

**THE PARADOX OF NATION-BUILDING AND COMMERCIALLY  
DRIVEN BROADCASTING: THE CASE OF LESOTHO  
TELEVISION**

**BY**

**MOLIKUOA TAU**

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## DECLARATION

I declare that this is my own work, except for the acknowledged supervision and referenced citations. It is being submitted for a Master of Arts (course work) degree in the Faculty of Human Sciences, at the University of Natal, Durban.

Molikuoa Tau

Signature:  -

Durban, 08 November, 2001

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## **ABSTRACT**

Nation-building has always been considered the responsibility of a public service broadcaster while, on the other hand, commercial broadcasters are associated with profit-making. This study was designed to investigate whether a commercially driven broadcasting venture could be used for the purposes of nation-building: The case of Lesotho Television.

Established by the Lesotho Government in partnership with M-net, Lesotho Television informs, educates and entertains, thus attempting to follow the tenets of public service broadcasting. Upon its establishment in 1988, Lesotho Television was mandated to contribute in the nation-building initiatives of the Lesotho leaders. The station, which is embedded within the South African based pay-channel M-Net, was expected to positively contribute in the Lesotho Government's endeavours to re-build the nation divided along political lines.

In the discussion I highlight the fact that Lesotho Television encounters some problems due to the paradoxical relationship between it and M-Net (The former aspiring to serve as a public service broadcaster while the latter is a commercial television service). Nevertheless, considering its programming and activities, Lesotho Television contributes in nation-building. Therefore, I conclude that the potential for Lesotho Television to inform, educate and entertain would seem to outweigh the limitations.

## GLOSSARY

### LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BCP	Basotholand Congress Party
BNP	Basotho National Party
CCV-TV	Contemporary Community Values Television
ECLA	Economic Commission for Latin America
LEC	Lesotho Evangelical Church
LLA	Lesotho Liberation Army
LNBS	Lesotho National Broadcasting Service
MISA	Media Institute of Southern Africa
NIEO	New International Economic Order
PSB	Public Service Broadcasting
RCC	Roman Catholic Church
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
TV	Television
ZANU (PF)	Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front
ZBC	Zimbabwean Broadcasting Corporation

## INTRODUCTION

This dissertation explores the case of Lesotho Television as an example of an African broadcaster in an emerging nation. Lesotho Television began broadcasting in 1988. Prompted by news of a Papal visit to that country, it involved a co-operate venture between the Lesotho Government and South African based pay-channel, M-Net. Lesotho Television is a regional breakaway in terms of news, information and entertainment, thus attempting to follow the normative tenets of public service broadcasting (PSB). The paradox referred to in the title is that this aspirant public service broadcaster is embedded within a commercial broadcasting venture thereby seeming to compromise the very principles<sup>1</sup> on which PSB is based (Raboy, 1996; McQuail, 1994; Teer-Tomaselli, 1998/99).

This work provides an investigation of whether a commercial broadcaster can be used for the purposes of nation-building, since the existing literature assumes that nation-building is the responsibility of a public service broadcaster (Raboy, 1996: 6; McQuail, 1994: 126-127; Teer-Tomaselli, 1998/99: 92-93). The research addresses the following problems and issues: given that the Lesotho Government did not have sufficient capital to produce its own television channel, what were the mechanisms for establishing Lesotho Television service in partnership with M-Net; the interconnections between public service broadcasting and national identity in newly independent states (i.e. why do poor countries find it necessary to spend resources on national broadcasting rather than other areas of social services); and what are the possible limitations to the project of nation-building in the light of the fact that M-Net is a commercially driven station. The question of the significance of the timing of television in Lesotho, given that it coincided with the visit of the Pope to that country is also considered in this work. That is, the relationship between an international event and national pride is dealt with in the discussion.

This dissertation is divided into five sections. The introduction is followed by section one, which presents the historical background of the study. The socio-political situation

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<sup>1</sup> Please see page 26 - Public Service Broadcasting - for further explanation.

of Lesotho in the 1970s and 1980s is discussed here. This discussion helps in facilitating an understanding as to why it was necessary for the Lesotho Government to work towards building their nation. The theoretical framework of this research will be presented in section two. The dependency/disassociation theory and the public service normative theory are discussed here. Section three is dedicated to the practical aspect of the study. The negotiations between the Lesotho Government and M-Net, which finally led to the introduction of the M-Net service in Lesotho with Lesotho Television as a regional breakaway, are presented here. The content of Lesotho Television is also examined in this section in terms of whether it contributes to nation-building. Finally, the conclusion provides a brief overview of what transpired in the discussion. It also assesses whether a commercial service can be used for purposes of nation building.

A qualitative study approach, that which engages in the “processes, contexts and meanings of communication” (Lindlof, 1995:xi) was adopted for this project. This is because case studies frequently rely on verbal information which necessarily takes account of these aspects (Leedy, 1993: 139). Much of the research was based on information obtained through structured face-to-face interviews with Lesotho Television station management. Related government documents were sought in order to provide details about how and why the station was launched. Newspapers, unpublished research papers, unpublished dissertations and books were referred to in the composition of this work.

## **1. SOCIO-POLITICAL BACKGROUND**

The kingdom of Lesotho is a tiny enclave within South Africa with a total area of 30 355 square km and a population of 1 900 000 (MISA, 2000:14). Historically, the country was a protectorate of Britain and only gained independence on October 4, 1966 when the Basotho National Party (BNP) was elected into office. Four years later, the country was plunged into chaos due to a fundamental disagreement between the then BNP government and the opposition party, the Basotho Congress Party (BCP), regarding the 1970 general elections results. The then Prime Minister, Leabua Jonathan, declared a

State of Emergency and suspended the constitution. This enabled the BNP government to remain in power, despite growing support for the BCP. This move was seemingly upheld and even propagated by certain internal and external dominant interests, embodied in a speech made by Moshoeshoe II:

The first post-independence general elections in 1970 were thwarted, election results nullified, and the entire constitution was suspended by way of a coup d'état backed up by the security forces and, sadly, by both internal and external dominant interests who did not wish to see a change of government and consequently a loss of economic and political influence and power. With the suspension of the constitution, I, as the Constitutional Monarch, also found myself a victim, and I was banished to the Netherlands in April 1970, till I was recalled in November of the same year (Morrison, 1995: 1).

The unstable political situation led to the murder and intimidation of many people in the 1970s and 1980s in a bid to silence those who protested against the self-imposed BNP government. Thousands of BCP members went into exile. Those who remained behind were forced either to remain silent or to join the BNP. The situation in Lesotho during this time was characterised by bloodshed (Khaketla, 1972: 262).

In order to maintain and identify their support base, the government practised the policy of divide and rule. People were divided along political and religious lines as churches such as the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) supported the BNP government, while others such as the Lesotho Evangelical church (LEC) supported the opposition. The civil service and the military service were all composed of people from the ruling party. All this was facilitated through the use of the BNP membership card that everybody had to produce for identity purposes.

Propaganda<sup>2</sup> was also used to ensure loyalty from their members. Radio Lesotho, was government owned, and was used by the BNP to legitimise their government (Bereng,

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<sup>2</sup> Central to the concept of propaganda that I would like to emphasise here is that “the purpose of propaganda is to promote a partisan or competitive cause in the best interest of the propagandist (in this case BNP) but not necessarily in the best interest of the recipient. The recipient, however, may believe that the communication is merely informative” (Jowett, G and O, Donnell 1986: 12).

2000: 10). The station enjoyed a monopoly status and broadcast throughout the country. Its content was dominated by government speeches especially after the news and during prime time. Following the banning of the alternative newspapers whose main tilt was anti-government, Radio Lesotho became very popular as the sole provider of information pertaining to governance. As all these incidents took place, the spirit of distrust and animosity prevailed within the nation. This undermined the homogeneous nature of the nation in terms of the overall culture and language spoken (MISA, 2000: 14). The fact that Sesotho was spoken by almost every citizen and that almost everyone cherished the same cultural symbols and values became immaterial. People began to define themselves along political and religious lines, as mentioned above.

The coup d'état of 1986 instigated by the Lesotho army was heralded by many people. BCP members and those members of the BNP who wanted peace and reconciliation were particularly supportive since, ironically, this was the supposed aim of the army. Surprisingly, while the army had been central to the suppression of the opposition (BCP) throughout the years of resistance, during the coup of 1986 they overthrew the very government they had been protecting. Realising the pressing need for a sense of national identity within the divided kingdom, the military regime committed themselves to the course of bringing harmony between the antagonistic factions.

The irony of an army actively promoting peace and reconciliation does not go unnoticed by this author. Particularly in the light of their previous role in the BNP dispensation during the 1970s and 1980s. However, they gained support from the Basotho people who were exhausted by the conflict and political manipulation. Politics was therefore perceived as the primary threat to national unity. Quoted in *Lesotho Today* (9 July, 1986: 9), the then head of the government Major General Metsing Lekhanya<sup>3</sup> warned the nation: "when politicians were fighting, the nation was one to suffer. The politicians failed to restore peace for the nation." The paper goes on to say:

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<sup>3</sup> Major General Lekhanya's military council was popularly referred to as The Big Five. These were Major General Metsing Lekhanya, Colonel Thaabe Letsie, Colonel Sekhobe Letsie, Colonel Khethang Mosoeunyane and Colonel Nkhahle Ts'otetsi. Lekhanya's council was forcefully removed by the army in

Major General Lekhanya added that there are many people who died and some were forced to separate with their families and leave their country because of politics. He further stated that the military is not thirsty for power but it is only interested in restoring peace for the nation, and if only the nation accept this, the army would hand over leadership to the civilians, which is an unusual thing in Africa, it is a sign that it wants peace.

In a related statement made by a member of the ruling military council, Colonel Phisoana Ramaema, peace and political stability are highlighted as the basis for development:

Lesotho will return to civilian rule when the nation is fully convinced that there is peace in the country. But the military will intervene again if there are elements bent on disturbing the peace. A member of the military council, Colonel Elias Phisoana Ramaema, told a *pitso* in Butha-Buthe last Friday that despite what power hungry politicians said, the military were not thirsty for power and had no wish to entrench themselves in government. The military knew and recognised that power rested with traditional chiefs. All they wished for was that there be true reconciliation, he said (*Lesotho Today*, 9 July 1986: 4).

Considering the above two quotations, the military government's intention to hand power over to the civilians seems dubious not to mention ambiguous. How "the nation" will be "fully convinced that there is peace in the country" (*Lesotho Today*, 9 July: 1986) in order to bring about democratic rule, is not discussed. Nevertheless, an attempt was made to bring about political stability and reconciliation since it was believed by the military regime that political stability and peace were necessary in order for the country to realise economic development.

Nation-building and national identity were high in the military government agenda with the introduction of television in Lesotho to facilitate national unity. Addressing Pope John Paul II during the Pontiff's visit to Lesotho in August 1988 speaking on the political and economic problems in Africa generally and Lesotho in particular, King Moshoeshoe II said:

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1991 due to their involvement in internal army conflicts. He was succeeded by Major General Phisoana Ramaema who took the nation to multi-party democracy in 1993.

In Lesotho, as well as anywhere else in Africa, all this [political and economic crisis] brings us a challenge of unprecedented proportion to our national integrity and sovereignty. It is a challenge to our African spiritual and moral values, to our sense of community and justice, to our African cultural, traditional, and more particularly, our Christian identity. The continuing failure of imported development strategies to meet even the most basic needs of millions of our people in our continent, has caused us to seek new definitions, to ask new questions about our African identity in crisis, and to ask questions about the integrity of a world socio-economic system which appears unable or unwilling to meet the basic needs of millions of its human members (Morrison, 1995: 50).

The fact that the king had lost confidence in imported development strategies, was conscious about African cultural and traditional identity and was concerned about meeting the basic needs of the Africans is very crucial here. In essence, he was advocating the disassociation of African states from the west as the latter tended to employ development strategies, which did not benefit the former (Melkote, 1991: 258). Coupled with the idea of nation-building, the disassociation mission (through nation-building) is argued here to be the driving force for the introduction of Lesotho Television.

The introduction of the Lesotho Television service in 1988, which is the focus of this research project, came about as an attempt for the Lesotho Government to build their nation while simultaneously striving for autonomy from the outside world, particularly South Africa<sup>4</sup>, which was then under the apartheid dispensation (1948 - 1994). Considering the fact that Lesotho is geographically surrounded by the Republic of South Africa, the former is politically and economically affected by the latter (Bereng, 2000: 4). It follows therefore that during apartheid, Lesotho nationals were subjected to the same racist conditions as the black South Africans whenever they crossed the border into South Africa which was necessary in order to reach any other country. One incident of many was highlighted by *Lesotho Weekly* (9 May 1977: 8):

A certain Mr. Molapo of Hleoheng in the Leribe district was slapped with his passport on the face by a white South African policeman at the

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<sup>4</sup> Though South Africa is not the subject of this work, its apartheid policy contributed to Lesotho's endeavours to build her nation and to strive for self-determination. As a country surrounded by South Africa, the Lesotho citizens were directly affected by the apartheid system.

Ficksburg border post on May 1. This was stated by Mr. C. Mofeli, leader of the United Democratic Party in the national assembly of Lesotho on Monday May 4. According to Mr. Mofeli, Mr. Molapo was going to Ficksburg and while waiting for his passport to be checked at the checkpoint, a white South African policeman called him, slapped him with his passport on the face and told him to go back to Lesotho. People here believe that this particular incident happened because of the hostile attitude of some of the white South Africans towards Lesotho citizens.

Extensive harassment and intimidation on the part of South African border officials against Lesotho nationals sometimes resulted in death as in the case of a 17 year old girl from Butha-Buthe district who was admitted to hospital after being shot by a white South African (*Lesotho Weekly*, 9 May 1977: 8).

These are some of the incidences that influenced not only Lesotho, but also the entire world, to de-link themselves from South Africa during the apartheid era. In an attempt to disassociate herself from the Republic, Lesotho had to strive for self-determination and nation-building. Addressing the Pope, Moshoeshe II stated:

If we are to understand and live our faith, in the midst of suffering and injustice, in the midst of domination, dependence, racism, oppression and greed, we have need of the church to join with us in our task of liberation. If faith is power through love, then, our path is clear; it is the way of the poor, the oppressed, the humiliated; it is the call to work with them for the witness of that faith (Morrison, 1995: 60).

Lesotho's concern with racism and the way Lesotho nationals and black South Africans were treated in South Africa, was not only raised at the national level between these two countries, but it ultimately became an international affair discussed at the global level. This is confirmed by *Lesotho Weekly* (1977:1).

It was reported from London early this week that Lesotho's foreign minister Mr. C.D. Molapo warned delegates at the Commonwealth that the solution to problems in Southern Africa lies in Pretoria, and that the Commonwealth should take a bold stand by putting questions of Southern Africa in proper perspective. He said South Africa should be placed on top of the agenda because the people of South Africa were not prepared to

wait for the liberation of Namibia and Zimbabwe before their own problems were tackled.

Consequently, Lesotho's attempt to disassociate herself from South Africa and to build her own nation did not occur in isolation from the international political situation. As stated above, the way the Basotho nationals were treated by white South Africans through the use of the apartheid system forced the former to take action against the latter. Over and above, the attitude of the international community towards South African politics also reinforced Lesotho's mission to disassociate herself from the Republic. The unwavering support that the outside world showed to Lesotho in her reaction against South Africa was reason enough for Lesotho to embark on her mission of de-linking and disassociating herself from apartheid South Africa. *Lesotho Weekly* (9 July, 1986: 2) highlights this:

The chairman of the Military Council and the Council of Ministers, Major General Metsing Lekhanya has expressed the hope that the international community will exercise its responsibility towards the smaller nations should South Africa implement its threat to take retaliatory measures against the neighbouring states in case of the imposition of universal economic sanctions against South Africa.

The newspaper goes further to indicate that while Lekhanya acknowledged the fact that Lesotho depended on South Africa for its link with the outside world because of its land locked geographical position, he nevertheless hoped that the international community would assist Lesotho in case South Africa exercised its revenge against Lesotho. He asserted that "South Africa does not only control roads and rail routes through which Lesotho transports goods but it also controls the air space" (*Lesotho Weekly*, 9 July 1986).

The spirit of self-determination and disassociation and the related issue of nation-building took precedence on the part of the Basotho leaders. Locally engineered development was considered as central to Lesotho's endeavours to be self-reliant from the Republic. The following section will involve a discussion dedicated to the theoretical aspect of this

work outlining related development theories from modernisation through dependency/disassociation to ‘Another Development’.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **The Modernisation Paradigm of Development**

Development theories concerning Third World<sup>5</sup> countries were first conceived in the 1950s in Europe (Kasongo, 1998:31; Kumar, 1994:77 and Melkote, 1991:20). Western researchers began to theorise on how best the ‘Third World’ could be developed to elevate them to the standard of developed nations in the west. ‘Development’ in this context was seen in terms of consumption levels, investments, savings, population growth, health and education (Kasongo, 1998: 31). It was believed by these theorists that ‘Third World’ countries had to follow the same development pattern as the west in order to become ‘developed’. Underlying the dominant modernisation paradigm was the assumption that ‘Third World’ nations were poor due to internal political, economic and sociological problems and that these problems had little or nothing to do with their relationship with the outside world. Culture<sup>6</sup> was identified as the primary overarching obstacle to development. Alvin (1990:33) highlights a number of points which the modernisation theorists believed to be pivotal to the process of development. Central to all these points is the assumption that societies begin with the primitive, simple, undifferentiated traditional stage and end with the advanced, complex, differentiated modern stage. This point is echoed by Burkey (1993:27) when he argues that modernisation and development are synonymous with capitalism and industrialisation:

The emergence of capitalism and the advance of the industrial revolution gave a distinctive form to western development thinking. Development

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<sup>5</sup> Although the term Third World was ascribed by western ‘so-called’ First World countries within a modernisation framework, to describe conditions of ‘underdevelopment’, the term here is purely descriptive, synonymous with the grouping of ‘developing nations’.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Culture’ refers to “the common, value based interpretations, artefacts, organisational forms and practices of a group of human beings related to a specific environment” (Casmir, 1991: 7). It is interesting to note (as is further discussed on page 22) that in the modernisation paradigm culture is identified as an obstacle to development, while within the disassociation paradigm it is seen as central to development.

and economic growth became synonymous with progress and higher levels of civilisation... Development in the Third World was expected to be an imitative process in which the less developed countries gradually assumed the qualities of the industrial nations (Burkey, 1993: 27).

Central to the modernisation paradigm of development is the role played by media in transmitting information from the source (the westerners) to the beneficiaries ('Third World' nationals). Keval Kumar (1994: 78) considers Daniel Lerner, Everett Rogers and Wilbur Schramm as perhaps the most influential advisers in the area of development and communication during the 1960s and 1970s. A key concept within the modernisation paradigm as concerned with the area of communication is Rogers' theory of the diffusion of innovations (in Kumar, 1994: 80). Kumar indicates that Rogers developed his concepts and theory of the diffusion of innovations from a synthesis of diffusion research studies in the United States, and in later editions, of diffusion studies in developing countries as well. Rogers defined innovation as "an idea perceived as new by the individual" (Kumar, 1994). Rogers, quoted by Kumar (1994:80) notes: "It really matters little as far as human behaviour is concerned, whether or not an idea is objectively new as measured by the amount of time elapsed since its first use or discovery. It is the newness of the idea to the individual that determines his reaction to it." The implication here is that Third World nationals were in some cases recipients of outdated ideas from the west since such ideas were justified by the westerners on the basis of their newness to the recipients.

Media were therefore used to transmit these "innovations" (Kumar, 1994) from the west to the poor countries and the flow of this information was top-down in character. That is, it was hierarchically imposed information that tended to encourage passivity on the part of the 'Third World' masses (White, 1990a). Not only was this dissemination of information problematic because of its top-down nature, but also, the information delivered was often insensitive to educational disparities and was therefore alienating. To give an idea of the language style used in the radio, Melkote (1991:258) refers to an

English translation of *Polam Panulu*, a Telugu broadcast to the farmers, 11 July 1993<sup>7</sup>.

This is a typical instruction to a farmer on how to protect his crop from a pest:

Bugs and gum insects which suck the sap from the leaves and green insects which eat the fruits cause damage to the green gram, black gram and other pulse crops. They should be observed and controlled. 25 percent Thiamosein or 30 percent Dimethoate at the rate of 750 millilitres or 620-750 millilitres of 25 percent Methyl dimesein should be mixed in 500 litres of water per hectare and sprayed on the crop to control the gum insects.... (Melkote, 1991: 258).

The fact that all chemicals in the above example are listed using their scientific names makes it almost impossible for an ordinary rural farmer to comprehend. Such broadcasts facilitated the failure of the modernisation paradigm of development in general and development communication in particular. Although there are many criticisms levelled against the modernisation paradigm a discussion of these is beyond the scope of this paper. However, the fact that the paradigm in question failed to address the development needs of Third World countries should be highlighted. As a result, some scholars such as Paul Baran (1957) (in Servaes, 1991:57) argued that development and underdevelopment had to be seen as an interrelated and continuous process, two aspects of a single global process.

### **Dependency/Disassociation and development**

Servaes (1995:41) states that at a theoretical level, the dependency/disassociation paradigm emerged from the convergence of two intellectual traditions: one called neo-Marxism or structuralism, and the other rooted in the extensive Latin American debate on development that ultimately formed the United Nations' Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA). Therefore in contrast to the modernisation theory, the dependency/disassociation perspective was rooted in Latin America. In Baran's view (in Servaes, 1995), continued imperialist dependency after the end of the colonial period was ensured essentially through the reproduction of socio-economic and political structures at

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<sup>7</sup> Although this date is relatively recent, the example given is very typical of the kinds of inappropriate

the periphery in accordance with the interests of the central powers. This is the main cause of the underdevelopment of the developing countries, since the main interest of western monopoly capitalism was to prevent or to slow down and to control the economic development of underdeveloped countries. According to Servaes (1995), Baran argues that the irrationality of the present system will not be overcome so long as its basis, the capitalist system, continues to exist.

The continued imperialist dependency, it is argued, was one of the key factors that influenced African leaders such as Julius Nyerere (1974), Kwame Nkrumah (1964), Leopold Senghor (1964) and others to advocate the return of African-style socialism. These theorists believed that African countries remain poor due to their dependent relationship with the western countries. They blame capitalism, colonialism, the slave trade, and other such oppressions brought by the west for what Africa is today. *Dependistas*<sup>8</sup> argue that while western countries might have been at the undeveloped stage (when a country is poor because it does not produce and this has nothing to do with its relationship with other countries), African countries on the other hand have been underdeveloped by the west. Self-reliance was considered to be paramount to the development of the 'Third World' since it would weaken their ties with the exploitative European countries. Servaes (1991:57) explains:

The dependency paradigm has influenced discussion on strategies both at a national and international level.... On the international level, *dependistas* argued that in order to remove the external obstacles, each peripheral country should strive for self-reliance and search for new allies within the framework of a New International Economic Order (NIEO). It was assumed that a more or less revolutionary political transformation would be necessary in order to achieve this goal.

It should be pointed out that the dependency theories also failed to address the problems faced by the less developed countries. Once more, this paper will not go into criticisms levelled against this paradigm. However, the paper will later deal specifically with disassociation theory and the notion of nation-building as one of its central components

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interventions occurring during the height of modernisation – the 1960s and 1970s.

<sup>8</sup> *Dependistas* is a term used to refer to dependency/disassociation theorists. These theorists advocate self-determination and disassociation of poor countries from the exploitative developed countries.

in order to lay a theoretical foundation for the research discussion. This paper will now consider 'Another Development' as an alternative to both the modernisation and the dependency/disassociation theories.

### **Another Development/Multiplicity**

As opposed to earlier development strategies' tendency to universalise, the priorities of the 1980s and the 1990s were more contextual in their relationship to the needs and problems of a country or community (Melkote, 1991). This was the view rearticulated by 'Another Development'.

Drag (1993:150) correctly points out that the strategies of the approach in question are normative, which implies that they relate to the understanding of what development should be and how it could be triggered. The focus on participation of the local community in areas such as planning and organising development projects, is an essential element in 'Another Development'. Different cultures are also to be looked upon as equal, not in the sense of "sameness," (Drag, 1993) but in the sense of having the same degree of importance. Underlying 'Another Development' approach is the assumption that there is no universal path to development, that development must be conceived as an integral, multidimensional and dialectic process which can differ from one society to another. It is assumed that there are no countries that function completely autonomously and that are completely self-sufficient; nor are there any nations whose development is exclusively determined by external factors. It is also assumed by proponents of 'Another Development' that every society is dependent (Kumar, 1994:86).

Servaes (1995:42) identifies six criteria essential to 'Another Development'. The discussion of these is crucial in that it serves to facilitate understanding of how 'Another Development' differs from the preceding, (though still existing) two paradigms. These criteria were first articulated by the Dag Hammarskjold Foundation in the 1980s in Sweden and the Green political movement in Germany.

- 1) **Basic needs:** The new focus in development was on satisfying the basic human, material and non-material needs of people such as sanitation, nutrition, shelter, health care, structural transformation, and participatory democracy.
- 2) **Endogeneity:** Development was understood as being constructed within a particular context, defined by a particular society. This point is supported by Melkote (1991:67) when he argues that development should be perceived as “stemming from the heart of each society, which defines its sovereignty, its values, and its vision of the future”. He writes further, “since development is not a linear process, there can be no universal model.”
- 3) **Self-reliance:** Each society is encouraged to rely primarily on its own strength and resources in terms of its members’ energies and its natural and cultural environment. Melkote (1991: 67) indicates that self-reliance clearly needs to be exercised at the national and international levels, but it acquires its full meaning only if rooted at the local level, in the praxis of each community.
- 4) **Ecology:** This involves the rational utilisation of the resources of the biosphere in full awareness of the potential of local ecosystems, as well as the global and outer limits imposed on present and future generations. This implies the equitable access to resources by all, and careful, socially relevant technologies.
- 5) **Participatory democracy as the true form of democracy:** Democracy is seen not merely as government ‘of the people and for the people’, but also, and more fundamentally, ‘by the people’ at all levels of society. In terms of public service broadcasting, television and radio waves are seen as public property. Television and radio are seen as essential for a democracy as the media provide a platform of debates and act as a watchdog. As a public service broadcaster, Lesotho Television is expected to contribute to the enhancement of Lesotho’s new democracy. It is expected to be the forum of national debates.

6) **Structural changes:** The necessity for structural changes was recognised more often than not in social relations, in economic activities and in their spatial distribution, as well as in their power structure. This would enable the realisation of the conditions of self-management and participation in decision-making by all those affected by it, from the rural or urban community to the world as a whole. For example, a major achievement of Julius Nyerere, the then president of Tanzania, was to involve people in development decision-making (Nyerere, 1974). Through the establishment of Ujamaa villages Tanzania achieved, to a great extent, decentralised and popular participation of the people in activities that were important and relevant to them.

In what he calls the beneficiary-driven development model, Emmanuel Kasongo (1998:36) clearly presents the steps through which a beneficiary community has to go in order to achieve its development goals. This model envisions the citizens of beneficiary communities acting collectively in the following key steps of the development process:

- 1) **Problem identification:** Collectively identifying and characterising what the problems are.
- 2) **Alternatives identification:** Discussing ways in which these problems can be tackled.
- 3) **Alternative adoption:** Choosing suitable approaches from among the ways discussed.
- 4) **Planning:** Laying out what steps are needed to carry out the tasks needed, and the anticipated time-scale.
- 5) **Implementation:** Acting collectively towards the desired change.
- 6) **Reflection and projection:** Meeting at the end of the planned intervention in order to evaluate and lay down further responsibilities.

Ideally, communities would elect leaders to preside at their meetings, spearhead the work, and encourage participation throughout the process. These leaders would serve as the link between their communities and the appropriate resource systems. As opposed to the externally driven development, where leaders are appointed by 'developers,' to ensure 'directed participation' by community members, in this approach leaders are

elected by the intended beneficiary 'citizens.' They would take part in all tasks and be regularly elected, since the model is based on participation rather than representation (Kasongo, 1998). Kasongo argues that in rural communities, there may be no need to elect leaders because effective traditional leadership structures already exist. He argues that not only does this ensure that communities are led in their development by people known to be suitable and committed, but also it legitimises the leadership and instils the sense of ownership of the development intervention or project. In this context media take a different form from the preceding two paradigms in that the masses actively participate in the dissemination of information that best addresses their developmental needs.

### **The Disassociation Theory and the notion of Nation-Building**

The paradigm of dependency and disassociation uses the logic of a political metaphor (White, 1990b: 1). Development is conceived as a strategy of mobilising and motivating a population, through a process of collective decision making, to form a nation. Nationhood is considered to be central to the development process. This is supported by Kohn when he comments: "the growth of nationalism is the process of integration of the masses of the people into a common political form. Nationalism therefore presupposes the existence, in fact or as an ideal, of a centralised form of government over a large and distinct territory" (Kohn, 1945:4). A nation is formed when dispersed communities, ethnic groups, or regions, define themselves as forming a single people with a common destiny. There may be different subcultures and languages among these people but this collectivity agrees to work toward a common destiny and common goals. They see themselves as building a common history in the future, a common myth, which may be constructed (usually after the fact) on certain common symbols and historical roots. In support of this, Benedict Anderson (1991: 9-10) gives an example of tombs of unknown soldiers. He argues that no more arresting emblems of the modern culture of nationalism exist than cenotaphs and tombs of unknown soldiers. The public ceremonial reverence accorded these monuments, precisely because they are either deliberately empty or no one knows who lives inside them, has no true precedents in earlier times. He indicates that to feel the force of this modernity one has to imagine the general reaction to the

busybody who ‘discovered’ the Unknown Soldier’s name or insisted on filling the cenotaph with some real bones. “Sacilege of a strange, contemporary kind! Yet void as these tombs are of identifiable mortal remains or immortal souls, they are nonetheless saturated with ghostly national imaginings” (Anderson 1991). Anderson suggests that this is why so many different nations have such tombs without feeling any need to specify the nationality of their absent occupants. He poses a question: “what else could they be but Germans, Americans, Argentinians” (Anderson, 1991: 10).

This historicist way of defining a nation is reflected in Teer-Tomaselli’s argument (1998/99: 95) that national mythologies devolve into a series of motifs or elements, and that they commonly follow a set pattern:

1. A myth of origins in time; i.e., When the community was ‘born’;
  2. A myth of origins in space; i.e., Where the community was ‘born’;
  3. A myth of ancestry; i.e., Who bore us, and how we descended from him/her;
  4. A myth of migration; i.e., Whether we wandered;
  5. A myth of liberation; i.e., How we were freed;
  6. A myth of the golden age; i.e., How we became great and heroic;
  7. A myth of decline; i.e., How we decayed and were conquered/exiled;
  8. A myth of rebirth; i.e., How we shall be restored to our former glory.
- (Teer-Tomaselli, 1998/99: 95).

An explanation is offered as to why this collectivity should work together to form a single nation in the future. Eventually, the people will, in the process of their common problem solving, develop common elements of culture or certain common cultural symbols in which all can recognise something of their identity. There may be different subcultures, based on different religious, ethnic, linguistic, artistic traditions, but through processes of cultural negotiation, these people evolve some common symbols that embody something of all of the subcultures (White, 1990b: 1). If these common symbols are lacking or if some subculture cannot recognise their identity in the common symbols, there will be eventual rebellion, subversion, breaking away to form a separate nation or mass migration. This explains why after independence (as indicated above) African leaders such as Julius Nyerere, Kwame Nkrumah and Leopold Senghor advocated a return to an old African way of living (African Socialism). Nyerere’s famous concept of

*Ujamaa*, which means familyhood, was meant for the then Tanganyikan people to consider their common history so as to shape together their common future and destiny. Although these African leaders used different concepts in an attempt to organise their people in what can best be understood as nation-building, the gist of their story was however the same. This is supported by Friedland and Rosberg (1964:4) when they argue that in the ferment of nationalist struggle in the 1950s many African leaders found themselves saying identical things in varying ways. Leopold Sengor's *Negritude* and Kwame Nkrumah's *African Personality* are indications of this search for continental identity. Friedland and Rosberg (1964: 4) elaborate:

It was in these circumstances that an African form of socialism began to emerge. The mythos of an African Socialism developed as political leaders sought a doctrine to replace the outmoded unifying influence of anticolonialism. Anticolonialism had been a powerful force for organising the African peoples during the pre-independence era. With independence there was the need to find new doctrines that would continue to unify the African population.

Although Friedland and Rosberg seem to understand the notion of African Socialism as though it was only concerned with uniting African nations at the continental level after independence, the concept meant a lot more than that. It could be applied at the national level to mobilise different groups and subcultures to negotiate their differences so that each group developed a sense of belonging in a particular country. Hence, the notion of *Ujamaa* was politically used by Nyerere to instil oneness in his people irrespective of difference.

In the paradigm of national disassociation, the protagonists are politicians united in a party with the intention of forming a state on the basis of the nation. In this paradigm the state is the instrument for carrying ahead the process of development and tries to meet the interests of the nation. The central dynamics of development in this paradigm involve the **“mobilisation of the people to form the nation-state, the formation of a people which has the will to command development, especially economic development”** (White: 1990b:1). The individualism and dispersion of the people – often a lingering sense of

attraction and loyalty to other advanced, metropolitan nations – is seen as a fundamental problem to be overcome. It is the role of the state to fashion a nation among other sovereign nations. Nyerere (1964: 246) drew a distinction between African socialism, Eastern socialism and capitalism in order to influence his people to return to their own traditional lifestyle different from that of the advanced nations:

‘Ujamaa’, then, or ‘familyhood’, describes our socialism. It is opposed to capitalism, which seeks to build a happy society on the basis of the exploitation of man by man; and it is equally opposed to doctrinaire socialism which seeks to build its happy society on a philosophy of inevitable conflict between man and man (Nyerere, 1964).

This statement is central to the notion of nation-building and disassociation in that not only does it encourage Tanganyikan citizens to live together as a family but it also identifies dangers that the citizens may encounter in case they adopt other nations’ lifestyle. This ties in with Tom Mboya’s (1964: 250) concern that copying western nations’ lifestyle threatens the very attempt made by African leaders to build their nations.

It appears to me that although Africa is getting rid of Western colonialism and is still fighting against its hangover, known as neo-colonialism, there is yet another fight to be waged – the fight against intellectual imperialism. This fight must be waged now, side by side with the fight for economic independence. It is because of this stark reality that I value the concept of African Socialism so much (Mboya, 1964).

Mboya goes further to define ‘African Socialism’ as those proved codes of conduct in the African societies, which have, over the years, conferred dignity on African people and afforded them security regardless of their station in life. The concept, according to Mboya (1964) refers to the universal charity which characterised African societies and the African’s thought processes and cosmological ideas, which regard man not as a social means but as an end and entity in the society.

Another imperative of the disassociation theory is the fact that self-determination becomes the central objective of development. A nation should always strive for

autonomy. Discussing self-determination, Ronen (1979:6) points out that self-determination is laid down as a right in various documents: as popular sovereignty in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, and people's right to self-determination in the Charter of the United Nations. It is variously defined and interpreted. Neither written words nor official interpretations, however, motivate people to seek self-determination; they are merely instrumental in spreading it. "When a political leader speaks of the right to self-determination for his people, he refers not to the legal term but to the idea of an inalienable right to freedom from 'them.' This idea lies at the root of the struggle" (Ronen 1979: 6).

Thus, the implication is that every nation must guarantee itself full freedom to discover its own 'genius' (White, 1990b: 7). This stems from the belief that every country has unique strengths and weaknesses and that it is through the identification and use of its strengths that the economic growth of that particular country can be realised. This usually involves limiting external influences and controlling the internal development of all institutions. It also implies that each country must develop its own industrial base and technical power so that it can trade competitively with others using its unique cultural and economic capital. A nation must have the freedom to explore its own unique advantages and to develop the integration of all of its institutions around its unique path in the world. Central to this, which will be discussed now, is the role played by mass media.

### **Disassociation and Media**

After independence many newly independent African states, including Lesotho, prioritised the introduction of their own television stations over other social services (Bourgault, 1995: 03). Lesotho Television was introduced as a post independence assertion timed to coincide with and to mark the occasion of the Pope's visit to Lesotho. Both these incidents were nation-building exercises. Disassociation requires nation-building and culture is central to disassociation. Culture refers to the common, value-based interpretations, artefacts, organisational forms and practices of a group of human beings related to a specific environment (Casmir, 1991: 7). These tend to be seen as the

best or even the only way of dealing with the challenges faced. They are more than individual experiences and interpretations. In effect, they depend on sharing, transmission and maintenance for the purpose of bringing a group of human beings together in specific efforts or enterprises, which are judged significant to the survival, maintenance, and continuity of a societal system (Casmir, 1991:7-8). This is the reason why a national broadcasting system was deemed important in Lesotho and other emerging African nations after independence. Media were perceived as playing a crucial role in disassociation endeavours in that they had to educate the masses in the national culture. White's statement (1990b:5) confirms this point:

All developing countries have ... discovered that political independence cannot be achieved or sustained without a certain level of economic independence, and political-economic independence can be sustained only with cultural independence, and cultural independence can exist only with the independence of the national communication or media system.

Nation-building within Lesotho requires local broadcasters, not foreign broadcasters such as the SABC. Leaders of contemporary political states rely upon consensus within their countries for their power. Thus, relying on foreign media implies the possible erosion of the consensus within countries. Considering the fact that the usefulness and potential power of the mass media to develop and maintain influence is widely recognised (Zaffiro, 2000: 20; Teer-Tomaselli, August 1999: 2-3), there is always the danger of the abuse of media by corrupt power-hungry leaders. Such leaders use mass media to counteract and deconstruct other internal political systems so that they remain in power (Casmir, 1991: 9).

On the other hand, the belief is that mass media act as a catalyst, which helps contemporary states to organise people in such a way as to accomplish development. They can be used to bring about human interaction for the purposes of development. In a culturally diverse environment, mass media have to accommodate minority as well as majority cultures for the purposes of development. This enables the minority and majority cultures to find a common ground and to learn to interact effectively. Nevertheless, "bitter civil wars, and even genocides throughout the world, have

demonstrated that the mere use of mass media does not bring about such positive evolutionary processes” (Casmir, 1991: 13).

Within the disassociation paradigm mass media are useful in the development of national pride, which in turn influences nation-building. Mass media and mediated communication serve the purposes of status enhancement, pride, and acquisition of financial resources. They can be used by states for their status and economic improvement. Mass media can help acculturate and socialise, but they always do so in accordance with a model, a theory, a perceived idea and a preassigned role because mass media are much more than technological accidents. They were, in effect, developed for a number of purposes, some self-seeking, as in the case of Lesotho, others humanitarian. That is why they tend to change cultural and social structures, even those which at first used them only because they were seen as necessary tools for development (Casmir, 1991: 15).

The introduction of television in Lesotho can be understood in line with the *dependistas* belief that development in the centre implies underdevelopment in the periphery. Reliance on media from more developed nations is perceived to be detrimental to the development of Lesotho as this encourages cultural imperialism. This is mainly because while modernisation scholars take the nation state as their main framework of reference, *dependistas* believe in a predominantly international level of analysis. They argue that the domination of the periphery by the centre occurs through a combination of power components, that is, the military, economics, politics, culture and others. Nowadays the cultural and communication components have come to be of greater importance in perpetuating dependency relationships due to the rather paradoxical situation that, as the Developing World begins to emancipate itself economically and politically, cultural domination increases (Servaes, 1991: 58).

It could be argued that in its nation-building attempt the Lesotho government was less effective by relying on the importation of foreign media. This is even more significant in light of the fact that the SABC was notoriously known for promoting national divisions

along colour and tribal lines. Hence, the introduction of television in Lesotho was seen as a priority to be gained at any cost. Describing the interrelationship between globalisation and localisation Tehranian and Tehranian (1995: 61) write:

Globalisation seems to be a dominant feature of the post-modern world. Indeed, the process of globalisation can be viewed at the same time as the processes of localisation. The global market is adapting to the local conditions while it employs them to gain competitive advantage. The global communication network is globalising local issues at the same pace that it localises global issues such as the environment, human rights, and population control.

The decision for Lesotho to break away from dependence on foreign media in the 1980s can be explained according to Tehranian and Tehranian's three waves of ethnonationalism that prevailed since the eighteenth century. They state that the first wave came with the rise of European nationalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries followed by a second wave of national liberation movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America in the twentieth century. The current, third wave of ethnonationalism is witnessing the rise of those ethnic and racial minorities who have been repressed by the nation states of two previous waves (Tehranian and Tehranian, 1995: 62). The post independence assertion of Lesotho, positions it in the third wave, as the country strives for self-determination. The introduction of television can be seen as the country's need for status embodied in Tehranian and Tehranian's argument (1995: 62) that during the Sixth Modernisation and Democratisation, two distinctly different types of ideologies and pathologies are simultaneously at work. These may be characterised as globalisation versus localism, and commodity fetishism versus identity fetishism. The global marketplace clearly favours the secular ideologies of progress that encourage an acquisitive society and competitive individuals. "Commodity fetishism, i.e. a desperate struggle to acquire the material symbols of modernity, seems to be therefore an intrinsic pathology of the modern world. Material poverty in the age of modernity is no longer a condition that can be borne with dignity" (Tehranian and Tehranian 1995: 62).

What is true of individuals is also true of small states. Since the dominant culture holds up material success as a sign of superior moral standards (Tehrani and Tehrani, 1995: 63), they also are incessantly reminded not only of their economic but also 'moral' failure. This leads to aggression and instability on the part of the small states often leading to crisis such as civil war. But when it finds a legitimate cause, it can be directed against the outside world as well. The regression to an earlier stage of dependency often leads to identity fetishism, a pathology that through collective identities, loyalties, and actions breeds a sense of false security in an uncertain and threatening world. Totalitarian ideologies such as fascism, communism, and fundamentalism thrive under such conditions (Tehrani and Tehrani, 1995: 63). It is in this light that the suspension of the parliament and the involvement in other forms of human rights violations characterising Lesotho in the 1970s and 1980s should be seen. In an attempt to correct the situation, the military regime recognised the significance of establishing a local television station with the hope that it would facilitate nation-building.

The above review necessitates the discussion of public service broadcasting since it is the function of public service broadcasters to build nations (McQuail, 1994: 126; Raboy, 1996: 6; Teer-Tomaselli, 1998/99: 92-93). Therefore the following section will examine the public service normative theory, looking in closer detail at public broadcasters as nation-builders.

### **Public Service Broadcasting**

The first time Public Service was used to describe broadcasting was in 1922 by an American broadcaster named David Sarnoff. He stated: "considered from its broadest aspect... broadcasting represents a job of entertaining, informing and educating the nation and therefore should be distinctly regarded as a public service"(McDonnell, J. 1991: 1). Nevertheless, while Sarnoff may have been the first to voice the concept, the first to give it its institutional form was Sir John Reith who served as the managing director of the British Broadcasting Company from 1923 to 1926. He was the first director general of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), his term being from

1927 to 1938 (Scannell, 1990:13) and consequently the BBC and its public service broadcasting policy was primarily developed along his lines (Raboy, 1996: 6). Since Reith's time, the BBC has always been considered the quintessential example for public service broadcasters including the SABC (Teer-Tomaselli and De Villiers, 1998:154) to follow. Despite contemporary challenges, it is this conception of the BBC as the quintessential example of a public broadcaster that its principles are today considered a guide for every public service broadcaster that is committed to delivering services efficiently and in the spirit of social responsibility.

Reith characterised public service broadcasting in terms of four elements: the rejection of commercialism; the extension of availability of programmes to everyone in the community; the establishment of unified control over broadcasting and the maintenance of high standards - "the provision of the best and the rejection of the hurtful" (Thompson, 1990: 255). These elements, according to Thompson, were embodied in the original organisational structure and practice of the BBC, which was conceived of by Reith who founded a tradition of public service and devotion to the public interest<sup>9</sup>. This perception of public service broadcasting is outlined more clearly by Raboy (1996: 6):

Universal accessibility (geographical); universal appeal (general tastes and interests); particular attention to minorities; contribution to sense of national identity and community; distance from vested interests; direct funding and universality of payment; competition in good programming rather than for numbers; and guidelines that liberate rather than restrict programme makers.

This describes public service broadcasting as perceived by Reith. The concept for those who wish to preserve a notion of the public sphere remains important for three main reasons: first, it has historically occupied an institutional space that has some independence from both the economy and the state; second, public broadcasting potentially provides a national arena for a diversity of social groups to communicate with

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<sup>9</sup> Public interest: "expresses the idea that expectations from, and claims against, the mass media on grounds of the wider and longer term good of society, can be legitimately expressed and may lead to constraints on the structure or activity of media. ...media should meet the needs of their audiences, but ethical,

one another; and third, it addresses the public as citizens rather than consumers (Stevenson, 1995: 63).

Reith's ambition to "uplift" the British nation, presumably to his level (Reith was a member of the elite class) was extremely paternalistic. Consequently, the position of the BBC as an efficient public service broadcaster is to some extent questionable. Stevenson explains:

Lord Reith...argued that public service broadcasting had a duty to educate and inform. However the defence of these norms became entangled within a cultural strategy that sought to impose an elite high culture on a diverse national community. Since Reith's time a multitude of excluded voices have criticised the BBC for imposing a certain version of Englishness upon the audience... (Stevenson, 1995: 62-63).

Even though such authors as Thompson (1990: 255-256) believe that during the early days of Reith the BBC was considered the best model of public broadcasting, it was, however, not long before it lost its "missionary zeal" (Thompson, 1990). This was partly because of the introduction of commercial television. This problem is not unique to the BBC but is a common challenge that all public service broadcasters are faced with today. Although some authors such as Raboy (1996: 6) come up with slightly extended public service broadcasting principles from the traditional Reithean ones, the central idea of what the functions of a public service broadcaster should be, remains the same. In the light of the contemporary media environment, the whole notion of public service broadcasting seems to be problematic. Media institutions do not function in isolation. They operate within a global and local socio-economic climate that impacts them – either directly or indirectly. They can be shaped either by the political situation of a country in which they operate, or its economic conditions. Raboy (1996: 7) outlines some of the problematics of the principles of public service broadcasting:

While some of the characteristics (e.g. accessibility) are straightforward enough, certain others (e.g. contribution to a sense of national identity) are

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ideological, political and legal considerations may also lead to much stronger definitions" (McQuail, 2000: 501).

highly problematic, insofar as in many states (including the British) the question of nationhood itself is not fully resolved. Distance from vested interests implies an ideal situation where the broadcasting institutions do not have their own vested interests. A notion such as good programming begs the question of taste, according to whom?

Raboy's concerns are borne out by the facts. The whole idea of public service broadcasting as conceived by Reith is both idealistic and simplistic (Raboy 1996). It tended/tends to overlook factors which challenge its principles. The very fact that the SABC was used to support and legitimate the apartheid regime (Teer-Tomaselli, August 1999: 2-3) at the expense of the majority of South African citizens is reason enough to justify the claim that public service broadcasting as understood by Reith can only work successfully in cases where there is total political stability, democracy and a high economic level. This claim is supported by Teer-Tomaselli and De Villiers (1998: 154) when they argue that the recommendations made by Reith on how best to improve the services of the SABC seemed not to apply to the South African situation:

The structure of the SABC was outlined in the broadcasting Act of 1936. The Act, based on the Charter of the BBC, assumed a consensus between English and Afrikaans speakers which in fact did not exist at the time. Clearly, Reith was unaware of the degree of conflict which existed between the two main European language groups, and the political tendencies they represented, not to mention the implications of excluding black audiences.

The above citation indicates the difficulties of implementing conventional public service broadcasting principles especially in Africa where there are always vested interests in broadcasting (Bourgault, 1995: 103). Realistically enough, Raboy (1996: 7) states that even broadcasters themselves do have vested interests. Discussing the issue of vested interests at the political level and referring to the Zimbabwean situation, Zaffiro (2000: 20) states that the Zimbabwean Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) has failed to live up to the post-independence promise of helping to make politics transparent by creating a public sphere in which every one could participate. "ZANU (PF) has done exactly what its pre-independence predecessor, the Rhodesian Front, did with broadcasting

conspicuously using radio and television as tools of government propaganda, uncritical news and views, and self-glorification” (Zaffiro, 2000: 20).

The second issue to clarify is that with the growing number of commercial broadcasting stations resulting from the liberalisation of broadcasting and the challenge imposed by the commercial stations on public broadcasters, the latter have shifted from their initial stance towards a more dynamic position. The commercialisation of the public sector has been the typical response to the ‘crisis’ of introducing competition into the markets that previously enjoyed a monopoly position. Expressing their concern on this issue, Barker and Minnie (2000: 9) write:

Faced with rising costs and decreasing government subsidy, or the stopping of subsidies altogether, the intensification of commercialisation has become an imperative for public broadcasters throughout the region. As public broadcasters develop increasing commercial imperatives, information and educational programming decreases.

The Lesotho Television problem is not conceptually different from the problems faced globally by all public service broadcasters: the increasing dependence on commercialism for their sustainability. Having to rely on a commercial station for the purposes of sustainability implies that Lesotho Television has to compromise some of its nation-building commitments. The reason is that as mentioned above, broadcasting is dynamic and not static.

### **Public Service Broadcasting and Nation-Building**

As mentioned previously, one of the responsibilities of a public service broadcaster is to build a nation (McQuail, 1994:126; Raboy, 1996: 6; Teer-Tomaselli, 1998/99: 92-93). Local content programming is central to nation-building. Locally produced entertainment, information and educational programming makes a vital contribution to democracy, nation-building and the development of a country (Teer-Tomaselli, 1998/99:96) By reflecting the culture of a nation, the public service broadcaster is

actually promoting social identity. It is showing how the nation is culturally different from others and the danger that the nation faces by copying other nations' cultures.

The history of a nation will always be emphasised by public broadcasters. As previously pointed out in the section on disassociation theory, public broadcasters will always emphasise the heroic acts of the founders of a nation and how they made the nation what it is today. Attempts are made to instil a sense of respect in the nation for these heroes<sup>10</sup>. These heroes are considered a symbol of unity that everyone in the society identifies himself/herself with. For example, by showing the cultural celebrations of the birthday of a founder of a nation, the public broadcaster is reminding the nation of the sacrifices made by this hero and also passing the message that such sacrifices should be considered for the purposes of national unity. In countries where the head of state is a monarch such as in Lesotho, traditional ceremonies that characterise the king's birthday are normally considered a national event with which every citizen associates himself/herself. Broadcasting such an occasion is a promotion of national identity and unity since the king symbolises unity and oneness of the nation. In a culturally diverse environment, a public service broadcaster should act as a powerful means of social unity, binding together groups, regions and classes through the live relaying of national events (Teer-Tomaselli, 1998/99: 93). This is best achieved when audiences with different cultures are subjected to a monopoly provider of a single service. One strategy through which television can be used to unite speakers of different languages from different cultural backgrounds is described by Mersham (1998: 207) in his discussion of South African broadcasting:

In January 1992 TV2, TV3 and TV4 were merged into a multicultural channel called CCV-TV (Contemporary Community Values Television). This reflected a radical departure from previous policy, which was based firmly on the language and ethnic differentiation of viewers.

According to Mersham (1998), CCV-TV's major policy objective was to broadcast programmes which would attract viewers from all cultural groupings. An increased English Language component in the 18:00-21:00 prime time slot, extensive use of

simulcast and subtitles to attract a variety of viewers, and black and white on-screen co-presenters and continuity announcers characterised the channel.

Diversity of opinion is also central to nation-building. Different groups and classes take part in a common public dialogue (Stevenson, 1995: 64). Public service broadcasters provide a shared domain for a pluralistic group of individuals to explore whether or not they have interests in common. By so doing everyone in the society develops a sense of belonging to that particular country. This in turn influences solidarity and unity on the part of the citizens.

Nevertheless, the concept of national identity and nation-building is not without its challenges. Raboy (1996: 4) describes the problematic nature of nation-building and national identity. He states that “identity today is increasingly multifaceted, and national identity is particularly contested issue in many countries, even among some of the politically stable.” Raboy correctly recognises the fact that there are internal pressures on public service broadcasting brought about by the fragmentation of traditional notions of nationhood. He therefore suggests that “if public service broadcasting is to speak to the real concerns of its public, it has to rethink its approach to one of its most cherished objectives: the cementing of national unity” (Raboy, 1996: 4).

Furthermore, Raboy (1996) draws a distinction between traditional public service broadcasting and modern public service broadcasting. According to him, traditionally, national public broadcasting systems were seen to be the main vehicles through which the national culture was sure to be reflected. Nevertheless, he acknowledges the fact that today public broadcasters have shifted from their initial stance due to globalisation. While traditionally public broadcasters were expected to represent the nation as opposed to the foreign, today they focus both locally and globally. Globalisation, coupled with commercialisation tend to influence public broadcasters to broaden their scope and be less concerned with the reflection of national culture. Realising the fact that globalisation

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<sup>10</sup> In Lesotho situation, the founder of the nation Moshoeshoe 1 and his warrior, Makoanyane are, amongst others, respected even today for having positively contributed in the building of the nation. They are the nation's heroes.

leads to cultural imperialism, which in turn poses a threat to national identity and nation-building, Raboy (1996: 5) calls for a new definition of public service broadcasting (suitable to a new public culture), global in scope and experienced locally.

Nevertheless, in a relatively homogeneous yet divided society such as Lesotho, public service broadcasters can still be expected to carry out their nation-building mandate the same way traditional national broadcasting systems did. This is because unlike established television services that broaden their scope to serve at a global level, due to its infancy, Lesotho Television aims at representing the locals and reflecting the Basotho culture as will be seen in the next section.

### **3. LESOTHO TELEVISION**

Lesotho Television was formed at the time when the then Lesotho military government was involved in the programme of building their nation while at the same time attempting to reduce their dependence on the outside world, particularly South Africa. As mentioned in the first section of this paper, the political situation prevailing in both Lesotho and South Africa during the 1970s and 1980s forced the Lesotho military regime to prioritise the unification of their nation. The introduction of television as a means of facilitating nation-building was seen as crucial. This was confirmed by the production Manager of Lesotho Television Lebohang Moqasa in an interview with this author (interview, October 2000). Moqasa indicated that Lesotho Television was intended to minimise the nation's dependence on foreign media. Responding to the question why M-Net was considered for partnership in the establishment of Lesotho Television, Moqasa stated that the state did not have enough money to form their own television without relying on external capital. M-Net's extensive reputation as an established service broadcasting throughout Africa influenced the military government to consider it for the establishment of their own television station. M-Net's commercial scheduling was considered an added advantage since there would be no clash of interests between the state in its endeavours to build the nation, on the one hand, and M-Net in its interest to sell their programmes, on the other (Moqasa, interview, October 2000).

The advantageous position of M-Net is evident in the proposal submitted for consideration by the Lesotho government (Ministry of Communications, Executive proposal, December 1987) where it is stipulated that “the M-Net part of the service will be pure entertainment. For example sport, series, magazine programmes and films and will not contain any news or political broadcasts”. On the other hand, Lesotho Television was to produce news, informational and entertainment programmes every day in a regular time slot, thus attempting to follow the tenets of public service broadcasting. By broadcasting entertainment programmes, Lesotho Television would not be competing with M-Net because the former is embedded within the latter. That is, viewers would not be able to watch M-Net because Lesotho Television would be accessed on M-Net channel as will later be discussed.

M-Net was also considered suitable because of its sophisticated encrypted technology that allowed it to scramble both the video and audio portions of the signal so that only those people who subscribed received the programmes. In Lesotho’s situation this was very crucial since Lesotho Television is embedded within M-Net’s service. M-Net’s sophisticated technology would enable it to switch to Lesotho Television every time the latter broadcast their programmes.

The network and facilities were arranged to be in operation by August 1988, timed to coincide with the visit of the Pope to Lesotho. In part, the intention was to avoid congestion in the capital city Maseru, as people came to see the Pope in large numbers. This is confirmed by the letter written by the then Chief Engineer of the Lesotho National Broadcasting Service (LNBS<sup>11</sup>) to the Managing Director of the Lesotho Telecommunications Corporation, which reads:

Initially there will be very few viewers in Mafeteng, Butha-Buthe and Leribe where we estimate 40, 25, and 100 respectively. We do not expect that there will be any M-Net subscribers except a handful within the first 12 months in these areas. LNBS is therefore providing these regional

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<sup>11</sup> LNBS refers to the ministry of Information and Broadcasting, currently known as the ministry of Communications. LNBS was responsible for the negotiations that led to the introduction of Lesotho Television in partnership with M-Net. Lesotho Television falls under the LNBS.

transmitters as a service to the community particularly with regard to the visit of His Holiness the Pope where all efforts must be made to limit the influx of people from the regions to Maseru in the interest of the country as a whole. (Ministry of Communications, Letter, December 1987).

The visit of the Pope was central to the introduction of television in Lesotho. The Pope came to Lesotho when South Africa was still under the apartheid dispensation and the international community was considering the imposition of economic sanctions on South Africa in a bid to stop it from continuing with its oppressive legacy. Thus, the Pope's visit to Lesotho, instead of South Africa, was in part a political statement against the apartheid regime, in which solidarity and support for Lesotho's efforts to disassociate itself from its racist neighbour was shown. However, the visit also coincided with the Lesotho military regime's endeavours to reconcile antagonistic political factions in the building of a nation. The Papal visit was perceived as a rare opportunity to mark the beginning of a new united Lesotho. Introducing television at this time would reinforce the spirit of nation-building and disassociation from the Republic. The nation-building aspect of the Pope's visit is embodied in a speech made by the king of Lesotho, Moshoeshe II, to the Pope. He says:

Your Holiness, we celebrate your visit, to our nation, by coming to our most sacred place, Thaba-Bosiu – the symbol of the birth of our nation and the centre of our cultural, spiritual traditions, and of our heritage, as well as the beginning of our Christian faith. But the story must not end there. We are looking to celebrate your visit, not only in terms of the past, but also as real opportunity for spiritual, cultural, and moral re-birth and renewal for Lesotho (Morrison, 1995:60).

Thaba-Bosiu is the place where the founder of the Basotho Nation King Moshoeshe I built his kingdom by bringing together different tribes to form a nation. People from different tribes who ran away from tribal wars seeking political asylum were welcomed here as part of the Basotho nation. This was the fortress of Moshoeshe I where he protected his people from their enemies. All the kings of Lesotho get buried here even today. The place is considered sacred and such ceremonial functions as praying for rain are held here. Taking the Pope here had positive political implications. It was a demonstration of a thirst for national unity. Since in the past Thaba-Bosiu was used as a

fortress, owing to its geographical nature (flat mountain top), taking the Pope here could also be seen as a desire for self-determination and self-reliance. The message passed by the military government was that if their forefathers had been able to defend themselves from their enemies, isolated from other nations, they too could follow suit; hence the 're-birth' aspect of the speech quoted above. Addressing the question of unity as a basis for economic advancement and self-determination, Moshoeshe II said:

Here, in Lesotho, we realise that we must unite to confront our own economic and social disorders and imbalances – to meet the needs of those of our own people who suffer from any form of degradation, deprivation, disadvantage, and marginalisation. We must work harder, together, for a just, self-reliant, dignified Lesotho; and for this, we will need the undivided support of the church. We must not only seek to re-read and re-evaluate our spiritual culture and history, but we must re-make it together. (Morrison, 1995: 59).

Asked about the timing of the introduction of television in Lesotho, given that it coincided with the visit of the Pope to that country, the Studio Engineer and former Acting Controller of Lesotho Television, Dyke Sehloho (Interview, December 2000), confirmed that the Papal visit was central to the military government's initiatives to build their nation after a long period of political turmoil prevalent in that country. Sehloho stated that the visit could be considered as the Catholic Church's response to the international calls to isolate South Africa as a sign that the world did not accept its racist self-imposed minority government. By visiting Lesotho instead of its bigger neighbour, the Pope was making his position clear about the politics of these two countries.

Although the Pope used South Africa as a transit to Lesotho owing to the geographical situation of these countries, he did not kiss South African soil. His visit was a source of national pride on the part of the Lesotho citizens. Therefore with national identity so high on the political agenda it seemed unwise for the Basotho nation to rely on foreign media, particularly the government controlled South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), for the coverage of events pertaining to the Papal visit (Sehloho, personal interview, December 2000). Sehloho stated that, in addition to the points mentioned earlier in this section, M-Net was considered for the introduction of Lesotho Television partly because

it was never known (at least to the Lesotho military government) as facilitating racism regardless of the fact that it was also based in South Africa. This could be because of its commercial nature coupled with its independence from direct government control.

M-Net's position as an established commercially driven venture was also advantageous given the fact that the introduction of television in Lesotho had to be an overnight activity. In an interview with this author, Moqasa (Production Manager, October 2000) stated that the idea to have television in Lesotho came unexpectedly and at short notice. He said only a commercial television station of M-Net's calibre would be able to operate a television station in such a short period of time. This is true considering the fact that M-Net had to put up a transmitter network, estimated at a capital cost of R 948 000, and form a new Lesotho based company called Lesotho M-Net (Pty) Ltd, 50% owned by the Lesotho government and another 50% by M-Net (Ministry of Communications, executive proposal, December 1987).

The M-Net transmitter network covered Maseru and other main population centres and capital cost amounted to R 246 000 and R 702 000 respectively. M-Net was also commissioned to assist in setting up a television facility and studio for the production of news, information and educational programming by Lesotho Television. The capital cost of setting up this facility was expected to be approximately R 700 000 if budgets were well controlled. This cost was for the account of LNBS (Lesotho National Broadcasting Service) (Ministry of Communications, proposal, December 1987).

The overnight nature of the introduction of a television service in Lesotho is evident in that some of the agreements between M-Net and LNBS were either oral or written later when such agreements were already in practice. In a personal interview (Interview, October 2000), the Acting Chief Engineer of the Ministry of Communications Basia Maraisane said some of the agreements or meetings they had with M-Net representatives were so informal that resolutions were made orally or put on paper at a later date. For example, it is written in the new agreement (February 2000) that:

The original agreement lapsed at midnight on 17<sup>th</sup> August 1988. Whereupon the parties concluded an oral agreement governing the rights and obligations of the parties pursuant to such lapsing. This agreement embodies the terms of the said oral agreement and supersedes and novates such oral agreement (Ministry of Communications, Agreement, February 2000).

The steps that led to the introduction of television in Lesotho can be divided into three: the proposal, the agreement and the implementation. The proposal stage can be traced as far back as 1987 when the then Ministry of Information and Broadcasting of the Kingdom of Lesotho in partnership with M-Net submitted a proposal to be considered by the Lesotho Government for implementation. This proposal was never subjected to parliamentary debates, but was approved by the Lesotho government. Moqasa gave two reasons for this (Production Manager, Interview, October 2000): first, the consultations between LNBS and M-Net for the establishment of television in Lesotho took place at a time when Lesotho was under the military rule and therefore there was no parliament in place; second, as mentioned above, the idea to have television came as a surprise and therefore all the arrangements had to be made quickly.

According to the proposal (December 1987) the establishment of a television station in Lesotho was to be effected in the most cost efficient manner. The basic recommendation was that the regular M-Net service be relayed to Lesotho. This would then be interrupted at a suitable time to allow LNBS to provide 30 minutes of news, informational and educational programmes everyday in a regular time slot. The proposal stipulates that 14 hours per week of the M-Net service was to be broadcast for free and the rest of the broadcast would be encoded. This means that people would be able to access 'clear' broadcasts free of charge and then have to pay for the subscription sections of the service. The proposed schedule would result in a 'clear' broadcast of up to 20 hours per week which included the services of LNBS, as well as 50 hours plus of encoded transmissions. As mentioned earlier, the M-Net part of the service would be pure entertainment and would not contain any news or political broadcasts.

The proposal (Ministry of Communications, Executive Proposal, December 1987) also suggests that the formation of Lesotho M-Net (Pty) Ltd would be central to the operation of television services and that the company would operate along the following parameters:

- The company would raise sufficient loans to put up the transmitter network and to operate it;
- The company would compensate M-Net for programming provided on a per subscriber basis;
- The company would install and service decoders administering all subscribers with the help of the M-Net computer;
- The company would each day relay up to 60 minutes of programming provided by LNBS at no cost and;
- The company should cover the cost of M-Net programming, interest and loan repayments of the transmitter network and the running cost by the subscription income.

It is obvious from the contents of the proposal that M-Net, as a commercially driven venture, agreed to go into partnership with the Lesotho Government for commercial purposes. Although, initially, M-Net would not expect to make a lot of profit, as demonstrated by the letter from the LNBS Chief Engineer quoted earlier in this discussion, it was however obvious that there were business opportunities in Lesotho. This was confirmed by the Studio Engineer and Former Acting Controller of Lesotho Television, Dyke Sehloho (personal interview, October 2000). Sehloho stated that M-Net had always been interested in acquiring a broadcasting license for Lesotho prior to the beginning of the M-Net/LNBS negotiations. The monopoly status of M-Net in Lesotho, would make business viable on its part. Although there was signal spill-over from the South African Broadcasting Corporation, possessing the license to broadcast in Lesotho would enable M-Net to establish a transmitter network in Lesotho, which in turn would make it possible for the M-Net service to reach many population centres in the country. Thus, it was stipulated in the proposal (Ministry of Communications, Executive proposal,

December 1987) that “subscription income of R 29 per subscriber will cover most of the cost of Lesotho M-Net (Pty) Ltd and will break even when a base of 2500 subscribers is reached”.

After the Lesotho government’s approval of the proposal discussed above, the government, represented by LNBS, signed an agreement with M-Net on the 17th August 1988. This written agreement seems to have been overdue since it is stipulated on page 6 that:

The television service shall commence on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1988. If at that date the LNBS programmes are not yet ready for transmission then M-Net may use the time which would otherwise have been available for the transmission of the LNBS programmes for the transmission of such other programmes as it deems fit. This agreement shall endure until 31<sup>st</sup> July 1998. By not later than 1<sup>st</sup> August 1998, representatives shall meet to review the extension of this agreement until 31<sup>st</sup> July 2008 (Ministry of Communications, Agreement, August 1988)

It is also mentioned in the agreement that the proposed television service in Lesotho would consist of clear transmissions of not less than two hours per day in addition to further encoded transmissions of not less than 50 hours per week. The transmission would consist of both M-Net and LNBS programmes. Also important, was that the parties concerned would use their best endeavours to ensure that the television service would not transmit any programmes which would be inimical to the interests and policies of the government of the Kingdom of Lesotho. This ties in with the previous discussion on the perceived advantages for the Lesotho government in considering M-Net for the introduction of television in Lesotho due to its commercially driven nature. M-Net and LNBS agreed that clear transmission might take place between 17h00 and 21h00 everyday. However, it was decided that at the commencement of the television service the clear transmissions would take place daily between 17h00 and 19h00.

The LNBS programmes would be prepared, produced or acquired at their cost and would be made available to M-Net for transmission free of charge. The LNBS programmes would only be transmitted during the daily clear transmissions, between 17h00 and

21h00. Initially the LNBS programmes would be transmitted everyday between 17h30 and 18h00. If ever M-Net decided to change the transmission times of the LNBS programmes, then it would give LNBS ninety days prior written notice of any proposed change. It is clear from the agreement that M-Net had more power than LNBS in determining broadcasting in Lesotho. Although there was a fixed slot for LNBS programming within the M-Net's service, what is surprising is that M-Net had the power to change transmission as long as they informed LNBS in advance. According to the agreement (August 1988) the LNBS schedule would be as follows:

- 1<sup>st</sup> August 1988 to 31<sup>st</sup> July 1990, the LNBS programmes may not exceed 30 minutes per day;
- 1<sup>st</sup> August 1990 to 31<sup>st</sup> July 1995, the LNBS programmes may not exceed 60 minutes per day;
- 1<sup>st</sup> August 1995 to 31<sup>st</sup> July 1998, the LNBS programmes may not exceed 120 minutes per day (Ministry of Communications, Agreement, August 1988).

In addition to this, it was agreed that from 1<sup>st</sup> August 1988 to 31<sup>st</sup> July 1998, LNBS might, on Saturday afternoon between 15h00 and 17h00 transmit LNBS programmes in the clear during the time set aside for encoded transmissions (encoded time). If ever need arose to change the clear transmission hours, the times for transmission of LNBS programmes in the clear during encoded time might be revised at the discretion of M-Net, provided that such revised times would immediately precede or follow clear transmission.

The issue of language was seriously considered in the agreement. The LNBS had earlier expressed their concern on the use of language on the M-Net programmes. In the letter from the Chief Engineer dated 28<sup>th</sup> January 1988, M-Net is asked to guarantee in writing that there would always be English language on the programmes at all times and that Afrikaans would never be used as an alternative to English. As a response to this, M-Net in the August 1988 agreement committed themselves to provide all transmissions with an English soundtrack and that whenever M-Net failed to do so, they would offer the transmission time to the LNBS for any LNBS programme and LNBS would be informed

about this well in advance. In consideration of LNBS providing the microwave links free of charge, M-Net would transmit LNBS programmes free of charge for LNBS.

On the other hand, LNBS would retain for its own account any advertising revenue arising from advertisements broadcast during the transmission of the LNBS programmes; any sponsorships which LNBS acquired in respect of the LNBS programmes; and any television license fees which it might collect from inhabitants of Lesotho.

The implementation stage came as a result of the first two steps discussed above. Television in Lesotho was introduced and served in line with the agreement signed by LNBS and M-Net representatives. Lesotho Television is embedded within M-Net and presently broadcasts for one hour daily. Its programming comprises news, current affairs, sports, documentaries, health issues, agricultural issues, Basotho cultural issues, both local and international music in its brief time slot. It informs, educates and entertains, attempting to follow the tenets of a public service broadcaster.

### **Lesotho Television as nation-builder**

The first significant nation-building coverage by Lesotho Television were the events pertaining to the Papal visit in August 1988. As previously discussed, the coverage was meant to unite the Basotho nation while at the same time reducing the dependence of the nation on foreign media. The fact that as a Catholic the Pope could be perceived as representing the Catholic Basotho does not go unnoticed by this author. However, Basotho as a Christian nation considered him as a symbol of holiness and seemed not to associate him with internal Lesotho political problems. The coverage promoted national pride on the part of Basotho citizens who for the first time witnessed local presenters dealing with local events on television. As previously discussed, showing the place where the Basotho nation was built (Thaba-Bosiu) had positive political implications for the project of nation-building. It influenced people to reconsider their stance in terms of the way they related to one another in their communities, drawing attention to the history of the Basotho people as diverse but united in strength against a common enemy. This is because historically, in order for the great Basotho to succeed in building a nation, they

had to be united and fight their enemies together. Today Thaba-Bosiu symbolises unity. Christianity was also first introduced in Lesotho at Thaba-Bosiu. At the time it started, Christianity was considered by the Basotho people as a uniting force since it preached living together in peace and harmony. By covering the visit of the Pope and the nation-building speeches made by the leaders, Lesotho Television contributed to the nation-building endeavours of the leaders.

Apart from covering the Papal visit, Lesotho Television has on numerous occasions covered nation-building events. For example, in 1997 the station broadcast live the coronation of King Letsie III – an occasion that was witnessed by government and heads of state from all over the world and was followed not long after by the coverage of the king's wedding ceremony. The nation-building aspect of these two events should be seen against the background that traditionally a king is perceived as a symbol of unity. Being a traditional society, Basotho perceive the king to be the 'father' of the nation who will always intervene in times of political instability. This stems from the belief that ideally a monarch should always be politically neutral; therefore citizens recognise the king irrespective of their political and religious inclinations. Broadcasting these events can be viewed as nation-building exercises. At the end of every year the king is allocated a slot in the Lesotho Television schedule where he makes the end-of-year statement highlighting some of the significant incidents that took place during the year, and also wishing his subjects a happy New Year. While Lesotho Television is not covered by detailed audience surveys, anecdotal evidence suggests that the annual address by the king is keenly watched.

Apart from covering the events pertaining to the king's life and the nation-building speeches made by the leaders, Lesotho Television's programming can be conceptualised to some extent as that of a nation-builder. Besides some news items usually read as copy stories from certain international news agencies such as Reuters, and some music by foreign musicians, Lesotho Television's content is local in character. The content reflects the life of the Basotho nation. This is evident in the traditional music shows broadcast on Lesotho Television from time to time, which serve to educate the nationals about the Basotho culture, particularly traditional Basotho music, and to demonstrate the difference

between the Basotho lifestyle and other cultures. The programmes serve to influence the nation to appreciate their own culture.

The church service broadcast every Sunday is crucial especially when viewed against the background that Basotho are a religious nation. Upon their arrival in Lesotho in 1833, the western missionaries preached living in peace and harmony. Church services are therefore intended to unite the nation. The traditional Basotho lifestyle, featured on television timeously, is intended to influence the nation to stick to their traditional way of life namely living together harmoniously. Individualism is discouraged since it poses a threat to the national identity. The charity shows for the needy broadcast on Lesotho Television are intended to promote generosity amongst the nation. This should be seen in the light of the fact that traditionally the Basotho people have helped the needy as a way of bridging the gap between the have and the have nots. This was also a contributing factor in matters of nation-building. The agricultural shows, captured by the Lesotho Television camera, are important in that they provide a source of education for the nation about the necessity of self-determination and self-reliance. The messages conveyed in these programmes are aimed at persuading farmers to produce their own food and not to expect donations from other countries. The current affairs programmes are dominated by development related issues such as tree planting occasions during which many nationals come together with the aim of controlling soil erosion or planting trees for other future benefits. The self-help development programmes and community development projects aimed at educating and informing the people as to how they can be more self-reliant in an attempt to rectify poverty, are also common on Lesotho Television. In fact, the celebrations marking the birthday of Moshoeshoe I, founder of the Basotho nation, are characterised by, amongst other things, tree planting at different areas of the country. The planting of trees is not only meant for ceremonial purposes but is also meant to assist in the developmental endeavours of the concerned communities. Given the fact that Moshoeshoe I is considered a hero even today, in line with what Teer-Tomaselli (1998/99: 95) calls “a myth of ancestry,” by broadcasting events pertaining to the celebration of his birthday, Lesotho Television is contributing to national identity and thus disassociation. Whether these programmes are successful in their persuasive efforts

is a question beyond the scope of the dissertation, which is focused on the rationale behind Lesotho Television services.

Lesotho Television's broadcasting of sport, particularly soccer (for both men and women), cannot be underestimated in matters of nation-building. Because of the small audience size, it is unlikely that these matches would be broadcast had it not been for the establishment of Lesotho Television. This is even more so when the station covers international games in which a Lesotho national team is a participant. The spirit of nationhood normally prevails during such occasions. This was evident in the recent soccer game between the Lesotho national team *Likoena* and their South African counterparts *Bafana-Bafana* where *Likoena* was victorious with the score of 1 – 0. Basotho were proud of their team which in turn had a positive influence on the spirit of national identity.

Despite the fact that Lesotho Television does contribute to national identity, there are some factors that hamper this mission. The main factor is that the station is embedded within a commercial broadcaster and is therefore affected by the way the latter operates. While the reasons to consider M-Net, a commercial broadcaster, for the introduction of television in Lesotho were sound, as previously discussed, there were problems. M-Net's transmitter network was limited to the main population centres in Lesotho such as Maseru, the capital, Mafeteng, Maputsoe, Hlotse and Butha-Buthe (Sehloho, Studio Engineer and former Controller of Television, Personal interview, October 2000). This was basically because M-Net, as a commercially driven venture, was interested in serving large numbers of audiences so that it could sell decoders. Lesotho Television's attempts to build the nation were not M-Net's number one priority. This was confirmed by the fact that according to a letter from the senior engineer, Ministry of Communications, Basia Maraisane, dated July 06 1999 and addressed to the Minister of Communications, M-Net eventually lost interest in running a transmitter network carrying signal to areas outside Maseru due to commercial reasons. The letter stipulates that:

The ownership of television transmitter network outside Maseru, at Mafeteng, Maputsoe, Hlotse and Butha-Buthe will now fall in the hands of Ministry of Communications, making it possible for the first time for LTV, to be able to broadcast for 24 hours in the regions. These transmitters have already been installed and are now operational. (Ministry of Communications, Letter, July 06 1999).

M-Net's loss of interest in running the transmitter network outside Maseru was also motivated by the fact that they had introduced the satellite delivered 'DStv' service, thus making their programming available in remote areas. The irony here is that while M-Net could transmit their programmes to the remote areas of Lesotho for commercial purposes, Lesotho Television could not because they relied on a terrestrial transmitter network for transmitting their programmes. This in turn had serious implications on the Lesotho government's initiatives to build a nation. It means that the nation-building programming broadcast by Lesotho Television is accessible to only a very small proportion of the population. As a result, the programming has little impact on nation-building. It also means that those who have a satellite dish can not access Lesotho Television programmes but instead have a whole range of programmes offered by M-Net. This is a threat to nation-building since some programmes promoting foreign cultures are transmitted to Lesotho. Instead of watching a monopoly provider of a single service, characteristic of public service broadcasting, people are free to watch any television channel of their choice thus minimising the influence that the Lesotho Television might have on the viewers. This is true considering that some foreign television channels offer high quality programmes compared to the locally produced ones.

## **CONCLUSION**

The introduction of television in Lesotho needs to be understood against the socio-political background within which Basotho as an emerging nation exists. After independence many African states, including Lesotho, prioritised the introduction of their own television stations because they perceived television as central to the development and thus economic growth of a country. Ownership and control of a television station would also impact on the possibility of nation-building within societies that had been torn

apart by the colonial legacy with its policy of divide and rule. A television station was perceived as a means of postcolonial assertion by many African states such as Lesotho. The dependency/disassociation spirit through which African leaders perceived development in terms of de-linking African countries from the exploitative western countries was reason enough to influence the former to establish their own television stations as a way of reducing dependence on foreign media (White, 1994).

In Lesotho the introduction of television was motivated by some other factors unique to the mountain kingdom. The wars between the BNP government security forces and the LLA, coupled with poor BNP governance that discriminated against whoever opposed the government, created animosity amongst the Basotho nation in the 1970s and 1980s. The nation was defined along political and denominational lines that divided the nation. The nation was no longer unified as it used to be during the reign of Moshoeshoe I, founder of the nation. This political situation coincided with the apartheid rule in South Africa whereby Basotho were on numerous occasions victimised by the white South Africans on the basis of colour (*Lesotho Weekly*, 9 May 1997: 8). The differing policies between the two governments regarding apartheid worsened the relations between these two countries. As a result, the political leaders in Lesotho attempted to disassociate themselves from the Republic – which geographically surrounded them. This was particularly evident when the military government came into office in 1986. They preached reconciliation, peace and national unity between the antagonistic political factions in Lesotho since these were perceived as the basis for disassociation. It was through the spirit of nationhood and self-determination that Basotho would reach a consensus of de-linking themselves from the Republic.

Media, particularly the introduction of a local television station, was perceived by the military regime as paramount to their nation-building endeavours. Lesotho Television was intended to minimise the nation's dependence on foreign media (MacBride, 1980). The timing for the launch of Lesotho Television was politically significant. It was to coincide with the Papal visit to that country, thus reinforcing the Lesotho government's initiatives to build their nation while at the same time disassociating themselves from the

racist Republic. The visit by deliberately excluding the Republic of South Africa, could be seen as the Roman Catholic Church's statement against the apartheid system in South Africa while at the same time contributing to Basotho's efforts of promoting their national identity.

M-Net was considered for partnership in the introduction of television in Lesotho for various reasons. Its reputation as a commercial service broadcasting throughout Africa influenced the military government to consider it for the introduction of Lesotho Television. M-Net's commercial scheduling was an added advantage since there would be no clash of interests between the state in its initiatives to build the nation and M-Net in their interest to sell their programmes. M-Net's sophisticated encrypted technology, that enabled it to scramble the signal to allow only those people who subscribed to receive M-Net's programmes, also contributed to its consideration by the military regime. The Lesotho Television portion of the broadcast was 'open' or unencrypted. This allowed anyone in Lesotho with access to a television to receive these broadcasts. Since the introduction of television in Lesotho was an overnight decision, only an established private commercial station like M-Net could be able to establish a transmitter network carrying both M-Net and Lesotho Television's signal in such a short period of time. Due to financial constraints the Lesotho Government had to rely on foreign capital. Ironically, in order to aid disassociation from the Republic, Lesotho actually became dependent on a South African pay channel to facilitate this political ambition of nation-building. However, M-Net's position as a private company outside the control of the South African government was another point to consider in the establishment of television in Lesotho.

Lesotho Television has contributed to the nation-building endeavours of the leaders - though with limited success. The main problem has been that the station is embedded within a commercial broadcaster and is therefore affected by the way the latter operates. This is because as a commercially driven venture, M-Net is interested in serving large audiences to whom it can sell decoders. Its transmitter network is limited to the main population centres in Lesotho and does not cover the whole country. This implies that

Lesotho Television is only accessible to a very small portion of the population, a factor that impacts negatively on the Lesotho government's initiatives to build a nation.

The M-Net/Lesotho Television unbalanced broadcasting situation was aggravated by M-Net's introduction of a satellite dish, which enabled people to access a whole range of channels as long as they possessed the dish. Satellite technology created a situation where Lesotho Television has to compete for audiences, which weakens attempts for national unity and identity especially if Lesotho Television fails to win the majority of the audiences. Having access to foreign channels means being exposed to different foreign cultures, which the Lesotho citizens consume. The global nature of television broadcasting reduces the impact that Lesotho Television might have if it was a monopoly provider of a single service characteristic of public service broadcasting. Multi-channel broadcasting contradicts the thinking behind the disassociation paradigm, which influenced the establishment of Lesotho Television in the first place.

Financial constraints often necessitate the compromising of principles – this is the nature of normative aspirations. Thus, having to ride the back of commercialism in order to introduce public service television (at least at the fledging stage) may seem paradoxical, and far from ideal; but I would argue the ends justify the means. Problems notwithstanding, the potential for Lesotho Television to inform, educate and entertain would seem to outweigh the limitations.

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