located at Maseru which aims at telling Letse'ng story, educating and exposing Basotho to the excitement and complexities and opportunities of diamond mining in Lesotho and understanding Lesotho's diamond resources in a global context. This discovery center is an important information hub for the industry and the objective is to provide access to the diamond story. The information display includes interactive 3D exhibits, wall projections and multi-touch tables providing a cinema experience.

Compared to other countries like its bigger neighbour South Africa, the museum world in Lesotho is relatively small and still emerging. The LNM will be the largest museum project for the country, hence the huge expectations from society and stakeholders in fostering cohesion and unity, in diversity. Schmidt (2013) has shown how South Africa relies on museums to produce and spread a sense of unity in the mist of differences. Their success in the narrative depends on decolonising concepts of race, museum and nation that perpetuated the apartheid agenda and attempts to find liberation in new approaches to

curation and pedagogy in museology. This study will critically look at the implementation of the South African Department of Arts and Culture's (DAC) mission to create a nation united in diversity in the newly constructed museums in serving their mission as nation-building museums which is what is lacking looking at the country's historical background.

1.5. Museums and Minorities' Representation in Lesotho

This section discusses and analyses the settler representation of minorities in Lesotho museums so far, in particular the Baphuthi. One can argue that due to some of the incidents such as Moshoeshoe 1's death and after Moorosi's brutal death by the colonists [6], the other ethnic groups which are presently referred to as the minority groups lost their former freedom and support enjoyed during Moshoeshoe 1's reign. I would like to assume that they lost their confidence and became frightened and reluctant to fight against oppression by the following leadership in particular colonialism. As a result, they became voiceless for safety purposes; the killing of their leader who was an activist and patriotic behavior from Moshoeshoe's successors as well as the San people extermination[7] somehow inflicted fear of their lives and suppressed them. Furthermore, the laws that were introduced by colonialism cemented their exclusion and disturbed the original set up of the Basotho community from the pre-colonial era and Basotho started to look down upon them as they gained superiority over other groups and as a result, they were overlooked.

The other reason for these divisions argued elsewhere is that they were created mostly because of the work of the missionary societies, which helped to crystallise a written language around a certain community and standardised that community's language and

[6] The old chief and many others were killed and his body was decapitated and his head sent to King William's Town in the Eastern Cape. After months of stalemate, Moorosi mountain was attacked in 1879 (Ellenberger 1992:16).

[7] Gill (1993:132) points out that, Colonel Bowker the government agent in Lesotho after British sovereignty called for San extermination. He and his forces carried out some campaigns, followed up with others organized by chief Jonathan's men one of Moshoeshoe's sons which dispersed the last independent san community. The remnants attached themselves to friendly Basotho as well as Xhosa of the Eastern Cape while others lived a peripatetic existence as a result by the 1950s they were completely absorbed within these friendly communities. Thus ended the history of the mountain Bushmen of Lesotho.

then standardised that language around an entire region. Gill (1993:23) alleges that in reality there is a possibility that a variety of linguistic groups about seven or more existed within the broad family which is today called Sotho. Mapena (2017) argues that the constitution continues to ignore the prevalence of linguistic diversity; perhaps this is one of the inherited experiences of colonial indoctrination, which saw English being given privileged as a language of colonisers and Sesotho a language of the majority being given an official status. The constitution seems to cement an ideology that presents a single narrative in Lesotho for transmission of knowledge. Interestingly, in South Africa a country that shares the same colonial legacy as Lesotho, diversity is recognised by giving indigenous languages equal privilege as reflected in their Constitution and White paper.

The question is how to highlight the contribution of minorities in the country as well as portray various cultures that make up the heritage of the people of Lesotho. I believe LNM can be used to rewrite and redress the history of the nation through its programs and recover the history that was made invisible and muted. The new museum can be used as a platform to share thoughts on how to deal with the legacies of the colonial empire in particular hegemonic practices. We can start by analysing the past as a way of addressing the colonial gaze that still lingers in the present, and curate the experience that was erased from the collective imaginary. There is a need to expand the potential of the museum's social value to create meaningful experiences for peoples of all origins and backgrounds ensuring that minorities feel embraced and emboldened.

The process of colonisation began with the entry of the mission of Christianity into the historical landscape and brought about social change that was imposed. This resulted in imposition of western cultural values upon Africa through the Christian missionary project. It brought about dominant imported culture and it involved the assertion of control over such things as educational and ritual processes, patterns of socialisation, political and legal procedures, public communication, and self-representation and so on. This scenario disturbed the pre-colonial order of modes of thought and ways of understanding reality and acceptability of practice and habit.

Museums can be seen as public heritage sites that strive to present public memories and also serve as places of public engagement. The Baphuthi provides an exceptional case

because there are few Baphuthi cultural exhibits at Masitise Cave museum in Quthing district. Historically this is the geographical area where they settled in the pre-colonial era. Therefore, this part examines and gives insights into what is being displayed in this museum and how. This is important since my argument is that they are underrepresented and I also intend to make the reader grasps the existing situation of Baphuthi's presentation in the country. For the scope of the research, this section focuses on the Baphuthi minority group though towards the end of the research the curatorial recommendations will be applicable for all advocated minority groups to be presented in the national museum for inclusivity and diversity purposes.

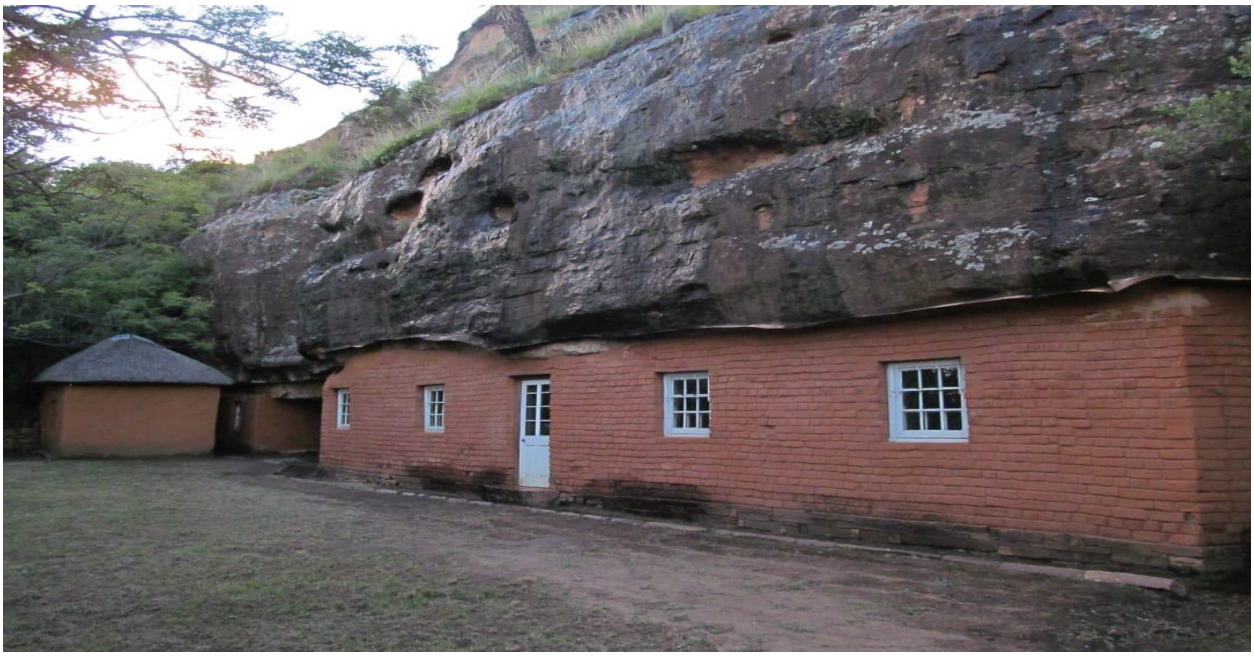


Figure 1 *Image of Masitise Cave Museum (photo courtesy of Masitise Museum).*

Overall as explained above, Masitise briefly portrays how historically the Phuthi came to settle in Lesotho and the relationship between Moshoeshoe 1 and Chief Moorosi, the leader of the Baphuthi. The exhibition also narrates how the Baphuthi were instrumental in assisting Moshoeshoe to build up the wealth of his emerging nation.

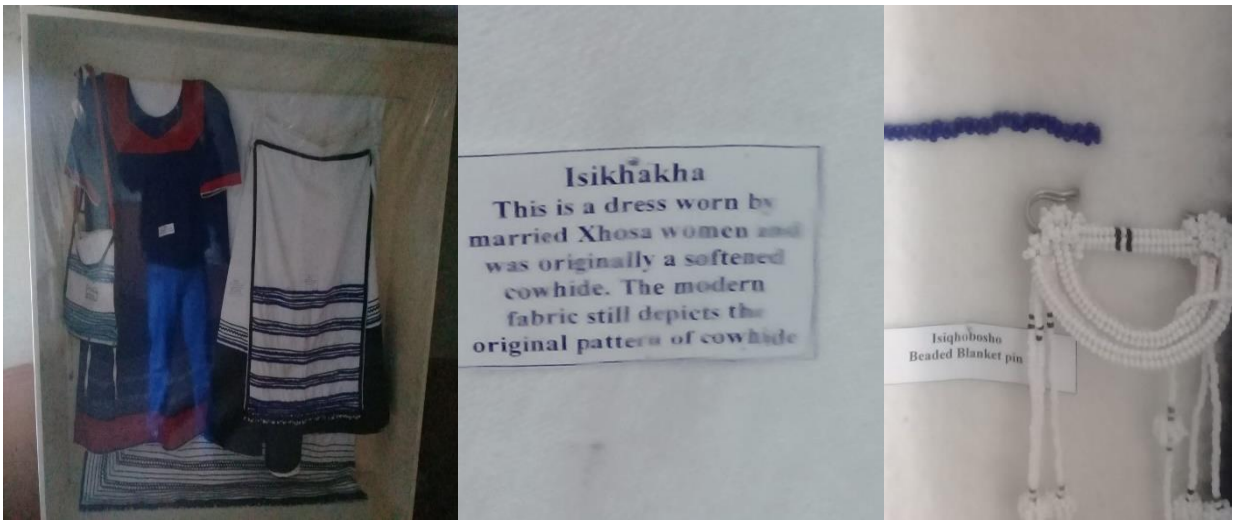


Figure 2 shows *images of the few artefacts of material culture found in the museum with labels on permanent display (photo courtesy of Masitise museum).*



Figure 3 *Above are fossils and texts inside the cabinet on display (photo courtesy of Masitise Cave Museum).*

Generally, I see this site as being problematic if considered in light of new museology theory and practice. I have picked the predominance of missionary discourse. The main focus has been on glorifying Ellenberger as the person (bio) and founder of this museum. I argue that there are no ordinary people stories with regards to local people, the main

focus as usual is on the kings (Moshoeshoe and Moorosi). Though it is supposed to be reflective of the peoples' cultures and identity, there is little information available in terms of content, especially in the attire being showcased. In general, the museum displays do not incorporate Intangible Cultural Heritage. It is composed of static exhibitions that are heavily based on text and no archive/ storage. The permanent displays have not been refined in response to changing times as such require serious reconfiguration that will enliven the site and offer the experience to the visitors. At the moment I have a lot of questions involving educational programmes about Bahuthi culture, community involvement and ownership and the meaning and intentions of the existing collections.

Gill (2015) states that site has not performed well due to problems of inactive oversight and therefore an oversight committee was re-established in 2003 and was put under the direction of a full-time Curator. Furthermore, even though there has been a Memorandum of Understanding between this cultural institute and the government, it seems there is no consistent support or funding model from the government (MTEC). Gill has held a view that due to the financial crisis a year later after signing, MTEC's vision concerning private museums was not clear and the main focus was now on building the new national museum (Gill 2015:67). He assumes that there are not enough resources to support both public and private museums. He concludes by contending that the government has not yet embraced private efforts as fully legitimate or worthy of its support. In Gill's statements, one can sense that so far the establishment of the National museum is taken as a threat to existing private heritage initiatives in terms of support.

Masitise cave is rooted in its physical place whereby the Baphuthi historically settled and clustered till today. The question is how is it addressing surrounding community artistic endeavors now. So far in Lesotho museums are not fairly representing the diversity of the country, they seem to be focused on the political power of Moshoeshoe and the triumphs of 'Basotho'. There is a need to create the platforms and accommodate minorities to redress past imbalances and offer representations of previously marginalised groups. As per Ngcobo (2018), the controversy over public representations of the past fostered a range of deliberate efforts to create displays and experiences more suited to post-colonial contexts.

Meanwhile, the other question that has been raised by the stakeholders is how LNM might relate to other heritage institutions such as this one as the existing institution. They have suggested a network of museums centrally coordinated in Maseru that will encourage integrated hubs for public education programmes, income generation and entrepreneurship. It seems they have been inspired by contemporary trends of museum networks such as Iziko, Ditsong and Museums of World Heritage whereby previously independent heritage institutions are amalgamated to align with the new government's transformation imperatives. This so far is envisioned to allow de/construction and multiculturalism. They build on former diverse collections and are partially subsidised by the government. In Lesotho, the emphasis is that this strategy will allow stronger cohesion and build consensus within the sector moving forward, extend the MOU to other private heritage sectors such as Masitise salaries, to cover operating expenses, training, equipment and program development. My opinion is that this initiative will aid in organising the sector and take action towards harnessing the funds taking advantage of the fact that Creative and Cultural Industries (CCIs) have been prioritised by the government in the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) 11[8].

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a context of the research by outlining and reviewing the concepts used to inform this study. It looked at multiculturalism and its usefulness as the central concept that circulates throughout the research. It unpacked the concepts of multiculturalism and decoloniality, proposing how these can assist us in understanding and dealing with the current lack of minorities' representations in the museums in Lesotho. To elaborate on the context of Lesotho and its current state of affairs in relation to museums, the chapter ended by giving a short history of Lesotho's museums, highlighting the dominance of missionary museums and a few emerging non-state

[8] The Lesotho Government has identified the Creative Industries as one of its priorities in the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP 11) 2018/19-2022/23, meaning that the development and promotion of the cultural creative industries is a matter of national importance. It signifies a shift in the way in which the current government sees and prioritizes the sector.

museum projects. In spite of these developments; the section points to existing challenges of representation of minority groups in the current museums in Lesotho.

CHAPTER 2

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW NATIONAL MUSEUM OF LESOTHO.

Introduction

In this Chapter, I look at the historical and contemporary efforts at establishing a national museum in postcolonial Lesotho. The information shows that the idea of a national museum in Lesotho is long-standing and various efforts were made to realise its being. Such a museum has always been seen as important for the unity and identity of Basotho. I situate this with the developments elsewhere in the world and in Africa, and draw on experiences relating to how they have approached diversity and multiculturalism. The chapter shows that the world over, museums are still regarded as important places for the creation of national identities, diversity and multicultural societies. Given the importance accorded to national museums, Lesotho could learn from experiences elsewhere to inform its own processes of making museums that fully recognise the diversity in the country.

2.1. On National Museums

The majority of the public museums are funded by the state and guided by official cultural policy. According to Bennett (2006:35), they have new approaches of citizenship in the contemporary context with official policies advocating for multiculturalism. Bennett argues that no matter how progressive public museums are, by their nature they are governmental. Therefore they should understand their intermediary role in public culture. They have become ‘differencing machines’ dedicated to the promotion of multicultural understanding especially cross divisions caused by colonialism (Bennett 2006). The question then is how do we shape alternative practices that are intended to overcome the racial divisions that museums have historically portrayed. This chapter gives insights on the current establishment of LNM and discusses different cases that can inform LNM towards being a distinct instrument.

Apart from the European explorer's efforts, it is also evident that the government of Lesotho has also been attempting to establish its own national museum as far back as the 1950s. However, there have been so many hindrances until 2015 when eventually the project commenced. The government of Lesotho through the MTEC has finally begun the development of the Lesotho National Museum and Arts Gallery. Currently, towards completion, the LNM will contain exhibitions that showcase the stories, art, history and natural and cultural heritage of Lesotho (Master Plan 2015). According to the UNESCO report carried out by Vowles in 1985, it was initially proposed that the building would be erected to house both national museum and national archive (Vowles 1985:2).

Vowles (1985) noted that Lesotho holds a rich cultural and natural heritage and the lack of a national museum is a major disadvantage to the consolidation of the country's culture. According to Vowles, the safeguarding of Lesotho's cultural and natural heritage cannot be guaranteed unless proper facilities are provided in a permanent building and therefore, measures should be taken for the construction of the equipped secured facility (Vowles 1985:2). However, since then the government has been struggling to launch the construction due to many complications including lack of funds, political will, and expertise needed to carry out the project effectively. Even though the project eventually began recently, there are still many and uncertainties surrounding the development of the LNM. The debates involved collections, programs, and organisational structure, as well as delays caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Such challenges require the DOC to consult as widely as possible.

When tracing the history of the development of the national museum in Lesotho through UNESCO report, Vowles (1985:2) states that in 1958 the government made legal provision for Basotho museum. Nevertheless, active steps were taken by a committee set up by the University of Lesotho in 1965, which was superseded by a committee appointed by the minister of education in 1966. This committee managed to secure a site and approved plans for a museum and in 1973 the construction began. Unfortunately, the museum building was demolished in 1980 to make space for a big government complex (Vowles 1985:4).

As a result, many collections were lost in the absence of storage and display facilities. This was a major setback for those who have been involved in the museum project. Government records point out that other attempts began after 1980, but these did not materialise until 2015 when the new plan for a national museum was launched. It is the first national museum in the country's history in the midst of the international trend for establishing museums during the 20th century especially in Africa. Thus, the idea of a national museum in Lesotho has long existed, though it was delayed and shelved due to the economic climate and debates over the site.

In this regard, the question that remains amid the national museum's establishment and the official circulating speeches asserting that the museum is for 'Basotho', is who are the Basotho? In answering this question, the Department of Culture can play a role in promoting change through LNM museum. The Department can enforce diversity by grabbing this opportunity to create an enabling environment in which minorities can be equally represented through cultural knowledge production and exhibitions of their heritage. There is a need for introspection that will allow transformation, so as to challenge colonial policies, which tended to espouse a limited understanding of African culture.

2.2. The contemporary notion of a national museum.

In what follows, I explore the idea of a national museum in Africa since the Lesotho government has embarked on the development of a national museum project in the postmodern era. In the modern-day, it seems many academics and professionals have been interrogating the very concept of the museum itself. In particular, many Africans are posing questions around the challenges of museums as they argue that they are ideas imported to Africa through colonialism. They seek to know the profound implications this has for museums. According to Emmanuel Arinze (1998:31), member of ICOM the majority of museums in Africa share a common heritage in their history as national institutions. In essence, they are establishments and products of the colonial era, largely because the notion of the museum was informed by the interests of expatriates in colonial

Africa with the focus on the collection of indigenous traditional art and studying the cultural history of traditional societies.

Experts like Arinze (1998) have concluded that basically, African museums share the same outlook that was received from the West during European intrusion, and to some, this is still the case even today. His general observation is that almost across the continent the same formats and approaches were adopted in the way museums are organised. The methods in the collection and presentation of the materials as well as the legislative acts that established museums in Africa in the colonial period have not been changed in the post-colonial era. It seems African museums were created to house the materials of a 'tribal' people and to satisfy the curiosity of the elites, while excluding and detaching the local people who produced the objects and materials. Also, religion has been repeatedly highlighted as the common denominator, where African museum establishments attacked, yet collected cultures of Africans (Arinze 1998).

What is critical is that Western religion challenged and discouraged traditional values, rites, and belief systems. As result, communities were called to discard objects that were associated with their traditions and identity. These were either destroyed or deposited in museums with inadequate information like the names of artists who made the objects. As a result, most African museums were museums of antiquity, archaeology, ethnography and natural history. Chiefly, these institutions were dedicated to colonial power and highly educated foreigners and tourists. These museums referred to as the 'Western model' stereotyped local cultures and did not serve the needs and interests of African people (Arinze 1998).

Museum scholars claim that the 19th century saw a growing desire for the establishment of national museums around the world as a result of emerging and the formation of newly independent nations. It has been argued by James Gore (2008:80) Curator in *Australia National museum*, that the number of museums that were established in European colonies can be viewed as 'national' in orientation though they were not representatives of a comprehensive African nation. The era of the European Enlightenment created a society curious about the world, while at the same time preoccupied with the concept of a nation. According to Anderson, Benedict (1983) in his seminal book *Imagined*

Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, museums in the 18th and 19th Centuries have always been important to how countries look at themselves as exclusive and cohesive nations. When Europe colonised other parts of the world, the term national was an assertion of the individual autonomy of that particular colony. The focus was more on showing off imperial progress or power. Therefore, in most colonial states, the museums were representatives of the empire's wealth as they were fascinated with collecting scientific or artistic objects as more countries were being discovered and more scientific inquiries were conducted. Nation-state institutions did not ascribe the word 'national' to portray national distinctiveness. They were rather national by virtue of their civic and educative role not because of their exclusive national content.

However, post-independence saw some shifts in public museums as cultural institutions. Arinze (1998) states that bold steps were taken to Africanise museums. National museums both new and existing ones were now engaged as vehicles of nationalism by newly elected governments led by African leaders. This saw the growing tendency of deploying museums in Africa for purposes of fostering national consciousness and political unity, and a feeling of belonging. Essentially, they were used to rewrite and redress the history of the nation. Arinze asserts that museums were projecting what Kwame Nkrumah called the African personality, along with forging greater national understanding and unity. Of significance, museums turned into spaces that aim to highlight and recognise the complex cultures which constitute the heritage of the people (Arinze 1998:32).

Worldwide nation-states with capacity were seen establishing more museums both national and local while some went through renovations the popular one being the *British Museum*. In post-colonial Africa, efforts have been made by governments to give museums a profile of national importance and relevance, as they developed the capacity to challenge the stereotyped Western model they inherited. Because of the evolving nature of museums, they are still marked and authorised as celebratory ideas of government and remain the new national capital (Gore 2008). Therefore, in Africa as in other continents, national museums are still considered important institutions by

governments. They are expected to present the histories, cultures and experiences of society to both local people and to the outside world.

2.3. The National Museum of Lesotho

Considering the baggage carried by contemporary museums in the post-colonial African context, the process of setting up Lesotho's new national museums entails engaging with a range of challenges such as relevant models including funding, expertise, management, etc., as outlined by Arinze (1998:36). For LNM, the museum building proposed by the architect is shaped like aloe and merged the sacred cultural Basotho hat '*Mokorotlo'* (See Figure 4). The construction project commenced in 2015 and was expected to be completed in 2017. The building thus carries the special emblematic status of the invented tradition. It is located on Lerotholi road across the Royal palace premises of the current monarch King Letsie III. The building was planned and designed by DNT Architects in collaboration with Cube Architects. The proposed construction is larger than the initial 1985 plan, though one can say it is based on the proposal that was conceived in the 1980s with slight modifications. The building consists of three floors and according tothe architects, it will house cultural infrastructures such as an art gallery, theatre, film studios, craft centre and amphitheater, storage, a conservation lab, restaurant and offices. The current perception is that the Public-Private Partnership model is expected to ensure the efficient running of the museum (SECO project managers).



Figure 4 *LNM under construction, picture authors own.*

It is apparent that significant progress is being made in terms of the construction of the national museum. At this point, the DOC has moved ahead with plans for the National Museum in the capital town of Lesotho, and the building is almost finished. Stakeholders engagements have been conducted from 2014 to the present. However, even as the construction progresses, there are still unanswered questions from various stakeholders. For instance, nothing has been heard from the department concerning the development of solid institutional plans and leadership to build upon and drive the process, even long-time stewards such as Gill (2015) have worryingly expressed this concern. This begs the question as to what direction is being taken in terms of the concept of the national museum in Lesotho. It seems like as a country MTEC have not concluded defining what the National Museum should be and how it is going to operate as well as the criteria of

collections across the country that are of national significance. This is more worrying considering the fact that initially the museum was expected to open in 2021.

There have also been mixed emotions dominated by doubt from the public concerning the capability and expertise of the management and sustainability of the cultural institution of this nature and size in the country looking at the amount of work involved in developing a national institution of this kind for the first time. Up to this moment, the project has been spearheaded by Dijon Design, a heritage consultancy firm from Cape Town, South Africa. Dijon has been providing guidance drawing from his experience and expertise and has also been gathering information from different stakeholders. To a certain extent that Dijon is familiar with our natural and cultural landscape since he has also been engaged before in other existing cultural projects involving exhibitions at Thaba-bosiu and Sehlabathebe National Park.

With regards to the vision of LNM, Gill (2015:70) has analysed two thoughts that can be considered regarding the effective operational framework of LNM. This centers on whether it should be a centralised government institution in Maseru or a decentralised institution which is more of a network of public and private museums. Throughout his entire discussion, Gill has advocated for a decentralised model, citing many reasons including collaboration purposes and sharing of resources. Khensani Maluleka via Dijon design (Letuka 2018) has also shared the same sentiments with Gill, asserting that the LNM should consider the viability of integrating the museum with other heritage administrative functions. The reason is that Lesotho is a small country therefore the best way is to be coordinated via a single national network to avoid duplication.

There are also questions around what will be exhibited in the museum. In the current exhibition plan/narrative, what is going to be exhibited in LNM has been situated broadly within subjects such as geography, biodiversity, rock art, contemporary art, crafts and literature. Photographs, film, digital exhibitions as well as natural and cultural artifacts have also been mentioned as per the stakeholder invitation memo (2018). The memo also stipulates that the museum is going to be for ‘all people’ of Lesotho. The current vision of LNM reads as follows*: “showcasing Basotho heritage for present and future*

generations. Developing understanding, advocacy and pride to make Basotho identity known and appreciated by the rest of the world" (LNM Information Leaflet 2018).

During one of the stakeholder workshops on sensitising the public Maluleka, a representative of Dijon Design, emphasised that the artists and Basotho should strive to have ownership of the museum and tell their stories, as well as deploy the museum space to express and engage with the international market. In his own words, Maluleka indicated that "As a country, the world is expecting you to set your own theme, something that sets you apart" (Letuka 2018). The emphasis is that Basotho should take pride in the artifacts that will be showcased in the museum. Thus, it is up to Basotho to decide what they make of it.

In my observation, the task of developing the collection has been overwhelming since there is only a minimal existing collection in the Department of Culture that is considered as the potential.[9] However, according to the Masterplan, there is a vast range of prominent collections outside of Lesotho generally consisting of paleontological, anthropological and archeological items.[10] This is mainly because of decades of lack of proper facilities or space and expertise to consolidate the country's cultural collections. As a result, much of the cultural heritage of Lesotho in the form of museum artifacts has been lost due to the absence of storing and displaying facilities as well as limited conservation techniques (Vowles 1985). However, as a country, we still acknowledge the efforts of Paris Evangelical Missionaries for the collection that still exists at various isolated heritage sites both private and public in the country.

According to Zachery (2018:65), there have been thoughts of loaning objects by the national museum team from these spaces that make up Lesotho's heritage. He claims

[9] A range of material culture that was inventoried and had been since stored at the offices of MTEC in the 1980s. The 1985 UNESCO museum report included a list of objects to be used as an inaugural collection for the museum. Included are items under the headings of History, Archaeology, Palaeontology, Zoology, Ethnography and Ethnomusicology (Master plan 2015:22)

[10] In Iziko Museums of South Africa there are 1200 items of Natural History collections that include paleontological and entomological specimens, as well as close to 360 objects of Social History consisting of storage vessels, basketware, clothing and adornments, sleeping and food mats, weaponry etc. Moreover, National museum of Bloemfontein holds a collection of over 1000 social and natural history that include special collection of 'Basotho' blankets, archeology and paleontology. Whereas KZN Museums collections consists of 60 items of anthropological and archeological artefacts (Ibid)

that the LNM team has reached out to them to inquire about the possibilities of arranging loans for part of their collections. However, some are not prepared and willing to hand over their collections as well as permit their professional staff to be part of the national museum if it is based on a centralised model (Gill 2015). Surprisingly, they indicate that MTEC should extend MOU to other heritage sector's such as salaries, operational expenses, equipment training, and program development.

In my conversation with the project manager Mapena, regarding the museum collections, she asserted that they are still consolidating the museum collections. However, she mentioned that the DOC has already drawn the human resource structure, acquisition policy as well as drafted MOUs with potential donors, though collections are still scattered some with individuals and institutions, locally and abroad. In terms of the LNM being a network, she said that they have anticipated a network that does not involve a budget but a network in a sense of sharing information and expertise.

On the other hand, since Dijon Design was commissioned by MTEC, to develop the concept, content and exhibition for the LNM (Maluleka 2018); this consultant firm has also stressed the urgent need to harmonise different national policies and legal frameworks for museums and heritage in Lesotho. The key policies such as the Museum Act of 1967, National Cultural Policy 2005 and MOU with Morija Museum and Masitise Cave Museum. This followed after they had identified gaps that might impact negatively on the future management of the museum. When reviewing the *LNM Masterplan*, their findings point out that key issues to be addressed include the non-existence of a heritage register, museum objects that are not well documented the absence of a heritage council/ commission, as well as outdated Museum Act.

In summary, and as also observed by Gill (2015), it appears the majority of stakeholders are appealing for joint ownership and responsibility in this way. They believe that the heritage sector will be developed realistically and sustainably. They envision a larger decentralised network of heritage institutions and sites in terms of institutional roles, policies, objectives, staffing and budgets. On the other hand, they have critiqued the department that *the Master plan* was not presented in time and should have informed the architectural plan. The delay has been seen as a disadvantage because drawing

institutional plans, organising relevant staff, developing the collections and exhibition programmes are viewed as a challenging process than the building itself so the fear is the museum might remain closed in the meantime. As such, the stakeholders called for critical interventions to be made lest LNM becomes a white elephant.

2.4. How have other museums applied or tackled multiculturalism?

This section attempts to analyse strategies adopted by Australia and South Africa, to go beyond the colonial legacy – strategies which I suggest LNM can consider to promote diversity and inclusion. There has been increasing discussion of the social impact of museums and their role in promoting social inclusion and cohesion in the post-colonial era particularly in countries that suffered colonial social injustices like South Africa. The museum has been seen as an ideal place to reflect and connect people and as a result, communities of all sizes around the world address issues of migration, religious expression, discrimination, gender identity and the equal treatment of all people in the museum spaces. Even the definition of the museum itself is debatable and under reconstruction, as some experts feel the current one is inadequate (Small 2019). The question is about the role of museums in enhancing multiculturism and how LNM can deploy it so that it speaks for underprivileged groups and that the museum be a place of creative exchange and open dialogue.

According to Schmidt, (2013) the challenge has been to create new relations and perceptions of differences that break away from the hierarchically organised form of stigmatic othering. This is an attempt to explore how museums have reshaped their colonial heritage using the museum space for recognition and historical reconciliation. Schmidt (2013:289) observes that efforts can be defined as curatorial and institutional considering cases that illustrate the different scales of transformation. They can also be observed through a policy-oriented reframing of colonial heritage. The (re)installation process of collections allowed different governments and curators to formulate new exhibitionary complexes and governmentality.

The post-colonial shifts have been characterised by the fight and claims of cultural minorities for identity recognition all around the world. These movements have somehow forced ethnography museums to review their goals and roles to new critical perspectives. Since the beginning of the 21st century, several museums have taken different directions towards decoloniality by adopting a range of strategies to cancel out, neutralise, or critically expose colonial roots. Their actions or efforts are visible through new displays, a wave of refurbishments, message renovations, name modifications, and new foundations to a large extent in pursuit of reshaping the ethnographic museum landscape. All these are done in an attempt to come out of the shadow of the colonial legacy. Many museums now reinvent themselves by implementing policies of recognition for previously marginalised groups in an attempt to repair historical wrongs and redress social equality.

2.5. The Australian National Museum

In what follows I outline the shifts the first illustration being the *Australia National Museum*, which opened in 2001. According to Gore (2008:76), the Australia National Museum is the first national museum in history considering the international trend for establishing national museums during 20th across the world. The museum is said to have been based on the concept that was conceived in 1975, though different proposals were put forward but delayed and shelved due to political and economic reasons (Gore 2008). It is noteworthy to highlight that the journey of the Australian national museum is almost the same as Lesotho, in particular the challenges involved in establishing it.

Reflecting on the general history and development of this museum, Gore (2008) notes that the first attempts to establish national museums were for the reason of displaying natural history and antiques. Australians realised that there is a growing number of traditional museums towards the end of the 19th century that proved to be fascinating and attractive to the general public. This shift helped Australia to develop a sense of historical perspective and a love of the past people presenting a picture of various aspects of the daily life and works of ordinary men. Australian national museum is designed as a national

institution of social history and it seeks to attract an even greater segment and develop a symbol of a nation. They have also displayed their national anthem and flag (Gore 2008).

The Australian national museum focuses on putting the human history of the continent at the forefront as it displays the diverse Australian culture. Gore (2008:81) points out that the museum collections are seen as diverse collections of everyday life. They represent its native life and customs, literature and fine arts as well as other significant features of the Australian way of life. It does not just consist of rows of traditional cases and artifacts but is a forum and a place of learning open to scholars. The museum is described as receptive to differing versions of the past by focusing on Aboriginal history than anthropology and the Australian environment and recent history. Whereas in the past the indigenous populations were regarded as primitive, comprising part of natural history and without history, there was growing recognition of the Aboriginal triumph in conquering the harsh environment of Australia. Thus, the museum explores their diversity, spirituality, identity; survival stories and experiences of indigenous and settler society in consultation with and involvement of those communities who are given control over their own heritage (Gore 2008).

In terms of outlook the Australian national museum is defined as self-consciously diversified, postmodern and post-colonial. Among the contentious issues that emerged after its opening is the issue of 'Australian-ness' which was debated more vigorously than any other period of the nation's history. Gore adds that the NMA conceptualisation and presentation to the public has informed the understanding of the social role and purpose of the museum. The aim is to increase the awareness and contribution of the ordinary members of the national community and their conception of identity. The museum seeks to represent identity as unfinished contested, contingent and continuously negotiated. In the museum, Australian national identity was represented as a work in progress to which the museum audiences are encouraged to contribute. The museum was turned into a public forum that aimed to speak with many voices, listened and responded to all as well as promote debate and discussion about questions of diversity and identity (Gore 2008).

Thus, the Australian case gives a good example of how a museum can be used as a platform for recognising communities that were sidelined. The museum has been

responsive to contemporary events and represents indigenous Australian 'Aboriginal' peoples, bringing these themes into the museum and into dialogues on Australian national identities. More importantly, the museum emphasises that Australian society comprises people of many different origins by highlighting the effects of cultural diversity. The everyday experiences of minorities are showcased representing those who had been previously excluded from the national register (Gore 2008:83). It shows the role the museum had in reflecting and influencing public opinion.

2.6. South African Attempts

In the African context, significant examples of how to deal with diverse and multicultural societies are found in South Africa, largely because of its history which is characterised by segregatory apartheid regime. Post-1994, the focus on the representation in the heritage sector in museums shifted to reconciliation and nation-building. Ngcobo (2018:15) observes that in emerging nations like South Africa, cultural identity, social justice, productive diversity and civic engagement are fundamental for their diverse citizenship. The country has seen major policy changes to enforce transformation. The South African government through policy and other measures embraced multiculturalism and recognised the neglected parts of history. On the other hand, one question still lingers as Ngcobo (2018) has wondered "how representative are national museum collections?"

With regards to the above question, there are notable developments happening in South Africa. The controversy over public representations of the past has fostered a range of self-conscious efforts to create displays and experiences more suited to post-colonial contexts. Such initiatives can provide insights into post-colonial identity politics, cultures of state power and the configuration of transnational interests as well as flows of ideas that have in some cases allowed innovative changes. Schmidt (2013) describes how museum exhibitions are important is shaping and influencing societies and how exhibitions have a role to play in engaging the complex and contested history of the region. As described by Ivan Karp (1992:1), an exhibition is a political arena in which definitions of identity and culture are asserted and contested.

Multiculturalism was adopted in South Africa, and it emerged as a way of promoting and representing diversity and redressing imbalances of representation. The government made it its agenda to attend to the multicultural identities rather than the single identities of people that were previously experienced by apartheid society and structures. Today, the country is striving to respect other cultures and coexist without affirming racial hierarchies. Further to this, there are attempts in South Africa aimed at discouraging assimilation whereby the marginalised groups will be requested to integrate into the dominant culture. The South African government seeks to unite national imagination around an identity that is multiracial. This is exemplified in their cultural landscape, in which particular museum institutions deployed multiculturalism as part of their strategy to redress colonial discourses and systems ranging from access, denied rights, unequal allocation of resources and othering.

The absence of alternative narratives in the landscape of contemporary museums has led to dismantling and rethinking the practice. Schmidt (2013) identified three ways of dismantling the practice, choices of pedagogy, content and activity. According to Schmidt (2013:302), there is a critical consciousness around representation and fluidity of identities as new museologists in South Africa have challenged the pedagogical design and intentions of museums. She observed that contemporary museology produces models for curation and pedagogy that sought to reimagine rather than reproduce racial consciousness. The question is how to be represented and experienced in the museum while at the same time detaching from colonial discourses. Museologists have accepted that visitors are affected by displays and the use of previous experiences in their meaning-making.

Thus, South Africa provides lessons to imagine interaction that builds trust in one another. Recent museums differ significantly in their use of artifacts, space for education and pedagogical intentions. They employ critical museology practices that allow confrontation with past racialism. Temporary displays and curriculum ‘disjuncture’ are used to expand imagination and stabilise the colonial structures. They offer multicultural telling and conversations, narratives of struggle and democracy. Below I discuss some of the

illustrations of the museums that in my judgment have engaged the notion of multiculturalism in their exhibition spaces and have also Africanised their institutions.

2.6.1 Freedom Park

A memorial situated on a hill in Pretoria*, Freedom Park* is a post-1994 project initiated by the newly elected South Africa government and it is said to be more of a monument to democracy founded on values of human dignity, rights and freedom. It was designed to allow physical encounters with peaceful coexistence that emerged from a painful past while encouraging contemplation, reflection, and healing in the construction of a desirable South Africa. Elements of the park include a resting place of spirits, a war memorial, a stage for storytelling and a garden for mediation and contemplation. Linking together elements is a path designed as a space for reflection while people travel between experiences (Prinsloo 2010). With *Freedom Park* focus is more on the experience than the content. According to Schmidt (2013:301), a narrative display and an archive are the only points of curriculum about the country and its past. Schmidt insists that because of the manner in which it is designed, it is not easily recognisable as a museum as it disrupts the fixedness or representation and identity often associated with museums in such a way that it is not investing its value on objects but it is embracing pedagogy of experience and encouraging reflection. It values and encourages contemplation as a key to understanding and meaning-making.

Freedom Park which I had an opportunity to visit together with my classmates in 2020, is mostly understood as a national and international icon of humanity and freedom. Hendrick Prinsloo (2010) reports that it commenced in 2004 as one of the heritage projects of the post-apartheid era. It is designed in the form of an open park with various elements that are meant to pay tribute to those who have sacrificed their lives for freedom and humanity. The opening of the museum coincided with South African's ten-year celebration of democracy. The park was conceived to commemorate heroes and heroines who died fighting for freedom and it also commemorates key conflicts that shaped South African

history. Prinsloo believes it was the most ambitious heritage project of the South African democratic government (Prinsloo 2010).

The hill on which the park is situated provides a spectacular view of the capital city, the space that the black South Africans have been previously denied by the white minorities who confined them to townships and rural areas. *Freedom Park* memorial elements include *Isivivane, Skhumbuto,* a museum and a garden. The *Isivivane* concept was derived from 'viva' interpreted as unity and solidarity for purpose and it is a resting place of spirits of those who died in the struggle for humanity and freedom. *Skhumbuto* comprises the Wall of Names inscribed with the names of those who died during various conflicts in South African history such as pre-colonial wars, slavery, genocide, the struggle for liberation and World wars etc. It allows future generations to memorialise their heroes. The Garden of Peace is said to be a space for meditation, self-discovery, healing and spiritual contemplation.

The construction of this heritage site is said to be a unique as it will assist all South Africans in the process of reconciliation and nation-building. What intrigued me the most about the place is that it tells the story of South Africa and its people through the lens of indigenous knowledge. The narrative in the museum is conveyed through audiovisuals which highlight not only South African history and aspirations but also African distinctive history, heritage, spirituality and culture. The reason is that though I am from Lesotho I could relate to it and it gave me a beautiful experience as it reminded me of the old-times when my grandmother would tell me stories known as 'lits'omo' around the fireplace. The different African flags in the museum acknowledge South African diverse multi-ethnic and linguistic society and promote multiculturalism and Pan Africanism.

The other that element that inspired me is the Pan African Archives containing the underlying knowledge base of all components of Freedom Park, elements of history and national curriculum also available for educational and research purposes. This is very valuable looking at the Pan Africanism contribution to heritage discourse, African solidarity and decolonisation. The depiction of the stories in the museum, the *Isivivane*, and Wall of Names together with other features like water and garden within the heritage site is symbolical not only to most South Africans but indigenous Africans at large because

the site is filled with African content that we share in common, they mark the site's relevance and African-ness.

Although the dominant view is that it is a national icon conceived to enhance reconciliation and freedom in South Africa in an all-inclusive manner, it has generated criticism as some members of the society have different impressions. Scholar Pieter Lubuschagne (2012:159), argues that although it was a welcome addition to the other heritage sites commemorating freedom in the country's history, it also sparked criticism for excluding the names of the former South African Defense Force (SADF) soldiers who also died. What is questionable is the interpretation of 'heroes' and 'heroines' of the struggle, and issues like the moral ideas of remembrance, reconciliation, and nation-building. For Lubuschagne (2012:161), the idea behind the construction of the *Freedom Park* site was derived from the Khoi word *'Hapo'* meaning a dream, taken from a proverb loosely interpreted: a dream is not a dream until it is shared by the whole community. The overall objective of *Freedom Park* was to contribute to the ideals of an inclusive society, reconciliation and nation-building. *Freedom Park* serves as a significant marker of post-colonial society's reforming of the past. What is fundamental is a subjective and political interpretation of who should claim ownership of the title 'freedom fighter' (Lubuschagne 2012). As such, the conclusion is that a museum is a contested place as it can also spark controversy (Ayanda Ngcobo 2018, Gerald Corsane 2005, Nick Shepherd 2008). In the light of this, *Freedom Park* offers another concrete example that the heritage concept attracts controversy because of its double nature, a phenomenon referred to as 'dual valences of inclusive and exclusive' by Shepherd (2008:117).

Since South Africa has been occupied with transformation, which is the deliberate action to correct and counterbalance the surrounding colonial monuments and heritage sites, *Freedom Park* was conceived for that purpose. Other versions revolve around the perception that *Freedom Park* was visually and spatially meant to oppose *Voortrekker Monument* as part of the historical entrance, which has been labeled as a distasteful Afrikaaner heritage site. *Freedom Park* was meant to be a contrast creating a balance of its counterparts of the colonial era using different architectural languages. The motive has been that the two sides should be in dialogue (Museums in conversation) breaking the

visual link between and the Union building with its historical and symbolic connection reflected the Afrikaaner domination of the pre-democratic era. Museums in conversations are whereby we find two museums adjacent to each other and we get a chance to experience multicultural telling, different stories and competing narratives.

My observation is that although it has marketing issues, *Freedom Park* is more Afrocentric as it speaks to the notion of decoloniality and therefore serves a particular audience that has been silenced in many colonial narrations. I would also argue that the notion of a museum is partly foreign to the black society as it was introduced by the Whites and its foundational motives are questionable as it denoted particular colonial interests and views which tended to dehumanise and misrepresent indigenous Africans. Therefore, most traditional Africans do not yet perceive it as something they can relate to because of its remoteness. Though *Freedom Park* needs to market itself intensively and position itself within its target audience to experience what they offer, it is a good example of how museums can be used to address difficult pasts by creating new narratives related to a country's past and present. Although Freedom park has made significant attempts to address the lack of representation of local Black South Africans the perception is that there is a lack of patronage from the Black South Africans which has been attributed to marketing issues. The other view is the concern that Africans have not yet fully embraced the museum institution because it is foreign. The key lesson from Freedom Park is that LNM should think of ways to ensure local ownership of the museum.

2.6.2. Robben Island Museum

Robben Island is another addition to South African contemporary national museums. This is a place where Nelson Mandela and other apartheid resistors were imprisoned and the site is an embodiment of a desire to place the past into present conversation. It is accessed through a 7km boat and brings experiences of imprisonment to life. Among other things, it displays narratives, letters, photos of separation and marginalisation artefacts, which speak to a long history of oppression. Former prisoners are guide tours and share stories of hardship and isolation. It offers spaces whereby people come

together to develop the curriculum and participate in leadership camps and other programs that support economic development and democracy (Schmidt 2013:302).

Freedom Park and *Robben Island* are also understood to be creating spaces of civic development and devaluing 'objects' (material culture) by embracing pedagogy of experience which refuses colonial discourse and representation of the other. *Robben Island* has few artifacts or formal exhibitions. *Freedom Park* and *Robben Island's* emphasis are not to learn about something they are more of a way of reflecting upon the painful past as a means of creating something different for the present. They are both highlighting the journey of the struggle of Africans to end apartheid and attain democracy (Schmidt 2013).

Schmidt feels that these recently constructed museums do not have 'national' in their title because their designs reflect local persons, events and culture (2013:300). For instance, some of the new additions to the museum's landscape include Nelson Mandela (Umthata) and Chief Albert Luthuli (KZN) museums. Since former or existing museums have the colonial gaze in terms of their model, representation, language, content, architecture, location and political contributions, such museums as Nelson Mandela and Luthuli are dedicated to black leaders. The former museums showcased the grand achievements of white South Africans such that even their geographical locations were in white settlements as they were found in cities and urban towns. Schmidt warns of dangers in the decision about what to call a national museum because the concept remains attached to colonial discourse unless troubled it remains exclusive.

These are black leaders who are said to have embraced the rainbow nation. These two museums display few artifacts but they are more open to their spaces as the community and educational centers. Their focus is on the legacies of two African men therefore they can be perceived as promoting Africanism, they are African museums looking at their location, content and the community they are serving. Therefore, Schmidt (2013) justifies that they are distinct and interrupt the pedagogy and purpose of existing ones. They are traditionally based on the name, architecture, reflection and knowledge produced and acquired therein.

2.6.3. Other Museums

While Freedom Park and Robben Island represent efforts at addressing apartheid misrepresentations, at the new dawn of democracy, the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC) organised a narrative of unity through diversity accompanied by nonracial policies. Its policies were designed to dismantle the apartheid racial structure that organised the state, nations and relationships between individuals and groups. Therefore, the DAC plays an important role in this objective as it is commissioned to establish institutions that denounce racialisation. As a result, part of its mission is to celebrate resistance to apartheid and recognise the country's multiple ethnic and racial groups, promoting democracy and human rights. A major aspect of its objectives was to design national museums that serve as the agency of heritage and culture. This included adapting the existing museums and creating new ones (Schmidt 2013).

Drawing from Schmidt this section looks into how the existing museums have been (re)signified for the post-apartheid era. It seeks to understand how new museums have shaped the terrain of race and museums in South Africa. The observation is that there is a museology shift in terms of the physical landscape, typology and location. Another strategy that the government took besides creating new museums was through DAC's unification of inherited museums, where old museums were incorporated to create new ones. Popular examples are the *Iziko* museums in Cape Town and *Ditsong* museums in Pretoria. In these scenarios, the colonial museums were united to educate the public. The old museums reflected colonial content because they displayed wars, furniture, medals and letters of Whites and they were homes of British or Boer families that are said to have made significant artistic, industrial or political contributions. Their emphasis was on European lifestyles. As a result, DAC laid a curriculum of 'disjuncture' that cut across the racialised past and present. To mitigate and disrupt the colonial gaze, the museums engage temporary displays highlighting African lives and stories of resistance. This can be seen as a contemporary mission of non-racialisation and it depicts social justice and advocacy. Disruptions serve an important pedagogical purpose in allowing encounters

with another. The network of national museums collectively represents the narrative of difference and refuses singular identity by claiming the multiplicity of cultures and language (Schmidt 2013).

Schmidt outlines that artifacts, space for education and pedagogical intentions employ critical museology that allows confrontation of the past. *Iziko* efforts to change representation are also witnessed by displaying Africans, Muslims and Malay people in their exhibitions for the role of their slave labor in the Cape economy and lifestyles. An example is *The Groot Constantia* museums which places together the lives of Afrikaaners, Africans and Malay peoples in depicting the legacy of slavery while detailing winery estate life between the 17th and 18th centuries. Another example is *The Bo Kaap* museum devoted to Muslim life in South Africa. It celebrates the life of Muslim families following the end of slavery in the Cape and tracks the lives and culture of Muslims in Cape Town today, therefore adopting social justice advocacy. The audiences get to learn about and walk through the horrendous conditions of slavery. *Iziko* symbolises the hub of cultural activity. It refuses singular identity and supports national racial difference that is meant to reflect on a multilingual and multicultural nation. The network of national museums collectively representing the narrative of difference (Schmidt 2013).

Likewise, in Europe, the museum has been used as a space for recognition and historical reconciliation. The new *Museum of World Culture*, which was inaugurated in Gothenburg, Sweden in 2004, according to Bodenstein and Pagani (2014) it illustrates a very different kind of strategy to question the colonial heritage. The *Museum of World Culture* is part of the state-owned National Museum of World Culture which includes three other museums of the Swedish government. These groups of museums are dedicated to questioning ethnography collections as well as relating them to contemporary topics. *National museums of World Culture* are said to have been established to play a specific role in dealing with the challenges of multicultural Sweden through their international collections and networks. It presents various cultures of the world through a policy of idea-oriented temporary exhibitions dealing with contemporary issues such as globalisation, migration, cultural diversity, post-coloniality and gender studies, through multiple voices and interdisciplinary perspectives.

In the center of global debates is the newly renamed Africa Museum in Congo formerly known as the *Royal museum for central Africa* in which went through five years of renovations. It is alleged that curators struggled with how to modernise exhibits in a place where racism is literally built into the building in the form of carvings and murals of eroticised Africans on the walls. The intention was to overhaul an institution that was packed with racist images of Africans. The permanent exhibit had not changed for 60 years ever since the independence of the Congo. Now it presents the story of Africa long before European colonists invaded. Finally, it decided to come to terms with the colonial past. Even though artifacts on display are mostly from old collections one can observe different curatorial approaches (Birnbaum 2019).

Most collections were acquired during Belgium's conquest and colonial rule. Birnbaum (2019) states that new exhibits seek to present the same objects with different emphasis. First of all, they no longer claim the artifacts were given by Congolese subjects in gratitude to their Belgium rulers. Some halls were redone altogether. One is devoted to life before the Europeans, another to the slave trade and deprivations of colonial life. Another focus is on rituals of everyday life in Congo, Rwanda and Burundi three modern countries where Belgium once ruled. There is also a *Hall of shame* in the basement filled with racist statues on display. They also tried to find ways to address parts of the building that could not be removed as they projected Congolese victims onto the original memorial. The museum is reorganised in such a way that there are many multilingual signs on exhibits that are now apologetic. Nonetheless, there is some controversy around its reopening as some feel it has not done enough.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how museums locally and abroad have engaged multiculturalism supported by their ruling governments. In the case of South Africa, one can argue that its approach is more of a top-down approach since post-apartheid DAC made it part of its agenda to speak to its multicultural identities. They have established their museum as ideal spaces to connect people and communities by addressing issues of discrimination

and identity, and offering equal treatment of all people. These museums have shown commitment to de-construction by diversifying their cultural system, location, their collections, languages used, architecture, content and anticipated visitors to be accommodative and inclusive. The examples shown here demonstrate that national museums are still regarded as important in addressing problematic issues around colonial histories and minorities. Some of the cases here show that museums employ curatorial approaches that do not only speak to their local audience but also resonate with the large African community through their deployment of architecture, archives, landscaping, sculpture and imagery. Lesotho can indeed learn from some of these developments.

CHAPTER 3

ALTERNATIVE EXHIBITION PRACTICES IN LESOTHO: THE CASE OF *CONVERSATIONS AT MORIJA.*

Introduction

This chapter looks at the efforts of the LNM, within the context of museum activities in Lesotho. It looks at the importance of exhibition practices in a museum and highlights some of the efforts at working with communities in museums, I particularly look at the work of the only mission museum in the country. The Morija Museum, which has been the main player in the world of museums in Lesotho. The chapter learns from some activities associated with a community-based exhibition, *"Conversations at Morija"*, as a community-based curatorial project, to suggest and inform strategies that the LNM can adopt in working with communities. Looking at the success of this project, it will allow LNM to be able to collaborate with diverse stakeholders and improve community engagement. Therefore, using Conversations at Morija (2013) and (2015) as the main case study the section explores themes based on collaboration, access, and community engagement as aspects of multiculturalism/ curatorial strategies.

3.1. Exhibition practice and representation in museums

Lesotho is a beautiful mountainous, high-altitude country rich in culture and history. However, due to its geographical position, surrounded and overshadowed by South Africa it is often overlooked but those who had an opportunity to experience it, refer to it as 'the Switzerland of Africa'. Lesotho is landlocked yet has managed to preserve a strong culture and identity. Drawing from my BA Honors research (2019) titled *The State of Cultural and Creative Industries in Lesotho* findings, I argue that there is talent in the country yet untapped and in need of nurturing and also, on the other side there are so many challenges hampering the creatives to flourish. Overall, there is no national arts council, lack of funding, no art schools and discourses, and no creative spaces whereas our heritage is largely undocumented.

Drawing on the country's geography and the historical remoteness of the museum from major continental creative production centres Gill (2015) has asserted that museums are not well known in Lesotho. It has been argued that, compared to other bigger countries, Lesotho lacks a visual art audience and curatorial expertise. Additionally, in my view most of the displays in the present museums are conventional with no education programmes, Therefore; they employ passive tours. In other words, the tours are not engaging. Lerato Bereng, an established curator in South Africa and a member of diaspora through her MA thesis explores and presents curating definitions and their various forms within local contexts valuable to my research. In particular, Bereng explores both theoretical and practical curatorial methods of engagement and the curatorial role as the disseminator of information. She argues that language (art terminology) and accessibility are barriers within the visual arts. Out of her thesis, she conceived the ongoing series exhibition titled *Conversations at Morija* (in 2013, 2015, and 2017) at Morija museum.

Conversations at Morija exhibition was conceived as a response to the absence of creative platforms and alternative curatorial methods that engage the public in a participatory manner. It offers relatable ways to engage the local audience whilst maintaining a creative core in which to spark dialogue around pertinent matters relating to the country. This exhibition offers participatory curating strategies comprised of Skype, collaboration, workshops and presentations that can inform and assist with my imaginative goal of representing the minority framed under multiculturalism concept, in the upcoming LNM museum and my career. Moreover, Bereng's works serve as a trial towards understanding our audience within the local contexts, which is very imperative to this dissertation since the other rationale is to broaden the museum's audience.

Of importance to my research is the work of Shelly Butler (2008) who explores the possibilities of museums to shift from being colonial to being educational spaces. Analysing two case studies as comparatives she offers insights into the inherited problems and the potential critical and reflexive museology to decolonise museums. She discusses colonial and modernist practices of exhibiting culture looking into exhibits that generated multiple and complex responses while touching upon sensitive issues concerning the retelling of histories in South Africa and Canada. She claims that the

exhibits became instances for broader discussions about citizenship, power relations, and identity politics in multicultural and postcolonial cities.

Ayanda Ngcobo (2010) also unpacks the politics of representation in South Africa in the post-apartheid era. She argues that historically during the colonial regime, certain race groups had privileges over others and museums in Africa were affected. Although she maintains that efforts have been made to transform museums, she also argues that most museums are not adequately and not drastically transformed to represent the people of South Africa especially women and youth. She observes that there have been policy changes and the establishment of new museums, but she questions how much transition has been applied in museums that existed in the pre-democratic era. She also questions what informs representations of history and society in museums. She states that representation is about power dynamics and that what is represented by whom and the purpose of which is represented embodies different aspects that encompass language, context, perspectives, social meanings, and the potential atmosphere of the place.

Ngcobo (2010:150) outlines that representation can be understood as a historically determined construction that is meditated by social, ideological and cultural processes. However, many forms of representation are presented as facts using selective processes that define, order, classify and name social reality. She claims that power holders most of which are government structures are able to make decisions about what aspects of history are represented in a museum and what is celebrated as public heritage. She argues that modes of representation by those in power can perpetuate stereotypes, silence or exaggerate history or cultural heritage. Therefore, in America and Africa there have been movements triggered by political actions against racial inequalities. As a result, there has been the growth of Black history movements, initiatives that influenced the changes in heritage projects, in the post-colonial era of different states multiculturalism emerged (Ngcobo 2010).

Lastly, Butler (2008) focuses on museum practices of collecting, classifying and displaying material culture, and asserts that museums can be a meeting ground of cultures, and can become bridges for intercultural communication. The communities are often deeply concerned with the way in which they are or not represented by the museums

(Butler 2008). The issues regarding the politics of representations have become intense in the context of contemporary multicultural and post-colonial societies often leading to controversies characterised by hostility and vandalism of public visuals. This builds my argument for the need to recognise and accommodate minorities in the LNM**.**

3.2 Missionaries and Museums: Communities and Collaboration in Lesotho.

This section maps alternative art exhibition practices in the absence of a national museum and gallery in Lesotho. The main question is around what have been the tools of culture building in Lesotho over the years. To narrow this question down the study will focus on the exhibition titled *Conversations at Morija* curated by Lerato Bereng as an ongoing series of dialogues of art practice in Lesotho. Conversations at Morija exhibitions, held at Morija Museum and Archives (see Figures 5 and 6) a French colonial museum, staged ground for ongoing series of dialogues about art spearheaded by Johannesburg-based curator Lerato Bereng. The exhibition featured live interactions between visiting artists from South Africa, Lesotho artists, and the public. I will analyse the exhibition to explore the curatorial methods that were deployed. In this study by ‘tools’; I refer to mechanisms that have been deployed to carry out exhibitions in the absence of a national museum. By ‘culture-building’ I mean the meaning-making process (art production).





Figure 5 *shows the exterior view of Morija Museum* ***Figure 6*** *shows the interior view of the current home of 'Basotho' material culture (photo courtesy of Morija museum).*

It is important to first articulate who Bereng is as an independent curator. Currently, Bereng is the associate director and curator at the Stevenson Gallery in Johannesburg South Africa. Born in Maseru Lesotho, she completed both her BA in Fine Arts (2007) and MFA in Curatorial Practice (2013) from Rhodes University. She undertook several curatorial training and mentorship programs like at Goodman Gallery in Cape Town and The Young curators training program of CAPE '09. She was a selected member of the curatorial board for focus 10 a biennale held in Switzerland. Other notable exhibitions she has curated include *SEX* (2016), *Out of Thin air* (2012) and *Into Thin air* (2012). Last but not least, she has also worked with other curators as assistant curator in exhibition projects such as *Scratching the Surface Vol. 1* (2008) curated by Gabi Ngcobo and Mwenya Kabwe as well as *Dada South* (2010) curated by Roger Van Wyk and Kathryn Smith (2009/2010) (Mabaso 2018).

When observing Bereng's profile, one can suggest that she has wide exposure as a curator because of her curating experiences both locally and internationally. Training and mentorship programs have played a significant role in the advancement of her career and as a curator. She was also selected as one of 13 young curators from around the world to attend the curatorial workshop for the 6th Berlin Biennale (2010). Furthermore, when

looking at Bereng's work we see someone who has worked with prominent curators at prestigious organisations in South Africa. I find it important to lay out this information about Bereng so that one can get a clear picture of who Bereng is in terms of her achievements. Moreover, it makes the reader assess what kind of input as well as influence she has brought with her through *Conversations at Morija* to Basotho artists and practitioners along with a range of distinguished guests such as Zakes Mda, Njabulo Ndebele, Desmond Dube and associates of *Chimurenga*.

The Morija museum remained the repository of archives, history, and historical artifacts of Basotho. Since it was founded by missionaries it is still under the stewardship of the church, funded and run by a board elected by a church (Gill 2015). Morija Museum offers conventional exhibitions with displays of objects with labels, stuffed animals and there are no video projections. As a result, one can argue that it is slow in terms of progress and with relatively conservative programming. The chosen site for the conversation exhibitions was the Maedar gallery, also erected by one of the first French missionaries and currently used as an exhibition space and craft shop for ceramics, etc. made by the local community. Maeder house, holds a historical significance as one of the oldest recorded buildings in Lesotho (Gill 2015), with a simple architecture made of bricks with mud smeared walls, unprocessed ceiling, and thatched roof (See Figure 7 below).



Figure 7 *Inside Maeder House Gallery exhibition (Image by Meri Hyoky).*

It seems missionaries had been developing ideas around a national museum concept since 1947 hence Morija was then called 'The Basutoland museum', and as such, many exhibitions were organised at mission stations namely Morija museum and Masitise cave. The current Morija museum was reflective of the vision and expectations of museum enthusiasts of the time (Gill 2015:32). The concept of exhibitions was also alive among the missionaries in Lesotho. In 1861 Lesotho (through missionaries) participated in the great exhibition called *London International Exhibition on Industry and Art* regarded as the first substantial collection showcasing Basotho material culture. After the exhibition, the organisers donated the collection of over 500 items to the British museum where they are held till today. The anticipation is that this collection is also going to be part of the LNM displays (LNM Master plan). Some of the collections have been digitalised and are currently showcased at Thaba Bosiu museum panels.

It has also been noted that in 1966, there was an exhibition called *Lesotho: Past and Present* representing a vast range of Basotho material culture borrowed from various private collections at the British Council in Maseru city. Whereas in 1985 material culture was inventoried and had been since stored at the offices of MTEC, potentially these items could be the first objects to be fully accessioned into the proposed new collection of LNM (Master Plan).

However, ethnographic museums have been strongly tainted by toxic aspects of colonial ideology. The residual legacy of colonialism and the anthropological bias of historical collection strategies continue to provoke important questions about the role of museums and their collections in contemporary society. Because these institutions originated from foreigners, there is a call for a new type for Africa one more grounded within its indigenous traditions. As argued by Arinze (1998: 36), when advocating for a change in museums, there is the necessity of a new definition of museums, and for African experts to develop African impressions and appropriate methods and strategies for interacting with the public. Looking at what kind of Morija museum it is important to discuss how '*Conversations at Morija'* exhibition made it relevant to contemporary society.

3.3 Exhibitions and Communities: "*Conversations at Morija"*

Museums are not very well-known in Lesotho, and it is not everyone who understands their value or significance due to little curatorial and museum practice exposure. Morija museum exhibit or structure is based on anthropological collections and can be described as an ordinary static, old-style colonial museum with systematised knowledge. Therefore, bringing *Conversations at Morija* exhibition content here meant that it helped the museum to be resourceful, reconnect and reinvent itself in such a way that it facilitated space for discussion what Casey (2010:233) calls the social arena. She further asserts that there has been a wide scope of research studies; based on how museums globally deal with social affairs and the way the public connects with the museum as a space of transition and knowledge production.

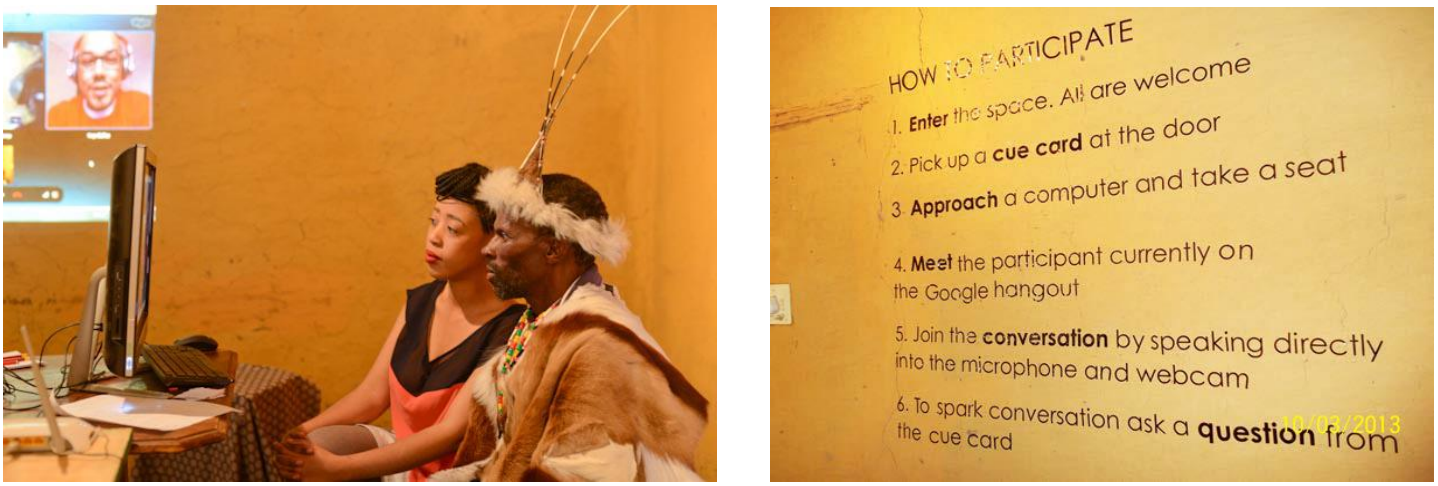


Figure 8 *conversations at Morija, Maeder house; left: Lerato Bereng the curator of Conversations with one of the participants right. Engaging with the computer set up and wall projections (picture by Meri Hyoky adopted from Bereng thesis 2013)*

The first exhibition of *Conversations* which was entirely based on dialogue it was entitled "*What is urgent to you*" (2013). It commenced as an initiative to create a podium for engagement with Lesotho's creative community, focusing on opening a discussion between the Morija community, artists, the general public and the country's diaspora. Based on what she called "national brain drain," it questioned the notion of Diaspora which she found necessary to understand the reasons why Basotho creatives operate abroad,

mainly in South Africa. This was not a conventional display and participation because, it departed from the traditional one in such a way that space “was mobilized in a circulating performative act through which audiences respond and engage,” facilitating a kind of participation that moves away from traditional representation (Bereng 2016).

In her interview with Rosengarten (2016), Bereng mentioned that the rationale behind the above-mentioned exhibition was that she knew that a conventional exhibition would not be ideal. What was critical for her at that moment was for people to speak. Her curatorial role was being a facilitator whereby she made interventions for the setup in such a way that brought Skyping in one of the oldest buildings in Lesotho. Guidelines were projected onto one of mud smeared walls inviting people to enter the space, take a drink, sit in front of a provided computer screen and either read the suggested questions on the card or direct a question to one of the speakers. Bereng claims that she avoided being an interpreter and so directed the conversations (Rosengarten 2016).

To achieve this, she set up a few computers with the participants' own Skype address, She avoided owning the dialogue and allowed the participants freedom to drive their chats to engage and feel like they have a one-on-one encounter with the speaker. I think this was a unique, innovative and interesting move, and it was cheap since the guests such as Desmond Dube and Pepsi Pokane did not have to be there physically. However, one can also argue that it was challenging in a way that it was not a direct physical dialogue People had to follow written instructions in English, which meant one had to know how to read and speak English as she avoided interpreting. Therefore, this aspect limited exhibition to those who were able to read and speak English, which is not a mother tongue for Basotho. As a result, language became a barrier and negated the notion of access and also denied locals an opportunity to express themselves through their language. Thus, one can conclude that it catered for a few and promoted elitism.

In the context of embracing technology in the museum and curatorial practice; Gimblett (2006:44) in *Exhibitionary Complexes,* claims that many projects today are using digital technologies. By compiling collection databases and making new images widely accessible through the internet creating a virtual museum, exhibition or integrating digital media and actual objects within physical space (something which we experienced a lot

during Covid-19 lockdowns as virtual exhibitions were engaged and became very popular). Through this collaboration, we see the Morija Museum reinforcing itself by becoming resourceful and the agent of transformation encouraging innovation. In this project, digitalisation was engaged as a new mode of display and preservation.

The second exhibition-themed *Telling Stories* (2015) was also centered on engaging members of the creative diaspora, this time not only in conversations but also in presentations from local display, venturing into storytelling. Bereng said she realised that after the first event there was a need to be more direct with the local community, showcasing what is happening locally via presentations by artists to visitors from outside the country. Stories were created by local artists and visitors were invited. Modes of representations engaged for this one comprised of videos, photography, emphasising and addressing the problem of how to tell stories with little means or no capital (Morija Blog 2015). This reminds us how historically oral tradition has always been used as a medium of knowledge production.

Conversations at Morija exhibitions initially stemmed from Bereng's MA in Fine arts research *Featuring Simplicity as an Irrational Fear* (2013), as part of the practical component. Also underpinning her work as a curator are pertinent issues brought to light with regards to the role of a curator. Morgan (2013) articulates that a curator acts as cultural mediator historically understood within the framework of institutions like museums and galleries responsible for the process of meaning-making, through works concerning place or space and create an opportunity for viewers to see and experience artworks. The field of curating is expanding and as a result, the term has been characterised by different meanings and interpretations at different times and even environments (Morgan 2013). The notion of a curator is complex since it is embodied with different meanings. As the practice shifts, it keeps on changing to accommodate and address contemporary challenges of the field concerning knowledge, space and audience. As such, there is no fixed meaning of a curator. Historically they were known as caretakers during the European Renaissance (Morgan 2013).

Tshefogatso Mabaso (2018:19) notes that curating can take on different characteristics depending on whether it occurs within institutional contexts such as museums and

galleries or project-based work carried out by independent curators. Through exhibitions, one can begin to identify methods and approaches employed by different curators in varying contexts. It can be an exhibition based on the medium of the work of the artist or artists; Artists work from a certain period or selected theme whether it is a retrospective exhibition for a single artist or works by a selection of artists. Modes of working are also defined by whether the curator is working with an existing collection, commissioning new works by artists or engaging archives (Mabaso 2018).

Through *Conversations* project, one can observe curatorial gestures providing creative possibilities and new ways of looking and understanding exhibitions. Bereng through *Conversations at Morija* offered ways of opening up rigid exhibition protocols and stiff institutional structures like Morija Museum as a colonial stereotyped museum. Moreover, as argued by Mabaso (2018), conferences seminars and workshops are used as discursive platforms and important vehicles for shared knowledge. The dialogue created an environment in which to build a collective understanding and exchange of knowledge whether live or recorded for the previously disadvantaged. In this context, the museum and the gallery were engaged in the process as spaces of debate to capture issues and concerns of the Basotho creative community and forged professional networks.

Though the Morija Museum has remained relatively underdeveloped and quite isolated since it is on the outskirts of the capital town and other main districts, one can argue that technology bridged the gap thus connecting the museum with the internet. Bereng (2013) claims that technology connection had never been used before for any projects requiring internet connectivity. Thus, her project introduced and equipped the museum with technological advancements and this signified a positive step towards modernity. She pointed out it was important for her to contribute towards the creative vision of Morija Museum. For purposes of sustainability she wanted to leave the museum with the physical framework for similar creative initiatives to occur. To realise her goal, she lobbied for institutions with affiliations to the country and members of the diaspora to make a donation and through their support, she was able to purchase computers that were later donated to the museum for future purposes (Bereng 2013).

With regards to exhibition methods, the *Conversation* offers critical points of further reflection. Methods used in this curatorial project are unconventional in terms of the norms of art exhibitions, not an exhibition in the sense of objects but more of 'practice research-based. Instead of working with the artists and exhibiting artworks, it worked within a broader scope of the profession creating a platform of interaction and discussion of relevant issues relating to participants. Morija Museum became an alternative space allowing 'experimental public-oriented models' to emerge. The curator claims her intention was not to isolate visual arts but rather to curate an encounter that is relevant to the addressed audience to which the visual arts are not common. Therefore, to stimulate engagement she generated strategies that were to encourage public participation (Bereng 2013).

The overall observation is that there have been shifts in exhibition models and occurrences since their invention in the era of Enlightenment. According to Julian Myers (2011:25), these developments might be associated with cultural dynamism. Myers notes that exhibitions are 'something historical, occur at a specific moment, structured as a response to a certain set of historical conditions. Historically they have been understood within the context of art, and have also been interpreted as a tradition of showcasing the arts to the public, situated within the artists, institutions, the market and the public. Exhibitions have been organised to bring art into existence, and since the French Revolution, they have always been meant to publicly serve a particular audience. Since then they have been imagined as a new practice both educational and commercial (Myers 2011).

The implication is that exhibitions are different from the 18th-century traditional model as they presume new relationships as time goes on, in and through the field of art. Teresa Gleadowe (2011:33) has referred to exhibitions as a 'creativity entity' and in the 20th century, artists have employed them as their medium, transforming and enlarging their limits. The curators frame and re-contextualise artist's exhibitions as a medium of political, economic and socio-cultural aspects.

On the institutional level Gleadowe asserts that we have seen the establishment of curatorial programs linked to exhibition innovations, and programs sought to define a

body of knowledge of past exhibitions as part of the curriculum and curatorial courses. Curatorial strategies have become more flexible, working conditions are no longer entirely based on institutions and they are used to highlight glorious shifts in the production and reception of contemporary art (Gleadowe 2011).

According to Zoja Bozic (2012:8), the era of Enlightenment coincided with a set of great discoveries and introduced a scholarly approach to collecting, researching and display of museum objects. This resulted in an era of the establishment of great museums across Europe and beyond. It has been argued that the western models are confining and limiting, constricted to objects and aesthetics. Consequently, there is a need for unconventional conceptual methodologies, in understanding the concerns surrounding the subject. Morija Museum collections are tied to the material practice of colonisation and they maintain the colonial legacy. The use of skype can be seen as overcoming traditional attitudes.

Drawing from contemporary ideologies such as decolonisation most scholars such as Mignolo (2009) and Goniwe (2012) have contested against dominant principles of knowledge perpetuated by the European Renaissance. The emphasis is on departing from familiar notions of knowledge originating from western cultures into own African indigenous context. They call for contribution to the ongoing process of decoloniality and pronouncing that we should resist enacting imposed global frameworks (Western knowledge), and focus on the reorientation of knowledge construction and rewrite different versions of knowledge. Since the concept of the museum is foreign Lesotho, there is a need to guide and mentorship the process and understanding to own it and make it relevant in our own context. We can change the situation and position ourselves within transformation and define things in the national context so that they speak to Basotho heritage as well as inspire Africanness and multiculturalism

Bereng curated Conversations in a way that allowed transition beyond display and demonstration, a process that aids in the formation of new meaning and knowledge, thereby offering ways to open up stiff institutional structures. According to Goniwe (2012:193) historically acquisition policies and curatorial mandates of institutions have been informed by burdens of colonisation, apartheid, racism, totalising, primitivism and

“othering” (which go as far back as cabinets of curiosity). These perpetuated certain ideologies through collections and exhibitions and validating certain knowledge over others, especially the devaluation of traditional learning. Now art practice seeks to move away from colonial oppressive dilemmas; influences and encourages African creatives to have ownership and authorship of their stories from African perspectives. They are informed by dialogue concerned with visibility, recognition, exchanging ideas and forming meaning of contemporary art (Goniwe 2012).

3.4 Removing barriers to access

Sesotho language is beautiful, has poems and expressive figures, and is enriched with oral traditions as people speak in songs and idioms. However, the fact that there is no access to higher education in the arts impacts negatively on creativity as many are forced to leave and study abroad. Bereng, as one of the members of the diaspora, narrated how she developed her skill outside Lesotho with support from her family. She got to explore, realised her interests and potentials, open to opportunities and She stated that ‘her passion lies with space, the absence of it, and model these spaces accessibility through language’ (Rosengarten 2016).

Bereng states that locally there are no avenues for funding creative projects. There is support from a few local cooperatives, and they experienced this impact when *Conversations* was canceled in 2012 due to political instability resulting in financial limitations. Supporting Bereng’s claims, Lineo Segoete in her article *State of Art Education in Africa* (2015), remarks that although there is rich and enormous talent in Lesotho, the overall perception is that arts education is not sufficiently supported and nurtured. The main hindrance for it to flourish and reach its full potential is poor or lack of infrastructure, despite the government initiatives to introduce art education in schools under creativity and entrepreneurship. More work remains to be done since the efforts are more at the primary level in particular the private schools (Segoete 2015).

Bereng adds that *Conversations* (2013) was inspired by Hans Ulrich Obrist’s question at his “*Brutally Early Club*” in Johannesburg; “what is urgent to you?” (Rosengarten 2016).

She realised that she did not have to wait for major funding for the festival platform, *Conversations* only needed people, audience and content. Thus, with no budget plan, she invited a few artists to drive to Lesotho and her parents provided the accommodation whilst Morija museum borrowed the equipment. The Hub Morija also assisted by spreading the word and used their audience, exhibiting networks and refreshments. Through this gesture, one can learn how Bereng used her networks to collaborate initialize and strategised the exhibition with no or little means.

The staging of the exhibition featuring artists from varying geographical socio-political contexts by Bereng can also be viewed through the lens of the notion of 'human infrastructure'. In Visual Arts Network South Africa's (VANSA) handbook (2019), it is stated that it seems as if many African countries are faced with the challenge of limited physical infrastructure. As a result, in the absence of formal physical creative spaces such as galleries and theaters, members of the creative society who are well equipped in terms of skill like Bereng, contribute to the sector to address the challenge by providing mentorship, skills and support to young upcoming practitioners with lack of exposure to the field practice. The idea of human infrastructure, 'by nature provides a range of intangible and informal contributions; in regard to what is currently lacking, primarily as the infrastructure of people' (VANSA 2019:61). For instance, an artist or curator can offer informal training through workshops to those who are pursuing art discourses but cannot access formal training. In Lesotho, this idea can be viable in the new museum.

I find *Conversations at Morija* exhibition, through its curatorial methods and strategies, to have broken the barriers of accessibility in so many aspects such as location, space, budget, and knowledge. To elaborate the geographical location through engaging dialogue with participants by the use of skype technology, providing the platform as a way of bridging the gap of arts education (informal learning), and budget constraints in two ways: initialising the exhibition with a small budget and sharing of knowledge with regards to working with limited capital.

Drawing from my Honors research findings *(2019)*, I argue that the creative sector is a fragmented and largely informal industry seeking practical expertise support and recognition. It is also challenged with weak policies to support arts and culture. Little

financial support is provided generally for performing arts due to other priorities such as health and education (Dlali 2019). This is unlike in SA where there is existence of established art organisations like VANSA, National Arts Council (NAC) among others supporting the art discipline locally and internationally.

At the moment our institutions are not relevant to the creative and cultural industry concept and need to reinvent their curriculum. For instance, Limkokwing University is the only tertiary institution presently which offers courses like music, film, fine arts, technology, and design. The country needs more of these kinds of art schools for production, skills transferal/professionalisation and development of new artistic expressions. There is a huge gap because neither curatorial mentorship nor tertiary institutions and arts organisations are offering any training in heritage management, arts, and culture, art and history (Dlali 2019) such as those Bereng was opportune to attend.

The general remark is that it seems as if shifts within exhibitions practice have assumed new ways that appropriate objects and activities; which depart from the traditional field of art in the museum and mobilising spaces whereby audiences respond and engage. The highest aim is of imparting knowledge, not passive tours based on artifacts in the space. According to Michael Belcher (1991:58) in *Exhibitions in Museums*; exhibitions are classified by mode, type, theme as well as a response intended to draw out from the audience. His perception is that almost all exhibitions by definition are educational, by their nature they somehow embody learning content though intensions may vary sometimes maybe for entertainment. Of the few types that he describes the vital one in regard to this study is called an interactive exhibition. He states that their presentation varies but their important element is the response (feedback) of the visitor in relation to their service and activities that involve intellectual and physical activity. An example is computer-based exhibits that facilitate dialogue and encourage conversation (Belcher 1991).

3.5 Collaboration as a curatorial strategy.

According to Kimberly Huber (2009:151), “collaboration means to work jointly with others or together especially in an intellectual endeavor.” Collaboration refers to mutually beneficial cooperation between two or more organisations that are not immediately connected for the purpose of achieving common goals. It enables organisations to share responsibilities as well as the burden of time, budget and effort associated with planning, research, and execution of projects. Collaborations allow institutions to complement each other providing skills and expertise that may not be available to the other. Collaboration allows the sharing of experience, information, and exposure to new approaches, information, and networks as well as the exchange of knowledge and skills (Huber 2009).

There is a need to stimulate collaboration among arts education practitioners that provide exciting learning experiences for the audience and decolonize the imposed Western curriculum pedagogy. There is also a need to redesigning the curriculum to suit a world that is reinventing itself rapidly through new technologies (Huber 2009). The aim of the Morija Museum and Bereng collaboration can be understood as offering creative and informal learning experiences and enriching participants learning using their collections, programs, resources and professional expertise effectively in shaping ideas. It was also a strategy to build alliances between the museum and Bereng as an independent curator to reach new and broader audiences, maximise resources, and contribute to the public expansion supporting learning objectives and content standards.

The content produced contributed to the museum's relevance in the post-colonial era and attracted a new audience. Since Bereng is not well known in the country this initiative assisted her to enjoy Morija’s audience, Bereng also brought along prominent and diverse audiences to the Morija museum. As a result, Morija Museum was able to reposition itself in the market as a place of learning, promoting collective learning and knowledge sharing models of critical pedagogy in art education

Working together can help organisations to combine financial, intellectual and institutional resources and meet their target goal. In the same way, the cultural institutions are advised to collaborate for benefits such as filling in the gaps of knowledge, sharing resources, strengthening cultural ties, stretching budgets as well as developing an improved understanding of serving the public better. It is an advantage for museums to collaborate

with community organisations since their social role also lies in serving the public and working together to solve common problems (Huber 2009).

It is a good idea that the stakeholders have stressed on adopting a decentralised model that will allow Lesotho's museums to networking. Networking and collaboration are important for professionals since they can foster new relations and contribute to orientation and capacitation in regard to service provided. The overall perception is that the world is transforming and shifting boundaries as a result, museums should associate themselves within and not function in isolation. Collaboration can enlarge museum possibilities and ensure they effectively use their collections, programs and resources effectively (Huber 2009). George Hein -museum learning theorist (1998) insists that "there can be no learning or meaning if there is no interaction". One of the advantages of the museum is that it provides a brief experience that leads to learning, creating a memory, influencing and changing visitor's perceptions.

3.6 Community engagement

It is important to mention that, initially *Conversations at Morija* coincided with the Morija festival at the same place and this explains how it was deployed as an opportunity and strategy to attract, introduce and reach a wide range of people for the audience development for visual arts in Lesotho. Morija festival was a popular annual Morija-based festival that began in 1999 as a platform to demonstrate and experience the culture of Basotho residents and neighbours. It was labeled a major cultural event that attracted about 35 000 people per year (Morija Museum Blog). It was a major diverse event that involved performance, music, stalls, and exhibitions aimed at developing, promoting and marketing the arts.

Morija Museum and Bereng collaboration was pertinent to ensuring access and community empowerment. Serving and representing the community is supposed to be Morija's Museum core mandate as a museum. This initiative provided a platform for Basotho creatives to voice out their concerns and aspirations through the dialogue especially the first conversations *What is urgent to you (2013)*. Bereng (in Rasengarten

2016) remarked that, knowing that rigid exhibition would not be ideal to excute her goal of arts accessibility, she engaged her curatorial interventions so that the audience would able to express themselves.

Through this effort, people had a conducive environment to participate, collaborate and develop meaningful solutions to complex issues. This community engagement promoted custodianship and for people to value what they have. It provided online exposure and invited the community to engage as another of solving the problem. The dialogue space was a flexible environment for a better understanding of community needs affecting their everyday life and aspirations. It even broke the geographical distance by deploying technology, Bereng made the Morija Museum lively through conversations.

Many people do not have access to arts education in the absence of adequate infrastructure, in particular, the national museum and art schools. Therefore, the prevailing situation puts the discipline in danger of becoming just a foreign subject to Basotho, something they cannot relate to. This prevents Lesotho and her people to be able to harness the full potential of arts, and for the arts to contribute to the socio-cultural and economic aspects of their lives. Therefore, this collaboration in my view drives social change and transformation.

In the absence of the national museum in Lesotho, I find *Conversations at Morija* to be a good and profound example to learn from as it opens up and offers new functions of exhibitions and engages with the public and other already existing museums like Morija Museum. Furthermore, through this exhibition, Bereng offers ways to conceptualise exhibitions and curatorial methods in the absence of expertise in the country. It is a good analysis of how to respond and be relevant in the contemporary era in particular with the community. It gives exposure to contemporary approaches. It is worth mentioning that Morija Museum, as small as it is, has also played a crucial part in this context and in Lesotho as a social resource.

Bereng as a full-time-based recognised curator in South Africa showed patriotism through this ongoing initiative. It is crucial now for Basotho artists and cultural practitioners to take over ownership and maintain it for sustainability purposes. Of urgent importance is finding ways of empowering Basotho to own their culture and strengthening their cultural pride

which will influence how they are being viewed. There is a need for more frequent exhibitions in the country as a tool to create awareness, as platforms of learning and teaching people about socio-cultural and political issues affecting their lives.

Goniwe (2012:194) when discussing exhibition and art as sites for knowledge generation, he alludes that like art, an exhibition is a space of creativity in which artistic discourses and concerns are analysed, deliberated as well as arranged for engagement and consumption. They are spaces whereby personal, political, economic and social affairs can be reflected while at the same time cultivating dialogue and appreciation. He adds that art and exhibition encompassing their publications are sites of knowledge generation and therefore they are cultural and intellectual capital as artists convey ideas and produce meaning in their engagement with the world. In my view Conversations at Morija was more of a process of knowledge-making than an exhibition in the form of a product.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is obvious that there is still a long road to travel in efforts to promote, conserve, build and manage Basotho's cultural heritage landscape in visual arts. In Lesotho, the DOC is the one responsible for arts and culture management generally. However, it is experiencing challenges to fully perform its mandate due to a lack of funds and expertise. There is a general lack of promotion of the arts in the country as there are no curators in the government and spaces for exhibitions. Few events happen informally *Conversations at Morija* being the example. There is a need for lobbying support for artistic works for funding opportunities. *The case of Conversations at Morija* provides a good illustration of how art spaces can be organised to spark dialogue and engage different stakeholders, shaping the way art is produced and experienced. So far studies show that there is talent in the country. What is lacking is the promotion of its visibility and the need to move away from imposed normative ways so that our knowledge production is aligned with what is relevant in our context. Morija museum needs to foster ongoing relations with the creative community and become a space of experiment and dialogue to remain active in the contemporary as well as provide support for artistic endeavors.

Though I was unable to reach Bereng as the project manager, the overall impression is that this initiative was well received.

CHAPTER 4

Diversifying Lesotho: overlooked communities to be incorporated in the museum (Findings)

Introduction

Having provided background and context of the museums in Lesotho in the preceding chapters, in this section I present the overall analysis and findings emerging from my research, in relation to how minority museums are being engaged in the process of making new museums in Lesotho. The chapter looks at forms of misrepresentations that have happened in museums elsewhere and argues that a new museum such as LNM, should avoid these by deliberately collaborating with communities, expanding its audiences, and looking at the museum as a place for promotion of cultural diversity in the country. The chapter focuses on how the LNM processes are related to the recognition of multiculturalism on the ground.

4.1. Minorities and Marginalisation in Lesotho

It has been claimed that Lesotho is a country with a diverse cultural heritage (Gill 2015, Dijon 2020, Bereng 2013). However, it also seems that this rich diversity is less celebrated and underappreciated. There has not been a fully legitimate acknowledgment of Lesotho as a multi-ethnic society. Researchers like Mapena and the Baphuthi representative Kometsi Letzazdzo have speculated that the reason for these limitations is due to its homogenous projection by the state, as well as the laws that tend to ignore the country's multicultural setup. The other reason that has been cited and of which I feel like should not be taken for granted is low educational levels among the minorities. Most Basotho think of minority groups such as Baphuthi, just as clans or mere descendants of Moorosi rather than looking at them as integral to Basotho citizenry. As result, educating the public about minorities should be one of the LNM mandates.

According to Ambrose (1993), the Baphuthi minority population is a very small group that constitutes a combined population of around 40 000 people in Lesotho and South Africa. They have a unique language, customs, performances as well as rituals that differentiate them from other groups like Basotho (Ambrose 1993). However, UNESCO has identified that their living heritage has been endangered and in an interview with the Lesotho Times newspaper, Baphuthi mentioned that their culture is not given attention by the descendants of the great king Moshoeshoe. As a result, it came to their realisation that their heritage needs to be preserved. Thus, there have been several strategies initiated that seek to strengthen and revive their heritage regardless of minimal support from government departments.

In my view, one of the most fundamental strategies is the formation of the *Ibandla le baPhuthi Association*. This is a social movement pioneered by the descendants of king Moorosi as counter publics, that represents the Baphuthi people in their quest for recognition. According to Baphuthi representative Muthjeuku Khosi, the association is formed to constantly remind themselves of who they are as they feel that because of modernisation most of Baphuthi's young generation do not understand who they are. Therefore, the idea is to preserve their identity. They contend that they are a marginalised society despite their ancestral role in the creation of present-day Lesotho. They have also presented their concerns to the previous cabinets, calling for negotiations so that some of the injustices can be rectified. Unfortunately, their efforts have encountered some reluctance from the successive governments (Lesotho times 2014). In 2014, Chief Molapo remarked that;

> I agree that after we became independent in 1966, something should have been done about Baphuthi issues. The crux of the matter might have been how this could have been done without causing instability, which remains a concern. (Molapo: Ministry of Chieftainship, Lesotho times, 2014).

Some of the Baphuti's important concerns are that their traditional leadership is overlooked as they do not have a representative in parliament and as a result they have been demanding the appointment of the Moorosi royal family as the paramount chief. In addition, the Baphuthi also demand traditional leadership of the districts which were once

under their king's rule to be returned to Baphuthi. Their claims go as far as the land, stating that they want ownership of the land within their territory, that is the districts that were their strongholds mainly Quthing. On the other hand, they expressly asserted that they do not want to be an independent state, they simply want to gain control of their inheritance. Apart from the mentioned claims, the Baphuthi would also like their language Sephuthi to be taught in schools. They claim Ibandla is there to keep their legacy and identity alive by becoming sources of information regarding the history of Baphuthi as Khosi emphasises:

> We would like people, the government and the Senate to accept that King Moorosi was not a paramount chief but a real king who had his own people and area he governed. We would like all stakeholders to look back and honestly analyze the betrayal and injustice perpetrated against his people…. We lost our kingship, our people, our resources, our pride, our true identity (Khosi, M, Lesotho times,2014).

Besides their advocacy for improved acknowledgment of the Baphuthi by the state, the group implemented an annual cultural pilgrimage which ranks amongst the Baphuthi's successful initiatives. Introduced in 2013, the *Baphuthi annual pilgrimage* is meant to revive their history through the historical route re-do of king Moorosi and his followers from Tulamaneng in South Africa to Mount Moorosi where he ended up building his stronghold. This is a three-day walk followed by a big celebration highlighted by the Baphuthi cultural performances (see figures 9 and 10, below). This commemoration has become an important milestone in the lives of Baphuthi. It is claimed to have attracted a wide range of people together which include students. They also invite people to attend the occasion and participants come from the district of Quthing, Qacha's Nek and Mohaleshoek as well as surrounding areas of South Africa (Lesotho Times 2014).





Figure 9 and 10: images of the 2019 Moorosi annual walk, the images illustrate participants during the walk (photo credit: Kometsi Letzadzo)

Other than the *Ibandla* initiatives, there are private and government initiatives that I would also like to comment on. First is the *Morija festival* a project established to celebrate Lesotho's diverse cultures and it was during this festival that a motto *Kaofela re Chabana Sa Khomo* was popularised.[11] This is where school children and the old gathered staging their cultural performances of which embodied a fantastic cultural experience. Through this project, it is claimed that for the first time in history, this was an initiative that aimed to embrace Lesotho's cultural diversity but then unfortunately it collapsed due to political and economic instability (Morija Museum).

[11]In an interview with Gill (2021,,20 January) , I learned that Morija musem did not coin the slogan *Kaofela Re chabana sa Khomo* but borrowed it. Apparantely, the slogan is extracted from the old song by J.P. Mohapeloa. Originally the slogan was adopted to overcome the terrible political divisons that reigned in Lesotho in 1998. As such, Morija festival team also thought it will be pertinent to appropriate it as it resonated with the locals in order to stimulate cultural diversity in the country and promote cultural tolerance.



Figure 11 *shows schoolchildren gathered together, wearing their Xhosa/ Phuthi traditional attires, to present and perform their culture at one of Morija festival events (Picture courtesy of Morija Museum).*

Another initiative worthy of mentioning is the National University of Lesotho (NUL) platform which was part of the university's events in 2017 where the Baphuthi were provided a platform to perform their cultural dances. Once again this was one of the efforts of *Ibandla le Baphuthi* to demonstrate their unique identity and diversity done as part of the revival and awareness of Baphuthi living heritage practices.

With the emergency of the above outlined cultural initiatives, one would expect the Department of Culture to assume a proactive role. My observation is that the DOC is faced with several challenges that include over-reliance on the department as well as increasing demands and expectations but with limited resources. However, through external funds from organizations such as UNESCO, it has managed to pursue its mandate of safeguarding the country's culture. DOC received funding from UNESCO 10 years ago to document the language of Baphuthi (Sephuthi) as part of its preservation

and revitalisation as it is said to be a severely endangered language. According to the world language atlas, Sephuthi is spoken by 20 000 people as per 1999 statistics. It could be less today since it has been proclaimed as an endangered intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO. There are few journals about the language and different books written about the history of the Baphuthi people and their king, King Moorosi.[12] The books are found in the libraries and archives and can contribute to their literature though most are written in Sesotho and English.

Overall, there seem to be small improvements though not sustainable to promote minority cultures in Lesotho. Moreover, the issue of Baphuthi not having land ownership shows multiculturalism applicability limitations as argued in Myambo (2010), where she maintained that is effective in an immaterial sense. Nonetheless, there seems to be some breakthrough for the Baphuthi community that can be noted and celebrated especially in terms of their language. The big achievement is the fact that almost after 185 years of the arrival of missionaries in Lesotho, the Bible Society of Lesotho has translated the Bible into Sephuthi. This was launched in 2018 and is indeed seen as a major achievement by some linguistic experts who have pioneered research on Sephuthi dialects. Also, one NGO, The Media Institute in Southern Africa (MISA) Lesotho facilitated a new community radio station focusing on minority languages. The organisation donated equipment that will broadcast and serve as a platform to talk about social and political issues in Xhosa that affect the Baphuthi in Quthing after it came to their attention that local radio stations cannot reach them,[13] The ministry of education has finally considered incorporating Sephuthi language in its curriculum, in Quthing district.[14]

[12] Books entitled Sent To Kill: The shocking true story behind a forgotten African colonial war (2014) and Moorosi: A South African King's Battle for Survival (2012) both wriiten by Graham Fysh.

[13] Moremoholo, R. (2016). *Giving a Voice to the Voiceless*, The Post, Maseru, Lesotho,13 May. Viewed 2 June 2020. Available at https://www.thepost.co.ls/news/giving-a-voice-to-the-voiceless/

[14] Ministry of Education and Training. (2019:23).The Lesotho Education Language Policy: All Learners need to be taught in their mother tongue up to Grade 3, Worldbank.

4.2. New Museums and Multiculturalism: LNM Plans and Opportunities

The movement towards the implementation of the new museum project included a UNESCO report produced on museums in Lesotho. This report can be seen as the most significant effort towards the state's museum establishment. The concepts contained in the report were used as a briefing document for the architectural tender competition. Following this, the second major exercise was to develop an institutional plan. The *Master Plan* on the development of the new national museum was compiled by Dijon, through a consultative process that outlined the recommended process to be undertaken for the project, taking into account the stakeholder's views. I was privileged to have access to this project strategy, containing a way forward towards the realisation of the museum.

As per *the MasterPlan*, the LNM's vision is "to become a regional heritage hub that fosters live project-based links with existing heritage centers of resonance within the country and beyond". Additionally, the new museum will also work to strengthen the heritage network nationally to maximise their potential and boost tourism (LNM Master plan 2015:3). According to this document, the role of the LNM, in summary, involves building partnerships, development and capacity building of national heritage sites and guidance on ethics and professional standards. Reading through *the Master Plan*, it is apparent that the LNM has adopted a similar model as that of South Africa which integrates several satellite museums and centers. LNM along with its satellite museums will collectively be responsible for collecting, preserving, presenting and researching the natural and cultural heritage of Lesotho, in all its diversity. Further to this, it is envisioned that the LNM objects collection will also be inclusive of all available collections in Lesotho held by private and public heritage centres (LNM Master Plan 2015).

Bearing in mind the magnitude of this national museum project and requirements in terms of management, curatorial and technical expertise, the emphasis is on acquiring, securing and nurturing specialised disciplinary knowledge and curation needs from local and international stakeholders. In this respect, the DOC is willing to forge Pan African partnerships in the implementation of the project. This strong desire to establish global partnerships was confirmed by Historian Leqaphela Liphoto from DOC who stated that the DOC has already approached a number of museums abroad and in South Africa,

including Iziko National Museums and Bloemfontein National museum, for assistance and collaboration.

During this research, I also had an opportunity to look into the *LNM Social History Exhibition Narrative,* prepared by a consultant Dijon Design. It is a DOC document that provides insights about the information to be installed in the museum. As per this document, there are going to be 14 Exhibition panels in the museum, focusing on the social history of Lesotho. My analysis is that of these, only 4 panels focus on minorities, mainly through subjects such as Archaeology, Rock art, Colonial resistance, wars, dispossession, and Basotho formation. In what follows, I examine and critically analyse the exhibition panels that in my opinion connect/ align with the notion of multiculturalism in this new museum.

The first exhibition panel is titled "*In Conservation"*, and it is a general introduction with concepts taken from 2018 traveling "*Story Booth"* a community-based initiative that sought to involve the community in the project, to contribute to shaping the content and approach of the LNM. This exhibition is anticipated to be installed on the museum's ground floor and photographs on this wall will feature some of the people who participated in the *LNM story and photo booth* project. The concept of *story booth* is said to be inspired by the popular aesthetics of African studio photography and street style applauded African photographs. This particular exhibition in the LNM is claimed is anticipated to reflect the voices, energies, opinions, and desires of everyone who participated and generously shared ideas (Dijon 2020:4).

As result, portraits were made as part of the museum's *Story and Photo Booth* project. What is promising here is that this mobile photo and interview booth was also set up at locations/districts where minority groups reside that as Quthing (Baphuthi), Mokhotlong (Batlokoa) and Botha Bothe (Ndebele) (Dijon 2020:3), and this reflects inclusivity. I assume that somehow the minorities were made aware of the establishment of the museum and given an opportunity to contribute to the histories and experiences they wanted to be told. According to Dijon (2020:4), the *story booth* is going to be installed in a way that allows the public to take selfies against Seshoeshoe (Basotho traditional fabric) fabric backdrops and share via social media platforms with hashtag phrases that read

#LNM #BasothoStories and # My museum. I find this idea to be very creative and helpful as it will also serve as a marketing strategy. This theme will also contribute to the branding of the museum, enhancing the potential of the museum to be recognisable and aid the museum to gain popularity and in building its audience.

Moreover, with this concept of a *story booth,* LNM can continue to use it as an innovative means of engaging the public in conversation. Through this medium, audiences, and ordinary people can continue to contribute and share their own experiences and content about the museum displays. In that way, it will be serving as an interactive dialogue platform whereby museum-goers participate in topical or controversial issues we face culturally or as a nation. Therefore, the booth will be a stimulus that enables the museum to get feedback from the public young and old alike. I also learned that there will be LNM radio station within the museum which will also contribute to educating and disseminating information concerning the museum and its narratives, particularly in my opinion to minority groups who are located in the far-flung districts where other media platforms do not effectively cover.

The second gallery, exhibition 2 entitled *Lesotho: The making of a nation (Precolonial times*), will consist of 6 parts, with parts 1 and 2 focusing on the history of minorities. According to Dijon (2020), this exhibition is meant to take one back in the time (pre-colonial era) in order to understand how the nation of Lesotho was formed and how the past has shaped its present. Overall, it is said to be a rich and dramatic story that covers the San people, the story of migration, long journeys of bitter warfare, dispossession, resistance, diplomacy, decolonisation and democracy. Part 1 covers Lesotho's story, articulating a brief description of the country, specifically the narrative of how Lesotho came to be and how its people came to be identified as 'Basotho'. This exhibition is aimed at making visitors understand how the nation of Lesotho was established.

Part 2 of the museums will tackle the very question that this study is also enquiring about, *who are the 'Basotho?'*- a concept that is still highly contested. After discussing different myths from historians and researchers that trace Lesotho's history Dijon concludes by stating that there are many different stories about where the first people called 'Basotho' came from. As such, there is no clear agreement among Basotho and historians on the

origin of the term Basotho. Nonetheless, today the term Basotho is used to refer to the conglomeration of different nations of Sotho, San, Zulu, Xhosa and Ndebele origin that were brought together by Moshoeshoe to form the single nation known as Basotho (Dijon 2020:10). This phrase just seals what has already been narrated in this paper in the first chapter i.e. the contests around the making of Basotho

Attention to minorities in the gallery will partly focus on Baphuthi's story. Exhibition 2; Part 7, will depict *Battles and Borders/ Wars,* more importantly, Baphuthi and King Moorosi's fight for independence. The section will focus on king Moorosi's role in shaping Lesotho and his relationship with Moshoeshoe 1, who is described as a very important figure in the 19th century. The exhibition will articulate that Moshoeshoe 1 and Moorosi were contemporaries and allies in the wars with the Orange Free State. Moreover, it will also convey how king Moorosi was attacked for his resistance; outlining his influence and determination to fight for the independence of his people against the colonial regime (Dijon 2020:17).

The Baphuthi king's determination to defend his people is continued in part 10 of the exhibition, which also traces *Moorosi's Mountain* fortress and narrates how the King faced major attacks at his stronghold with his subject where his people, sons, wives, himself were brutally murdered. The section shows the brutality of colonialism, highlighting how the King's body was beheaded and his head was sent to King Williams Town in the end, the Cape Colony conquered King Moorosi's land and Quthing became a white settlement. Lastly, the exhibition also shows how during the war, families came to be refugees by fleeing these troubles and moving into Moshoeshoe's territory as settlers (Dijon 2020:18).

Lastly, exhibition 13 represents an Archeology section where according to Dijon (2020:105), panel 3 will present a unique set of paintings discovered at the Quthing district -home of the Baphuthi minority. Another mention on the displays is a historical novel about Moorosi in 1948 by M. Damane. It's a book about the History of Baphuthi written in Sesotho by one of Lesotho's renowned authors Mosebi Damane, and so far will be the only book on the display.

Apart from the narratives outlined in the preceding discussion, there will be a lot about 'Basotho' oral histories, literature and objects. Although I acknowledge the enormous

effort to conceptualise an inclusive national museum due to my thorough assessment and engagement with the planned exhibits, it is my view that Basotho history is the one that is dominating the LNM social narrative exhibitions. While there is a lot of attention paid to Baphuthi and King Moorosi of Qhuting, I did not come across anything about Batlokoa and Ndebele's experiences who are also part of the minorities.

It is evident that the history of the Baphuthi community has been placed within the wider social context of colonial resistance. Situating myself as an audience, the question that came to my mind is where are they now and what is of significance to them today. My observation from what is going to be installed in the museum is that I find it to be just a neutral representation of Baphuthi culture and history. The emphasis of the narrative is on the pre-colonial era creating some sort of erasure by portraying them as if they no longer exist or are left behind in the precolonial era. The storytelling lacks continuity about the Baphuthi especially their contemporary everyday lives. Thus, the DOC continues to reproduce and normalise dominant representation.

In my opinion, LNM presents an opportunity for the continuation of narrating the Baphuthi stories in a more comprehensive way. This is more so considering the fact that the museum has decided to mention them in their displays. In the planned narrative, the aspects of what is being memorised about them are largely aligned with king Moshoeshoe 1, making the representations to be overshadowed by Basotho narratives and experiences. Other than that, one gets to hear more about their great king Moorosi, but there nothing is on the planned exhibits that showcase the contemporary vernacular stories or related oral traditions and culture. In the emerging post-museum practice, minorities are not just part of history, but are alive and make vital contributions to contemporary culture and art. In the same vein, Ngcobo (2018:150) warns against placing the marginalised in the frame of the past history as it perpetuates the stereotyping.

In the case of LNM, the planned representation of Baphuthi risks this type of stereotyping because nothing is heard about their ways of life, oral traditions, literature, objects, knowledge systems in the planned LNM exhibits. In this scenario, the deficient representation of the Baphuthi portrays their culture as rigid or dead yet they are still living and practicing their own culture, as stated at the beginning of this study. Any effective

representation of minorities should consider as Author Gerald Corsane (2005), has emphasised that culture is a living process that incorporates both continuity and change. Culture is always dynamic, changing and living, rather than dead or fixed. More importantly, the contemporary value of heritage for living cultures restores cultural value and identity.

I applaud the fact that the *story booth* was located at some of the minorities' places/ districts. Therefore, one would expect to hear their voices in the *Conversation* exhibition. However, when browsing through the document, I did not encounter some of their quotes from the interviews that were conducted. I was anxious to find out what they said in regards to the museum's role in their history and culture. What histories and experiences did they want to see and hear in the new museum? I noted for example that under Exhibition 5, there were no praise poems, music or quotes from selected books on Baphuthi in terms of their language. The text was largely only in Sesotho and English.

Minority cultures should be given equal attention as the larger cultures. Garuba and Raditlhalo (2008) in *Culture* offer a new analysis on the importance of culture within society and history. They discuss how the concept of culture has been evolving together with many usages and meanings attached to it. They maintain that culture has opened up new domains of social life and activism, political struggle and economic competition over resources, as well as new avenues of academic inquiry. They further suggest that the entire discourse of multiculturalism draws on the notion of culture as the unique, distinctive way of life of a particular group that marks it apart from other groups. On the same note, the Black Consciousness Movement in the 1970s was interested in African culture and cultural preservation or cultural self-definition and coined the concept of African Renaissance. Here, culture was seen as a form of reclaiming and reaffirming an African identity and language. Proponents of Black Consciousness argued that every group of people or nation has its own distinctive ways of life, its shared system of beliefs and values, and thus its own culture. It is therefore noble to recognise the presence of cultures. Culture has been defined as a set of practices by which meanings are produced and exchanged within a group (The Black scholar 2008).

Overall, looking into the LNM exhibition, panels to be installed the Baphuthi history and culture is rarely embodied in material objects. Rather the exhibition bequeaths words or texts. The exhibition retraces the history of the struggle of migrations which is a more painful history as opposed to their contemporary cultural wealth. In the proposed exhibitions, their sociol-cultural development remains unnoticeable. It has been argued that language through poetic speech, proverbs and riddles, is not limited to memory because new forms of cultural expression such as hip hop, rap, and contemporary dance continue to transform existing practices. However, it is commendable that the new museum has paid some attention to the minority group, and the *Ibandla* can serve as a foundation and backbone for consultation and possibilities of shared curatorial authority. There is a willingness for minority cultures to be recognised and they can be engaged with and this will help in bringing about multiple voices and diverse representation, thereby avoiding otherness

4.3. New Museums and Notions of representation

The efforts described in the above section are against what is advised in museum literature, where museums are advised not to reproduce dominant-looking relation as they should set up a dialogue (Corsane 2005 and Ngcobo 2018). Curating is never value-free and some critical approaches are more compelling and stronger than others at the same time we have to engage with issues related to globalisation. Corsane (2005) highlights that representation is associated with perceptions of how knowledge is acquired, produced and communicated. He suggests that there should be no fixed message to be transmitted, no single voice to be elaborated in museums. and that museums have to acknowledge absence and promote understanding between cultures while presenting it engagingly.

Thus, in response to *Ibandla*'s concerns, LNM can provide empathic and dignified space in a society where is absent. The new museum must show respect for a difference and acknowledge it, as well as strive to validate domestic multiplicity. And as argued by Butler, familiarisation with difference should begin with efforts of reclaiming recognition of how to

address the socio-cultural discrepancies that linger in our cultural institutions. Butler (2000) contends that curators should not just deliver content, but offer an experience of "the other" and provide space within which to develop a different understanding of self and other - past and present. Theories of representation maintain that curating is like teaching and it should never be an authoritative exercise that imposes views on others. There should be community consultation, sharing of curatorial authority and respect of other cultures. Importantly museum visitors and users should not be seen as passive receivers of fixed messages but should be taken as active participants. In doing this, public participation and involvement in decision-making are crucial in all stages and activities of the overall process of the museum. Ngcobo (2018) asserts that the focus on cultural diversity is in lieu of recognition of dispossession, difference and domination.

Corsane (2005) asserts that the construction of identities happens when museums become sites and spaces where different representations are found and when they open up as places where dialogue can take place, they can challenge, inspire and act as resources for lifelong learning. Formal and informal learning opportunities should be considered. Attention should be particularly drawn to what has been excluded, and the intersection between academic and indigenous knowledge systems.

In this respect, LNM should continue with a conversation that began with the *storybooth* in the museum. There should be a continuation of dialogue as long as the museum is operating. It should be prepared to engage with topical and sometimes difficult issues such as the representation of the minority in the country. This can be achieved by producing programmes that are challenging and stimulating. However, Corsane (2005) warns that museums can also spark controversy, yet this controversy can be reduced when issues are carefully negotiated in responsible and sensitive ways.

4.4. New museums and Lessons learned from the past: Politics of vision

Using two case studies *"Into the Heart of Africa"* and *"Miscast"* Butler (2000:78) discusses museum models of exhibiting culture, examining how the different approaches impact the audiences. She identified 3 methods which are Reflexive, Critical and Optimistic

museology. These two cases dealt with colonial collecting and various ways in which Africa has been represented and appropriated by others. The ultimate goal of the curators of these exhibitions was to give visitors a taste of imperial and missionary ideology. Also, of importance, Butler (2000:79) argues that visitors and users of museums bring their own experiences and prior understandings into play as they engage with public programmes. (Butler 2000).

Curated by Jeanne Cannizo, *"Into the Heart of Africa" has been* described as an attempt to address the fact that museums and galleries rarely acknowledge the contemporary diverse cultural and political lives of Africans. Butler describes this exhibition as Reflexive curating whereby the modernist practice of representing culture involves efforts to decolonise the museum space. In this scenario, retelling of histories can touch upon sensitive issues creating multiple and complex responses. The exhibition displayed imperial icons with captions that read 'missionary room'. Butler states that it demonstrated that exhibits are never neutral and that they are informed by the cultural, historical institutional and political contexts of the people who create them (Butler 2000). Exhibitions might offend many people whom curators surely hoped would be receptive to their exhibitions such as offering critical education about colonialism, therefore, mutual gaze is not easily found.

Some audiences appear to prefer Celebratory (Optimistic) exhibitions about Africa to reflexive strategies. According to Butler (2000:84), celebratory exhibitions involve exploration and immersion in contributions made by Africa and experiences. They focus on public education and facilitating dialogue and debate between diverse and multicultural citizens. Here museums can be a connecting space and a bridge of intercultural communication, emphasising the inclusion of new voices in the museum exhibits. The Critical model challenges dominant Eurocentric practices, in particular the West's representations of non-Western cultures, the practice of collecting, classifying and showcasing material culture (Butler 2000).

Looking at the exhibition *"Miscast"* curated by Pippa Skotnes, Butler claims that its curatorial approach offered a critique of Western practices. The aim of 'Miscast' was to bring concerns about genocide against the Khoisan into public awareness. Showing that

exhibitions can respond to others, *"Miscast"* is said to have responded to the famous "Bushman" diorama[15] at the South African National Gallery in Cape Town. It depicted examples of Khoisan material culture such as recorded Khoisan voices, copies of rock art paintings, photographs and newspaper clippings to immerse the viewer in the histories represented. The showcase intentionally placed archive and storeroom in the public domain showcasing colonial genocide, challenging the fact that normally storerooms are only accessible to curators and researchers (Butler 2000).

Both exhibitions cited above were post-colonial initiatives meant to respond to colonial legacies. Each was influenced by theories of representation associated with postmodernism, challenging colonial images and vocabularies like the term 'Bushmen'. Both received many positive reviews by visitors and critics, showing the complexity involved in producing critical exhibitions in mainstream museums and galleries. The reason being that the curator's critical intentions can be missed or misunderstood when attempting to communicate something such as efforts to include previously excluded histories, narratives and presentations. For this reason, Butler warns that viewers will be viewers interpreting the exhibition as they please. As a result, one cannot expect uniform responses, for audiences are diverse and spectatorship is both individual and highly contextual. For example, some visitors are fond of dioramas which they say have a special appeal, are timeless and fictionalized. They are therefore loved by some for their authenticity while others feel they construct static representations in public visual culture (Butler 2000).

Just like the visual and dialogic politics of displays like diorama, the aforementioned exhibitions were provoking but brought awareness of cultural arrogance and set up a dialogue. They produced mixed emotions and views as some audiences missed the curators' critical and reflexive agenda showing that the colonial stereotypes still linger in the present public visual culture. Descendants of the Khoisan attended the opening of 'Miscast' in traditional attire showing that the exhibition became the meeting ground for

[15] Diaromas are defined as recreations which was a common spectacle at 19th and early 20th century exhibitions practice of exhibiting people 'traditional' cultures in natural settings. They have been criticized with the argument that they reinforce popular stereotypes of the 'primitive' linked to 'animality' and nature as opposed to culture and history which reduce indigenous people by representing them as having no significant economic, historical-cultural relationships with their landscape (Buttler 2000:82).

them and generated discussion. Some jeered arguing that some of the issues raised by the exhibition are still happening to some Khoisan as they are marginalised and severely impoverished. The controversial exhibition led to cultural claims to land, some said it is good that people see it as it will strengthen young people to stand up. Some appreciated it stating that it provided an opportunity to create new political networks and to voice out their concerns publicly.

Some audiences contended that this kind of portrayal of African history continues to tarnish the image of Africa. They argued that the exhibition was not empowering, was insensitive and therefore victimised the Khoisan by reinforcing their pain and shame. Their view was that it is too detached from community concerns. On the other hand, the curators defended their artistic freedom and curatorial authority on the politics of what to display and what not to show. Buttler's (2000) point is that audiences perceive the exhibition in different ways and that the way visitors read the display can depend a lot on their opinion and or experience on the subject or position of the narration. Thus, an exhibition can provoke responses that are either supportive or oppositional and even contradicting views.

What these contests and controversies show is that there is the social and cultural authority vested in museums. The museum work is fundamentally about representation where decisive acts of inclusion and exclusion based on criteria that is culturally and historically specific, always strategic and selective (Buttler 2000 and Ngcobo 2018). As a result, situating myself as an audience and bringing in my experience of what is prevailing in the existing museums of Lesotho and looking into LNM's social history narrative, though yet to be installed my observation is that the consultant has reproduced dominant power relations. The Baphuthi are overshadowed by Basotho's ways of life, literature and objects. My expectation as a visitor is that I will encounter exhibitions that celebrate and refashion Baphuthi's socio-cultural wealth as well as facilitate critical dialogue and debate about some of their concerns they have already aired in the public domain.

However, it seems like, over the past decades, significant movements have taken place within museums in the direction of greater inclusion, a broader representation of cultures and recognition and difference. The question is about what constitutes an adequate

representation? Targets shifts as museums engage in their critics and ongoing dialogues as a response as well as theory and practice of museums advance. Some of the 21st-century international initiatives that have valued and validated recognition, respect for difference, and acknowledgment of difference opposing monoculture include ICOM and UNESCO. ICOM celebrates museums as places for Diversity and Inclusion, orientating cultural institutions towards empowering diversity and inclusion within their landscape. UNESCO through the *2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions*, aimed to create a rich and varied world which increases the range of choices and nurtures human capacities and values. It forms a common heritage of humanity by advocating that heritage should be cherished and preserved for the benefit of all, as well as mutual respect between people and cultures. Last but not least, it affirms that cultural diversity is a defining characteristic of humanity.

Overall, for museums to be effective in working with multicultural diversities, they have to fully acknowledge and be sensitive to the role of minority groups. Corsane (2005) opines that cultural sensitivity is important for diverse cultures with multicultural audiences. This calls for the urgency of public participation in all stages and activities of the overall process of the museum or heritage work, involvement and decision-making processes. Consultation of stakeholders groups and community representatives together to identify and appropriate heritage resources through scoping. Looking more at the development of new audiences and users from those groups of people who previously may have felt alienated or marginalised and invisible.

4.5 Audiences expansion and museum activism: LNM potential

For the new museum in Lesotho, I believe small opportunities already discussed in the preceding sections can be taken advantage of to contest dominant-looking relations by providing opportunities to critique and shift dominant-looking relations. The LNM should create events or exhibitions that empower as well as create an opportunity to communicate aspects of the minority cultural identity to a broader audiences. LNM should prepare to reach out to the underserved or potential users by specific museum collections

and programmes that promote inclusion and diversity. According to Graham Huggan (2001), this is the age of ‘multicultural consciousness’ whereby inclusion is identified as the current phase of museum history and the audience are claiming their right as diverse communities. For Buttler (2000), there is always room for improvement, for audiences are diverse and a deeper part of curators and academics.

The fact that museums are not well known in Lesotho (Gill 2015), makes important what Vera Zoelberg (1994:49) has termed ‘an elite experience for everyone, that is adoption of policies intended to overcome elitism and democratise experience for unschooled museum-goers’. It is important to study the museum's possible visitors and community members, which will provide the basis of the character of the museum publics. Globally museums are under pressure to open access to a wide social spectrum. It is has been argued that museums should act as intermediaries aiding excluded political groups. Curators should influence public participation through special exhibits featured on news broadcasts and other popular media such as television.

On the same note, Bereng (2013) states that Lesotho lacks a visual art audience a sentiment shared by Zoelberg (1994), Zolberg argues that museums can be culturally exclusive through their language and terminology contracting their mandate of disseminating information and educating the public. As such, they can be selective in regard to their target audience. To avoid this discrimination, museums are called upon to draw into that public population with little understanding of history and or fine art. How should a museum cater for a crowd that does not have cultural literacy so as to offer equal opportunity in creating and maintaining public variables that would appreciate the museum? Thus, its duty is to seek out those who would normally not interest themselves with the museum institution as a way of attracting broader and diverse audiences.

Globally some museums have engaged in an activist practice defined by Robert Janes and Richard Sandell (2019), as an explicit intent to act upon inequalities, injustices and environmental crises. Part of the LNM's current mission statement reads *“Developing understanding, advocacy and pride to make Basotho identity known and appreciated by the rest of the world.”* (LNM Information Leaflet). Seeing the word ‘advocacy’ brings hope to me though one can not be sure about the exact contextual meaning of the word or

intentions of its insertion but one can speculate since museums are seen as activists in a civil society seeking to purposefully bring about social change.

Museums as civic institutions have the ability to cultivate dialogue and engage other civic agents to promote general public discourse on issues and concepts of race, ethnicity, politics and culture. Museums have shown to forge bridges between social groups and also foster a greater understanding of cultures and beliefs. Ivan Karp (1992:5), notes that civil society includes diverse forms of organisations like families, voluntary associations, ethnic groups, educational organisations and professional societies. Museums are part of civil society as they provide services that some institutions cannot. Civil society provides arenas in which people define, debate and contest identities and produce and reproduce their living circumstances, their beliefs and values and social order (Karp 1992).

Some museums may be part of local, state or national government but remain agents of civil society. Economic activities, social life and cultural affairs are all constructed within civil society. Karp (1992) believes that museums have key intellectual and civic resources to address inequalities and injustices. Museums must address big problems and questions through their mission and visions, why does it exist and what changes are you trying to affect as well as what solutions will they generate affecting the whole community. Civil society is an arena in which values are asserted and attempts of legitimisation are made and contested. The strength of social order resides in the capacity of civil society to aid in shaping the directions of change. As definitions of inclusion and exclusion become more negotiable, museums are asked to explain their history of exclusion and to fashion inclusive ways about their work (Karp 1992:6).

Conclusion

This chapter has summarised the current efforts and plans by the LMN in paying attention to marginalised minority groups in its exhibition plans. While the approach to attend to minority groups is positive and commendable, there is more that can be done to have a better representation of these groups. It is apparent that Museums have undergone

enormous changes in recent decades through ongoing process of renewal and transformation as they are shifting their social, cultural and political significance of museums and their agency beyond and within the cultural sphere. The LNM in Lesotho is a public institution and part of museums that are currently perceived to be active agents of cultural change. These institutions carry a legitimate expectation. Therefore, they should be open to influence and impact from outside interests, and they need to be responsive to citizens' interests and concerns. Paying attention to minority groups allows the harnessing of the museum’s resources towards a more sustainable, fair and just cultural landscape.

CONCLUSION

Museums for Africa: Afrocentric solutions

Using the case of a new museum project in Lesotho, this research has shown how new museums in Africa have to face the challenge of representing the diverse and multicultural societies in which they are located. The case of the LNM shows that in spite of good efforts and progress, more work still needs to be done in Africa. The study has explored the challenges and the opportunities in the form of some strategies that can be taken by new museums for them to correct the wrongs of the past. Museums need to work more to incorporate marginalised minority groups. In relation to this, some experts have argued that with regard to African cultures and their representations, the museum must become truly post-colonial not only chronologically but constitutionally (Vivan 2014:195). The emphasis is that there is a necessity of reinventing museums if not altogether inventing new ones in Africa as part of the efforts to have the marginalised integrated in museum representations. There is a need for a social experiment space, which is innovative and positioned in local cultures' needs and customs. Also post-colonial approaches do not necessarily have to have artifacts, they can be based on oral traditions and literature as well as community-based indigenous curating (Chipangura and Chipangura 2019:17). Curators and museum practitioners should imagine museums without objects in which history and culture can be depicted through sounds, images, plays and narratives to induce a moment just like Freedom Park has attempted. They should develop cooperative networks that could lead to meaningful loans and advised to be funded by private initiatives. Dealing openly and honestly with cultural arrogance and denial of another's identity will lead to multicultural public spaces.

Recommendations

This last section offers concluding remarks to the study as I reflect on the discussion in the preceding chapters. The discussion considered the possibilities of employing multiculturalism in the new national museum of Lesotho. In this study, I have argued that multiculturalism should be treated as necessary in redressing past biases in our cultural institutions in order to move to a more equal and representative future. The general overview is that the concept of the national museum remains attached to colonial discourse due to the reasons that it was established, unless it dismantled it remains exclusive. Among the key questions is how can LNM deploy multiculturalism to produce a sense of unity across differences? Through the discussion, important lessons have been learned from experiences encountered in similar projects in Australia and South Africa with regards to how they have constructed their modern societial realities in their national cultural institutions, through the application of the notion of multiculturalism to redress social inequality by focusing on diversity and inclusion of the marginalised. Hence, it has been proved to be a 'commodious' concept that allows coexistence thereby solidifying and embracing multicultural identities and multicultural telling.

The historical narrative in Lesotho illustrates how the Baphuthi minority identity and heritage of other minority groups were compromised and continues to be undermined and inadequately represented by the present Basotho community. However, it is evident that there are achievements in terms of preservation of their intangible cultural heritage in particular the language. My observation is that there is a huge gap when it comes to their visual arts and cultural experience and as a result, the new national museum can act as a bridge in promoting their tangible heritage by engaging a collective initiative (*Ibandla la baPhuthi)* that already exists as its fundamental source. Therefore, the LNM can be used to validate their history and ways of living. Ibandla la baPhuthi and the museum should work together to identify and appropriate their heritage; and ownership of resources, using their language as a vehicle of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), performing arts, social practices, festivals, and traditional craftsmanship.

I propose that a proper visitation of the Baphuthi community at the grassroots level is needed to carry out research, inventorying and carrying out interviews that will give insight into the interpretation of both their tangible and intangible cultural heritage. This will enable archiving and exhibitions that will disseminate information and educate the public. The process should be informed by the bottom-up approach as a method of inclusion and democratic practice to restore their cultural value and identity as well as for empowerment.

Apart from preceding suggestions, I also strongly recommend reconfigurations that will lead to new interpretations of the old museums such as the Masitise Museum, taking advantage of the fact there seems to be a commitment and awakening in the Lesotho government in terms of the management, prioritisation and funding of the cultural sector as outlined in the NSDP 11. The network model is crucial for LNM as it will allow the development of cross-cultural communication linkages, the creation relevant focal points and forums for the exchange of ideas, the organization of the heritage sector and sharing of resources, the enhancement of the flow of ideas and the integrated hub of education programs.

Common to all of these approaches are the core accessible and educational presentations of the display. Educational and public programs should be tailored to compliment the display in their language, thereby deepening and expanding their participation and fostering greater audience interaction. Furthermore, the fact that the museum will adopt the Public-Private model, I highly recommend the engagement of entrepreneurial skills, encouraging the use of museum facilities and others for income-generating activities.

There are opportunities for tapping into the everyday cultures of the minority groups such as performance, temporary displays and curriculum/educational programs which can be considered once the museum is running. The museum also offers the opportunity to fashion museum exhibitions or collections of those who have been previously sidelined so that they can gain cultural recognition by becoming visible on a museum's prestigious stage.

In the context where there is inadequate availability of objects as the case may be for LNM, references can be made to immaterial culture. The museum can focus on experiences and passions of the diverse cultural groups and these can be depicted using sounds, images, plays and narratives to evoke moments. Since the collection process has been seen as a journey, a number of pertinent steps are still unfolding and no concrete conclusion has been reached. In this current situation, LNM can start by turning the museum into a social platform through workshops and webinars that would assist to enliven the museum so that it starts functioning. This will prevent the museum from becoming a white elephant before it has even been launched.

In the same vein, audience development is crucial so that the museum team and creative community get to know each other better in terms of roles and expectations. The museum should be a responsive and experimental space in engaging the community to build the sector and capture concerns and issues as well as network. LNM should start thinking about extending their mission beyond the museum walls by presenting fairs, educational activities, expos on websites and on the field as a teaser to visit the museum while waiting for the museum to open. The audience will then visit for an in-depth experience.

Important programmatic interventions that need to be considered include the development of exhibition catalogues and weeklong free events over the summer school holidays, while nationwide touring exhibitions can also be employed to promote their works and culture. Additionally, formal and informal learning opportunities that allow the intersection of IKS and academic knowledge should also be considered. The museum should strive to be innovative by creating off-site programs (outreach) by bringing part of the mission and collection into the classrooms. DOC should also introduce the museum materials and activities that cater for and attract an audience that might not otherwise visit, such as underprivileged schools where students cannot go on field trips.

To tap into the existing expertise and creative capacities, notable art practitioners from the diaspora such as Bereng can be engaged as cultural brokers and other art practitioners as human infrastructures for mentorship and to guide the process of addressing issues of diversity and presenting exhibits by artists. I propose that they can intervene and bring to global attention a category of artists and their works. They can

assist through their networks to promote and connect Lesotho's arts community to participate globally.

Though the process of representation in a museum is selective and involves power dynamics and one museum cannot properly represent or allow people to represent themselves, the concept of *Kaofela re Chabana sa Khomo* can be adopted to instill multiculturalism in our cultural landscape and in the Lesotho heritage network.

Another opportunity for the LNM museum to address diversity is through art education. Since art education is not sufficiently supported and nurtured in Lesotho we need a pedagogy strategy such as the one introduced by Wits Art Museum (WAM). Here, the museum is used as a learning environment for a diverse set of groups and multiple different departments are engaging arts collections, using the collections as a tool of creative thinking and problem-solving. WAM is a good demonstration that museums can impact beyond playing the role of custodians of culture as it has invented educational innovations that use art collections for rich learning, critical thinking skills and cognitive development showing the inter-disciplinary potential of museums for teaching beyond arts. It has been argued that collections can help promote observation, description, interpretation, focus and openness to different perspectives and possibilities. Hence, we can adopt this strategy by reaching out to different schools and tertiary institutions to come and use the museum as a critical learning environment.

Lastly, LNM can build on what is already on the ground, and foster new ways of working with minority communities. Its curatorial approaches can be shaped by several factors such as socio-political factors. As observed in Bereng's *Conversations, in Chapter 3, Lesotho* needs initiatives that promote dialogue with ordinary communities. As in the case of Conversation, LNM should be an engaging museum space and be a forum for debate. It should develop methods of inclusion and democratic practice as the case in museums such as the Australian National Museum cited in *Chapter 2*. More importantly, the new museum can play an important role of addressing the issue of who the 'Basotho' are– it needs to be discussed further in such forums through seminars, lectures and symposiums to instill understanding about diversity in the country. The conceptions of Basotho are contested as they seemingly excludes minority groups and the museum has

a key role in helping with inclusion. The consultant working on the museum, Dijon in the LNM social narrative (2018) has rightly observed and concluded that there is no clear agreement among the Basotho and historians on the origin of the term ‘Basotho’. Overall, there seems to be a limited conception of Basotho in general meanwhile diversity is compromised in our exhibitions and construction of identity. This is a huge opportunity for a new museum.

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