
1. HEART OF THE NATION: AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

As one of the authors of the *Heart of the Nation* report, I have followed its political reception with great interest. Clearly it has provoked debate, as any thorough review document should. Two strands in this debate are of particular interest. First, the Associate Minister of Culture and Heritage Judith Tizard is now intending to produce her own strategy by next year and has spoken of enlisting help from abroad. And second, Peter Biggs of Creative New Zealand feels the report 'leaves large issues unanswered about the future of the cultural sector' and worries whether the direction of our recommendations for restructuring might not be 'counter to international trends' (Biggs, 2000:1).

Long before the *Heart of the Nation* project was mooted, I had arranged to take study leave to investigate current trends in cultural policy. I have therefore spent much of the last two months examining policy documents at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, the Arts Management School at the City University of London and at New York University. This has given me access to extensive material, which I had not seen before the *Heart of the Nation* report was drafted.

The Council of Europe (COE) documents are particularly relevant because many of them have been produced as standard-setting documents to guide new policy formulation for 45 European nations. Perhaps it would assist Ms Tizard to appreciate the value of the *Heart of the Nation* report if these standards were used as an evaluation framework? Perhaps such a process would also address Mr Biggs' 'unanswered questions'?

This, anyway, is the purpose of this article. Council of Europe benchmarks will be used to test first the policy setting; second the strategy; and finally the structural recommendations *Heart of the Nation* contains.

2. THE POLICY SETTING

The Council of Europe documents identify one generic concern about contemporary cultural policy: it's all talk but no action. Or as the Council puts it:

'There is an unexplained contradiction at the heart of cultural governance ... It is a critical disjunction between rhetoric and reality. States are increasingly asserting the importance of cultural policy but this is not always translated into effective action' (COE1: 7).

The Blair Labour government in Britain apparently exemplifies this problem (AP1). It would be a pity if this same malaise afflicted its counterpart in New Zealand.

The explanation for this inertia is not ascribed to a *'failure of political will'* but instead to inappropriate and fragmented policy settings. The following solutions are proposed:

1. **An integrated approach.** Cultural policy must be government led - *'at the heart of public administration' (COE3: 10)*. The government's purposes cannot be fully realised unless *'a holistic or integrated approach is adopted' (COE1: 8)*. This is precisely the approach adopted by *Heart of the Nation* (see pp.16-1).
2. **Leadership from the top.** Culture must be *'repositioned at the heart of the decision-making process' (COE2: 272)*. What is required *'over and above everything else is a commitment at the highest level to govern by objectives' (COE1: 44)*. To this end *Heart of the Nation* recommended policy leadership by the Prime Minister assisted by a Cabinet Committee on Cultural Development (see p110).
3. **A cross-governmental perspective.** In addition, *'some kind of cross-governmental arrangement will be necessary to ensure that in cultural matters the State takes due account of the cultural impact of all its decisions' (COE1: 17)*. Our proposal to achieve this involved the establishment of a specialist cultural portfolio within the Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (see p110).
4. **A cross-sectoral approach.** *'The case for a cross-sectoral approach ... is rational and convincing - in fact irresistible' (COE1: 43)*. This was the approach adopted by *Heart of the Nation* (see p 76).
5. **Recognition of the symbiotic nature of the arts and creative industries.** The Council of Europe believes cultural policy must recognise that:

... for each of the subsidised art forms there is an interlocked commercial arm with which the relationship is symbiotic ... the subsidised sector has the effect of being the research and development wing of the cultural industries' (COE1: 67).

Similarly, Heart of the Nation argues that the arts and creative industries are 'symbiotic' and that the strategy should 'ensure that their development occurs in an integrated manner' (see p 6).

6. **A policy model which secures both social and economic benefits.** According to the Council of Europe, the cultural policy 'model which succeeds will be that which provides a sense of economic and cultural security in equal measure' (COE3: 45). The Heart of the Nation model is predicated on a balance between 'cultural returns/social cohesion' and 'reinvestment and economic growth' (see p 17).
7. **Self-determination.** The best model will also allow 'the greatest degree of self-determination' (COE3: 39). Heart of the Nation argues for 'Maori cultural sovereignty/tino rangitiratanga over the development of Maori cultural resources' (see p7 and elsewhere).
8. **Integrated regional development.** The Council of Europe's view is that there 'is advantage in national governments restricting themselves to a high level strategic role' (COE3: 100). In such circumstances:

... regional and local authorities should be given the responsibility to establish comprehensive cultural strategies ... However, as a matter of principle, the delegation of cultural responsibilities by government should be accompanied by the transfer of appropriate financial resources (COE3 273).

Such arrangements are seen as an expression of the need 'to take decisions as close as possible to those who will be affected by them' (COE3: 272). Similarly, Heart of the Nation proposes a devolved model of local government partnership and co-financing on the basis that 'cultural development responsibilities should lie where strategic capability is strongest or might best be developed' (see p 112).

9. **The diminished significance of the arms-length principle and the necessity of structural change.** The 'arms-length principle remains valid' (UK Department of Culture, Media and Sport 1: 1) as a means of guaranteeing the integrity of artistic expression. 'Individual creativity' must be 'allowed to function outside state control' (COE1: 49). However, government needs to drive its own development policies directly.

We are convinced that the arm has different lengths and it is sometimes too long. It has become a substitute for the strategic leadership which only a Department of State can provide... That role means being able to take forward government objectives for and with these sectors and when necessary taking action ourselves DCMS1: 1).

Heart of the Nation preserves the arms-length principle in relation to individual creativity through its proposed Creative Resources Foundation (see p 116). It also provides for government action 'with the sectors' through the Creative Industries Development Agency (see p 115); and independent government action through the 'policy and resourcing functions' of the proposed twin ministries (see p 111).

10. **New tools of measurement and accountability.** A final criterion involves *'the development of new and sophisticated methods of measuring the delivery of objectives'* in order to *'refocus government away from the measurement of activity to the measurement of results'* (COE1: 44). *Heart of the Nation* envisaged this as the role of the Cultural Management and Research Centre which would be devoted to *'independent monitoring, review and research'* (see p 119).

3. STRATEGIC ISSUES

If the *Heart of the Nation* approach is consistent with the big picture, what about its detailed recommendations for strategic action? The principal areas for strategic action identified in the report are considered below. I compare the Council of Europe's standards with the *Heart of the Nation* prescription.

HERITAGE

'Heritage', the Council of Europe argues, 'must be maintained as a living part of society' (COE2: 84) since 'culture, like nature, uses its past to fuel its future' (COE2: 10). Precisely! As we argue in *Heart of the Nation*:

'We see heritage not as remote and moribund but as a cultural resource, continually reinvented to meet present needs' (see p16).

And what measures does the Council of Europe see as pressing priorities for heritage development?

Accessibility – The collections of museums, libraries and archives should 'join together as a series of linked databases' (COE2: 57) to permit ready public access. This parallels *Heart of the Nation's* proposals to establish New Zealand Heritage On-line (p 118).

Integrated heritage product development – Member states of the EC are formally committed to improving 'universal access to ... heritage ... to help to increase awareness of ... cultural identity and to strengthen it in the light of new developments in communications' (COE4: 89). Comparative national policy reviews have demonstrated that these purposes are realised more effectively by:

... the trend in heritage management ... towards positive external factors, a trend encouraged by cultural tourism and the economic exploitation of heritage, which entails co-operation (COE4: 76).

Heart of the Nation similarly argues for a 'new heritage partnership' to develop and market 'quality heritage experiences ... among domestic travelers and international tourists' (see p 117).

IDENTITY

The Council of Europe also asserts that 'reinforcing and promoting cultural life in all its variety is the best way of promoting a national identity' (COE 4: 188). *Heart of the Nation* also sees the 'identities we define as 'primary cultural assets' and 'the impulse behind the cultural policy programmes that have developed over time' (see p 16).

What measures seem particularly important to the Council of Europe as essential means of safeguarding and celebrating identity?

Broadcasting policy (perhaps supported by 'quota requirements'). 'The images of a society which appear on TV screens are crucial to its cultural identity' (COE1: 14). Broadcasting policy must therefore 'deliver opportunities for a diversity of

viewpoints and for local and regional characteristics, whether linguistic, topical or artistic' (COE2: 71). Heart of the Nation's parallel call is for a broadcasting policy that supports 'a pluralist conception of broadcasting' which 'conceives of a multiplicity of audience types served and audiences catered for' (see p90). Quotas are also seen as a possible policy tool should the government's objectives not be realised through self-regulation by broadcasters.

Language policy that ensures the 'protection and promotion of linguistic heritage' COE3: 276). Heart of the Nation similarly highlights the need to 'take all reasonable steps to enable the survival of the Maori language' (see p 87).

CREATIVITY

Council of Europe experts argue that the *'sustainable development'* of creative industries depends on two linked factors. The first *'presupposes that optimal use and regeneration of intellectual resources and human capital provided by the arts will be the focus of attention'* (COE3: 272). The second involves the recognition that *'creativity is not the prerogative of the professional artist'* (COE3: 267), but is also expressed in new fields of cultural practice such as software development and interactive digital media. They see the need to ensure that human creative potential is realised and channelled into creative industries. How is this to be achieved?

Improved arts education in schools. They write:

Learning music helps co-ordination and logical skills. The visual arts aid analysis and concentration. Drama helps levels of self-confidence and social understanding. Creative writing releases expression and improves articulation. These benefits, among others need to be reflected in the school curriculum for all children (COE2: 90).

Again this is familiar territory for *Heart of the Nation* which supports the introduction of New Zealand's progressive new schools arts curriculum (see p 93).

New Training Initiatives for Creative Industries. These industries need *'a continuous stream of skilled and imaginative talent'* (COE2: 68); and *'public policymakers'* must be concerned with *'the nursing of new generations of creative talent'* (COE3: 267). *Heart of the Nation* works from the same premise. *'Creative industries need specialist skills to flourish ... The successful peopling of creative industries cannot be left to chance'* (see p 116). The Creative Resources Foundation is proposed as means of achieving this *'advanced training and retraining and project-based skills development'*.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Like the authors of *Heart of the Nation*, the Council of Europe experts are struck by the *'massive expansion' of investment in 'the infrastructure of arts, venues, libraries and museums'* (COE3: 207). What are their views of this situation?

A need to shift funds from infrastructure to the support of creative expression. They comment on this at some length:

The infrastructure of buildings and building-based institutions now absorbs most of the resources set aside by governments and their agencies for culture ... Inevitably individual creativity and innovation suffers. If the intention is to leave a creative legacy for the future, governments would be wise to review the balance between resource allocations for cultural institutions and the infrastructure and that for non-institutional creativity (COE3: 274).

Heart of the Nation's analysis reveals a similar pattern of investment in New Zealand and also calls for a move 'from a decade of construction to a decade of creation' (see p 73).

The entrepreneurial use of local performing arts infrastructure. The Council of Europe sees the new and often under-utilised performing arts infrastructure in metropolitan centres as offering 'scope for promoters' to market programmes of external productions for audiences that would otherwise be 'subjected to an unnecessarily limited range of styles' by local companies (COE2: 64). *Heart of the Nation* similarly advocates establishing a 'presenters network' to use civic amenities to promote 'a calendar of attractions drawn from local, national and international sources' (see p 96).

More could be said about these and other policy issues: but my point should be amply demonstrated. The policy framework developed by *Heart of the Nation* meets the most exacting of international prescriptions for future cultural policy development. In this sense, *Heart of the Nation* has delivered a policy that creates the future. It's the first off the rank.

4. STRUCTURAL REFORM

And what of the question of structural reform with which the media have been excessively preoccupied? Most of the justifications for change have already been discussed. But let's consider the options that have been raised.

For Ms Tizard and Mr. Biggs, the status quo seems to be sufficient. The Ministry of Culture and Heritage and Creative New Zealand are represented as being capable vehicles of change. Indeed, if Mr. Biggs is to be believed, Creative New Zealand is already in the vanguard.

But experience in Europe must call this judgement into question. In Blair's Britain in particular, commentators perceive the onset of '*a crisis of sorts in the way that we govern arts and culture*' (AP1: 156). It has been induced by a mismatch between the scope of Britain's new cultural and creative industry policies and the narrow focus of the existing machinery of government in the cultural sector.

This is highlighted by the deficiencies of a '*relatively weak department of government ... that has no direct control over many of the key elements that might, logically, be required to pursue such a strategy*'. The uncertain role and function of the Arts Council of England, still disoriented following a '*huge reorganisation*', compounds the situation (AP1: 157). As a consequence, '*the question of implementation is yet to be resolved, let alone the question of strategic development and co-ordination*' (AP1: 160). Comparisons with the New Zealand situation are compelling.

Heart of the Nation may not have got it right with its proposed restructuring (though so far no-one has clearly explained why). But the Council of Europe has one final message for those in the government who have responsibility for New Zealand's future cultural directions:

Governments will not be able to realise their aims unless they create [structures] which match the reality of the way culture works in society (COE1: 43)

Is the best means of advancing our cultural future a monocultural Ministry with ad-hoc authority over the cultural sector? What is the future value of an arts-focused statutory body which claims to be 'arms-length' but which the Associate Minister now regards as viable only because it is subject to her personal direction? As she has said on Radio New Zealand:

... Oh look, it's [Creative New Zealand] been terrible and I think they have just finally started to get it right. Things like our requirement on them that they start working on a touring fund, on artist fellowships, on branding of Maori arts and crafts, all of those sorts of issues I think, (Tizard, 2000: 3).

Don't we owe it to ourselves to do better than this? Should we be guided by short-term cultural politics, but by the spirit of the *Heart of the Nation* process:

Te wairua, te mauri, te manawa.

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