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To cite this article: J.D. Snowball & A.C.M. Webb (2008) Breaking into the conversation: cultural value and the role of the South African National Arts Festival from apartheid to democracy, *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 14:2, 149-164, DOI: [10.1080/10286630802106326](https://doi.org/10.1080/10286630802106326)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10286630802106326>



Published online: 19 May 2008.



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Breaking into the conversation: cultural value and the role of the South African National Arts Festival from apartheid to democracy

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The paper examines the value of the South African National Arts Festival (NAF) in the transition to democracy using theories of cultural capital. NAF history from 1974 to 2004 is used to argue that the Festival provided an important arena for the expression of political resistance in the 1980s and, to some degree, continues to do so today. It is concluded that an important part of the value of the arts is their ability to provide a forum for debating the goals and values of society and that individualistic utility theory is not always successful in measuring such social value.

Keywords: cultural capital; arts; valuation; common good; festival

Frey (2005, p. 2) points out an apparent contradiction in measuring the value of the arts: ‘Arts people focus more on the economic effects of the arts than economists do’. On the one hand, arts administrators and entrepreneurs accept the social value of the arts as given and commission economists to provide economic impact reports because they know that this is a very effective way to lobby for increased public funds. On the other hand, economists use willingness to pay studies to show market failure, proving that the arts deserve public funding in the first place. Currently the two sorts of studies are mostly conducted and used separately (Frey 2005)

The problem is partly related to utility theory and its focus on individual, short-term consumption, which allows economists to make ‘efficient’ decisions without interrogating value. Klamer (2002) argues that economics did once include more ‘moral science’, but that in the process of defining the discipline, much that was never meant to be excluded, was lost. He argues that we need to expand our field of study to once again include things like cultural capital, ‘which have value in and of themselves’ (Klamer 2002, p. 463) without a fixation on market or contingent market values.

Using the South African National Arts Festival (NAF) as an example, this paper argues that both the market and contingent market studies fall short when it comes to valuing the arts in the long term and that historical, qualitative studies might provide both the evidence of market failure or externalities and the ‘political activation’ (Frey 2005) needed for effective fund lobbying.

The NAF is an interesting case study because it has been in operation from 1974 to the present – covering the politically turbulent apartheid to democracy period in the country’s history. This paper uses new theories of what makes up cultural and artistic value (and who determines it), to assess the contribution of the NAF to South Africa’s cultural capital over three periods.

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1. Theoretical advances in valuation of culture

Most economists would agree that culture and the arts do not operate like normal goods in the market. One argument is that the arts have public good characteristics (Throsby 1994, Abbing 1997). This has an important implication for valuing the arts because price, value determined by the market, is often what is used as a measure of value. Klamer (2003a, p. 3) argues that, ‘the dominant economic paradigm seriously hampers discussion of values among economists’ because it is too focused on the idea of utility and rational choice theory. In this model consumption and production, which determine market price, are an effective way of valuing a good without having to observe or discuss the reasons behind the choices.

Many of the problems associated with the valuation of cultural goods specifically are that the arts, and the cultures they stem from, are very much the product of society rather than the individual around whom marginal utility theory revolves. Both Klamer (2003a) and Throsby (2003) refer to the complex ways in which society values cultural goods, not as individuals, but collectively. Interestingly, communitarian theory, developed as a way of explaining the value of leisure activities in sociology, seems to be approaching the same conclusion, but, as it were, from a different starting point; ‘For communitarians, community is the context of social relationships; it is not simply the utilitarian context for meeting private ends’ (Arai and Pedlar 2003, p. 187).

Communitarians value participatory leisure activities, or ‘focal practices’, like the arts, very highly because of the social networks and ‘shared meanings’ they create, not because of the individual utility they provide, which, in any case, is meaningless outside of its social context (Arai and Pedlar 2003). But far from suggesting that such communal leisure produces unity of voice or widespread consensus, communitarians believe that it is precisely the argument about shared values and goals that such participatory leisure enables, which is so important in developing the ‘social self’ needed for a healthy society. A recent study of the perceptions of festival stakeholders in Catalunya (Crespi-Vallbona and Richards 2007, p. 112) found just perceptions: that the festivals were important in developing social cohesion and identity, but also that they ‘made contradictions evident’. Such local cultural events were also seen as a way of incorporating increasing numbers of Spanish immigrants into Catalunan society and an important way of maintaining the region’s cultural identity in the face of globalisation.

Theory about the nature and value of the arts as an economic good has developed in two related, but different directions – the idea of ‘cultural capital’ and the arts as a ‘common’ good – both of which abandon the private/public good debate in favour of recognizing the social nature of the arts.

Throsby (1999, 2001) first introduced the idea of cultural capital in economics. ‘Cultural capital, in an economic sense, can provide a means of representing culture which enables both tangible and intangible manifestation of culture to be articulated as long-lasting stores of value and providers of benefits for individuals and groups’ (Throsby 2001, p. 44). Like Klamer (2003b), he separates economic from cultural capital, but emphasizes that cultural capital can give rise to both economic value (‘ordinary’ capital) and cultural value.

For the purposes of this study, cultural capital can be understood in two ways: as a stock of knowledge that enables an individual person to interpret or, to use Klamer’s (2002, p. 467) definition, to ‘find meaning’ in cultural goods. This form of cultural capital is usually specific to a particular cultural group and can be acquired formally and deliberately (for example through formal education) and informally by being exposed to the cultural practices and artefacts of a particular part of society (for example by being raised in that culture or living among a group of people from that culture). Secondly, cultural capital can

be seen as forming part of the wealth of a particular group of people (a tribe, a nation, a city). This can include both tangible and intangible goods and refer to everyday lifestyle practices, but particularly to artistic expressions of that way of life. For example, a city like Athens or Paris can be said to have significant cultural capital.

The recognition of cultural capital as an economic value can provide a whole new way of understanding the value of the arts. Throsby (2001; 2005) draws a parallel between the preservation of biodiversity (natural capital) and cultural diversity (cultural capital), which generates the kinds of moral arguments that have been used in the case of the preservation of natural capital for years. Like natural capital, cultural capital can be depreciated without any immediate decline in economic capital. The impact on current human capital, and hence economic implications, suggests inevitable medium to long-term consequences not reflected in the current market. A key area of this argument is the value of cultural diversity, both in terms of equality and in terms of its innate value, where differences are 'prized and cultivated as empowering forces' (Ghilardi 2001, p. 2). As with natural resources, the rights of current and future generations to access to such cultural resources are an equally important issue (Throsby 2001). As will be shown in the NAF case study, the notion of fairness of access and representation of diversity were particularly important and bitterly contested issues.

Another way of interrogating the value of cultural goods is to look at them as common goods. Klammer (2004b) defines common goods as 'shared by a group of people without a clear legal definition of ownership'. They are not exactly private goods because members of the group or club cannot be excluded and, since the degree of participation determines the level of benefit to any user, free-riding is not a problem. On the other hand, they are not exactly public goods either, since it is quite possible to exclude non-members. Klammer (2004b) compares the arts as a common good with a conversation: While no one of the participants owns the conversation, they certainly derive value from it, but only in the context of the conversation, not in isolation; current participants can exclude outsiders and decide on the criteria for membership; the more anyone contributes to (produces) or uses (consumes) the conversation, the more valuable the conversation is, both to the individual and the group. Acknowledged membership lends status and recognition to the members while neglecting the conversation devalues it.

Many of these characteristics are directly applicable to the arts, especially in a Festival context, where the 'conversation' can be intensively pursued by producers and consumers in a limited geographical space. The idea is also particularly applicable to South Africa, where racial barriers defined memberships or groupings for so long. People of non-European origin were largely excluded from the arts 'conversation' by participants of European origin. By this exclusion, African-origin art and artists were denied the legitimacy and status conferred on club members and were essentially disenfranchised in the cultural sphere. When things began to change politically, there were several stages in the re-making of the arts conversation.

Firstly, previous non-members were given limited membership, that is, they could 'listen' to the conversation and contribute small amounts, but had no control over how much they could contribute or the direction the conversation would take. This corresponds to Phase 1 of the National Arts Festival (NAF) development. Ironically, South African members were then excluded from the wider international arts conversation in the cultural boycott of the apartheid years. In the second phase, previous non-members were given almost full membership in that the value of their contributions was much more widely recognized and appreciated, but they still lacked representative control of the conversation (the NAF committee, who decided on participation and subsidy, still being

largely made up of the old members). Finally, in the New South Africa, previous non-members have full membership and previous members have, to some extent, lost status and control. But, the logical, hoped-for conclusion, that we could build an inclusive, enriched conversation of South African art, is still some way off and, at the moment, it looks as if our club has fragmented into a number of sub-clubs – still within the original club, but consisting of distinct conversations with very different levels of participation, membership and status.

Having established the problems with individual utility theory as a way of valuing the arts, the next logical question is how else one might go about measuring such values. Here the theoretical advances have reached a temporary halt. Throsby (2003, pp. 279–280) points out that while economic value, including imputed non-market value, is measurable and expressible in quantitative terms, ‘Cultural value ... is multi-dimensional, unstable, contested, lacks a common unit of account, and may contain elements that cannot be easily expressed according to any quantitative or qualitative scale’. While there appears to be a significant literature developing on the subject of ‘cultural indicators’, particularly amongst arts policy makers and proponents (Madden 2004), the field is ‘still largely under development’ and has mostly not been turned into practical arts funding policy.

Other work that has emphasised and tried to quantify the social value of the arts includes the study by Matarasso (1997) who used case studies and questionnaires to evaluate the social impact of community arts participation in UK. The findings were divided into six themes: personal development; social cohesion, including promoting intercultural understanding within communities; community empowerment and self-determination, including ‘nurturing local democracy’; local image and identity; imagination and vision; and health and well-being. However, the work was severely criticised by Merli (2002) on the grounds that it lacked internal validity, so that the data collected could not be shown to be unbiased (both in terms of questionnaire design and in the underlying assumptions of Matarasso himself) or to support the findings.

McCarthy *et al.* (2004) attempt to place a social value on the arts from both private and public good perspectives. They acknowledge that the arts can provide two categories of benefit. ‘Intrinsic’ benefits are directly related to the artistic product and can provide values like captivation, pleasure, empathy, cognitive growth, creating social networks and finding or conveying community expressions and critiques. ‘Instrumental’ benefits are those not directly associated with the artistic output, for example improving learning and academic performance, improving attitude and behaviour, positive impacts on health and social interaction and, of course, economic or financial benefits. The latter are, unfortunately, often the focus ‘impact’ studies used to argue for public support, but have problematic methodologies and can be provided by substitutes, i.e. goods other than the arts (McCarthy *et al.* 2004).

Holden (2004, p. 10) also recognises the difference between ‘the affective elements of cultural experience, practice and identity’ and the more easily quantifiable numerical data on spending and attendance. He argues that recognition of cultural values, not based purely, or even mainly, on such numerical data will lead to a ‘strong culture, confident in its own worth, instead of a weak culture dedicated to the production of ancillary benefits’. In such a scenario, evaluation could be used to improve the quality of the cultural resource, not just as a motivation for more public funding. However, he also recognises that quantifying such values is far from simple and that it may never be possible to show that ‘investment in x will produce y outcome’ (Holden 2004, p. 18).

Throsby (2001) suggests that one might more closely interrogate cultural value by disaggregating it and perhaps using some kind of numerical scale to indicate the importance of

each category of value over time. Part 2 of this article discusses the application of these theoretical advances to the National Arts Festival and attempts to value it in terms of its role in South African political and social transformation. 'Value' is thus divided into a number of sub-categories and rated in importance over the three phases of the Festival described below. These valuations are based on interviews with stakeholders, perusal of past Festival programmes and other literature, and a consideration of South African political and economic history.

There are a wide variety of categories or indicators that one could use to disaggregate the cultural value of an event like the National Arts Festival. For example, the arts have been shown to increase people's sense of identity and empowerment, build community pride and cohesion, bring people together who might otherwise not have met, help to build social networks, encourage diversity and understanding of other cultures and so on (Guetzkow 2002; White and Rentschler 2005). There is also some evidence that culture can be important in reflecting, or even encouraging, social change. As Waterman (1998, p. 55) puts it, "cultural" questions of aesthetics, taste and style cannot be divorced from "political" questions about power, inequality and oppression ...'. Studies on cultural resistance, defined by Brown (1998, p. 218) as 'the use of culture as a locus of organization and a counterhegemonic tool in the conflict with political powers' have been conducted in many countries including Mexico (Brown 1998), Singapore (Kong 1995) and China (Mackerras 1979).

Three major components of the cultural value of the Festival are considered in this study: firstly, the extent to which the Festival played a role in maintaining the stock of diverse South African cultural capital, where diversity is defined as the cultural variety of performers, artists, artistic performances and artefacts. In the apartheid era, this was largely related to the extent to which the Festival included Africa-origin (black) art and artists, rather than exclusively English or Afrikaans (white) cultures. The second indicator looks at the Festival's role in building new cultural capital, where cultural capital is understood to be a form of South Africa's wealth, but is primarily related to the education and inclusion of young South African artists. Like environmental issues, the continued interest in, and development of, culture depends crucially on building new audiences for the future. These indicators were chosen because they apply the fairly well developed idea of cultural capital and are relatively easy to assess from the historical information available.

The third category is the extent to which the festival acted as an outlet for the expression of political and social resistance, particularly during the apartheid era, but also in the change to the New South Africa. Again, this is a fairly well documented research area and, by comparing the political and economic events of a particular period with Festival content of that period, it is possible to assess to what extent this reflection was occurring.

Finally, the Festival's role in the 'valorisation' (Klamer 2004a) of cultural expression by artists, agents and audiences is discussed. Klamer points out that the valuation of cultural goods does not only happen in the market, but is a socially constructed value that can change over time through interactions between various parties engaged in valuing the good. An arts festival, which brings together various groups of evaluators for a short, concentrated time, is an ideal opportunity for such valorisation to occur, creating feedbacks between them which can result in a broad consensus of the 'value' of a particular work or artist (Waterman 1998). An example of the use of such socially generated values would be the way that performances that are sold out at well-known festivals, like the Edinburgh Festivals, use this in their advertising as an indication of their quality. However, the National Arts Festival's role in valorisation is very much dependant on the previous categories of cultural value,

since the judgments made by Festival artists and audiences are subject to the perceived legitimacy of the Festival in articulating a truly representative South African voice.

The four categories discussed above are assumed to provide positive values, but it is noted that the arts may also generate negative social impacts. White and Rentschler (2005) and Belfiore and Bennett (2007) note that most studies focus on positive impacts, but that the arts may also have negative effects, like building solidarity in one group to the exclusion of others. There may also be negative impacts within the four value categories discussed. For example, while this paper treats increasing diversity as a positive aspect, resistance sub-cultures may see inclusion in a more diverse, yet organised, mainstream festival as undermining their effectiveness. Further research in this area is certainly needed.

Section 2 evaluates the National Arts Festival in the four categories described from 1974–1983: Festival beginnings and the cultural boycott; section 3 examines the period of social resistance, revolution and issues of control from 1984–1994; section 4 discusses the role of the Festival in the New South Africa and section 5 concludes.

2. Phase 1: Festival beginnings, cultural capital and the cultural boycott

The South African National Arts Festival (NAF) was started in 1974 as an annual arts Festival, designed specifically to conserve and promote the English heritage and cultural capital of the 1820 British Settlers in the increasingly Afrikaner dominated regime of the time. The government supported the initiative on the grounds that this would allow for the ‘separate development’ of English culture, a keystone of the philosophical underpinning of apartheid. Early Festivals included events like the plays of Shakespeare, BBC films and guided tours of ‘settler’ country and even began a misconceived series of theme Festivals in 1981, starting with ‘Mostly Mozart’ and ‘Boldly Beethoven’.

However, even in the early days, European-origin Festival organisers (mostly members of the 1820 Settlers’ Foundation, local office bearers and members of Rhodes University) recognised the need to expand into other cultures and also to make space for politically provocative and experimental work. From 1976, the Festival thus included work by Athol Fugard and the political satirist, Pieter-Dirk Uys, South African short films and exhibitions of contemporary African art. 1979 saw the advent of the more experimental ‘fringe’ programme which also included more African-origin artists. By 1983, the Festival chairman, Dudley Hopkins, specifically stated that ‘meaningful black [African-origin people] participation can only result in a richer experience for us all’ (Festival programme 1983).

Neville (1999, p. 89) comments on the difficulty of getting government permission for the inclusion of even such limited numbers of African-origin and mixed-origin delegates at the 1976 Festival, despite the fact that only a few weeks before an international United Nations ‘Year of the Woman’ conference was held at the Monument, which was ‘the largest multiracial gathering ever held in South Africa’. In the end, the Festival was unofficially open to everybody as long as it did not lead to confrontation and this element was downplayed in the press.¹ Nevertheless it remained difficult, and sometimes risky, to include many Africa-origin artists as Grundy (1993, p. 15) points out:

At the time of the Soweto uprising [1976], government censorship and the bounds of artistic expression were unclear and downright dangerous ... Virtually no one at the Foundation or the Festival management was prepared to risk closure by or even challenges to the state by presenting more than mildly daring material.

However, so long as performances were presented in the English language, they escaped the ire of the regime. There was undoubtedly grave reservation on the part of the South African government to even the 'mildly daring' offerings and attempts at audience diversification on the part of the Festival committee, but so long as they presented no immediate threat to the purity of Afrikaner culture they could be tolerated. Furthermore, the collapse of Portuguese colonial rule in Africa, the rise of resistance in Rhodesia and the beginnings of South Africa's own internal struggle with the schools boycott of 1976, all heralded the onset of a period in which the focus of the apartheid state was drawn increasingly towards a battle for survival rather than the micro-management of a disdained cultural event.

Despite this move towards recognising the value of African cultural capital, it should be noted that Festival control was still exclusively in the hands of European-origin people and that the gravity of the political situation in the South Africa between 1974 and 1983 was not reflected in Festival content. This decreased the value of the Festival as an arena for 'valorization' (Klamer 2002) of cultural goods or, as communitarians would suggest, the value of the 'shared meaning' of the good.

The UN international cultural boycott officially began in 1980, reflecting the growing opposition to apartheid. According to Mzamane (1990) African-origin South Africans saw the cultural boycott as an important way to fight against the apartheid system and a possible means, along with other boycott measures by the international community, to a peaceful solution to the problem. Along with Shore (1990), Mzamane stresses that the purpose of the cultural boycott was to isolate, to deny acceptance to European-origin South Africans and to thus impose psychological pressure. Shore (1990, p. 403) comments that,

in many ways cultural politics is at the cutting edge of the new society waiting to be born in South Africa. Through these cultural expressions, it is argued, those Africans committed to a new society are helping people to resist, survive and, ultimately, contemplate alternatives.

Huisamen (2004), who has been involved with the Festival from the beginning, comments that the cultural boycott was a double-edged sword as far as the Festival was concerned. While on the one hand it limited the number of international performers, on the other it meant that the stage had to be filled with South African art and artists, thus encouraging their work and making it available to audiences. While some anti-apartheid artists got caught in the cross-fire, the lack of cultural imports ultimately helped to wean local English culture off its colonial roots and encouraged the emergence of greater clarity of what it meant to be 'English' in Africa. In this sense, the cultural boycott helped the birth of a South African cultural identity of 'shared meaning'. That it was a slow process is a reflection of the extent to which colonialism and apartheid had alienated and separated the society into distinct ethnic 'cultures'.

Klamer's (2004) view of the arts as a common good explains the effect of the boycott well. Exclusion from the international cultural 'conversation', a denial of access to cultural capital, was a real punishment – perhaps as much as denial of access to more commonly accepted forms of capital or goods, like arms. Being cut off culturally from the rest of the world almost certainly decreased the Festival's role as a place where art could be displayed and valued. Along with the lack of audience diversity, the lack of international audiences, agents and artists meant that the Festival only had a very limited credibility as a place to judge or value the arts.

Considering the sub-categories of cultural value outlined previously, the period from 1974 to 1983 does not perform well. As far as maintaining diverse South African cultural capital goes, while it could be argued that protecting or maintaining the English language speaking population's cultural capital in the face of Afrikaner political domination was

an important goal, it was a very small part of the culture of all South Africans. Although African-origin artists were involved from the beginning, their influence was minimal and the Festival Committee was made up of only European-origin people, effectively controlling 'club membership'. As for building new cultural capital, the Festival was equally unsuccessful in this period. The inclusion of student drama in the programme from 1976 no doubt contributed somewhat, but the tone was very much that of the preservation of English cultural heritage, rather than extending audiences and reaching out to the majority of South Africans.

Even in this early stage, however, the role of the Festival as an outlet for the expression of political and social awareness and resistance was starting to be important. Entwined within the programmes of Shakespeare and Brahms can often be found the tendrils of current social comment and the voice of dissent and the beginnings of an appreciation of African art and artists. Category four (the valorization of culture by artists, agents and audiences) is difficult to comment on in this period because of the lack of audience research, but anecdotal evidence (Huisamen 2004), as well as the laws restricting the movements of African-origin people, suggests that audiences were mostly European-origin, English-speaking liberals. Despite this, the coming ferocity of debates about Festival control and the appearance of Barbara Masikela (head the ANC Department of Arts and Culture) in 1990 (discussed further below), suggest that the Festival has always been recognized as an important platform on which to present ideas and arguments.

3. Phase 2 (1984–1994): Resistance, revolution and control

The Festival character changed decidedly in 1984, when the Standard Bank took over as title sponsors (Huisamen 2004; Grundy 1993) and the chairman renewed the commitment to building more diverse cultural capital with a view to more general acceptance by all South Africans (Festival programme 1984). However, considering the increasing political violence and the severe economic recession in the country that year, Festival content was still (mostly) determinedly uninvolved, the programme cover showing a portrait of Shakespeare.

The real change in Festival direction is immediately apparent in 1985 – the programme cover showing a stylized form of African mask (see Appendix 1). The chairman's message also reflects this change in attitude, referring to the Festival as a 'melting pot of ideas ... where people of divergent cultures struggle to find a common identity and purpose' (Festival programme 1985). The Main programme included high profile African-origin actors, like John Kani, and the Young Artists Award for drama and music went to African-origin and mixed-origin artists, Maishe Maponya and Sidwell Hartman, for the first time. While the Winter School still included things like the inauguration of the South African Shakespeare Society, the keynote lecture, 'Images of Africa' was presented by Professor Es'kia Mphahlele of the University of the Witwatersrand. The Fringe presented a number of political plays by African-origin artists, like 'Ubu for President' as well as Athol Fugard's 'Sizwe Bansi is Dead'. Clearly, a sea change had occurred and, from this time onwards the character of the Festival became more diverse, politically aware, challenging.

Both Grundy (1993) and Huisamen (2004) attribute this 'awakening' to the influence of the Standard Bank, despite the fact that it was seen by many as an establishment, capitalist organization. In fact, the *South African News Summary* (1984 and 1985) reports the growing opposition of big business to the apartheid policies of government. The Standard Bank itself (and other large corporations) had been collecting fine art by African-origin artists since the 1960s, thus playing an important role in maintaining the cultural capital of African cultures. The first step in their reformation of the Festival was to loosen the ties between the Festival

and the 1820 Settlers' Foundation, with its overtones of European-origin colonialism, by funding certain things (like the salary of the Festival officer) directly (Huisamen 2004).

1985 was a year of economic hardship for South Africa with increases in taxes and fuel prices driving inflation up even further, increasing foreign debt (\$23.9 billion by the end of 1985) and low national productivity. The financial 'sanctions' via the debt-standstill imposed by the international financial community in 1984 meant that the apartheid state could no longer finance its policies and political violence via foreign loans. A political deadlock was reached in that the government would not negotiate with the ANC while they advocated violence and the ANC would not consider a ceasefire until negotiations had started. The South African Defence Force led raids against alleged ANC supporters in Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. A state of emergency was imposed in June (*South African News Summary* 1985). While President Botha opened parliament with a reference to the 'outdated concept of apartheid', and two of the most indefensible apartheid laws, the Pass Law (controlling the movement of African-origin people into and out of European-origin urban areas) and the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, were repealed, the economic outlook was still poor with economic growth of only 1%, inflation of 18.6% and continued massive disinvestment by foreign-owned companies (*Race Relations Survey* 1986).

The 1986 Festival theme (originally planned to highlight the effect of Russian émigrés on Western culture, but necessarily revised because of the cultural boycott) was 'Encounters' focusing on cross-cultural understanding. There was also a significant increase in African-origin performing arts groups and institutions on the Fringe. The Winter School reflected a great deal more political awareness, with lectures on 'Maids and Madams' and 'Witness to Apartheid' and films focusing specifically on apartheid South Africa. Pieter-Dirk Uys presented 'Beyond the Rubicon' – an openly satirical drama focusing on P.W. Botha's famous 1984 speech that finally prompted the international financial institutions to act against the country and ridiculing apartheid policies. A photographic exhibition entitled, 'South Africa in Conflict' was shown on the Fringe (Festival programme 1986).

Grundy (1993, p. 18) agrees that, while the Main Festival programme remained fairly conservative, partly because of their reliance on the state-funded arts councils for large productions, the Fringe 'came alive as more adventuresome material was offered. The audiences were younger. The market for challenging, indigenous theatre grew,' as did the Festival's roles both in maintaining cultural capital and in offering an outlet for apartheid resistance. Van der Vyver and Du Plooy-Cilliers (2006 p. 193) agree that, despite the 'favoritism, injustice and racial prejudice' found in South African performing arts at the time, 'culture was used as a powerful platform to voice opposition against apartheid ...' Yet, despite changes in the NAF, Grundy (1993) is skeptical of their real effect because European-origin people still controlled the Festival completely. Despite the continued increase in African-origin artists and performers in 1987, by the following year the Festival was faced with a possible boycott by some progressive cultural organizations (Grundy 1993).

In 1989, F.W. De Klerk became president and immediately made it clear that changes were in the offing. In his parliamentary opening address in February of 1990, he referred to the country as being 'irrevocably on the road to drastic change' (*South African Record* 1990, p. 68). From then onwards, political changes began to take place faster and with a more definite direction: Nelson Mandela was released from prison, ANC exiles began to return to the country and the ANC declared the end of the armed struggle. The National Peace Accord agreement was signed and Codesa (Convention for a Democratic South Africa) began in December (Library of Congress Country Studies 2004).

The changing political climate and increasing demands from community leaders for more say in the organization and planning of the Festival led to many talks and meetings

between the Festival committee and various cultural groups. The talks were, however, hampered by two things. Firstly, as Grundy (1993, p. 19) mentions, by 1988 some progressive African-origin artists were wary of being identified with the NAF and particularly, the 1820 Foundation. Secondly, as both Huisamen (2004) and Grundy (1993) admit, the lack of organization of the cultural groups of African-origin people made it difficult to find acknowledged representatives with whom to negotiate. Thus, while the Festival committee had started to diversify its membership² (under the influence of the Standard Bank) and was open to new ideas, the state of emergency left many groups leaderless and 'it was difficult to understand who was in charge, if anyone, and who could speak for whom' (Grundy 1993, p. 29).

In a sense, the Festival negotiation process was a microcosm for South Africa. Parties on both sides were reaching out and making advances to each other and, while there was a predictable amount of distrust and miscommunication, the overall tone of reconciliation and reformation was unmistakable. One indication of this change was the invitation to Barbara Masakela, head of the ANC Department of Arts and Culture, to speak at the Winter School in 1990. Despite the attempts by the Cultural Desk of the ANC to prevent her attendance, she did speak at the 1990 Festival, making this the first official public gathering with an ANC speaker since the unbanning of the organization. Her address was a clear challenge to the Festival organizers to change the Festival's structure and composition to be more representative of all South Africans, but also acknowledged the positive changes already achieved (Grundy 1993).

When considering the value of the NAF during the politically turbulent 1980s and early 1990s contradictory views arise. On the one hand Huisamen (2004) feels that, although the Festival played a fairly minor role, it was an important one. He argues that the Festival offered a way for anti-apartheid activists to reach out to European-origin liberal artists, academics and audiences and to present some radical ideas. As proof that the Festival was seen by resistance movements to play an important role, he cites the fact that it was never subject to violent attack, although it would have made a highly publicized event. He sees it as offering 'a marketplace for ideas' and an 'escape valve for the frustrations which developed under draconian censorship'.

On the other hand, Grundy (1993, p. 51) ends his review of 'The Politics of the National Arts Festival' on a much more pessimistic note: 'Progressive cultural people still regard the NAF as essentially an establishment institution that gives disproportionate exposure and support to white minority artists and art forms, that is still controlled by minority interest ...'.

Performance in the four value categories from 1984 to 1994 was much improved. In particular, the inclusion of more culturally diverse artists (and thus, audiences) greatly increased the Festival's value as an institution aimed at maintaining diverse South African cultural capital, which was beginning to be recognized as more inclusive and multiracial. Including high profile African-origin artists on the Main programme, more politically daring work on the Fringe and in the Winter School programme all helped a great deal. Diversity was still somewhat hampered by the control of the Festival by European-origin people and the lack of any organized African-origin cultural groups, but was also a symptom of financial considerations. There was also an improvement in building new cultural capital, with the expansion of student drama and the Young Artist Award.

In this politically turbulent period, the Festival became an important outlet for the expression of social resistance and awareness, especially from 1985 onwards. Despite criticisms and the continued control by European-origin people, even Grundy (1993) agrees that far more politically important material was appearing, especially on the Fringe. As far as valorization goes, there are several indications that the Festival was being taken seriously

as a place to display and value cultural and political expressions. For example, the bitter debates relating to control (especially of the Main programme), the presence of important political speakers and the lack of violence at a time when many other public gatherings were at risk, all point to the idea that the Festival was seen as a valuable platform on which to be seen and which thus generated important opinions.

4. Phase 3: Keeping the conversation alive in the New South Africa

The role of the Festival in the New South Africa is naturally different from that in the climate of resistance and struggle of the preceding decade. Lynette Marais has been the NAF director since 1989 and feels that the major change in the Festival, as far as increasing diversity goes, began in 1991 and 1992 (Marais 2004). In 1991, for the first time, the Festival Committee included non-European-origin members (Festival programme 1991). In his Festival message, the chairman of the Festival Committee referred to the criticism that the Festival was receiving from both sides – that it was too Eurocentric on the one hand, and pandering too much to indigenous cultures on the other – as the first sign that it was ‘moving closer to reflecting the richness and diversity of South Africa’s cultural heritage’. Included in the programme was a one-page essay by Makhene entitled ‘Thoughts for the Festival-goer’ in which he outlines his experiences of South African culture in rural areas and amongst workers’ unions. In conclusion, he poses the following question: ‘Are you the Festival-goer ready to include the Bapedi drums and horns, the energy of African Dance, workers’ theatre and the beauty and nuance of African languages in your definition of culture?’

The question still lies at the heart of the success or failure of the Festival’s role in maintaining and building the diverse cultural capital of South Africa and is important on two fronts. Firstly, it links to Klamer’s (2002) definition of cultural capital which is ‘the capacity to ... make meaning’. Since most of the Festival audience at the time was made up of European-origin English speaking people (Davies 1989), it is reasonable to suppose that most of them would not have had the tools or cultural capital needed to make meaning of, for example, Bapedi drums. The willingness of the audience to experiment and to invest in the necessary cultural capital was, and is, the key to creating a really national Festival.

Van Graan is a playwright who has also been extensively involved in arts administration in South Africa and was appointed as an advisor to the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology after the 1994 elections. He now runs an arts and culture consultancy. In a recent interview (*LitNet* 2004) he pointed out that African-origin audiences tend to go to ‘black’ shows, while European-origin audiences go to ‘white’ shows and that disappointingly little hybrid South African culture has emerged. When considered from the point of view of cultural capital, this is hardly surprising, since it is not only the willingness to attend shows outside one’s own culture that is needed, but also the knowledge and experiences needed to make it meaningful.

A number of initiatives have been included in the NAF to build audiences (and so their cultural capital). While the process is slow, there is some evidence that Festival audiences have become more diverse: the percentage of Festival-goers reporting their mother-tongue as English decreasing from 85% in 1987 to 54% in 2004 (Davies 1987, Antrobus and Snowball 2004). The diversification of the Festival committee to include more African-origin cultural workers, political figures and administrators has definitely resulted in a more diverse and representative programme of high-quality shows and improved Festival credibility and made it a more effective arena in which to value works of art.

While some accept that expanding the Festival ‘conversation’ to include all South Africans on an equal footing may be slow work, some commentators argue that the merging of diverse ‘clubs’ is unlikely ever to happen. In a historical study of the development of cultural diversity in the US, DiMaggio (1991) argues that, in the US, ‘high’ culture has been steadily losing its pre-eminence to a multiplicity of other cultural forms which are highly differentiated, but not hierarchically arranged in terms of their value. What has happened is that one form of cultural capital has been devalued, while other forms have been inflated. In South Africa, the political transition to majority rule has devalued European-origin ‘high’ cultural capital almost overnight, while inflating capital associated with other cultural forms, particularly African-origin ones. Barry Ronge (2004, p. 6), a film critic and astute South African social commentator, drew attention to the recent differentiation of South African African-origin youth, who can no longer be regarded as one group:

The older [African-origin] generation seems anxious about the new classes and groupings that are forming in what once seemed like a unified and homogenous ‘black population’. The power brokers want to freeze it into a generic shape with uniformly accepted cultural and political values because that will entrench their power base. But ... the vibrant, young black generations of South Africa are starting to celebrate their differences and to build new social and cultural groupings. The phrase ‘the black youth of South Africa’ no longer means what it meant in 1976.

This emphasises the point that African culture is no more or less static than other cultural forms and that, under the influence of industrialisation and urbanization, new forms of African culture are also developing.

Rating of Festival performance or value in this period is necessarily tentative, since it is not yet clear how it will develop. Nevertheless, the increasing diversity of shows and art on offer from South African and other African artists, as well as the re-establishment of the ‘conversation’ with the international community, has continued to improve the Festival’s role as a maintainer of cultural capital. Growing audience diversity and younger audiences, along with outreach projects, student drama and the Winter School are also playing a vital role in building new cultural capital in South Africa. In fact, it could be argued that this is now one of the Festival’s most important roles.

The one area in which the importance of the Festival could be said to have declined is in its role as an outlet for the expression of political and social resistance and awareness. Given the relative stability of the political situation in the New South Africa compared with the 1980s, this is hardly surprising. While some provocative works continue to appear, criticism of the ANC government is still viewed by many as disloyal and financial, rather than artistic, considerations, seem to be becoming more important, especially with the withdrawal of the Standard Bank as title sponsor in 2002. However, Hauptfleisch (2006, p. 182) argues that arts festivals are once more becoming important in South Africa, ‘not only in understanding and re-interpreting the past, but also in coming to grips with the present and shaping the future ...’.

As the Festival has gained in diversity (in audiences, artists and in control) it has become more and more credible as a valorization arena, so that now a success at the Festival is a good way of selling one’s work, both within the country and abroad. Hauptfleisch (2006, p. 184) supports this view, citing the frequent use of advertising slogans like, ‘As seen at the Grahamstown Festival’ in effective marketing of South African theatre productions.

5. Conclusion

The above political and social history of the NAF has attempted to weave together some quite disparate threads of history in order to emphasize the long term ‘value’ of the Festival

Table 1. Changes in the qualitative value of the NAF in three phases of development.

	Phase 1 1974–1983	Phase 2 1984–1994	Phase 3 1995–2004
Maintaining diverse South African cultural capital	Poor	Fast rise	Slow rise
Building new cultural capital	Poor	Slow rise	Fast rise
Outlets for expression of political and social resistance and awareness	Reasonable	Fast rise	Slow fall
Valorization by artists, agents and audiences	Poor	Slow rise	Fast rise

in a changing society. Since it is an ongoing, evolutionary process, dependent on spheres outside the control of the Festival committee, like education levels and economic indicators, no one conclusion as to the success or failure of the Festival in this context can be drawn. Using the four value categories referred to above, however, it is possible to get a sense of the changing role of the Festival over time (see Table 1).

The NAF has clearly become increasingly important in maintaining the stock of all South African arts and cultures – cultural capital in the broad definition. Although it started as a means of maintaining specifically British Settler cultural capital, it has certainly broadened its scope over the last 30 years. The same is true of building new cultural capital. In fact, as government support has been stretched thinner and professional theatre companies have all but disappeared, festivals in general have provided an increasingly important source of funding and work to South African cultural workers. Audience development projects are also an important way to build and maintain cultural capital.

As an outlet for the expression of political resistance and social awareness, the NAF really came into its own in about 1984 and although it continues to present what are considered politically daring works, there has been a drop-off in this sort of comment in the New South Africa, partly because to criticize the present government if one is of African-origin may be seen as disloyal to the ‘comrades’, many of who were involved in the struggle for freedom and suffered under apartheid. Criticism by European-origin artists is often interpreted as racism – a stigma many are particularly careful to avoid.

The NAF has always played some role in the ‘valorization’, to use Klammer’s term, of works of arts from the point of view of artists and audiences. If one accepts that cultural value is socially constructed, then it makes sense that extensive social gatherings of diverse artists and audiences present important evidence for the forming of such values. The increasing diversity of the offerings at the Festival has brought greater legitimacy to the values constructed, so that a successful production at the NAF can be used as a reliable and generally accepted measure of value in other spheres.

In conclusion, then, it does appear to be both possible and useful to value cultural goods in a more qualitative way, especially in cases where there have been significant political and/or social transformations. However, financial circumstances have continually surfaced as a shaping influence – both as a limiting and empowering factor. It would thus be naïve to exclude more quantitative methods of valuation completely, but equally incomplete to ignore the long term social value of the arts as articulated within the framework of cultural capital.

Notes

1. Theatres were only officially open to mixed audiences from 1977. Until 1986, the movement of African-origin people into and out of urban areas was still controlled by the Pass Law. The Group Areas Act of 1940 prevented African-origin people from living outside of particular areas.

2. In the late 1980s and early 1990s the Festival Committee included at least one and sometimes two African-origin people. However, by about 1998, of the 15 Committee members, five were African-origin people, some, like Sibongile Khumalo and Sydney Selepe, with very high national profiles. By 2005, seven of the Committee members were Africa-origin people.

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Appendix 1. Examples of covers from early NAF programs illustrating the changing nature of the Festival

