**A CRITIQUE OF THE FOURTH DRAFT OF THE WHITE PAPER ON ARTS, CULTURE AND HERITAGE**

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**Introduction**

Policy is a product of its times. Policy responds to conditions as they exist in relation to the subject about which policy is being made, in order to intervene and shift those conditions towards the realisation of a more ideal set of conditions.

As conditions change, not least because of the positive outcomes of initial policy interventions, it is necessary to evaluate the relevance of those initial policies, and to revise these and devise new policies in response to the prevailing conditions.

The original White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage was adopted by Cabinet in August 1996. It was preceded by an extensive research and consultation phase that began two years earlier, in 1994.

The Department of Arts and Culture began reviewing this White Paper under the previous Minister, Paul Mashatile, in 2013; now, in 2019, it is the Fourth Draft of the Revised White Paper which is posted on the Department’s website, and which is the focus of this critique.

The first three drafts were published on 17 March 2015, 14 Nov 2016, 1 June 2017 respectively and the fourth draft about 18 months ago, on 27 October 2017.

The current status of the Revised Policy is unclear as it still exists in draft form on the DAC’s website, although the Deputy Minister for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Andries Nel, announced last year that the document had been officially adopted.

With elections now less than a month away, and the likelihood of a new minister for arts and culture, it is moot as to whether this revised policy will continue to have any official status, or whether a new broom will seek to sweep the policy slate clean.

In the meantime, we have had the minister of finance announce policy; at the end of his inaugural budget speech, he said that consideration is being given to a new national museum, a new national theatre and support for a national ballet company and a national orchestra.

However, we are obliged to discuss what is currently before us and to engage with it critically in anticipation of whatever may emerge after 8 May 2019.

**Structure and content of the Revised White Paper**

The Revised White Paper is 82 pages long and comprises 11 chapters, excluding a list of abbreviations and a preamble and a conclusion which bookend the chapters.

Chapter One serves as an introduction, provides key definitions of arts, culture and heritage (the same as for the 1996 White Paper), sets out the structure of the policy argument, the rationale for revising the White Paper, affirms the goals of the Revised Paper and outlines the process by which it was brought about.

Chapter Two details the vision, mission, principles and core values of the Revised Policy, while Chapter Three evaluates the progress made since the adoption of the 1996 White Paper and locates the revision within the context of the National Development Plan.

Chapter Four outlines policies for each of the disciplines: theatre, dance, music, visual arts, craft and design, audio-visual media, heritage, libraries, language and literature, community arts, events and technical production.

The Cultural and Creative Industries are the theme of Chapter Five while Chapter Six focuses on the status and rights of arts, culture and heritage practitioners.

Chapter Seven speaks to human resource development and Chapter eight is titled “Cooperative Governance” and focuses on cooperation between different tiers of government as well as between different departments responsible for some aspect of arts, culture and heritage.

Chapter Nine outlines a “New National Arts, Culture and Heritage Dispensation of South Africa”; Chapter Ten discusses the funding sources and mechanisms, and Chapter Eleven speaks to the monitoring and evaluation of policy.

Given the comprehensive nature of the Revised Policy document, this critique will focus on selected areas, more particularly as they relate to “Development” which is the theme of these monthly Future Africa seminars.

**Conditions in 1994 versus 2019**

Before focusing on the Revised Paper itself, I think that it is important to note some of the fundamental differences in the conditions prevailing at the time of the preparation of the original White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage and the conditions surrounding the drafting of the revised White Paper.

First, in 1994, there were limited funds for the arts, and within the context of the myriad other apartheid legacies that a new government would have to deal with, policy makers adopted a “five loaves and two fish” approach to policy-making by attempting to use the funds available to serve primarily a white minority under apartheid, to now serve the whole population. Twenty-five years later, the DAC has the 24th largest budget out of 40 departments and entities that receive funding from the national fiscus. This year, the budget is R4,617 billion; in 1994, it was closer to R260 million. To put this into some kind of perspective, the total allocated to the five nationally subsidised theatres this year is R271 million, more than the total arts, culture and heritage budget 25 years ago; then, with the performing arts councils consuming 46% of the total budget, they were targeted for budget reductions and reallocations to other disciplines. So, there is significantly more public funding for the arts in 2019 than in 1994, and this excludes the new sources of funding through the National Lotteries Commission that did not exist at that time.

Second, we were at a very different stage in our democratic project. In 1994, we had a government of national unity, and a minister from a junior partner in government – the IFP - was put in charge of the arts, culture, science and technology ministry. There was an openness to consultation, to engaging with civil society in devising policies and structures that would govern the arts and culture sector. Now, government – including the Department of Arts and Culture and its political incumbents - is characterised by an arrogance, based on the premise that they have been elected, and that they therefore have a right to govern, without necessarily engaging with those over whom they govern. This goes directly to the quality of the policy document as well as to its legitimacy; working with the sector is more likely to result in legitimising the outcomes than having a policy document that is imposed on the sector.

Third, twenty-five years ago, we had vibrant, robust civil society organisations like COSAW, FAWO, PAWE, MUSA, etc united under the artists-created and led National Arts Coalition that actively lobbied for policies that served their interests. Civil society organisations – where they exist – are weak, lack sector support or are sweetheart, top-down structures like CCIFSA that they DAC itself has created, and which lack credibility within the sector. The organised voice of the creative sector is much weaker and divided now.

Fourth, two-and-a-half decades ago, public funding had not been democratised; now we have structures like the NAC, NFVF and the NHC as well as the NLC to support independent art and heritage project. We also did not have a functional arts and culture department, now we have more than twenty years of structures and of experience of how these work, or not.

Many of these structures, as well as other publicly-funded cultural structures, have been plagued by poor governance, which points to issues of ethics, poor oversight and the urgent need to develop skilled, ethical human resource.

Finally, the political imperatives of that time were quite different to what they are now. Then it was a case of how do transform the cultural landscape to that it served the needs and aspirations of all the country’s citizens and not just a racial minority, while today, the imperatives that inform policy-making are the country’s triple challenges of unemployment that stands at 26-38%; poverty with 55% of the country’s population living below the poverty line and inequality, with 20% of the population earning 70% of national income. Thus, whereas the 1996 White Paper was premised on a human rights approach – “everyone shall have the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community and to enjoy the arts” (Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights), the contemporary approach is premised on the need for inclusive economic growth, which might explain the emphasis on the creative and cultural industries as contributors to the country’s GDP.

The irony of this latter approach is that while it is intended to serve the poor and the excluded, it actually excludes them, for the basic premise of cultural and creative industries is that it requires markets with disposable income to sustain and grow them. Whereas the original White Paper sought to make the arts, culture and heritage accessible to everyone, thereby placing an obligation on the state to deliver infrastructure close to where people lived, develop the human resources to manage these, provide finance to support the creation and distribution of the arts, a cultural and creative industries approach leaves these to “the market”. However, “the market” does not automatically correct historical inequalities, so that, for example, by continuing to fund theatre infrastructure in the urban centres, private entrepreneurs have been able to amass fortunes through staging musicals at publicly-funded infrastructure, while citizens in the country’s poorer provinces, have continued to be marginalised and excluded from access to theatre.

**Principles**

The Revised White Paper lists eighteen worthy principles like openness, accountability, inclusion, international solidarity and the like. However, I would like to discuss three of these in particular.

First, the principle of sustainable development is explained as follows: “Art, culture and heritage are critical mainsprings of innovation and social and economic development based on models that conserve, renew and expand resources for present and future generations”.

Interestingly for a cultural policy document, the definition ignores what many have called the fourth pillar of sustainable development i.e. culture, on the understanding that unless development takes account of the values, belief systems, traditions, etc – in short, the culture – of the intended beneficiaries, it was unlikely to be sustainable.

Later, the Revised White Paper does state that “it is important that culture…be fully integrated into sustainable development initiatives…”, but this is not embedded within the foregrounding principle of sustainable development.

Second, the Revised White Paper outlines the principle of transformation as “the reconfiguration of the personnel, programmes and collections, exhibits, performances and events in arts, culture and heritage to reflect the demographics of an African society with diverse cultures”. Elsewhere, the document laments the slow transformation of the sector and as part of its mission, states that the Revised White Paper intends to provide “leadership to the arts, culture and heritage sector to accelerate its transformation”.

There is, however, no analysis of what transformation has already taken place, of the impact of such transformation and where transformation needs to be accelerated. While morally and politically understandable and necessary in the context of our apartheid history, the definition of transformation in the Revised White Paper is relatively superficial as it is premised on making demographic changes i.e. transformation by numbers. What is really required is substantive transformation where structures and systems are changed to benefit the large numbers of citizens that have been excluded in the past and continue to be excluded today. All the museums can be transformed to be demographically representative, but if they are still not accessible – geographically – to people outside of the main urban spaces, has society really been transformed? And if our subsidised theatres have governing boards and managements that reflect the gender, racial and disabled demographics of the provinces in which they are located, but in 25 years, we have still not provided subsidised theatre infrastructure in the country’s poorer provinces, then has our sector really been transformed, or have we simply changed the colour of the elites who have access to cultural infrastructure?

Unless substantive – rather than superficial demographic – transformation takes place, another listed principle, that of “inclusion and equitable access to diverse cultural expressions” will remain hollow.

Earlier versions of the Revised White Paper had excluded the principle of autonomy i.e. “upholding the arms-length and independent status of public arts and culture institutions, subject to accountability”. The “arm’s length” principle was hard fought for by cultural activists in the early nineties as it was about publicly-funded institutions not having to internalise the political hegemony of the ruling party as was the case under the National Party regime, and it was imperative that this principle be upheld to protect freedom of creative expression. In a democracy, creative practitioners have the right to say what they would like, *with* the support of public funding, so that politicians or their representatives should not have control over the allocation of public funds for artistic endeavour.

However, although this principle is now embedded in the Revised White Paper, the reality is quite different as the Department of Arts and Culture under a previous Minister, Ben Ngubane, changed the Cultural Institutions Act so that instead of the Councils appointed to govern subsidised cultural infrastructure electing their Chairpersons who would then be accountable to the Councils, the Minister now has the right to appoint the chairpersons of such governing structures. This not only empowers such chairpersons above their Council colleagues, but also creates a direct route for political interference in such institutions. The last nineteen years have been littered with examples of how this has caused havoc in many cultural institutions who are also required to have as part of their branding “an agency of the Department of Arts and Culture”, hardly an arm’s length symbol.

Have the principles been applied throughout the Revised White Paper and its arguments and recommendations? Or vice versa. Where ideas are given more substance later in the Revised White Paper, have the principles been revisited to reflect that substance? I think not. What is the point of laudable principles, if there are laws and practices that actually contradict these principles? Should the laws and practices now be changed to align them with the principles espoused in the policy?

**Progress since 1994 and the strategic value of art, culture and heritage**

Chapter Three lists some of the changes that have been made over the last 23 years, and they are not insignificant e.g. the establishment of funding structures, the amalgamation of museums, the founding of new heritage sites, etc.

But the chapter, in critiquing the original White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage, shows up one of the fundamental flaws in the Revised White Paper. It states:

Two decades of implementation experience laid bare the limitations of the founding policies. These include:

* Divergence from the integrated architecture proposed in 1996 White Paper for heritage resulted in a fragmented and uncoordinated heritage dispensation;
* Slow transformations in the sector;
* Inefficient and cumbersome administrative procedures;
* A lack of coordination between national, provincial and local arts, culture and heritage policies and the need for greater interdepartmental cooperation;
* Inadequate formal education and training opportunities for art, culture and heritage;
* The uneven distribution of infrastructure, facilities, material and resource outside the main metropolitan areas;
* The persistence of the perception of arts, culture and heritage as marginal luxuries;
* Insufficient attention to the role of the private sector in funding and developing the sector; and
* Inadequate monitoring and evaluation of institutions, programmes and events.

A simple reading of the above list reveals that much of it has far less to do with the founding policies than with the poor implementation of those policies. The 1996 White Paper did not call for or result in slow transformation of the sector, or inefficient and cumbersome administrative procedures or for uneven distribution of infrastructure and facilities outside the metropolitan areas. Neither is it responsible for the perception of arts and culture as marginal luxuries, nor for inadequate monitoring and evaluation of institutions and programmes.

These are the responsibilities – and therefore, the failures - of the Department of Arts and Culture that is responsible for the implementation of policy.

The 1996 White Paper called for the establishment of multifunctional arts centres throughout the country as a means of correcting the uneven distribution of infrastructure and facilities outside the main metropolitan areas; that this has not been done, but that the five main theatres have continued to receive massive subsidies is a failure of the implementation of policy, not of the policy. And it is this failure on the part of the DAC that has perpetuated and increased inequality between the main urban centres and the less-resourced provinces.

While make sweeping generalisations about the lack of transformation or the limitations of the 1996 White Paper, the Revised White Paper makes no analysis of the Department of Arts and Culture and its capacity to manage, implement, monitor and take corrective action with regard to cultural policy. The fact alone that it has taken the Department more than five years to review the 1996 White Paper – and it is still not done – speaks to the limitations and deficiencies of the Department as the primary implementing agency, more than anything else. Policies can be changed as much as necessary, but if the implementing agencies lack vision and capacity, or are politically hamstrung, policy will account for little.

**Locating the Revised White Paper in the context of “Development”**

Given the challenges of our society, it is understandable that the Revised White Paper genuflects towards the National Development Plan and sustainable development. However, it needs to be pointed out that the NDP pays little attention to arts, culture and heritage in its more than 400 pages; the clearest reference is “if arts and culture are promoted effectively, the creative and cultural industries can contribute to small business development, job creation and urban development and renewal”.

This is an extremely limited understanding of the cultural dimension of development, and affirms the narrow economic dimensions of development, rather than the human and social dimensions. The Revised White Paper makes a case for Sustainable Development that integrates economic, social, environmental and cultural elements, calling on all government departments “to ensure that culture is integrated into sustainable development policies, plans and programmes at all levels…”, but if your country’s National Development Plan fails to recognise the importance of culture in development, and historically, the Department of Arts and Culture operates – as do all other departments – as silos, then the chances of integrating culture into development as a transversal concept and strategy are highly unlikely.

One of the challenges for most cultural policy makers – and as reflected in the Revised White Paper – is that while we speak of “cultural policy”, at best, we mean “policies for the arts and heritage”, when what a country and developmental strategies really require are policies that foreground culture – value and belief systems, social mores, traditions that inform behaviour and interpersonal relationships, self and group identities, etc – and the manner in which these could impact adversely on, or help to facilitate developmental goals.

We need far greater research into and more sophisticated understandings of culture as a transversal phenomenon in development. Rather than a silo ministry concentrating on the arts and heritage, we would do better in the pursuit of human, social and economic development if each department had a cultural desk or unit that examines and implements strategies in accordance with the cultural dimension of each department’s aims, and for these to be coordinated by the Department of Arts and Culture. But for that to happen, we require the necessary knowledge, human resources and political will which do not appear to exist at the moment.

The cultural dimension of conflict and divisions within our society would also help us better to engage in social cohesion and nation-building exercises which the Revised White Paper addresses. “Driven by the DAC, Social Cohesion and Nation-Building is a national intergovernmental project aimed at overcoming the race, class, gender, cultural and other divisions and exclusions of the past and the present,” states the document.

I am not sure what has been done in this regard over the last decades that this has been a project of the DAC, but I think that it is true to say that our country has not been as divided by class, gender, cultural, race and other factors as it is now. One does not need to add Afrophobia to the list (though it should be there) to know that our divisions are deep, that the rainbow nation is a myth and that even the one-off feel-good patriotism after satisfying wins in international sports, are exactly that – one-offs, like multi-racial musical festivals - that do little to address the structural and systemic fissures in our society.

The question is: does this Revised White Paper even begin to understand, let alone address this? Beyond easy and trite rhetoric, I think not.

The White Afrikaans community has among the most successful creative industries in the country. There are Afrikaans arts festivals, a private television station, numerous independently produced movies, highly successful music artists and to have a best-seller in Afrikaans, writers have to sell more books than would be the case if they wrote in English! A unifying language, economic empowerment premised on apartheid’s building blocks and dominant cultural values within that community account for these. Is the white Afrikaans community part of the social cohesion, nation-building project? Are there lessons to be drawn from their successful creative industries? More particularly, what does social cohesion and nation-building actually mean; what are the cultural dimensions of these, and what are the practical short, medium and long-term strategies to achieve these?

I am at a loss to find these questions answered within the Revised White Paper.

**Sector recommendations**

Chapter Four outlines new policies for arts, culture and heritage and it really is a hotchpotch of ideas per discipline with some having more thought and proposals than others. The RWP does state that it does not intend “to provide exhaustive discipline-based programme for each of the subsectors”, but one would have hoped for a policy document that more clearly applies its principles and philosophical underpinnings to each of the subsectors in concrete, integrated ways and within particular time frameworks.

For example, to correct uneven distribution of infrastructure, the following theatres and multifunctional arts centres will be established in the following regions by 2022… The Department will enter into a partnership with this or that tertiary institution to train and support the managers required to run these art centres and theatres. To ensure sound governance, the Councils or boards of these institutions will be trained and supported by the Institute of Directors. And so on.

If you want to know where Tito Mboweni got the idea for a national orchestra and ballet company, the Revised White Paper calls for the establishment of national theatre, dance and orchestral companies with youth components, and each of these to be resident in a different province. There is no talk in the Revised White Paper of a new national museum and a new national theatre though (which Mboweni alluded to), while there is allusion to the development of a national circuit of theatre spaces with infrastructure in every province.

**The Cultural and Creative Industries**

Chapter Five is devoted to extolling the virtues of the creative and cultural industries and their possible contributions to eliminating or reducing inequality, alleviating poverty and creating employment.

While I do not doubt that the creative and cultural industries do create jobs and contribute to the GDP, I believe that their significance in the context of South African – and African realities – is overstated.

In 1998, government adopted the Cultural Industries Growth Strategy when unemployment was 16,9%; twenty years later, we are still extolling the virtues of the creative industries with an unemployment rate of 26%, when we have even greater poverty and inequality has deepened. An emphasis on the creative and cultural industries in fact contributes to the greater social and economic inequalities as it is those with disposable income who will best be able to take advantage of products produced by the creative industries.

We must be careful of overstating the importance and contribution of the creative and cultural industries in dealing with our key challenges, when other major sectors of the economy have been unable to do so. The dominant profile of the unemployed – under-skilled and under-educated – does not match the dominant profile of those employed within the creative and cultural industries i.e. people with relatively high levels of education and expertise.

There are major differences within the creative and cultural industries and we need to give far more attention to these differences in our policy-making than what the general terminology of “creative and cultural industries” allows. For example, it is far easier and cheaper to distribute creative products like books, DVDs and music which can be downloaded through technology than it is to tour a play, a dance or an opera: the economies of scale are different, and policy needs to take account of this. If we do not recognise this and simply leave “the market” to determine the nature of our artistic products – which is the danger of an overemphasis on the cultural and creative industries – we will be doing ourselves, our heritage and our artistic practice a huge disservice.

In my view, the creative and cultural industries are but one aspect of the gamut of arts and culture experience in our country, rather than the primary focus of cultural policy and expenditure.

To use development discourse, the cultural continuum and policy-making should recognise arts, culture and heritage as having value for human development, for social development and for economic development.

Each would be distinct practices, with their own funding mechanisms.

*Art, culture and heritage for human development*

This is about art for its own sake, rather than in the service of anything, with its primary orientation being human development. It is about providing emotional, psychological and spiritual catharsis and sheer enjoyment for those who experience it; it is about building confidence, developing transversal problem-solving skills and indulging in creativity and innovation for those who participate actively in it. It is about exercising the fundamental human right to participate in the cultural life of the community and to enjoy the arts, and to exercise the fundamental constitutional right to freedom of creative expression. This is not about the size of the audience or the market, it is for its own sake, because individual human beings matter, because we are more than physical entities in need of food and shelter; we also have psychological, emotional and intellectual dimensions to be stimulated, to be challenged, to be satisfied. This is also about documenting and archiving heritage for its own sake and for the benefit of future generations.

These artistic and heritage practices are also about affirming identities, celebrating values and worldviews of local communities, helping them to make sense of their world, offering local alternatives to the values, beliefs and worldviews embedded in the creative products consumed daily because of globalized markets.

*Funding:*

The funding of these activities requires structures like the National Arts Council, the National Film and Video Foundation, the National Heritage Council – bodies that allocate public funding to projects based on their intrinsic merits, and their value for human development and civilization. In funding such activities, the state recognizes the value of the arts and heritage for human development, and it supports the right to freedom of creative expression by making available resources for this right to be practiced.

The nature of these activities are generally not-for-profit, and seldom, if at all, make a profit at the box office. At best, they may survive through a “mixed economy” model of public sector funding, private sector sponsorship and box office income, but generally, they will always be dependent on substantial public funding.

Artistic, cultural or heritage merit would be an over-riding criterion in the allocation of public funding, but funding to make such work accessible to as wide an audience as possible, particularly those who cannot afford it, would be an important consideration too.

*Art, culture and heritage for social development*

Given the nature of our society and the life experiences of the majority of people, it is in this area that the greatest need – and potential – for artistic and cultural interventions exists. It is also the area that requires the most resources.

This would – unashamedly – see the arts instrumentalised for socially good ends, and to change behaviour towards a socially good end e.g. a theatre company doing a play that educates a community about HIV/AIDS; an art exhibition that affirms women; a dance piece that celebrates people living with disabilities and a music concert to promote anti-xenophobic attitudes.

It is within this paradigm that art, culture and heritage projects that promote social cohesion, that proactively articulate positive moral values, that contribute to bridging divides between “population groups”, across gender, language, urban/rural and other divides are considered, and supported.

Issues to do with transformation and projects that promote the development of skills, mentoring, capacity-building among marginalized communities are supported here. The provision of infrastructure and the support for projects and activities that utilize township homes, schools, church halls, taverns and open streets to promote the creation, distribution and enjoyment of the arts, culture and heritage are promoted here.

Projects that monitor the impact of development on cultural practices, that interrogate culture as vehicles or obstacles to development and that investigate the cultural premises of developmental projects, would also fit into this category.

Bursaries and the funding of courses, mentorships and training programmes to address human development needs will be supported.

*Funding*

The beneficiaries of projects that fall under this category are seldom “markets” i.e. people with disposable income. They tend to be “audiences”, people who are to benefit from what the works have to say to them, or from their participation within the projects. Thus, the projects’ creators and distributors require funding.

It is recommended that a Culture, Arts and Social Transformation Fund be established to fund projects in their own right, that have social transformation as their end, as well as projects that might be supported from other funds, but which to add or integrate further “social transformation” elements e.g. a theatre company that wants to mentor a new woman director as part of their programme.

This Fund would be supported by the DAC with a founding grant, but it will be supplemented with funding from other relevant departments (education, social welfare, etc); corporate social investment budgets, international agencies, the lottery, etc.

While artistic criteria will still be relevant (it is important that such projects contribute to the raising of aesthetic consciousness), the primary criteria for considering projects would be their potential impact on social transformation, on providing access to the arts for all, on serving the artistic, social and other needs of mainly disadvantaged communities and individuals.

This should be the largest fund, as it goes to the heart of redressing current imbalances, of transforming our society through the arts and culture, of providing access to 70% of our population, to transversal issues such as the empowerment of people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, to developing human resources, etc.

*Art, culture and heritage for economic development*

The third primary area of activity is art, culture and heritage for economic development – the commercialization of arts, culture and heritage, art for profit and to generate wealth; in short, the creative and cultural industries.

These products, services and experiences would be aimed at local markets with disposable income, tourist markets and international markets, and could include cultural tourism services, literary fiction, music (live and in the form of CDs and downloadable forms), films, craft works, visual art exhibitions and auctions, literary and other festivals, etc.

Here, cultural and creative entrepreneurs, cultural SMMEs and co-operatives will be supported with funding, with mentorships, with skills development.

*Funding*

Entrepreneurial activities require start-up capital to produce, or to produce at scale and to take products and services to the market. Such start-up capital may take the form of grants, or low interest loans, or a combination of these.

This fund would be the Creative and Cultural Industries Fund, a fund that would support training courses for creative entrepreneurs, the creation and production of goods, research and interventions to produce skilled human resources at all levels of the value chain for each sector.

Funding would be gleaned from the DAC, from DTI, from corporates as well as from entrepreneurs supported by the Fund, who make some contribution to it, so that it becomes a self-sustaining Fund.

CCIF would not support not-for-profit activities (these would be funded by the other funds); CCIF’s primary role is to support artistic, heritage and cultural activities that will find sustenance in the market.

Criteria that would be used to allocate funding would include innovation, originality, profitability based on a business plan, capacity-building for entrepreneurs, expansion of markets, etc.

In such an approach, culture for human development, for social development and for economic development, “value” or what is considered “valuable” would not only, or primarily have an economic or financial dimension: value would also have dimensions of individual human fulfilment and happiness, and social dimensions i.e. a society at peace with itself with social equity and people living in peace with each other, the hallmarks of such a society.

**Status and rights of arts, cultural and heritage practitioners**

The UNESCO Recommendation Concerning the Status of the Artist was adopted in 1980. The DAC attended the 1997 Congress where the Recommendation was updated, a Recommendation that basically deals with the rights of artists to be treated with the same rights as other workers, to be able to form unions, to have social protections, to recognise the peculiar nature of their income when it comes to taxation, etc. The 1996 White Paper called for the rights of artists to be regulated, and yet, 23 years later, little has been done in this regard.

The RWP itself states that a “Benevolent Fund was outlined by the research commissioned by DAC several years ago…”, but little has been done to make this a practical reality so that even some of our best artists die paupers, and the DAC forks out money for their funerals.

This is not to question the policy, but the implementation of policy as securing the social rights and protections of creative practitioners has been a policy recommendation at least since 1996.

**Human resources**

The African continent generally and South Africa in particular are rich in minerals, but they lack the skilled human resources and infrastructure to beneficiate these minerals for greater economic return so that the minerals are transported abroad, where they are beneficiated and we buy the products at great cost.

Similarly, our continent and country are not short of talent, but there is a dire shortage of skills to help translate this talent into sustainable income streams. In twenty-five years, we have done little to train the human resources required to run our institutions, manage our artists, arrange local and international tours, market our creative work, use technology to distribute our wares, etc.

The RWP speaks to this need, but then, so did the 1996 White Paper.

Many of our institutions have been plagued by poor management, by corruption – a theme not highlighted in the RWP at all – by wasteful expenditure and unsound governance; these are the direct consequences of inadequate training, both in the hard skills required and in ethics. As with state-owned enterprises and other publicly-funded entities, our state-funded cultural institutions have been regarded by too many as sources of self-enrichment, rather than as vehicles to serve the public.

Good, progressive policies are going to be meaningless unless we pay serious attention to ethics and the development of skills, not simply through formal training institutions, but through providing opportunities for people to shadow those in management positions now, to learn through hands on activities, and through mentorships.

**New National Arts, Culture and Heritage Dispensation**

The later chapters of the RWP recommend some cosmetic and some fundamental changes to the cultural landscape. A cosmetic one is the changing of the name of the Department to the Department of Arts, Culture and Heritage, which might be neither here nor there if it is amalgamated with another Department after the May elections.

A more fundamental change is that the National Film and Video Foundation and the National Arts Council be amalgamated into the National Art and Audio-Visual Council of South Africa “to avoid the proliferation of governance bodies, enhance efficiency and enable coordination and cooperation”. However, there is no evidence or analysis to show how the NFVF and NAC have been inefficient in the past, and how amalgamating them will improve efficiencies.

It is probably a similar motivation that recommends the establishment of a National Heritage Council of South Africa which would govern all national museums in the country, with the separate museum councils being abolished. In other words, the National Heritage Council would govern/oversee Ditsong Museums, Iziko Museums, Robben Island Museum, Freedom Park, etc, all in the name of efficiency, coordination and cooperation.

A previous Director General suggested that the DAC was looking to streamline the governance of their 26 institutions as many of them had experienced governance and management challenges, qualified audits, etc which reflected poorly on the Department and its oversight role. By reducing the number of institutions through amalgamation, there would be fewer stains on the reputation of the Department…I really hope that this is not the real reason for these centralised recommendations. The challenge is to build capacity within the governance and management of these institutions, not to reduce the governing councils; how a centralised governing structure with part-time volunteers is going to be able to govern major institutions around the country even through one meeting per month, is beyond my limited comprehension, when many of these institutions have faltered even with governing boards that are in close proximity to such institutions.

At the same time that the RWP recommends the amalgamation of the NFVF and the NAC for greater coordination and efficiency purposes, it recommends a host of other funds – a Catalyst Fund for seed funding for creative enterprises, a Regional Fund to promote trade in Africa, an Investment Fund for equity investments in small and medium creative enterprises, accelerators, incubators, joint funding, conditional grants for community arts…There is little clarity about how these would relate, if at all, to each other, and to the new National Art and Audio Visual Council of SA, whether the Council would fund non-profit artistic practices, while the other funds would be to support for-profit activities. This is one of the key contradictions in contemporary funding: the push for sustainability and a profitable creative and cultural industries sector, while funding from the major agencies – the NAC, the NFVF and the National Lotteries Commission – are made available only to non-profits, to entities that almost by definition have to show a loss, or that they are unprofitable in order to access public support.

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

Finally, the Revised White Paper on Arts and Culture makes a case for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of policy in order to take corrective action where necessary and ends with the following “For monitoring and evaluation to be effective, the imposition of sanctions and the prescription of remedial action must be mandatory”. Which is all well and good, except that it does not apply to the principle agency responsible for the implementation and management of cultural policy – the Department of Arts, Culture and Heritage, which is assigned the role of monitoring and evaluation, along with other agencies.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, given that government departments have been called upon to respond to the country’s key challenges, I am not sure that the Revised White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage does so. I am sure though that with the resources we have developed over the last 20 years, the arts and culture sector could be in a much better space had the Department of Arts and Culture more rigorously and robustly implemented the spirit and the letter of the original White Paper.

Rather than be driven by political imperatives to address poverty, unemployment and inequality - even though they are worthy imperatives – I am of the opinion that if we created policies and strategies based on the premises of the 1996 White Paper i.e. “the doors of learning and culture shall be open” and “everyone shall have the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community and to enjoy the arts”, we would not only have a hugely vibrant arts and culture sector, but we will, more organically and sustainably, address the poverty, unemployment, inequality and issues such as social cohesion.

But then, and I cannot overemphasise this enough, policy is only the beginning. Effective implementation requires political vision and will, a capable driver in the Department of Arts, Culture and Heritage, and robust partnerships with civil society actors.