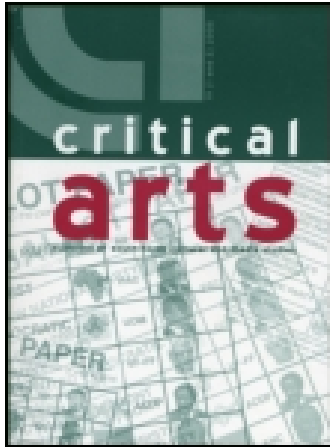


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Report of the Arts and Culture Task Group presented to the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, June 1995

J. J. Williams

1. Preface

It is quite clear that the Task Group has managed to elicit, collate and present in accessible format, a great deal of information on Arts and Culture. The ensuing critique focuses on the following substantive aspects of Arts and Culture:

- 2.1 Conceptual Aspects, i.e. definition of Arts and Culture
- 2.2 Methodological Aspects, i.e. modes of enquiry, interpretation and presentation
- 2.3 Theoretical Aspects, i.e. perspectives on Arts and Culture
- 2.4 Policy Aspects, i.e. goals, principles, vision for the Arts and Culture
3. Overall Assessment and Recommendations, i.e. what is to be done.

2. Substantive matters

2.1 Conceptual Aspects

The Report contains multiple definitions of Arts and Culture, each accenting different aspects of the subject matter. Although this multiplicity of definitions suggests inclusivity and conceptual open-endedness, such a myriad of nuances, however, can also be confusing to the uninformed reader who would prefer conceptual precision as opposed to

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This is a slightly revised version of a critique forwarded to the Ministry of Arts and Culture, Science and Technology in May 1995.

semantic flexibility.¹ In this respect, consider, for example, the following definitions of culture in the Report:

Chapter 1, Section 3.2, p 4: states that “[c]ulture” shall refer to language, heritage conservation (including museums, archives, libraries, historical sites) monuments and architecture”.² In this specific instance, the auxiliary verb ‘shall’ denotes legalistic compliance as an absolute rule and condition. The ensuing examples, however, appear to include definitions of culture that transcend the conceptual restrictions of the aforementioned types of cultural spheres such as language, heritage, libraries and so forth. In this instance, compare, for example, Chapter 3, Section 2.1, p 58, providing a definition of culture that is all-embracing of humankind’s means and modes of existence and livelihood, viz: “Living culture encompasses the totality of the intellectual and material landmarks which ... characterise a society or social group.”³

Likewise, in more elucidatory terms, Chapter 4, Section 1.2.1, p. 118 argues that “[c]ulture relates to a people’s way of life, a way of perceiving and doing things. It derives its qualities from the economic, social and political conditions existing in our society. It is the landscape in which we live, and which shapes our values, attitudes and customs, giving meaning to our backgrounds, our socio-economic and political circumstances and our relationships. It is a reflection and a determinant of the workings of a society’s structure, and is a shared and collective experience.”⁴

Lack of conceptual consistency, however, is quite glaring when the Addendum to the Report, Chapter 5, p. 178 provides once again a definition of culture that appears to freeze time, space and social processes when it is argued that “[c]ulture is our common heritage and the avenues of expressing it through the arts, humanities, anthropology, architecture and any other means of expression people use to communicate their fundamental character and aspirations.”⁵ This definition suggests that culture is primarily concerned with what is deposited through past practices and thus inherited by subsequent generations as opposed to, simultaneously accenting, as the preceding concept of culture allows for, the modifying and changing effects contemporary experiences might have on the accumulated heritage of former generations. Consequently, this conceptual malaise, accenting differing ele-

ments of cultural practices has two effects: First, it gives rise to a circumscription of culture that is etymologically inconsistent. Second, it detracts substantially from the overall theoretical precision and clarity of the Report.

2.2. Methodological Aspects

Since different authors were responsible for particular sections of the Report, the methods used to investigate the various dimensions of the Arts and Culture are eclectic, encompassing a number of approaches, ranging from the discursive, theoretical, historical, conceptual, empirical, reflective, interpretive mode to the analytical method of enquiry, interpretation and presentation. These approaches highlight, though not unproblematically, the diversity, yet continuity, particularity though inclusivity, vitality and overall vibrancy of the artistic and cultural landscape in South Africa celebrating, in short, human life, its vision, and being in all its splendour and glory.

Whilst the foregoing eclectic modes of enquiry and presentation are not without merit, as they allow for theoretical variety, the epistemological merits/demerits of such perspectives, aside, nonetheless, it would, perhaps, had been more effective/useful, by means of an Executive Summary, to accent specific methodological elements such as historical retrieval and hermeneutic exposition, thereby advancing a theoretical framework which highlights the historically dynamic processes undergirding the form, substance and dimensions of Arts and Culture (Albert et al, 1986; Williams, 1961, 1982, 1983a, 1983b).

2.3 Theoretical Aspects

The perspectives on Arts and Culture are diverse in that they emanate from the particular conceptual frameworks of the various authors, even though they are informed by the “principles for a democratic Arts and Culture policy” (Chapter 1, Section 5, p. 8) for South Africa.⁶

2.3.1 The potential for the commodification of Arts and Culture

Whilst in substance the overriding perspectives suggest the enunciation of democratic practice in relation to society at large and Arts and Culture, in particular, it would, however, be necessary, to accent the tension between such laudable goals and the possibility that the Arts and Culture could be commodified, ie being largely accessible – the

good intentions of the authors, notwithstanding – to only those who have the financial wherewithal to engage in and savour artistic and cultural events and experiences (e.g. Dupré, 1983; Svitak, 1970).

More specifically, this means, that recommended policy guidelines, unless appropriate preventative measures are enacted, could readily result in the commercialization of Arts and Culture. In this regard, consider, for example, Chapter 1, Section 4.7, p. 8, which states that “the Arts and Culture are also industries... [They] provide jobs and are indispensable elements of modern economies and trade”. Likewise, Chapter 2, Section 8.22, p. 28, refers to the “economic importance of the Arts and Culture and their indispensable role in development”. In this regard, see also Chapter 5, Section 5.6, p. 151, accenting the role of designers, visual arts and craft in job creation, thereby boosting the economy⁷.

Indeed, the potential commodification of Arts and Culture -- i.e. being controlled by those who have readily access to finance capital - - is being reinforced by the Report, Chapter 5, Section 10.3.8, p. 157 which states that “[t]he arts have an important role to play in the revitalisation and regeneration of both industry and tourism, and as such, can make a significant contribution to the economic life of the country.” In the original Draft, Chapter 8, Section 4.6, p 250, the potential commodification of the Arts and Culture was made even more explicitly, viz:

Culture is a significant and potentially growing industry that should be encouraged as part of the Metropolitan area's economic development. The term cultural industries refers to that sector of the economy organised around the production and consumption of cultural goods and services. This includes the print and electronic media, publishing, film, television and video production, visual and graphic arts and design, leisure and recreation sectors, music, cinemas, galleries, libraries, theme parks, festivals, arts centres and advertising.

The preceding commercial potential of Arts and Culture is pursued in the Report, Chapter 8, Section 1.6.9.2, p. 247, where it is stated that:

[e]conomic growth and development are stimulated through the sector of the economy, organised around the production and consumption of cultural goods and services. This includes both large industries such as the print and electronic media, publishing, advertising, film, television and video, compact disc and cassette production, visual and graphic arts and craft, all fields of design, and theatre, music and dance performance.

Highlighting, with regard to the recommended policy guidelines, the potential commodification-cum-commercialization of Arts and Culture, is not to gainsay the obvious economic dividends to be derived from this sphere of human life. On the contrary, it is merely to argue for the enactment of appropriate measures and mechanisms that would forestall Arts and Culture, by policy default, largely becoming the domain of the affluent in society, the laudable goals and good intentions of the policy-makers notwithstanding (e.g. Harvey, 1989).

2.3.2 The tension between historical materialism and eclecticism: policy implications elided

The Draft Report, Chapter 5, Section 1.4, p. 149 reads “[C]inema is generally referred to as the genre cinema of the imperialist states which encodes and legitimises the capitalist relations of production and the way in which capital would like viewers to perceive reality”. This view on the nature of cinema has been slightly altered in the final Report, Chapter 9, Section 1.5.2, p 285 to read: “[C]inema generally refers to the cinema genre of the imperialist states and Hollywood-type themes”. The slight change to the text notwithstanding, the authors still seem to be positing a perspective on one form of art and cultural practice which accents the ideological and questionable role of cinema in a specific social formation, i.e. a capitalist society (e.g. Foucault, 1980; Freire, 1987). Their ensuing policy guidelines, however, leave unanswered implicit questions regarding the nature of society (socialist? democratic? etc.) that would most readily accommodate the type of artistic and cultural practice which would liberate the full potential of human creativity and innovativeness (eg Foucault, 1980; Freire, 1987; Kavanagh, 1985). This heuristic omission has two consequences for the unfolding text. First, it undermines the cogency of the structurally grounded perspective, which, consequently, sits rather uncomfortably

amongst pretty consensus-oriented policy guidelines. Second, it buttresses policy guidelines based on social reform and not necessarily the transformation of the dominant artistic and cultural practices (Mattelart, 1988).

In like fashion, a similar analytical dissonance and epistemological tension pervades the Draft Report, Chapter 5, Section 1.4.3, p. 151, providing a definition of racism, as the “generalised and final assigning of values to real or imaginary differences, to the accuser’s benefit and at his victim’s expense, in order to justify the former’s own privilege or aggression” (Memmi, 1968: 186)⁸.

This analytically cogent definition of racism notwithstanding, the subsequent policy guidelines, however, are not necessarily structured around the historically determined implications of dominant racially-contrived values as, for the most part, they enunciate integrative and reformative measures vis-à-vis existing institutional practices. The need for a departure from dominant bureaucratic practices operates at the level of theory and not in relation to recommended bureaucratic arrangements.

Even more curious though, having just ‘transcended’ a history of racism, nowhere in the final Report is there any direct reference to the pervasive forms of racist practices which, thus far, have characterized the promotion of Arts and Culture in South Africa (Kavanagh, 1985). For no apparent reason, this whole section has been omitted from the final Report. To be sure, the Report does acknowledge the uneven development and promotion of artistic and cultural activities in the historically neglected (i.e. mostly black) areas. Yet, it is conspicuously silent about the relationship, however tenuous, indirect and nuanced, between race and culture vis-à-vis human development (West, 1988, 1993; Dupré, 1983).

2.4 Policy Aspects

The goals, principles and vision for the Arts and Culture, in general, are informed by the tenets of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) of the South African Government of National Unity. In this regard, however, the practical implications of certain assumptions and / or recommendations have not been mooted, let alone having been spelled out in full. In this regard, one can refer to the following examples:

Chapter 1, Section 3.3.4, p. 5, states “That in the context of the RDP priorities, resources for the Arts and Culture will not increase significantly, so that the allocation of existing resources will need to be addressed as a matter of urgency”.⁹ The litany of criteria (Chapter 2, pp 36-38) for the allocation of funds vis-à-vis the Arts and Culture, however, does not indicate as to how competing needs would be assessed, qualitatively as opposed to merely driven by laudable morally-correct posturing/positioning. Thus, for example, in response to the public concern over the funding of Arts and Culture, the appropriate Minister, Dr Ngubane, stated that “each line item [i.e. request for funding] will be studied, put under a microscope to decide whether it deserved to be supported through the fiscus. It’s a question of trying to stretch available resources to the furthest limit” (*Sunday Times*, November 11, 1995)¹⁰.

More specifically, in view of historical backlogs in marginalized communities, how would the proposed criteria be applied, monitored, evaluated on a consistent and rational basis across and within the different sub-divisions of Arts and Culture? Ideally, what is required is a qualitative index of the specific infrastructural needs in particular communities and how existing resources in other, preferably, adjacent, historically advantaged communities, if such communities are in proximity, be utilized to address historical backlogs (Western, 1981). In short there should be provided a geographical analysis of different communities and their specific strengths and weaknesses, as measured amongst others by the various resources available in their respective locales vis-à-vis Arts and Culture.

In terms of Chapter 2, Section 33.1, p. 43: “Metropolitan and Local Arts and Culture Councils shall establish consultative (sic) forums in which local artists, art organizations, experts and interested members of the community will provide advice and assistance in the planning of decision-making processes on the allocation of funds and other arts and cultural matters.”¹¹ The questions that arise in this regard are, amongst others: How representative would these fora be in relation to a specific community? Would they be mostly advisory bodies? If, so, why?

Chapter 2, Section 32.2, p. 43, states that Metropolitan and Local Arts Councils would have to be established on a voluntary, non-salaried basis.¹² In view of the tediously long and voluminous list of recom-

mended conditions, principles and goals governing the Arts and Culture, would it be fair to expect of such individuals to work long hours without remuneration? More importantly, in view of their voluntary positions would the employ of such individuals, who familiarize themselves with the multiple rules and regulations guarding the Arts and Culture, not readily give rise to a high turnover rate?¹³ Indeed, it might very well happen that very few people, if anybody, at all, would be prepared to serve the domain of Arts and Culture on a non-salaried basis for long periods, undermining, thereby, the effective administration and implementation of specific Arts and Culture projects/programmes.

Chapter 7, Section 5.2, p. 222, recommends that “[t]he current situation where only English and Afrikaans speakers receive education in their home languages throughout the primary and secondary schooling, must be changed to accommodate first language education at primary and secondary levels in all languages.”¹⁴ It should be self-evident that this policy recommendation has profound logistical and fiscal implications which, however, are not spelled out by the authors.

Chapter 8, Section 2.6, p. 249 accents the individualistic, elitist nature of ‘eurocentric’ curricula.¹⁵ Yet, in terms of the ‘Principles for a democratic Arts and Culture Policy’, and more specifically, in relation to Chapter 1, Section 5.12, p. 9, accenting ‘diversity’, how would the dominant ‘eurocentric’ artistic and cultural practices be accommodated in a new dispensation?¹⁶ This question is not mooted, let alone considered in any detail in either the Draft or final Report. During an interview, however, the Director General of Arts and Culture, Science and Technology, Roger Jardine, observed that “[t]he Eurocentric and Afrocentric debate was a counter-productive one because our national cultural identity included both and [this] means access to all forms of cultural heritage [should be] emphasized” [*Argus* (‘Tonight’), June 12, 1995; p 8].¹⁷

3. Overall Assessment and Recommendations

The recommendations of the Report should be contained in an Executive Summary in which the key policy aspects and considerations are highlighted with special reference as to how the different dimensions would contribute both individually and collectively to the stated goals

and vision for Arts and Culture in South Africa. More specifically, it should, ideally, also contain recommendations as to how artistic and cultural needs within specific communities could be assessed on a quantitative as well as qualitative basis. Hence it is suggested that the following planning dimensions¹⁸ vis-à-vis Arts and Culture be considered with regard to specific communities:

3.1 Overview of the amenities and facilities in relation to the Arts and Culture in specific communities:

- 3.1.1 Agencies and agents: Public/private/individual: in different fields -- their histories, present activities, future visions, i.e. what is the role of bureaucracy (public/private/individual) -- who does what, where and how often?
- 3.1.2 Present infrastructure: the physical condition of facilities, resources and opportunities for performance, practice/rehearsal, production, distribution, exhibition and education.
- 3.1.3 structures (heritage) -- movable and immovable (eg artwork and museums)
- 3.1.4 documented and printed materials
- 3.1.5 communication channels (publicity, the media, etc)
- 3.1.6 markets (audiences: local and international)

3.2 Systematic, structured, coherent policy framework with regard to:

- 3.2.1 provision of infrastructural services
- 3.2.2 facility management
- 3.2.3 community planning (programmes and projects)
- 3.2.4 the availability of grants, subsidies, funds raised by individual communities.

3.3 Schematically, the dimensions of planning policies vis-à-vis Art and Culture should encompass:

- 3.3.1 The planning concept of Art and Culture (philosophy and vision);
- 3.3.2 An indication of what an area, town or city needs in terms of Art and Culture (i.e. short, medium term and long term programmes) with specific reference to how Art and Culture can contribute towards, i.e. reinforce, the Reconstruction and Development Programme.

3.4 Policy Formulation/Design

- 3.4.1 Formulating policy content in consultation with different constituencies.
- 3.4.2 Type of benefits
- 3.4.3 Extent of change envisioned

3.5 Policy Implementation

- 3.5.1 Level of decision-making
- 3.5.2. Programme implementors
- 3.5.3 Resources committed to implementation

3.6 Policy Monitoring

- 3.6.1 Power, interests, tactics, strategies
- 3.6.2 Characteristics of public and private institutions
- 3.6.3 Networking/liaising with key implementors
- 3.6.4 Institutional compliance and responsiveness

3.7 Policy Effects

- 3.7.1 Impact on society, individuals and groups
- 3.7.2 Change and its acceptance

3.8 Policy Evaluation (Measuring Success)

- 3.8.1 Goals achieved
- 3.8.2 Action programmes and individual projects
- 3.8.3 Unintended consequences

3.9 Continuation or Revision of planning policies?

The legacy of the under-provision of facilities for the Arts and Culture in historically black areas should be addressed by simultaneously reviewing the legal mechanisms controlling the provision of the requisite infrastructural services at local level.

The revision of statutory mechanisms should be geared towards achieving the following objectives:

- 3.9.1 Ensuring more readily access to Art and Culture, resource pooling, adequate funding by both private and public institutions
- 3.9.2 Facilitating team-networking, intercommunal co-operation
- 3.9.3 Comprehensive co-ordination of activities, organizations and institutions that focus on Art and Culture, hence the import of a Directorate of Arts and Culture

3.9.4 The development of a registry on Art and Culture for specific areas.

Notes

1. This means that there are as many definitions of 'culture' as there are commentators. Such a type of inclusivity could potentially lead to a conceptual malaise and thus a lack of concurrence with regard to specific policies that seek to address specific issues pertaining to Arts and Culture.
2. In this regard see also the Draft Report, Chapter 1, Section 3.2, p 4, which states that "[c]ulture' shall refer to language, heritage conservation (including museums, archives, libraries, historical sites) and monuments".
3. In this instance, compare, for example, Draft Report, Chapter 3, Section 2, p 60.
4. This same definition also in the Draft Report, Chapter 6, Section 1.1, p 175.
5. In this regard see also the Draft Report, Chapter 8, p 262.
6. See also the Draft Report, Chapter 1, p 9.
7. In this regard, see also Draft Report, Chapter 8, Sections 2.3.4 and 2.3.5 p 247, quoting a World Bank Report that accents the role of designers to earn foreign exchange (ie US dollars) for South Africa.
8. It should be noted that this definition of 'racism' is conceptually limiting, in that it freezes history and organic relations of power that undergird the dynamic, materially-driven, processes of racist practices. In this regards, see for example: West, Cornel (1993). *Race Matters*. Boston: Beacon Press. The draft chapter on cinema was almost completely based on a rather eclectic extraction of unattributed quotes from a special issue of *Critical Arts* (1993) on "Cinema in the Third World". The articles in question were Tomaselli, K.G. and Tomaselli, R.E., "The Economics of Racism". The memmi definition was found in the article by Spence, L. and Stan, R., "Racism in the cinema: Proposal for a methodological Investigation". This draft version was revised by Keyan Tomaselli who totally rewrote the final chapter. The recommendations remained despite his contention that they seemed to have no coherence in the way they were listed.
10. The abbreviation refers to the 'Reconstruction and Development Programme' of the South African Government of National Unity.
11. In this regard, see the Draft Report, Chapter 1, Section 3.3.4, p 4.
12. It has also been announced by the Minister for Arts, Culture, Science and Technology that R40-million out of the Reconstruction and Development Programme Fund has been set aside for Arts and Culture (*Sunday Times*, November 05, 1995).
13. Compare, for example, the Draft Report, Chapter 2, Section 33.1, p 47.

14. In this regard, see the Draft Report, Chapter 2, Section 32.2, p47.
15. This means that frequently there might be fresh volunteers who would have to familiarize themselves with the principles, goals and vision informing the Arts and Culture, delaying, thereby, the effective implementation of specific projects and programmes.
16. In this regard, see the Draft Report, Chapter 7, Section 5.2, p219.
17. See also the Draft Report, Chapter 11, Section 2.6, p 330.
18. In this regard, see also the Draft Report, Chapter 1, Section 5.8, p 9.
19. Jardine, during this interview, however, failed to indicate the mechanisms that would be provided to ensure 'access to all forms of cultural heritage'.
20. These suggested planning dimensions allow for a flexible, yet structured, coherent and rational approach to the often emotive-laden issues *vis-a-vis* Arts and Culture. In this regard, see for example Friedman, John (12987). *Planning in the Public Domain*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

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