

**Framing Short Film:
Cultural Nationalism and Economic Rationalism
in New Zealand Film Policy**

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Abstract

Short film is a dynamic field of cultural production where filmmakers explore representations of social identity and experiment with various aesthetic and technical modes of cinematic communication. New Zealand short fiction film receives a relatively substantial sum of public funding and has gained an impressive international reputation. Overshadowed by the more visible medium of feature-length movies, however, short filmmaking attracts scant attention in policy discourse or film scholarship.

This thesis investigates the neglected art form and significant sector of cinematic research and development that is short film. Situating short film funding programmes in relation to hegemonic and competing discourses in New Zealand cultural policy, I examine the shifting rationales that justify offering public finance to filmmakers. After tracing the institutionalisation of cultural nationalism and economic rationalism within film policy, this thesis considers the rise of creative industries' discourse and the heightened attention given to film by the fifth Labour government. Interestingly, the recent discursive emphasis on filmmaking as a valuable industry, effective nation-branding tool and critical site of social communication has not resulted in significant changes to short film funding policies. There has nonetheless been an alignment between the short film programmes administered by the New Zealand Film Commission and Creative New Zealand, which suggests that the application of strategic goals and performance measures is entrenched in the dominant approach to film policymaking.

Interrogating the dominant framing of short film as a means of talent development, this thesis examines the funding process and outcomes of the Short Film Fund from 1997 to 2007. My analysis focuses on the devolved funding decisions made by executive producers, as well as on the scheme's evaluation by the New Zealand Film Commission. A close reading of a sample of short films illustrates the high quality but limited representations resulting from the framing of short film as a 'calling card' for future feature filmmakers. I find that whilst forms of economic rationalist discourse are employed to legitimise the allocation of public funds to short filmmaking, they fail to demonstrate the intangible contributions of short film to New Zealand cinema and the cultural public sphere.

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Glossary

AFC	Australian Film Commission
CANZ	Competitive Advantage New Zealand
CNZ	Creative New Zealand (formerly the Queen Elizabeth the Second Arts Council)
EP	Executive Producer
IFF	Independent Filmmakers Fund (administered by Creative New Zealand)
INZ	Industry New Zealand
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MoCA	Ministry of Cultural Affairs (1991-1999)
MCH	Ministry of Culture and Heritage (1999-2008)
NZFC	New Zealand Film Commission
PODS	Producer Orientated Development Scheme (administered by NZFC)
SIPF	Screen Innovation Production Fund (administered by Creative New Zealand)
SOI	Statement of Intent
SPADA	Screen Production and Development Association (formerly Screen Producers and Directors Association)
SPIT	Screen Production Industry Taskforce
TVC	Television commercial
TVNZ	Television New Zealand

Chapter One: Introduction

Short films are a rarified form, which serve to reflect the consciousness of our artists in a purer way than most feature films. With ideas often less diluted or altered by commercial imperatives, NZ short films hold tremendous cultural significance.¹

Short film was the first form of cinema and continues to play a vital role in contemporary filmmaking, yet it receives little public, political or academic attention. When short film is mentioned by the media, in academic work or in policy statements, it is typically referred to as the smaller, less interesting relative of the feature film. As Mette Hjort comments, 'The short film is in many ways the neglected stepchild of cinema studies.'² Compared to feature-length movies, short films have a limited audience and their commercial value is negligible. They receive only a tiny spoonful of the public resources allocated to the arts and their budgets are a mere fraction of those of feature films. The high investment required in feature filmmaking results in a somewhat unsteady local industry, which has struggled to continually release high quality movies. Short film has nonetheless been a constant feature on the New Zealand cinema landscape.

New Zealand short film has an outstanding international reputation. While very few New Zealand-made feature films have been selected for the Festival de Cannes, New Zealand has produced more short films that have competed at this prestigious international event than any other country, apart from France.³ Some European scholars with an interest in short film use New Zealand texts as examples of good practice.⁴ International onlookers marvel at the level of exposure and recognition achieved by New Zealand short film relative to the country's small population and limited resources.⁵ Factors such as the creative freedom of independent

¹ Simon Raby, quoted in: 'An exhibition highlighting the cinematography of Simon Raby' (advertising postcard), The Film Archive, Auckland, 2008

² Mette Hjort, "What's so Funny? Reflections on Jokes and Short Films," *P.O.V.* 9 (2000), http://pov.imv.au.dk/Issue_09/section_2/artc4A.html (accessed 1 June 2009).

³ New Zealand Film Commission, "Two New Zealand Shorts Chosen for Cannes Film Festival", 29 April 2009, http://www.nzfilm.co.nz/NewsAndMedia/NewsAndPressReleases/News/TWO_NEW_ZEALAND_SHORTS_CHOSEN_FOR_CANNES_FILM_FEST.aspx (accessed 22 May 2009).

⁴ Richard Raskin, *The Art of the Short Fiction Film: A Shot by Shot Study of Nine Modern Classics* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2002); Symon Quay, *Teaching Short Films* (London: BFI, 2007).

⁵ Jason Beaudry, Jennifer Chen, and Shane Smith, "Short Film Research Study," The Canadian Film Centre's Worldwide Short Film Festival (2006); Richard Raskin, "An Interview with Gregor Nicholas on Avondale Dogs," *P.O.V.* 1 (March 1996): http://pov.imv.au.dk/Issue_01/Avndldg/Avndldg7.html (accessed 16 April 2009); Raskin, "An Interview with Alison Maclean on Kitchen Sink," *P.O.V.* 13 (2002), http://pov.imv.au.dk/Issue_25/section_1/artc2A.html (accessed 16 April 2009).

filmmakers and the targeted policies of government agencies have been presented as causal agents for this surprising level of success in a country without a strong short film culture.⁶

This thesis explores the policies and practices of national funding agencies, particularly those of the New Zealand Film Commission (NZFC), to provide an explanation for the impressive quantity and quality of New Zealand short filmmaking. The primary focus is not international impressions of New Zealand short films, but the different mechanisms used by government agencies to fund this somewhat obscure form of cinema. The various reasons for state assistance of short film are examined within the context of debates about public support for artistic activities and cultural development. These rationales are often left unarticulated in policy debates, particularly when dominant agents take it for granted that the government should fund filmmaking. Film policy disagreements are more commonly located in classic questions of resource distribution: what should be funded and how should funding be allocated? Any answer to these questions is informed by a particular perspective on the role of cinema in society. This thesis aims to enhance our understanding of film policy controversies by highlighting the underlying beliefs and values that have informed debates about film funding and subsequently influenced decisions regarding support for short film. Through a qualitative analysis of policy discourse and outcomes, it shows that the dominant framing of short film as a form of talent development has influenced the types of projects that are made with NZFC funding.

After defining the scope, context and method of my study, the following chapter outlines the historical developments in film funding policy in New Zealand. This introduction discusses the principal theoretical approaches that frame my thesis: discourse analysis and a textual reading of national cinema. Chapter Two then identifies the discourses used in the campaign for and establishment of the NZFC, along with ongoing debates regarding its purpose and policies. The competing yet sometimes complementary discourses of cultural nationalism, economic rationalism, biculturalism, cultural diversity and the creative industries are explored in relation to developments in cultural policy and the practices of film funding agencies. The dichotomy of culture versus commerce that underpins much arts policy conflict is found to oversimplify complex discursive frames and shifting priorities.

⁶ Beaudry, Chen, and Smith, "Short Film Research Study"; Lindsay Shelton, *The Selling of New Zealand Movies: The Inside Story of the Deal-making, Shrewd Moves and Sheer Luck that took New Zealand Films from Obscurity to the Top of the World* (Wellington: Awa Press, 2005); Maclean, in Raskin, "Interview with Alison Maclean."

Chapter Three presents a detailed outline of the funding available to short filmmakers in New Zealand. The programmes offered by the NZFC and Creative New Zealand (CNZ) are analysed in relation to dominant discourses within public policy and are found to reflect an increasing alignment with the principles of economic rationalism espoused by recent governments. This research reveals that the intrinsic value of short film as a rich form of cultural production has decreasing weight in policy discourse. The NZFC consistently emphasises its instrumental value in relation to feature film, which is a more legitimate medium of state-funded cultural activity.

Consequently, evaluation of short film policy focuses on the strategy of industry talent development and a narrow range of performance indicators. This economic rationalist approach to film funding policy is described in Chapter Four, which examines the most recent NZFC review of its approach to short film. This chapter also considers the process and criteria used by contracted Executive Producers to make short film funding decisions between 1997 and 2007, focusing on a sample of sixteen short films made with NZFC production finance. The extent to which devolved decisions meet NZFC requirements is explored in relation to the goals of forging creative teams who demonstrate feature filmmaking potential and supporting Maori filmmaking.

While Chapter Four focuses on outputs, the next chapter looks more closely at outcomes. Chapter Five introduces some alternative criteria to determine the extent to which NZFC short films articulate the ideologies underlying the policies that enabled their creators to receive funding. While short filmmakers may align themselves with creative industries discourse and embrace the NZFC development objective, the quality films they produce do not necessarily represent the 'New Zealand brand' in the way desired by policymakers. The framework of national cinema is applied in a close reading of the sixteen selected films to identify culturally specific representations and nationalist discourses in these texts. This interpretative analysis finds that short filmmakers are often indifferent and sometimes resistant to hegemonic myths of cultural nationalism, but frequently align their practices with the dominant framing of short film as a pathway to feature filmmaking.

In the conclusion I pinpoint the dominant trends in New Zealand film policy and state-funded short filmmaking while acknowledging the difficulty of proving causal relationships within this dynamic field. Film funding policy is a contested discursive terrain that has been greatly affected by economic rationalism, particularly in the application of performance measures in policy evaluation. The emphasis on strategic targets fails to represent the full value of short film,

which is a rich form of cultural production with the potential to contribute to the development of cinematic techniques and to the circulation of socially meaningful ideas. While some NZFC short films fulfil their aesthetic and social potential, the focus on director talent development does not encourage experimentation, challenging representations or promoting marginalised voices within state-funded short filmmaking. The effective attention to Maori filmmaking demonstrates the potential for film policy to ensure certain groups are represented behind and in front of the camera, enabling them to make important contributions to New Zealand national cinema, without dictating aesthetic outcomes.

Framing short film: forms and functions

Short film tends to be defined in relation to feature film, predominantly on the basis of its duration. Scholars and filmmakers alike usually delimit a 'short' as a film with a running time of less than 30 minutes.⁷ The international marketplace dictates an even shorter duration, where five to fifteen minutes is the norm.⁸ The lesser duration of short film compared with feature film translates in fewer economic or industrial constraints and greater creative freedom, which allows for more experimentation and innovation than in mainstream film production.⁹ The label 'short film' can be applied to work on film or video, although some authors use the term 'video' to distinguish alternative or amateur practices from the production of short fiction films.¹⁰

In *The Film Encyclopedia*, Ephraim Katz notes the multiple functions of short film, as both a 'training and testing ground' where new talent and techniques reveal themselves, and as a vehicle for artistic expression and social commentary.¹¹ While there are many types of short film, there are two principal forms, excluding commercials and music videos, which many

⁷ Symon Quay, "In Short Supply," *Media Magazine*, February 2005, 1; Bevin Yeatman, "What Makes a Short Fiction Film Good?," *P.O.V.* 5 (1998); Alex Cole-Baker, "The Short Film: Issues of Funding and Distribution," in *Contemporary New Zealand Cinema: From New Wave to Blockbuster*, ed. Ian Conrich and Stuart Murray (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008); Eileen Else and Andrew Kelly, *In Short: A Guide to Short Film-making in the Digital Age* (London: British Film Institute, 2002), 2-3; Ephraim Katz, *The Film Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 1248.

⁸ Jeremy Howe, "Shorts and the Real World – The Relationship between the Short and the Feature Film," *Journal of Media Practice* 4: 3 (2004), 177; Cole-Baker, "Short Film," 49; Raskin, *Art of the Short Fiction Film*, 3.

⁹ Reinhard W. Wolf, "What is Cinema – What is Short Film?" (2006), <http://www.shortfilm.de/en/short-film-magazine/archive/topic/what-is-cinema-what-is-short-film.html> (accessed 12 August 2008); Quay, *Teaching Short Films*, 11.

¹⁰ For a New Zealand perspective on the difference between short film and video, see Tessa Laird, "No Dodo: Lawrence Macdonald Interviewed by Tessa Laird," *Log Illustrated*, 1 (1997), <http://www.physicsroom.org.nz/log/archive/1/dodo/> (accessed 10 May 2009). For an international perspective that draws on ethnographic research to identify ways of categorising contemporary short video and filmmakers, see Pekka Isomursu et al., "Internet-Based Amateur Video Delivery: The Users and Their Requirements," (paper presented at the 37th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences, 5-8 January 2004).

¹¹ Katz, *The Film Encyclopedia*, 1248.

authors fail to explicitly differentiate: narrative and experimental films. It is possible to see these two modes as binary oppositions on a continuum from 'condensed classical narrative' at one end to an arrangement of abstract images at the other.¹² The majority of recent books offering guidance to novice short filmmakers focus almost exclusively on the 'condensed classical narrative'.¹³ In New Zealand, the little scholarship available on short film tends to focus either on experimental filmmaking or on live action narrative dramas, giving the impression that the form depicted is the only legitimate type of short filmmaking.¹⁴ It is important to recognise that although there are parallels between short fiction filmmaking and experimental video production, there is a difference between short film with an experimental narrative and non-narrative experimental film.¹⁵ The partial representation of New Zealand short filmmaking is a result of limited scholarship; there is no developed academic framework within which to discuss short film. As Adrian Martin argues, 'the aesthetics of the short film [is] an underdeveloped and underdiscussed area'.¹⁶ Although this thesis considers film funding by CNZ, which supports documentaries and experimental films as well as narrative dramas, it focuses on the form as defined and supported by the NZFC. As we shall see, this means short fiction film.

The framing of short film by the primary funding agency in New Zealand combines European and American attitudes to the medium. The extensive infrastructure of state-funded agencies offering financial support to filmmakers and the plethora of festivals showcasing short films from around the world are indicative of the value attached to short film as an art form in Europe.¹⁷ Exhibition opportunities for short film are much more limited in the United States,

¹² Andreas Kakiou Halskov, "Everything but the Kitchen Sink," *P.O.V.* 25 (2008), http://pov.imv.au.dk/Issue_25/section_1/artc5A.html (accessed 16 April 2009). See also Hester Joyce, "In Development: Scriptwriting Policies and Practice in the New Zealand Film Commission 1978-1995" (PhD Thesis, University of Auckland, 2003), 79-80; Nick Lacey, *Media Institutions and Audiences: Key Concepts in Media Studies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 121-122.

¹³ The modifier 'fiction' should be inserted into the phrase 'short film' in the following titles: Patricia Cooper and Ken Dancyger, *Writing the Short Film*, 3rd ed. (Burlington: Elsevier/Focal Press, 2005); Linda J. Cowgill, *Writing Short Films: Structure and Content for Screenwriters*, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles: Lone Eagle, 2005); Elsey and Kelly, *In Short*. An exception, which includes animation and documentary in addition to live action narrative films in its case studies is: David K. Irving and Peter W. Rea, *Producing and Directing the Short Film and Video*, 3rd ed. (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2006).

¹⁴ Cole-Baker, "Short Film"; Roger Horrocks, "Alternatives: Experimental Filmmaking in New Zealand," in *Film in Aotearoa New Zealand*, ed. Jonathan Dennis and Jan Bieringa (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1996). An exception is Yeatman's frame critical analysis, which outlines the different ways in which New Zealand directors, producers, bureaucrats and students perceive of and define short film as a product and/or a practice: Yeatman, "What Makes a Short Fiction Film Good?"

¹⁵ Cooper and Dancyger, *Writing the Short Film*, 205, 229-230.

¹⁶ Adrian Martin, "The Seconds Pile Up," http://www.der.org/jean-rouch/pdf/SecondsPileUp_AMartin.pdf (accessed 5 May 2009).

¹⁷ Reinhard W. Wolf, "Short Film at Festivals: Some Current Repositionings," (2006), <http://www.shortfilm.de/index.php?id=2222&L=2#c4586> (accessed 5 May 2009). According to David King, however, apart from the widespread interest in short films in France, they are not taken seriously in most European countries. King, "The

where the medium tends to be treated as a 'portfolio piece' or 'calling card'.¹⁸ The significant level of support offered by the NZFC resembles a European appreciation of the intrinsic value of short film while its limited exhibition opportunities and low public profile suggest the dominant attitude towards short film in New Zealand society is closer to that of the United States.

Despite its low public profile, short film benefits from a significant level of support from New Zealand cultural funding agencies. Of the three state-funded agencies that support audiovisual production in New Zealand, two provide targeted finance for short filmmaking. The NZFC is the primary agency which distributes funds for films. Its key activities are providing financial and logistical support to New Zealand filmmakers for the development and production of feature and short films; selling and marketing New Zealand films; and industry support and professional development.¹⁹ The NZFC hence offers production and post production funding to short fiction films. CNZ supports the costs of production, post production and duplication for some documentaries, short and experimental films; and New Zealand on Air (NZ On Air) provides funding for music videos and audiovisual productions that are guaranteed television airtime or explore digital distribution opportunities. The NZFC and CNZ, which have stand-alone funds (discussed in Chapter Three) specifically targeting short film, receive funding from the Lottery Grants Board as well as the government. Both agencies report to the Ministry for (Arts,) Culture and Heritage and are thus allocated resources according to the government's arts and culture policy.

It is hard to quantify the amount of short film production in New Zealand, due to the various levels at which this activity occurs.²⁰ Between thirty and fifty short films are made each year with direct state assistance. In addition to the funds managed by CNZ and the NZFC, there are two other key sources of funding in New Zealand, each resulting in different kinds of films:

Long and the Short of it: European against Australian Attitudes toward Short Films and their Makers," *Metro Magazine*: 137 (2003), 148.

¹⁸ Cooper and Dancyger, *Writing the Short Film*, 225-227.

¹⁹ The NZFC also administers the approval of official co-productions and certification of New Zealand films for tax purposes, and contributes to policy development.

²⁰ See Appendices 1 and 2. Until 2004, SPADA undertook an annual survey on the screen production industry that measured levels of investment in short film production but note that their data 'does not capture total activity in short film making as there are a considerable number of grassroots / self-funded projects that are not able to be effectively tracked.' Screen Production and Development Association, "Survey of Screen Production in New Zealand 2004," (Colmar Brunton, 2004). 34. Since then, Statistics New Zealand has conducted a similar annual survey; however, their published data does not provide any detailed statistics on short film production financing. See: Statistics New Zealand, "Screen Industry in New Zealand: 2006," (Wellington: 2007). A 2003 report suggests that, on average, four or five 'alternative' short films are made per month in New Zealand. Deborah Jones et al., "NZfilm: A Case Study of the New Zealand Film Industry," ed. Competitive Advantage New Zealand (Wellington: Victoria University of Wellington, 2003), 38.

tertiary institutions and self-funding. Of the numerous short films and videos made by students, many are merely an exercise, but some find audiences beyond the educational institution.²¹ While film students are able to benefit from the resources and guidance offered by tertiary institutions, their inexperience frequently results in low production values and overly long films.²² Occasionally, experienced filmmakers employed at a tertiary institution make use of its resources to produce a high quality short film. There are also a number of filmmakers who do not gain institutional support of any kind but manage to fund their own short films. These films may be highly political or personal, or simply do not fit the criteria of public funding agencies. There is very little private sponsorship of short film production in New Zealand.²³ Some argue this represents untapped potential.²⁴ No matter how a short film is funded, it still relies on an 'economy of favours'. It would be difficult to find an example of a short film that had not benefited from 'in kind' services and donations in the form of, for example, discounted film stock or crew members working for reduced rates.²⁵

Recent film funding policy and relevant scholarship in New Zealand

Filmmakers in New Zealand have benefited in recent years from an unprecedented level of financial assistance from the state. After funding freezes and even decreases in the 1980s and 1990s, the last decade has seen public funding for film more than double from \$9.3 million in 1996 to \$19.3 million in 2006.²⁶ While the Lottery Board grant has remained fairly stable, the annual government allocation to the NZFC rose exponentially from \$890,000 in 1996 to \$10.9 million in 2006. The fifth Labour government, whose leader Helen Clark was also Minister for Culture and Heritage, demonstrated its support for film both discursively and substantively.

²¹ Cole-Baker, "Short Film," 56; Elsey and Kelly, *In Short*, 8.

²² Cole-Baker, "Short Film," 50-51; Richard Raskin, "On Pacing in the Short Fiction Film," *Journal of Media Practice* 7, no. 2 (2006): 159.

²³ See Appendix 1. Screen Production and Development Association, "Survey of Screen Production in New Zealand 1999," (Colmar Brunton Research, 1999), 35; "Survey of Screen Production in New Zealand 2004," 35.

²⁴ Chaz Harris, "Opportunities Beyond the Box," *TAKE* 54, Autumn 2009; Elsey and Kelly, *In Short*, 131; Andrew Kelly, "Creative Partnerships: Fundraising for Short Film Projects," *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing* 6, no. 1 (2001); Larry Parr has suggested that reducing NZFC budgets might encourage more entrepreneurial practices or innovative approaches by New Zealand filmmakers, in Virginia Pitts, "Cross-Cultural Filmmaking in New Zealand National Cinema" (PhD Thesis, University of Auckland, 2008), 127. By contrast, the NZFC believes 'there is evidence that short film producers and executive producers are being entrepreneurial in seeking out financing'. See Juliette Veber et al., "Review of NZFC Short Film Strategy," (New Zealand Film Commission, 2007), 54, 60.

²⁵ Veber et al., "Review of NZFC Short Film Strategy," 54; Cole-Baker, "Short Film," 57; Bevin Yeatman, "Policy and Practice: Funding and strategies for short film in New Zealand 1994-1998" (PhD Thesis, Waikato University, 1998), 140; Irving and Rea, *Producing and Directing*, 3.

²⁶ These sums include the NZFC income from both the Lottery Board and Government grants, as well as the additional funding offered through the SIPF by Creative New Zealand (and, in 1996, NZ On Air). Yeatman, "Policy and Practice," 235; New Zealand Film Commission, "Report of the New Zealand Film Commission for the year ending 30 June 2007" (2007).

Previous academic research has examined the development of Labour's 'third way' cultural policy, as discussed in Chapter Two, but it has not examined its tangible effects on audiovisual content.²⁷

There has been a significant amount of research conducted recently on feature filmmaking in New Zealand, and many studies have considered the policy context; however, little attention has been given to short film. Most of these studies draw on earlier work by Roger Horrocks and an insightful article by American scholar Gregory Waller, who traces the development of the NZFC with reference to historically situated discourses.²⁸ Since arriving in New Zealand in 2004, Duncan Petrie has been responsible for numerous publications on local cinema, in which he recognises the important role played by the national film commission.²⁹ Lorna Kaino, Bridget Conor and Jennifer Lawn each consider the effects of recent governmental discourses on the New Zealand feature film industry, particularly the rhetoric of creative industries and nation-branding.³⁰ The doctoral theses of Hester Joyce and Virginia Pitts offer an informative analysis of the policies and practices of the NZFC in relation to feature film scriptwriting and cross-cultural filmmaking, respectively.³¹ While Pitts' primary interest lies in feature filmmaking, she also provides a detailed case study of two 'intercultural' short film projects, which represent a more collaborative process than the average short film made with NZFC production finance.³² The only substantial study of short film funding in New Zealand is the thesis completed in 1998

²⁷ Peter Skilling, "Brave New Zealand: the Construction of a New Zealand Identity" (PhD Thesis, University of Auckland, 2008); Elizabeth Margaret O'Halloran, "Towards a 'Third Way' in Art and Cultural Policy in New Zealand" (MA Thesis, University of Auckland, 2003); Elizabeth M. Grierson, "The Arts and Creative Industries: New Alliances in the Humanities" (paper presented at the Hawaii International Conference on Arts & Humanities, Sheraton Waikiki Hotel, Hawaii, 12-15 January 2003); Jennifer Lawn, "Arts, Culture and Heritage," in *A Third Term? Evaluating the Policy Legacy of the Labour-led Government, 1999-2005*, ed. Mike O'Brien (Auckland: Massey University School of Social and Cultural Studies, 2005). Jennifer Lawn and Bronwyn Beatty contextualise their analysis of Labour's cultural policy by considering its effects on feature film production; however, they do not include consideration of any effects on the style and content of New Zealand filmmaking, in "Getting to Wellywood: National Branding and the Globalisation of the New Zealand Film Industry," *Post Script - Essays in Film and the Humanities* 24, no. 2-3 (2004).

²⁸ See, for example, Horrocks, "New Zealand Cinema," in *Twin Peeks: Australian and New Zealand Feature Films*, ed. Deb Verhoeven (Melbourne: Damned Publishing, 1999). Gregory A Waller, "The New Zealand Film Commission: Promoting an Industry, Forging a National Identity," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 16, no. 2 (1996).

²⁹ Duncan Petrie and Duncan Stuart, eds., *A Coming of Age: Thirty Years of New Zealand Film* (Auckland: Random House, 2008); Petrie, "New Zealand Cinema," in *The Cinema of Small Nations*, ed. Mette Hjort and Duncan J. Petrie (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007); Petrie, *Shot in New Zealand: The Art and Craft of the Kiwi Cinematographer* (Auckland: Random House, 2007).

³⁰ Conor, "Hollywood, Wellywood or the Backwoods? A Political Economy of the New Zealand Film Industry" (MA Thesis, Auckland University of Technology, 2004); Kaino, "Cultural Policy Formation and the Development of Creative Industries in Australia and New Zealand: A Focus on Feature Film Industries," *New Zealand Sociology* 22, no. 1 (2007); Lawn and Beatty, "Getting to Wellywood."

³¹ Joyce, "In Development"; Pitts, "Cross-Cultural Filmmaking".

³² Pitts, "Cross-Cultural Filmmaking"; Pitts "Intercultural Short Filmmaking in Aotearoa New Zealand," *Metro Magazine* 148 (2006).

by Bevin Yeatman who recognises that short film offers an interesting site for examination at the intersection of arts funding policies and filmmaking practices.³³ The impressive track record of New Zealand short filmmaking is mentioned in Lindsay Shelton's account of his experience as NZFC Marketing Director, as well as in the book edited by Petrie and Duncan Stuart, which was released to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the NZFC.³⁴ Occasionally, short film is discussed seriously as an important form of cinematic production in New Zealand.³⁵ Short film is not mentioned in several industry-orientated reports that consider the infrastructure and capability issues within the screen production sector.³⁶

This thesis follows the approach of the scholars mentioned above in its focus on the institutional aspect of New Zealand national cinema. 'The stories a nation tells in film are in many respects predetermined by the industrial, economic and political realities that frame film production,' states Joyce, arguing that the policies and practices of the NZFC have been 'instrumental in defining "a New Zealand film".'³⁷ Petrie and Waller concur that the NZFC is largely responsible for creating the infrastructure in which New Zealand filmmaking is possible.³⁸ As Stuart Cunningham explains, this infrastructure is 'the integration of policy, institutions and industrial practices as they together provide mechanisms for defining, justifying and delivering culture to audiences.'³⁹ Policy leadership has been highlighted as a significant factor at different levels. The value placed on cultural policy by Clark, which addressed the problem of the arts' marginalisation from the policy agenda, is highlighted by Kaino as an example of the importance of policy leadership.⁴⁰ Joyce points to individual leaders within the NZFC such as Jim Booth and Judith McCann who drove major developments in the agency, such as its attention to script

³³ Yeatman, "Policy and Practice".

³⁴ Shelton, *Selling of New Zealand Movies*; Petrie and Stuart, *A Coming of Age*.

³⁵ For example, Horrocks, "Experimental Filmmaking"; Jocelyn Robson and Beverley Zalcock, *Girls' Own Stories: Australian and New Zealand Women's Films* (London: Scarlet Press, 1997). See also Chapter Five, particularly note 15.

³⁶ Dorothee Pinfold et al., "Capability Study: The New Zealand Screen Production Industry," (Wellington: Industry New Zealand and New Zealand Institute of Economic Research, 2003); Screen Production Industry Taskforce, "Taking on the World: The Report of the Screen Production Industry Taskforce," (Ministry for Industry and Regional Development, 2003). Although it is not explored extensively, short film is nonetheless mentioned in the discussion on funding issues, in Jones et al., "NZfilm," 37-38.

³⁷ Hester Joyce, "A Sting in the Tale: Quirky New Zealand Films," in *A Clever Little Country? Cultural Change and Identity in New Zealand*, ed. M. Griffiths and G. Lealand, *Media International Australia* 117 (2005); Joyce, "In Development", 15.

³⁸ Petrie, "New Zealand Cinema."; Waller, "New Zealand Film Commission."

³⁹ Cunningham, *Framing Culture: Criticism and Policy in Australia* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992), 4.

⁴⁰ Kaino, "Cultural Policy Formation," 60.

development.⁴¹ As Chapter Two illustrates, former Chief Executive Ruth Harley also had a distinctive approach to NZFC practices and made an influential contribution to policy discourse.

In 1996, Jan Bieringa and Jonathan Dennis bemoaned the paucity of New Zealand film scholarship.⁴² Since then, publications on New Zealand films have burgeoned, the majority of which position their study as one of national cinema.⁴³ The use of the singular term 'national cinema' in research and anthologies on New Zealand film implies that there is a central body or canon of locally produced films which share some distinctive features. As scholars like Andrew Higson and Stephen Crofts suggest, such a canonisation of national cinema is inherently exclusive.⁴⁴ Local scholars such as Horrocks and Pitts demonstrate an awareness of this restrictive academic frame, the latter stating:

As with any national cinema, New Zealand films include a diverse range of genres and representations and, given the tiny cinematic output of the nation, any attempt to generalise can be fraught with accusations of undue selectiveness and extrapolation.⁴⁵

Although the increasing importance of social, ethnic and gender identities has reduced the centrality of nationalistic discourse in cinema practice and theory, and the nation-state is somewhat threatened by globalisation and neoliberalism, the concept of the nation remains relevant to contemporary cinema studies.⁴⁶ Despite globalisation and cosmopolitanism, people still tend to identify with a nation, and cinema continues to be an integral part of the cultural public sphere where ideas about national identity are represented and debated.⁴⁷ The rhetorical emphasis of recent New Zealand governments on cinema as a suitable vehicle for circulating representations of cultural and national identities is not at odds with contemporary film studies

⁴¹ Joyce, "In Development", 270. Other scholars concur that the NZFC's emphasis on script development has contributed to the increasing success of New Zealand films. Kaino, "Cultural Policy Formation," 58; David Newman, "Regions and Runaways: Film Assistance in New Zealand and British Columbia, 1999-2005," in *A Clever Little Country? Cultural Change and Identity in New Zealand*, ed. M. Griffiths and G. Lealand *Media International Australia* 117, (2005).

⁴² Dennis and Bieringa, eds., *Film in Aotearoa New Zealand*, 2nd ed. (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1996), 7.

⁴³ A few of the more prominent articles and books from the past decade that couch their analysis in the discourse of national cinema include: Horrocks, "New Zealand Cinema"; Petrie, "New Zealand Cinema"; Ian Conrich and Stuart Murray, *Contemporary New Zealand Cinema: From New Wave to Blockbuster* (London: I.B. Tauris 2008). Between 1985 and 2008, at least 35 books and hundreds of articles on New Zealand cinema were published, according to Duncan Stuart, "The Roar of the Crowd," in *A Coming of Age: Thirty Years of New Zealand Film*, ed. Duncan Petrie and Duncan Stuart (Auckland: Random House, 2008), 48.

⁴⁴ Crofts, "Reconceptualizing National Cinema/s," in *Film and Nationalism*, ed. Alan Williams (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 43-45; Higson, "The Concept of National Cinema," in *Film and Nationalism*, ed. Alan Williams (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002).

⁴⁵ Pitts, "Cross-Cultural Filmmaking", 158; Horrocks, "New Zealand Cinema."

⁴⁶ Pitts, "Cross-Cultural Filmmaking"; Duncan Petrie and Mette Hjort, "Introduction," in *The Cinema of Small Nations*, ed. Mette Hjort and Duncan J. Petrie (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

⁴⁷ Graeme Turner, *Film as Social Practice*, 4th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2006), 182-186; Alan Williams, *Film and Nationalism* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 4.

scholarship. While film theorists continue to employ national cinema as a useful framework for studying film, there is an increasing awareness of the tension between the unifying construct of national identity and the diverse representations emerging from contemporary national cinemas.⁴⁸ Taking into account the key contributions from the margins, Susan Hayward describes the ‘paradox of national cinema’ as such: ‘it will always – in its forming – go against the underlying principles of nationalism and be at cross purposes with the originating idea of the *nation* as a unified identity.’⁴⁹

Any description of New Zealand cinema itself constructs a particular image of the nation, defined by the representations in the films selected for discussion, and by way of their contextualisation. Although there was much resistance to Sam Neill’s description of New Zealand filmmaking as ‘brooding and troubled’, in his 1995 documentary *Cinema of Unease*, this typology for identifying and understanding New Zealand cinema has lingered. Indeed, it is evoked in nearly every academic publication on New Zealand national cinema, with many authors continuing to use it as a frame of reference or point of departure.⁵⁰ Even in their respective reviews of contemporary short films, Kathy Dudding evokes ‘the dark sensibility that is prevalent in New Zealand celluloid’ and Jacob Powell refers to ‘the many short films of a darker tenor that the New Zealand psyche seems to produce.’⁵¹ Australian scholars Susan Dermody and Elizabeth Jacka suggest that this is not an unusual approach to film studies or criticism: ‘National cinema studies always attempt to read national “psyches” from the cinemas in question’.⁵²

While some New Zealand filmmaking continues to be described as belonging to a ‘cinema of unease’, recent films are frequently categorised as more nuanced or rather light-hearted

⁴⁸ See: Petrie and Hjort, "Introduction"; Susan Dermody and Elizabeth Jacka, *The Screening of Australia: Anatomy of a Film Industry*, vol. 1 (Sydney: Currency Press, 1987); Pitts, "Cross-Cultural Filmmaking"; Albert Moran, "Terms for a Reader," in *Film Policy: International, National, and Regional Perspectives*, ed. Albert Moran (London: Routledge, 1996); Skilling also highlights the oxymoronic nature of national identity, defining the ‘nation’ as a group of diverse people whereas ‘identity’ means ‘sameness’. Skilling, "Brave New Zealand", 123.

⁴⁹ Hayward, "Framing National Cinemas," in *Cinema and Nation*, ed. Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie (London: Routledge, 2000), 95; Petrie, "New Zealand Cinema," 165.

⁵⁰ See, for example: Horrocks, "New Zealand Cinema"; Lynette Read, "Rain and the Tradition of Art Cinema in New Zealand," *Illusions* 34 (2002); Petrie, "From the Cinema of Poetry to the Cinema of Unease," *Illusions* 37: Winter (2005); Geoff Lealand and Helen Martin, "Aotearoa/New Zealand," *Screen Education*: 39 (2005); Mark Williams, "A Waka on the Wild Side: Nationalism and its Discontents in Some Recent New Zealand Films," in *Contemporary New Zealand Cinema: From New Wave to Blockbuster*, ed. Ian Conrich and Stuart Murray (London: I.B. Tauris 2008).

⁵¹ Kathy Dudding, "Picked and Mixed: Four "Homegrown" Shorts," *Illusions* 2006; Jacob Powell, "Pick & Mix: Homegrown (Programme 1)," *The Lumiere Reader*, 13 July 2008, <http://lumiere.net.nz/reader/item/1769> (accessed 10 April 2009).

⁵² Dermody and Jacka, *The Screening of Australia: Anatomy of a National Cinema*, vol. 2 (Sydney: Currency Press, 1988), 15-16.

representations of an increasingly diverse society. Pitts believes that 'the output of New Zealand's national cinema during the early 2000s ... has thus far included the usual range of critically self-reflexive and lightly celebratory genre and art-house films'.⁵³ Mark Williams observes a new style and tone of humour in New Zealand cinema of the new millennium; and along with Joyce, he employs the adjective 'quirky' to describe these films.⁵⁴ Joyce and Williams, among other scholars, have also noticed an increasing sophistication in New Zealand filmmakers' selective and inventive use of generic conventions to make films that appeal to both national and foreign audiences.⁵⁵ A national cinema is evidently, as Philip Rosen surmises, historically fluctuating.⁵⁶

The renaissance of scholarly interest in short film that has emerged overseas is not mirrored in New Zealand.⁵⁷ Individual articles on particular short films and their creators occasionally appear in academic publications and industry or cultural magazines.⁵⁸ The paucity of research on short film, as described by Yeatman in 1998, still holds true in New Zealand, if not in other parts of the world. Yeatman convincingly suggests this is due to a dominant view that short filmmaking is a marginal or transitional practice.⁵⁹ Overall, there seems to be a lack of awareness of the need for different kinds of filmmaking within accounts of New Zealand screen production and national cinema.

Studying film funding as cultural policy: issues of theory and method

Following the traditional approach of New Zealand governments and interested scholars, my thesis positions film funding within the realm of cultural policy, which itself is a subset of public

⁵³ Pitts, "Cross-Cultural Filmmaking", 157; See also Petrie, "The Coming of Age of a National Cinema," in *A Coming of Age: Thirty Years of New Zealand Film*, ed. Duncan Petrie and Duncan Stuart (Auckland: Random House, 2008).

⁵⁴ Williams, "Waka on the Wild Side," 188-191; Joyce, "Quirky New Zealand Films."

⁵⁵ Joyce, "In Development", 18; Williams, "Waka on the Wild Side"; Barry Keith Grant, "New Zealand Film and Questions of Genre," *Film International* 6: 2 (2008); Petrie, "How Others Have Seen Us: International Profile of New Zealand Films," in *A Coming of Age: Thirty Years of New Zealand Film*, ed. Duncan Petrie and Duncan Stuart (Auckland: Random House, 2008), 156.

⁵⁶ Rosen, cited in Susan Hayward, *French National Cinema* (London: Routledge, 1993), 15.

⁵⁷ Quay, *Teaching Short Films*; Elsey and Kelly, *In Short*; Raskin, *Art of the Short Fiction Film*. International festivals have also been making changes to their programming that suggest short film has gained in significance. Wolf, "Short Film at Festivals". A similar increase in interest may emerge soon in New Zealand given the rise in domestic distribution opportunities on television, the Internet and in festivals.

⁵⁸ For example: Powell, "Homegrown"; Pitts, "Intercultural Short Filmmaking"; Ocean Mercier, "Close Encounters of the Maori Kind - Talking Interaction in the Films of Taika Waititi," *New Zealand Journal of Media Studies* 10, no. 2 (2007); Aaron Lister, "Two Artists, One Car: Taika Waititi, Wayne Youle and the Pulse of Contemporary Maori Art," *Illusions*, Winter 2005; Nick Grant, "The Long and the Short of it II," *OnFilm*, December 2008/January 2009; Dudding, "Four "Homegrown" Shorts"; Gordon Campbell, "Taika Waititi," *NZ Listener* 192, 24 January 2004, http://www.listener.co.nz/issue/3324/features/1354/taika_waititi.html (accessed 3 February 2009).

⁵⁹ Yeatman, "Policy and Practice".

policy.⁶⁰ Academic analyses of cultural policy in New Zealand tend to emerge from political studies or sociology departments,⁶¹ while research on film policy has been carried out by a few scholars in cinema and media studies,⁶² and more recently by economic taskforces and business studies researchers.⁶³ Despite these individual contributions, there is virtually no field of cultural policy studies in New Zealand. That is not the case in the United Kingdom, continental Europe, Australia or the United States, where there are schools and journals dedicated to the study of cultural policy.⁶⁴

The dominant postmodern paradigms in cultural studies diverge from the positivism of mainstream policy studies, so it is perhaps not surprising that cultural policy studies has struggled to align the two approaches and establish itself as a coherent and legitimate discipline. A tension between ‘critical’ and ‘useful’ policy studies is especially apparent in Australia.⁶⁵ When cultural studies’ scholars position themselves as critics of the hegemonic order, they tend to reject the dominant economic discourse in which their claims would need to be expressed in order to appear valid to policymakers. On the other hand, when economic criteria become the main yardstick for assessing policy proposals and outcomes, the complex process of cultural policymaking is often misrepresented. As Jon Pierre argues, while recognising the important contribution of economic analysis to policy studies, ‘we need to realise that the notion of a policy process guided by scientific logic and causal models is a somewhat idealised representation of policy making’.⁶⁶ Frank Fischer also points to deficiencies in traditional forms of policy analysis, claiming the mainstream approach lacks relevance to political and social realities as it is

⁶⁰ Throughout this thesis, I alternate between ‘arts policy’ and ‘cultural policy’; both are shorthand for ‘arts and cultural policy’.

⁶¹ Catherine Alma Albiston, "Reframing Arts and Cultural Policy Designs in Aotearoa New Zealand" (MA Thesis, University of Auckland, 2000); Kaino, "Cultural Policy Formation"; Lawn, "Arts, Culture and Heritage"; O'Halloran, "Towards a 'Third Way'"; Jessica Pettersen, "Heart of the Nation? Arts Policy and Cultural Diversity during the Term of New Zealand's Fifth Labour Government" (MA Thesis, University of Auckland, 2008); Peter Skilling, "Trajectories of Arts and Culture Policy in New Zealand," *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 64: 4 (2005).

⁶² Conor, "Hollywood, Wellywood or the Backwoods?"; Joyce, "In Development"; Newman, "Regions and Runaways"; Waller, "New Zealand Film Commission"; Yeatman, "Policy and Practice".

⁶³ Tim Hazledine, *Arts Funding in New Zealand* (Auckland: Department of Economics, University of Auckland, 2000); Jones et al., "NZfilm."; Pinfold et al., "Capability Study."; Screen Production Industry Taskforce, "Taking on the World."

⁶⁴ Justin Lewis and Toby Miller, "Introduction," in *Critical Cultural Policy Studies: A Reader*, ed. Justin Lewis and Toby Miller (Malden: Blackwell, 2003).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*; Jim McGuigan, "Cultural Policy Studies," in *Critical Cultural Policy Studies: A Reader*, ed. Justin Lewis and Toby Miller (Malden: Blackwell, 2003); Julie James Bailey, "The Policy Process: Film Policy – Who Talks to Whom?" in *Film Policy: An Australian Reader*, ed. Albert Moran (Queensland: Institute for Cultural Policy Studies, Griffith University 1994); Cunningham, *Framing Culture*.

⁶⁶ Pierre, "Disciplinary Perspectives," in *Handbook of Public Policy*, ed. B. Guy Peters and Jon Pierre (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 482-483.

too 'narrowly empiricist, rationalistic, and technocratic'.⁶⁷ These scholars argue that policy studies must pay attention to the strategic goals and perspectives of the social actors that shape the policy process, as well as to the cultural, institutional and historical context in which they operate. Although it is important to measure whether or not a policy is economically sound, quantifiable measures cannot explain what is 'politically desirable and socially justified' or offer 'a deeper understanding of why politicians behave the way they do.'⁶⁸ Cultural policy necessarily involves value choices in the form of politically determined policies.⁶⁹ The study of it therefore requires an approach that acknowledges this is not a neutral, value-free domain.

The argumentative turn in policy studies has presented an opportunity to align the analytical approaches of cultural studies and policy studies, notably around the concept of discourse. Although there are many different branches of argumentative or constructivist policy studies, including rhetorical analysis and frame analysis, each with its own methodology, they all share an emphasis on language or discourse as a tool of communication in policy debates and as a constitutive element of the substance of policy. Robert Gottweis explains that the different methods of this approach are 'united by an epistemological perspective critical of philosophical realism and a common focus on language and argumentation as the foundation of the policy process.'⁷⁰ The backbone of this approach is social constructivism, which highlights the practices that produce and reproduce social meanings. Fischer calls this the 'social construction of "facts"'.⁷¹

Like argumentative policy studies, film studies is based on the notion of social constructivism. In 1984, anticipating the application of rhetorical theory to cinema, Dudley Andrew stated:

In the arena of modern film theory, meaning, significance and value are never thought to be discovered, intuited or otherwise attained naturally. Everything results from a mechanics of work: the work of ideology, the work of the psyche, the work of a certain language designed to bring psyche and society into coincidence, and the work of technology enabling that language to operate.⁷²

⁶⁷ Fischer, *Reframing Public Policy: Discursive Politics and Deliberative Practices* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 16.

⁶⁸ Pierre, "Disciplinary Perspectives," 491.

⁶⁹ Kevin Mulcahy, "Cultural Policy," in *Handbook of Public Policy*, ed. B. Guy Peters and Jon Pierre (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 266-267; Jim McGuigan, *Rethinking Cultural Policy* (Maidenhead: Open University, 2004), <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/auckland/Doc?id=10172368> (accessed 20 February 2009). See also Carol Lee Bacchi, *Women, Policy and Politics: The Construction of Policy Problems* (London: Sage Publications, 1999), 1.

⁷⁰ Gottweis, "Argumentative Policy Analysis," in *Handbook of Public Policy*, ed. B. Guy Peters and Jon Pierre (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 475. For an early identification of the normative dimensions of policy rhetoric, see Charles W. Anderson, "The Logic of Public Problems: Evaluation in Comparative Policy Research," in *Comparing Public Policies: New Concepts and Methods*, ed. D.E. Ashford (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1978).

⁷¹ Fischer, *Reframing Public Policy*, 13-14.

⁷² Andrew, *Concepts in Film Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 15.

In the last two decades, there has been a ‘cultural turn’ in film studies, which has moved away from theories based on psychoanalysis to tackle issues of cultural identities and representations.⁷³ Many scholars are interested in films’ representations of cultural identities, which have social significance, argues Graeme Turner, ‘because they are among the raw materials from which we construct our sense of “who we think we are” at any one point in time.’⁷⁴ These cinematic representations also have political significance because they may contribute to or challenge the dominant discourse which maintains and justifies the hegemonic order, thus potentially supporting dominant ideologies and reinforcing social inequalities.⁷⁵ Turner outlines two broad categories of the culturalist approach – textual and contextual – and asserts that it is in combination that these two approaches, albeit unwieldy, have ‘enormous explanatory power’ in film interpretation, due to their understanding of the ways in which ‘ideologies structure institutions as well as texts.’⁷⁶

Proponents of the argumentative approach see politics as an arena of struggle between competing discourses. Similarly, cultural studies’ scholars are interested in the production of knowledge and the struggle for power in lived and mediated experiences.⁷⁷ Both schools of thought draw on the Gramscian concept of hegemony to explain the continual ideological struggles that operate to sustain the political equilibrium through discursive practices. Rather than simply overpowering subordinate groups, dominant discourses function to integrate these groups by naturalising certain beliefs and providing a framework of ‘common-sense knowledge’ which allows social actors to communicate with each other.⁷⁸ Nancy Fraser’s conceptualisation of tensions between dominant and subordinate groups who struggle to gain recognition and power within the public political sphere exemplifies this view. Fraser’s concept of subaltern counter publics and their discursive struggles in late modern multicultural societies underlies my explanation in the following chapter of how alternative ideas from the artistic community shaped the dominant

⁷³ Turner, *Film as Social Practice*, 170-175. See, for example, Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (London: Routledge, 1994).

⁷⁴ Turner, *Film as Social Practice*, 170.

⁷⁵ These representations may also challenge the dominant discourse; however, the classical narratives of mainstream cinema tend to replicate dominant ideologies. See *Ibid.*, 198-204; Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*.

⁷⁶ Turner, *Film as Social Practice*, 179-181.

⁷⁷ John Hartley, *Communication, Cultural and Media Studies: The Key Concepts*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002), 49. Stuart Cunningham, "Cultural Studies from the Viewpoint of Cultural Policy," in *Critical Cultural Policy Studies: A Reader*, ed. Justin Lewis and Toby Miller (Malden: Blackwell, 2003).

⁷⁸ Fischer, *Reframing Public Policy*, 78. See also Norman Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*, (London: Routledge, 2003), 206-207, <http://www.netLibrary.com/urlapi.asp?action=summary&v=1&bookid=111346> (accessed 8 January 2009).

discourse in film policy debates and consequently became embedded in institutions such as the NZFC.⁷⁹

Discourse is an essential element of social constructivism. 'Discourse,' defines John Hartley, 'is the social process of making and reproducing sense(s).'⁸⁰ Norman Fairclough elaborates, drawing on the two main definitions of discourse, according to Foucauldian theory:

The term 'discourse' is used abstractly (as an abstract noun) for 'the domain of statements', and concretely as a 'count' noun ('a discourse', 'several discourses') for groups of statements or for the 'regulated practice' (the rules) which govern such a group of statements.⁸¹

The meaning of any discourse depends on its social and historical context and, as Fischer explains, 'discursive practices circumscribe ... the views that can be legitimately accepted as knowledge'.⁸² There are various types of discourse analysis, which can be basically categorised on three levels: text or language analysis; discursive practice, incorporating 'text production and interpretation'; and social practice, which takes into account institutional and organisational circumstances.⁸³ When discourse analysis is used in policy studies, there is a risk that an intent focus on the language of policy will result in the practices of policy implementation and actual outcomes being overlooked. Fischer and Fairclough hence stress the relationship between discursive practice and social practice, arguing that it is essential to study the historical and institutional context of policy discourse, because the language and tools of policy cannot be divorced from their institutional environment or from the social structures in which discursive actors operate.⁸⁴

Discourse analysis is a useful approach to the study of film policy as it aligns with commonly used methodologies in cultural and cinema studies. It can be applied not only to policy discourse but to the films that result from specific policies. Films are cultural artefacts that communicate stories, emotions and messages. A central question of this thesis is whether cultural policy frames influence the types of stories, emotions and messages that are contained in state-funded films. Such an approach demands an interpretive analysis of films, which can be accommodated

⁷⁹ Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text* 25/26 (1990): 67-69. Fraser coined the term 'subaltern counter publics' to describe the 'parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs.' See also Fischer, *Reframing Public Policy*, 76.

⁸⁰ Hartley, *Communication, Cultural and Media Studies*, 73.

⁸¹ Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse*, 123-124.

⁸² Fischer, *Reframing Public Policy*, 83.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 74; Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse*, 3, 35-36.

⁸⁴ Fischer, *Reframing Public Policy*, 83-85. See also Bacchi, *Women, Policy and Politics*, 40-46.

within argumentative policy studies as it also emphasises meaning and interpretation and accepts the unavoidable subjectivity of the analyst.⁸⁵ Fairclough's critical discourse analysis involves looking at interpretations of texts as well as the texts themselves.⁸⁶ My thesis adopts a similar approach, studying two main kinds of primary texts – policy documents and short films – and considering critical and public responses to them in order to reveal the significance of the ideas they communicate in relation to dominant and competing discourses in New Zealand society.

This thesis aims to reach an understanding of debates relating to the articulation and implementation of film policy by connecting theories from cultural studies, film studies and critical policy studies. On its own, each approach would be inadequate in this field. Film studies has been criticised for its fetishisation of texts; cultural studies for its restrictive neo-Marxist paradigm; and policy studies for its emphasis on technically rational models of decision-making that fail to explain real world policy issues and actions. Following Pierre and Fairclough, I take a transdisciplinary approach, drawing on research from sociology, economics, political science, and film and media studies to inform this thesis.⁸⁷ Drawing on the comprehensive form of discourse analysis articulated by Fischer, Fairclough, and Carol Bacchi, as well as on Donald Schon and Martin Rein's concept of 'framing', as discussed below, the following chapter explains the discursive battles pertaining to film policy in New Zealand over the past forty years, showing how certain discourses (or 'frames') become dominant and are used to justify specific courses of action.

As my primary methodology, discourse analysis enables me to highlight the ways in which different justifications for film funding are framed, and which of these frames are privileged in the dominant discourse. Frame analysis is a type of discourse analysis that shows how '[policy] issues are described and politically packaged, which to a large extent determines the future political handling of them.'⁸⁸ Rein and Schon call for frame-critical policy analysis to help resolve 'policy controversies' by 'uncover[ing] the multiple, conflicting frames involved' and investigating 'their sources and consequences'.⁸⁹ We cannot understand policy controversies, they argue, by separating facts and values and rationally evaluating the best course of action,

⁸⁵ Gottweis, "Argumentative Policy Analysis," 472-475; Andrew, *Concepts in Film Theory*, 172-173.

⁸⁶ Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse*.

⁸⁷ Pierre, "Disciplinary Perspectives," 481-492 ; Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse*, 225

⁸⁸ Pierre, "Disciplinary Perspectives," 490.

⁸⁹ Martin Rein and Donald Schon, "Reframing Policy Discourse," in *The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning*, ed. Frank Fischer and John Forester (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993), 159-164. The possibility for cooperation as well as conflict between participants in policy controversy, as Schon and Rein point out, also informs my research.

because these sorts of debates are based on interpretations of socially constructed problems, or ‘frames in which facts, values, theories, and interests are integrated.’⁹⁰ The reasons for state intervention in the film sector are often expressed in vague or slippery terms, so a critical approach is needed to interpret the actual intentions of politicians and objectives of their policies. Frame or discourse analysis provides the tools to unpick underlying myths and assumptions, like national identity, that permeate cultural policy discourse. This approach can also help to explain recent policy disagreements, which tend to relate to the use of different frames for justifying state support for film.

Bacchi adapts the different approaches to ‘policy as discourse’ to formulate her own “‘What’s the Problem?’ approach’, which focuses on problem representation.⁹¹ Applying Bacchi’s ‘What’s the Problem?’ approach in cultural policy studies, one can identify national cinema as a commonly offered solution to the perceived problem of a weak national identity. Many observers have noted that New Zealand cultural policy consistently responds to an assumption that this country lacks local culture.⁹² State support for film is regularly suggested as a means to strengthen New Zealand’s national identity and international profile, although substantive evidence is rarely provided for this claim. Image and identity tend to be presented as self-evident, complementary and unproblematic concepts in much policy discourse. Tensions within and between these concepts have not gone unnoticed, though. Peter Skilling, for example, interrogates the nationalistic goals of cultural policy, while Yeatman’s analysis of short film policy pays particular attention to the difficulty of using discourses based on the concept of identity as a funding strategy.⁹³ Yeatman also demonstrates that an increased emphasis on market value did not displace the cultural rationale for the continuation of state-supported cinema, although it has shaped the discourse used by funding bodies.⁹⁴

These competing discourses on national identity and national cinema are based on different interpretations of the function of film, which influence policy debates and industry practices. This thesis explores in particular the manner in which different perspectives on the purpose of short film affect the formulation, implementation and evaluation of funding policies. One way to

⁹⁰ Ibid., 145. (Emphasis in original.)

⁹¹ Bacchi, *Women, Policy and Politics*.

⁹² Skilling, "Brave New Zealand", 131-132. Colin James, *Funding our Culture* (Wellington: Institute of Policy Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, 2000). Pettersen describes national identity as an ‘empty signifier’ in cultural policy, in "Arts Policy and Cultural Diversity", 18-20. The desire to ‘invent’ a national identity is common in post-colonial societies. See Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, "Introduction to Part Four," in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (London: Routledge, 2006).

⁹³ Yeatman, "Policy and Practice", 99-100; Skilling, "Brave New Zealand", 125.

⁹⁴ Yeatman, "Policy and Practice".

understand these competing discourses is through Jim McGuigan's categories of state, market and civil/communicative discourses.⁹⁵ These fixed categories provide a useful framework for understanding many cultural policy debates; however they may not be applicable to every film policy disagreement. Applied to the New Zealand context, the dominant state discourse is often challenged by groups employing market and civil discourses. My thesis pays particular attention to the latter category, which, for the sake of clarity, is referred to as the discourse of 'the film community' in the next chapter. The binary opposition of art versus industry is referred to, if not actively employed, in much literature on film policy. Many scholars note that this simplistic dichotomy inhibits critical discussion of contemporary cinema, which is both an art and an industry, yet it continues to frame many funding debates, as the following chapter will demonstrate.⁹⁶

A useful framework for understanding these debates is offered by Octavio Getino in his work on film practice and industry development in Latin America. Even though his crudely translated terms – 'economism' and 'ideologism' – sound somewhat awkward, they accurately represent the fundamental tension between commercial and cultural interests that shapes state policies and surrounding discourse.⁹⁷ Randal Johnson explains that economism sees the film industry and products in purely economic terms, whereas ideologism privileges the cultural or ideological aspects of cinema over commercial imperatives.⁹⁸ As Chapter Two illustrates, the 'market' discourse employed by film industry members and researchers to criticise the NZFC is based on economism, or more specifically economic rationalism, while the framing of film by the arts community is underpinned by ideologism.

Scholars conducting critical discourse analysis encourage each other to be aware of their role and the risks of relativism and overwhelming subjectivity. Bacchi points out that academics and professionals 'often structure arguments and issues in ways which affect the framing of "problems" in the wider community.' All actors, policy scholars included, are embedded 'in discursive systems constituted by tradition, religion and political institutions', so Bacchi attempts 'to sensitize those seeking change to this difficulty [of moving outside discourses, and] to

⁹⁵ McGuigan. *Rethinking Cultural Policy*.

⁹⁶ See Dermody and Jacka, *Anatomy of a Film Industry*; Moran, "Terms for a Reader"; Cathy Robinson, "Films, Policies, Audiences and Australia," in *Film Policy: An Australian Reader* ed. Albert Moran (Queensland: Institute for Cultural Policy Studies, Griffith University 1994), 18; Peter Morris, "Public Policy, Public Opinion," in *Ibid.*, 76.

⁹⁷ Randal Johnson, "Film Policy in Latin America," in *Film Policy: International, National, and Regional Perspectives*, ed. Albert Moran (London Routledge, 1996), 135.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 135. In a broader discussion of social organisation, as it pertains to educational theory, Pierre Bourdieu similarly describes the opposing frames of 'economism' and 'semiologism', in "Forms of Capital," in *Education: Culture, Economy and Society* ed. A H Halsey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 54.

caution social critics to examine their language, their concepts, their assumptions and the way they construct their case discursively.’⁹⁹ Rein and Schon acknowledge this possibility in their argument for frame-reflective policy discourse, which is necessarily ‘affective as well as cognitive’.¹⁰⁰ A study like mine thus constitutes a storyline that frames policy issues in a particular way. It can be difficult for scholars to disentangle themselves from their subject, and their studies run the risk of relativism, whereby every framing of a situation is presented as equally useful. It is therefore necessary for me to make clear my choice of topic based on a normative understanding of the cultural public sphere, similar to that articulated by McGuigan, as well as my belief in the potential of film to influence an individual’s perception of social reality, based on my own experiences and education.¹⁰¹

As well as drawing on the theoretical framework offered by the scholars mentioned above, my thesis draws on primary research. The conclusions made about contemporary cultural policy discourse have been based on my analysis of policy and accountability documents and funding guidelines from the Ministry of Culture and Heritage (MCH), NZFC and CNZ, as well as speeches and press releases from politicians and bureaucrats. In later chapters I describe the results of my close reading of a sample of sixteen short films, which has also drawn on information taken from their press kits and, where available, reviews, interviews and articles. Finally, my study has been informed by interviews with former and current NZFC staff and board members, short film producers and executive producers. This combination of sources has provided me with ample material to examine the relationship between cultural policy discourse, film funding methods, and short filmmaking practice between 1997 and 2007. This study offers an interesting example of the effects of policy developments on a sector where the values of culture, creativity and careers collide, and where government subsidies have a significant impact on the number and type of productions.

⁹⁹ Bacchi, *Women, Policy and Politics*, 4-12.

¹⁰⁰ Rein and Schon, "Reframing Policy Discourse," 159-164.

¹⁰¹ Jim McGuigan, "The Cultural Public Sphere," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 8, no. 4 (2005). On the relationship between cinema and social reality, see Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*; Turner, *Film as Social Practice*.

Chapter Two: A Brief History of Film Funding in New Zealand

Film is important not just as a potent advertising medium for New Zealand; not just as a way of creating and personifying our country as a brand in all its diversity; not just as a high growth, high margin knowledge based business.... It is a central ingredient in constructing our identity for ourselves...¹

Film is commonly considered to be a medium of great social and economic significance, yet it has not always been recognised as such within public policy in New Zealand. When film has appeared in policy discourse, it has been represented in various forms: as a means of creative expression, vehicle for nation-building, wealth-creating industry, and distinctive commodity for the international market. These different frames are used to justify or campaign for state support for cinema, appearing in the political discourse of government agents, in various forms in the media, and in academic and industrial discourse on film production in New Zealand. This chapter traces the development and contestation of dominant frames in New Zealand film policy, which legitimise various reasons for funding film and shape the way short film is treated by government agencies.

Cultural nationalism and industry development emerge and merge as policy frames

While New Zealand feature films were made as early as 1914, government assistance was essentially limited to non-fiction film until the 1970s. The National Film Unit and New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation (later TVNZ) received state funds for audiovisual production, but neither organisation supported independent filmmaking.² Film producers struggled to find sufficient private sources of investment and, consequently, few feature films were produced before the national film commission existed.³ The dominant framing of film as a means of educating citizens and promoting New Zealand as a tourist destination was challenged by members of the film community in the 1960s and 70s. Their vigorous lobbying, fuelled by the efforts of John O'Shea as well as the popular success of Roger Donaldson's 1977 feature *Sleeping Dogs*, is credited with convincing politicians of the importance of supporting

¹ Ruth Harley, "Cultural Capital and the Knowledge Economy" (paper presented at the Public Service Senior Management Conference, Wellington, 1999).

² Duncan Petrie describes these institutions as: 'organs of the state, and as such much of their output directly reflected the point-of-view and interests of the establishment', in "Coming of Age of a National Cinema," 23.

³ Nineteen local features were released during the first few decades of the twentieth century, but only three were made between 1941 and 1971; all three were (co-)produced and directed by John O'Shea.

New Zealand filmmaking.⁴ In recognition of the growing desire for local films, the Queen Elizabeth the Second (QEII) Arts Council helped to initiate the 'renaissance' of New Zealand cinema in the 1970s, although it had neither the remit nor the resources to support the growth of a feature film industry.⁵ Local film and television productions such as *Sleeping Dogs* and the *Tangata Whenua* series helped to sensitise local audiences to seeing themselves on screen, and were used as proof that New Zealand films could overcome 'cultural cringe', a belief that would become a key justification for state-funded cinema.⁶ This narrative of origins of the film commission is reinforced by the official storyline: 'In establishing the NZFC ... the government recognised the need for more structured support for a medium and art form of great cultural influence.'⁷

Nationalistic arguments in favour of film as a form of cultural protection manifested themselves in New Zealand as a reaction to both British colonisation and American cultural imperialism. The Film Industry Working Party reports and records of parliamentary debates in the 1970s offer evidence of the belief that the foreign domination of local screens was 'robbing New Zealand of a chance to contribute its own distinctive view', and, 'the desire to achieve a State-financed but independent cinema should be part of this Government's commitment to nationhood.'⁸ Following on from the established trend of cultural nationalism in art and literature, a national film industry was thus presented as a vehicle for postcolonial identity formation and as a defence against Hollywood-led cultural imperialism.

Film came to be widely seen as an important medium for the projection and protection of national identity, but the framing of film as art soon disappeared from policy discourse. Although creative expression was a more important objective to the film community, and it was

⁴ David Gascoigne, "Recalling the NZFC's First 15," *OnFilm* (December 2006), <http://www.archivesearch.co.nz/default.aspx?webid=ONF&articleid=24161> (accessed 11 August 2008); Shelton, *Selling of New Zealand Movies*, 22; Pitts, "Cross-Cultural Filmmaking", 121-122; Joyce, "In Development", 60; John O'Shea, *Documentary and National Identity*, vol. 3, Working Papers (Auckland: Centre for Film, Television and Media Studies, University of Auckland, 1997); Gaylene Preston, (paper presented at the Public Service Senior Management Conference, Wellington, 1999); Jones et al., "NZfilm."

⁵ Chris Watson, "The Effect of Funding Policies on New Zealand's Film Culture," in *Film Policy: An Australian Reader* ed. Albert Moran (Queensland: Institute for Cultural Policy Studies, Griffith University 1994), 125.

⁶ *Ibid.*; Waller, "New Zealand Film Commission"; On New Zealand cinema and cultural cringe, see Shelton, *Selling of New Zealand Movies*; Duncan Stuart, "Celluloid Journey: From the Shock of Recognition to Now," in *A Coming of Age: Thirty Years of New Zealand Film*, ed. Duncan Petrie and Duncan Stuart (Auckland: Random House, 2008); Horrocks, "New Zealand Cinema," 135-136.

⁷ Ministry of Cultural Affairs, *Government's Role in the Cultural Sector: A Survey of the Issues* (Wellington: 1998), 35.

⁸ The Member of Parliament quoted was future Labour Party leader Mike Moore, who later served as Director General of the World Trade Organisation. New Zealand Parliamentary Debate, 398 (4 June 1978), pp. 1752, 1749. In Waller, "New Zealand Film Commission," 245-246, 258.

their lobbying that brought the issue of film funding onto the political agenda, the dominant rationale for a national funding agency was soon framed primarily according to the discourse of cultural nationalism. 'Filmmakers were not all necessarily nationalists,' writes Joyce in her discussion of the formation of the NZFC, 'but in order to secure government financial support they were prepared to talk about national culture.'⁹ A consensus emerged among politicians and those campaigning for publicly-funded films that government support for national cinema should be based on a commercial model. This industry-based frame came to sit alongside cultural objectives, with both discourses influencing the establishment of the NZFC as an industry facilitator, offering an investment aimed at generating income, rather than a subsidy for artistic activity based on its intrinsic worth.¹⁰ In 1978, the New Zealand Film Commission Act was passed with bipartisan support from Robert Muldoon's National government and the Labour opposition. It established the national film agency with the mandate: 'To encourage and also to participate and assist in the making, promotion, distribution, and exhibition of films'.¹¹ During its first years of operation, the NZFC provided finance for a range of short, medium and feature length films, encouraging filmmakers to build on an innovative tradition of short filmmaking that blossomed in the 1970s.¹²

The independence of the NZFC from political interference was an essential consideration in its establishment. As an 'arm's length' agency, the NZFC resembles the Arts Council and intermediary cultural agencies in other countries that are given the authority to interpret and implement the deliberately unspecific goals of cultural policy so that the state does not seem too controlling of culture.¹³ Although this follows the well-established 'principle of non-prescription', any funding policy which favours certain forms of cultural activities over others is inherently prescriptive.¹⁴ In order to be eligible for financial support from the NZFC, a project must have 'significant New Zealand content' in terms of Section 18 of the New Zealand Film Commission Act.¹⁵ The legislation stipulates that the NZFC judge the national relevance of a project according to the subject and locations of the film, the nationalities of key personnel,

⁹ Joyce, "In Development", 57. See also Horrocks, "New Zealand Cinema," 133.

¹⁰ Joyce, "In Development", 56-58; Pitts, "Cross-Cultural Filmmaking", 146, 155; Waller, "New Zealand Film Commission," 248; Skilling, "Trajectories of Arts and Culture Policy," 25; Yeatman, "Policy and Practice", 76. This contrasted with the 'high culture' frame of previous arts policy. See O'Halloran, "Towards a 'Third Way'", 3-10; Ministry of Cultural Affairs, *Government's Role*.

¹¹ "New Zealand Film Commission Act," New Zealand Government (1978).

¹² Pitts, "Cross-Cultural Filmmaking", 79; On the somewhat controversial nature of early NZFC funding decisions, see Shelton, *Selling of New Zealand Movies*, 26; Petrie, "Coming of Age of a National Cinema," 27-28; Petrie, "New Zealand Cinema," 165; Joyce, "In Development", 53.

¹³ Rolf Hugoson, "The Rhetoric of Abstract Goals in National Cultural Policies," *Cultural Policy*, 3, no. 2 (1997). See also O'Halloran, "Towards a 'Third Way'", 22.

¹⁴ Hazledine, *Arts Funding*, 3-4; Hugoson, "Rhetoric of Abstract Goals."

¹⁵ "New Zealand Film Commission Act."

sources of funding, ownership of the equipment and technical facilities to be used, in addition to any other factors it deems relevant. Another description of 'New Zealand film', Waller suggests, is found in the legislative requirement that the NZFC 'have due regard to the observance of standards that are generally acceptable in the community', which defines film's social function in relation to moral values within a given community.¹⁶

While there was some debate about the establishment of a national film funding body, it was not frame critical.¹⁷ Booth's original proposal, the Interim Commission's first report and the parliamentary discussion of the Act contain no distinction between the cultural nationalism frame and the commercial rationale for a national film industry.¹⁸ In his analysis of film funding policies, Yeatman observes that the following separate arguments are often mixed together in political justifications for supporting New Zealand cinema: cultural and national identity, international image, export income, and employment opportunities.¹⁹ My research confirms that these frames coalesced in the campaign for state funding for cinema and in the early political discussion of the NZFC. Following this period, however, international discourse on cultural policy combined with New Zealanders' changing attitudes to national identity and cultural activities to cause a reframing in arts policy.

Competing discourses in arts policy: multiculturalism and biculturalism

A wider definition of 'the arts' to include popular culture and the expression of diverse ethnic groups emerged from debates on the restructure of the QEII Arts Council in the mid 1970s.²⁰ A new focus on cultural diversity represented a shift from the 'foundation' period of paternalistic cultural policy to a 'cultural development' frame, which emphasised the multicultural structure of New Zealand society.²¹ This frame was then challenged in the 1980s and 90s by the growing recognition of indigenous rights and the government's acknowledgment that Maori cultural practices and language are *taonga*, which it must protect according to the Treaty of Waitangi. While tensions between biculturalism and multiculturalism have been an interesting element of

¹⁶ Waller, "New Zealand Film Commission," 249. See also Shelton, *Selling of New Zealand Movies*, 15, 34; Joyce, "In Development", 70-71.

¹⁷ Rein and Schon, "Reframing Policy Discourse," 162-164. See Chapter One.

¹⁸ Waller, "New Zealand Film Commission," 246-248.

¹⁹ Yeatman, "Policy and Practice", 79-85.

²⁰ Albiston, "Reframing Arts and Cultural Policy", 95; Ministry of Cultural Affairs, *Government's Role*, 39.

²¹ Ministry of Cultural Affairs, *Government's Role*. According to MoCA, 'cultural development' followed the initial 'foundation period' from the mid 1960s on. See also: Skilling, "Brave New Zealand", 133; Albiston, "Reframing Arts and Cultural Policy Designs". On development and diversity in cultural policy, see McGuigan, *Rethinking Cultural Policy*.

arts and culture policy debates in New Zealand, these issues will only be explored here in relation to the NZFC.²²

Unlike more recent cultural policy and legislation, the 1978 NZFC Act has not been updated to reflect multicultural or bicultural values and thus does not provide any legal recognition of Maori or other minority group rights in film policy. In its early years, the NZFC Board was predominantly composed of professional Pakeha males who invested in projects by male Pakeha filmmakers.²³ Merata Mita reveals that it was difficult for filmmakers like herself to fulfil 'the criteria of a white male-dominated ... funding structure'.²⁴ Mita represents a subaltern counter public of marginalised filmmakers and audiences who challenged the dominant discourse in the 1980s and 90s.²⁵ While the NZFC, in Waller's words, 'played up the role of the New Zealand film industry as national storyteller and historian'²⁶, the political embrace of cultural nationalism contrasted with emerging social and artistic trends. 'The new film-makers tended to be deeply suspicious of nationalism, seeing its artistic canon as white, macho and mostly straight,' asserts Horrocks.²⁷ Some of the arguments of this subaltern counter public have aligned with the discourse of recent governments who have recognised their responsibility to Maori based on the Treaty of Waitangi.

²² The effects of bicultural and multicultural principles, and tensions between them, are explored in relation to arts and cultural policy in, for example: Linda Moss, "Biculturalism and Cultural Diversity: How Far does State Policy in New Zealand and the UK seek to reflect, enable or idealise the Development of Minority Culture?" *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 11, no. 2 (2005); Albiston, "Reframing Arts and Cultural Policy"; Skilling, "Brave New Zealand"; Colin James, *Funding our Culture* (Wellington: Institute of Policy Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, 2000); Pettersen, "Arts Policy and Cultural Diversity"; Bhikhu Parekh, "National Culture and Multiculturalism," in *Media and Cultural Regulation*, ed. Kenneth Thompson (London: Sage, 1997).

²³ Jesson, cited in Waller, "New Zealand Film Commission," 248, 258; Joyce, "In Development", 75; Russell Campbell, "The Kiwi Bloke: The Representation of Pakeha Masculinity in New Zealand Film," in *Contemporary New Zealand Cinema: From New Wave to Blockbuster*, ed. Ian Conrich and Stuart Murray (London: I.B. Tauris 2008), 218.

²⁴ Merata Mita, "The Soul and the Image," in *Film in Aotearoa New Zealand*, ed. Jonathan Dennis and Jan Bieringa (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1996). The first Maori-directed feature film was Mita's committed documentary *Patu!* (1983). See also Shelton, *Selling of New Zealand Movies*, 58-59.

²⁵ See Michelle Keown, "He Iwi Kotahi Tatou?: Nationalism and Cultural Identity in Maori Film," in *Contemporary New Zealand Cinema: From New Wave to Blockbuster*, ed. Ian Conrich and Stuart Murray (London: I.B. Tauris 2008); Campbell, "Kiwi Bloke," 218.

²⁶ Commenting on a 1987 brochure from the NZFC, Waller, "New Zealand Film Commission," 253. The same could be said for the glossy text sponsored by the NZFC to celebrate its thirtieth anniversary: Petrie and Stuart, *A Coming of Age*.

²⁷ Horrocks, "New Zealand Cinema," 131. These newcomers included Mita who, in the mid-1990s, described the New Zealand film industry as 'a white, neurotic one', dominated by shallow films about 'the white man or woman at odds with his/her environment', in "Soul and the Image," 47. For a discussion of the colonial masculinity inherent in cultural nationalism, see Patrick Evans, "Whipping Up a Local Culture: Masochism and the Cultural Nationalists," *Landfall*, May 2005.

This alignment is likely to be responsible for the incorporation of bicultural discourse at the NZFC. In 1992, the NZFC's revised Statement of Purpose mentioned Maori for the first time: 'New Zealand films, and the New Zealand film industry, are reflective of the cultural diversity of the nation and in this spirit the Film Commission supports the aspirations of Maori filmmakers'.²⁸ Just as it combines the economic and social benefits of cinema, NZFC discourse seems to conflate multicultural and bicultural rationales, thus ignoring the tensions between them. The poor response of the NZFC to bicultural values resulted in a group of filmmakers lodging a Treaty of Waitangi claim against the agency in 1998. Although this claim is still unresolved, it seems to have encouraged the NZFC to implement more substantive strategies to support Maori filmmaking.²⁹ In 2001, the NZFC showed a stronger commitment to biculturalism by specifically funding several projects to showcase Maori filmmaking talent.³⁰ In 2007, long-awaited initiative Te Paepae Ataata was established to devolve finance for Maori feature films, allowing for a culturally relevant funding process.³¹ This follows on from the NZFC's focus on Maori filmmaking via its devolved producer groups that select projects for development and short film production funding. Possibly a partial result of the NZFC's supportive policies, a new wave of Maori filmmakers is emerging, led by director Taika Waititi and producers Cliff Curtis and Ainsley Gardiner.³²

Economic rationalism hits (and sometimes misses) 1980s-1990s cultural policy

According to Colin James, it was the institutionalisation of bicultural principles rather than state sector reforms that represented the most significant change to the arts and cultural sector in the 1980s.³³ Scholars confirm that while neoliberalism attained hegemonic status throughout the public service in the late eighties and nineties, the intrinsic values of conserving tradition and enabling cultural expression continued to be recognised as valid frames for arts policy.³⁴ The

²⁸ New Zealand Film Commission, "Annual Report of the New Zealand Film Commission," (1992).

²⁹ Pitts, "Cross-Cultural Filmmaking", 171-175.

³⁰ *OnFilm*, "Comish Commits to Maori Filmmakers," June 2001, <http://www.archivesearch.co.nz/default.aspx?webid=ONF&articleid=352> (accessed 11 August 2008); Gascoigne, "NZFC's First 15."

³¹ Pitts, "Cross-Cultural Filmmaking", 175; Te Paepae Ataata, "Welcome," www.paepae.co.nz/index.php (accessed 2 June 2009).

³² Shelton, *Selling of New Zealand Movies*, 186; Petrie, "How Others Have Seen Us," 149, 156. The success of these particular filmmakers is discussed later in this thesis.

³³ James, *Funding our Culture*, 2.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 12; Albiston, "Reframing Arts and Cultural Policy". Skilling asserts, 'The political consensus that art was, by its nature, unsuited to the ravages of the market was never completely dismantled', in "Trajectories of Arts and Culture Policy," 25. See also Jennifer Lawn, "Creativity Inc. Globalizing the Cultural Imaginary in New Zealand," in *Global Fissures: Postcolonial Fusions*, ed. Clara A. B. Joseph and Janet Wilson (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), 228-229; Waller, "New Zealand Film Commission," 253.

distinctiveness of the cultural sector meant that some principles of state sector reforms were well suited to it, whereas others were more difficult to apply. The very idea of subsidies runs counter to the neoliberal faith in markets, yet 'arm's length' funding agencies have continued to provide grants to artists rather than audiences, based on the government's assumption that subsidising producers rather than individual transactions generates greater benefits.³⁵ In addition to increased and guaranteed funding from the Lottery Board, the NZFC actually received higher grants from the fourth Labour government, which doubled its budget from \$7.3 million in 1986 to \$14.5 million in 1991.³⁶ This enabled the agency to continue devoting a large proportion of its income to its Short Film Fund. It has consequently been argued that the rise of neoliberalism did not change the fundamental role of the government in the cultural sector.³⁷

The removal of tax concessions in the 1980s also seems at odds with the discourse of governments who were otherwise keen for the market to provide incentives that had previously been offered by the state. The greatest incentive for film production in the history of the NZFC was arguably the tax 'loophole' discovered by its first executive director, which offered fiscal concessions for private investment in any feature-length film.³⁸ This caused a flurry of film production during the early 1980s: forty feature films were completed in three years, before production levels slumped when Muldoon's government removed the tax concession. For some this decision represented 'the most negative action that can be reported in terms of official assistance to an acknowledged "film culture",' as the tax benefits had allowed filmmakers to work in an autonomous manner, increasing their skills and international visibility without too much government intervention.³⁹ Others, however, feared a 'cultural colonization' by foreign

³⁵ James, *Funding our Culture*, 10. Hazledine challenges this notion, suggesting the government would achieve better results by targeting the consumption rather than production of cultural forms, in *Arts Funding*. Lawn argues that the focus on production over distribution is a weakness in New Zealand film policy, in Lawn, "Arts, Culture and Heritage," 25.

³⁶ Waller, "New Zealand Film Commission," 252. This political support came at a time when many state-owned enterprises were sold off, but when film had been identified as a dimension of Labour's foreign policy and as a vehicle to 'make statements about New Zealand overseas', by Prime Minister David Lange. See also Shelton, *Selling of New Zealand Movies*, 82; Lawn, "Globalizing the Cultural Imaginary," 228-229.

³⁷ 'Government has continued to own and establish institutions and to subsidise the production and presentation of artistic work through the "arm's length" agencies.' Ministry of Cultural Affairs, *Government's Role*, 40; Skilling, "Trajectories of Arts and Culture Policy," 25; James, *Funding our Culture*, 4. For an international perspective, see Kenneth Thompson, "Regulation, De-regulation and Re-regulation," in *Media and Cultural Regulation*, ed. Kenneth Thompson (London: Sage, 1997).

³⁸ Jones et al., "NZfilm," 36; Shelton, *Selling of New Zealand Movies*, 28, 53.

³⁹ New Zealand Screen Council, "Overview of the New Zealand Screen Production Sector," 5, http://www.nzscreenouncil.co.nz/documents/NZSC_production_001.pdf (accessed 11 June 2008); Watson, "Effect of Funding Policies," 126; Waller, "New Zealand Film Commission"; Jones et al., "NZfilm," 36; Shelton, *Selling of New Zealand Movies*, 56.

investors who were making films destined for overseas markets and abusing the tax shelter.⁴⁰ The NZFC advised the government to take action against the tax concession, hoping in vain for an alternative scheme that would result in an increase in feature film production without fostering tax avoidance.⁴¹ In this instance, the discourse of cultural nationalism appears to have resisted yielding to that of economic rationalism, probably due to the influence of politicians in both the National and Labour governments of the 1980s who were sympathetic to the arguments put forward by the group that lobbied for a national film agency in the previous decade.

By the 1990s, however, the hegemony of economic rationalism in public policy discourse had seeped into the cultural realm, making a significant impact on film policy.⁴² The arts continued to receive state support in the 1990s, but justifications of funding for cultural activities had to be reframed. The intuitive understanding of the intrinsic value of arts and culture was displaced by an articulation of their instrumental value, usually in terms of ancillary economic benefits. Kevin Mulcahy describes this as a shift in frames from cultural development to 'cultural utilitarianism'.⁴³ Justification for arts funding came to be based on economic arguments, primarily the idea that cultural activities are not ordinary private commodities, but *merit goods* which deliver important *externalities*. That is, they are public goods whose private transactions have important indirect effects, such as cultivation of consumer taste for art, which helps to raise artistic standards and generates 'spillovers' for other creative endeavours, particularly in collaborative areas such as film.⁴⁴ This argument was combined with the notion of *market failure* to sanction government assistance.⁴⁵ A 1998 report from the Ministry of Cultural

⁴⁰ Bruce Jesson, for instance, argued that the encouragement of overseas investment through tax incentives was paramount to "an Americanization of the industry" that "decapitates" its creativity'. Cited in Waller, "New Zealand Film Commission," 251, 259-260.

⁴¹ The NZFC looked to Australia as a model system. On the tax incentives introduced by the Australian government in 1978, see Graham Dempster, "Film in the Australian Government's National Cultural Development Strategy," in *Film Policy: An Australian Reader* ed. Albert Moran (Queensland: Institute for Cultural Policy Studies, Griffith University 1994).

⁴² Economic rationalism is a somewhat controversial Australian term that describes the neoliberal ideology or 'style of government' that began dominating policy discourse in the 1980s. See, for instance: David Burchell, "The Curious Career of Economic Rationalism: Government and Economy in the Current Policy Debate," *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology* 30, no. 3 (1994). See also McGuigan, who draws on Bourdieu to describe the hegemonic discourse of economic reason, in *Rethinking Cultural Policy*. The economic reason underpinning the state sector reforms in New Zealand was based on public choice theory. Albiston, "Reframing Arts and Cultural Policy Designs", 58-81. For international examples of economic rationalism within film policy, see Albert Moran, ed., *Film Policy: An Australian Reader* (Queensland: Institute for Cultural Policy Studies, Griffith University 1994).

⁴³ Kevin Mulcahy, "Cultural Policy," in *Handbook of Public Policy*, ed. B. Guy Peters and Jon Pierre (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 271. See also O'Halloran, "Towards a 'Third Way'", 32.

⁴⁴ Hazledine, *Arts Funding*, 5, 12-18.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* There are several reasons for market failure in the arts, including a lack of money, the need for risk-taking and the very nature of public goods.

Affairs (MoCA) expounds the argument that government support for the arts is essential due to a lack of private philanthropy, and a need to ensure social outcomes that 'depend on a commitment to the welfare of present and future generations that is not always characteristic of profit-making enterprises.'⁴⁶ In particular, the need to fail in order to produce innovative work comes at a price that a private enterprise is rarely willing to pay repeatedly. The acknowledgement that artistic innovation requires allowing for some failures has resulted in an acceptance of risk-taking in the allocation of public funds, particularly for emerging artists and projects of excellence.⁴⁷ As the next chapter shows, this has allowed criteria such as 'innovation' to be applied in short film funding programmes.

The NZFC did not escape the 'profit culture' of the 1990s: funding levels declined and the agency focused on encouraging investment in the industry by rewarding films that returned revenue.⁴⁸ Although funding from the lotteries increased in the early 1990s, the National government cut the NZFC grant by \$2.7 million in 1991, resulting in an overall decrease of 20 per cent in the agency's income. By the mid nineties, the direct government grant to the NZFC constituted less than 10 per cent of its annual \$12 million budget, which itself was a quarter of the cost of an average Hollywood production.⁴⁹ The NZFC, like CNZ, consequently became 'heavily dependent on Lotteries Commission profits', which provided most of its income throughout the 1990s.⁵⁰ The limited budget forced NZFC Board members to make difficult decisions in an attempt to balance politicians' demands to pursue international finance with the film community's expectations of support for unique and diverse projects which fulfil a cultural function.⁵¹ The Board opted to reduce expenditure on marketing and documentary filmmaking, and focus on lower budget feature productions to be co-financed with television companies.⁵² The lack of funds and insistence on private investment resulted in fewer productions, which caused a 'mini-exodus' of filmmakers.⁵³ The NZFC consequently accused politicians of

⁴⁶ Ministry of Cultural Affairs, *Government's Role*, 13, 23. MoCA points out that state support is not intended to supplant private funding, though: 'Public funding provides sufficient financial stability for artists and organisations to be able to take the creative risks necessary for cultural growth, while still requiring them to gain financial support – in one way or another – from their communities.'

⁴⁷ James, *Funding our Culture*, 11-13; Yeatman, "Policy and Practice", 108-109. The requirement that projects be 'innovative' or 'experimental' was consequently built in to the SIPF criteria. Creative New Zealand, "Screen Innovation Production Fund," www.screeninnovation.govt.nz/about/index.html (accessed 3 December 2008).

⁴⁸ Pitts, "Cross-Cultural Filmmaking", 127.

⁴⁹ Peter Calder, "Would-Be Warriors: New Zealand Film Since The Piano," in *Film in Aotearoa New Zealand*, ed. Jonathan Dennis and Jan Bieringa (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1996), 190.

⁵⁰ Ministry of Cultural Affairs, *Government's Role*, 24, 32-33.

⁵¹ Horrocks, "New Zealand Cinema," 137.

⁵² Waller, "New Zealand Film Commission," 255.

⁵³ Shelton, *Selling of New Zealand Movies*, 102; Ruth Jeffery, "Film Policy in New Zealand," in *Film Policy: An Australian Reader* ed. Albert Moran (Queensland: Institute for Cultural Policy Studies, Griffith University 1994), 46.

complacency by failing to encourage talented filmmakers to stay and contribute to the country's social and economic development.⁵⁴

Although the NZFC operates at arm's length from the government and is free to criticise it, the agency has not escaped the state's hegemonic control. The NZFC has, in effect, articulated increasingly focused objectives that align closely with government policy. Analyses of New Zealand cultural funding agencies show that they tend to align their objectives with those of the current administration in order to attract increased, or at least continued, funding levels.⁵⁵ Waller describes the situation in the 1980s: 'Like the [fourth] Labour government, the NZFC endorsed fiscal "realism", decentralization, internationalism and market-driven decision-making.'⁵⁶ This embrace of neoliberal principles intensified under the National government of the 1990s, especially when scepticism about the 'vested interests' of the film community resulted in the government appointing fewer specialists to funding agencies in an attempt to avoid 'policy capture'.⁵⁷ When investment banker Philip Pryke was appointed NZFC chairperson in 1993, he vowed 'to further "devolve" control to the private sector and bring "market-driven" operating principles even more to the fore, while still supporting the occasional "New Zealand icon".'⁵⁸ The following year, Richard Stewart joined Pryke as the new CEO. While Stewart's background as director of publicly-funded institution Film Queensland initially assured members of the film community that he had the appropriate experience to manage the NZFC, he appeared no more committed to the cultural mandate than Pryke did. According to Waller, 'Stewart's immediate objective was to encourage greater private investment in the industry'.⁵⁹ The practice of attracting private, preferably international, finance was seen as conflicting with the rhetorical emphasis of the NZFC on cultural goals; however, this behaviour represented an alignment with government strategy and hence an act of self-preservation.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Harley, "Cultural Capital and the Knowledge Economy"; Alan Sorrell, "Chairman's Introduction," in *Report of the New Zealand Film Commission for the year ended 30 June 1999* (New Zealand Film Commission, 1999).

⁵⁵ Skilling, "Brave New Zealand", 163; Yeatman, "Policy and Practice". For a broader perspective, see Thompson, "Regulation, De-regulation and Re-regulation."

⁵⁶ Waller, "New Zealand Film Commission," 252.

⁵⁷ Albiston, "Reframing Arts and Cultural Policy"; Horrocks, "New Zealand Cinema," 136-137; Brian Easton, in Skilling, "Trajectories of Arts and Culture Policy," 26.

⁵⁸ Waller, "New Zealand Film Commission." The appropriateness of an NZFC chairperson who had advised the government on selling off state-owned enterprises, and had only sat on the Board for one year prior to his appointment, was unsurprisingly questioned from within and outside the agency. See also Shelton, *Selling of New Zealand Movies*, 153.

⁵⁹ Waller, "New Zealand Film Commission," 255, 262.

⁶⁰ Skilling, "Brave New Zealand," 139-140.

As well as the external goal of promoting New Zealand, the emphasis on profit-making has encouraged successive governments along with the NZFC to target international investment and sales. New Zealand's population is too small to support its own feature film industry, so overseas sales are necessary if investors want a chance of recouping the production costs of a local film. As early as 1986, the NZFC was actively encouraging producers to develop feature projects that would appeal to overseas audiences.⁶¹ The NZFC has consistently devoted resources to the promotion and sales of New Zealand films overseas, operating as a sales agent for New Zealand films including those it has not invested in, and using national identity as a brand to differentiate its products on the international market.⁶² The policy and practice of the NZFC in marketing New Zealand film 'as a national commodity' appear to have been successful, because the visibility of the New Zealand film industry increased dramatically following the establishment of the Interim Commission in 1977.⁶³

The NZFC adopts the dominant discourse

The NZFC, especially while under the direction of Chief Executive Ruth Harley, aligned its approach with the dominant discourse of economic rationalism. It emphasised the economic benefits of film in order to attract continued – and eventually increased – levels of funding. This was not a new argument; the NZFC had been established for commercial as well as cultural reasons, and had been highlighting the economic benefits of a healthy film industry since 1978.⁶⁴ Even the Interim Commission had provided charts showing 'employment prospects, export revenue, tax earnings, and so on' as supporting evidence for what Waller deems a 'single-minded' argument that 'government support for a New Zealand feature film industry "is justified on economic reasons alone"'.⁶⁵ Analysis of Harley's speeches reveals, however, an 'overt politicisation of the film industry' as an important contributor to the economic and social development of the country.⁶⁶ Harley has explicitly stated that her

⁶¹ Waller, "New Zealand Film Commission," 252.

⁶² Duncan Petrie, "New Zealand Cinema: 30 Years On," in *A Coming of Age: Thirty Years of New Zealand Film*, ed. Duncan Petrie and Duncan Stuart (Auckland: Random House, 2008), 166; Shelton, *Selling of New Zealand Movies*, 29-30, 96-97, 156.

⁶³ Waller, "New Zealand Film Commission," 243; Shelton, *Selling of New Zealand Movies*. Shelton's comprehensive account of his experience managing the NZFC sales agency attests to the persistent efforts and achievements of the organisation in its international promotion of New Zealand films. See also Watson, "Effect of Funding Policies," 131.

⁶⁴ Shelton, *Selling of New Zealand Movies*, 70-71. Pitts and Mladen Ivancic contest the common misconception that the commercial focus of the NZFC is a new phenomenon. Pitts, "Cross-Cultural Filmmaking", 146, 155. Ivancic, in Philip Wakefield, "Doing unto Others," *OnFilm*, December 2006.

⁶⁵ Waller, "New Zealand Film Commission," 247, 258.

⁶⁶ Jones et al., "NZfilm," 14-16; Yeatman, "Policy and Practice". See, for example, Harley, "Cultural Capital and the Knowledge Economy".

understanding of the political climate led her to believe an economic discourse was the only way to overcome the marginalisation of arts and culture in policy debates, ‘because that’s the speak the Treasury speaks’.⁶⁷ Catherine Fitzgerald, former NZFC Director of Creative and Industry Development, confirms that the use of economic rationalist discourse was a deliberate attempt to encourage Treasury economists and policymakers to see the long-term cultural and economic benefits of film funding at a time when the NZFC felt particularly vulnerable.⁶⁸ Although a self-proclaimed ‘cultural nationalist’, Harley began to frame her discourse as well as that of NZFC documents according to the dominant economic reasoning in policymaking.⁶⁹ Yeatman remarks: ‘Harley is strategic in her alignments with the politicians, even if this is her own smoke-screen, and does not herself believe in the arguments she uses to justify funding increases.’⁷⁰

One of Harley’s first initiatives was to engage law and economics specialist George Barker to advise the NZFC on the economic discourse that had dominated policymaking since 1984. Harley explains that Barker was employed to help ‘make a bridge between cultural values and the principles of economic rationalism’.⁷¹ Barker proffered the concept of ‘cultural capital’ as a means of expressing and assessing the social benefits of cultural policy in a way that would make sense to politicians and policy analysts. He defines cultural capital, without reference to Pierre Bourdieu but by allusion to Robert Putnam, as a type of social capital, which helps to connect individuals and coordinate action by reducing misunderstandings.⁷² It is thus an intangible value, equivalent to the idea of identity, with aesthetic, cognitive and moral dimensions. The NZFC embraced this definition of ‘cultural capital’ and proceeded to use it in their mission statements and annual reports.⁷³ NZFC agents did not simply abandon the socio-cultural reasons for supporting cinema; rather they wished to ensure these objectives were not

⁶⁷ Harley, cited in Yeatman, "Policy and Practice", 88-89.

⁶⁸ Catherine Fitzgerald, Interview with the author, 10 March 2009. See Appendix 7 for full details of interviews.

⁶⁹ Harley, "Cultural Capital and the Knowledge Economy"; Harley, "The State of the Arts: Culture Industries," (2001) <http://www.govettbrewster.com/Publications/Visit+Online/harley.htm> (accessed 3 February 2009).

⁷⁰ Yeatman, "Policy and Practice", 89.

⁷¹ Ruth Harley, 'Foreword', in George Robert Barker, *Cultural Capital and Policy* (Wellington: Centre for Law and Economics, Australian National University, 2000), v; Harley, "Cultural Capital and the Knowledge Economy".

⁷² Barker, *Cultural Capital and Policy*, 13. See Bourdieu, "Forms of Capital"; Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2001).

⁷³ Conor, "Hollywood, Wellywood or the Backwoods?", 73. From 1998, the NZFC’s reformulated mission statement included the new ‘purpose of “contributing to the creation of cultural capital in Aotearoa/New Zealand through popular feature films”’. Alan Sorrell, "Chairman's Introduction," in: *Report of the New Zealand Film Commission for the year ended 30 June 1998* (New Zealand Film Commission, 1998), 6; and *Report of the New Zealand Film Commission for the year ended 30 June 2001* (New Zealand Film Commission, 2001), 6. Since 2004, ‘cultural capital’ has been presented as an objective in the NZFC’s self-evaluation of its service performance. New Zealand Film Commission, "Annual Reports of the New Zealand Film Commission," (2005 - 2008).

overlooked due to the emphasis on quantifiable outcomes in public policy. Fairclough explains that contemporary political texts often contain a 'hybridization of discourses', specifically the 'strategy of legitimizing the discourse of social cohesion in terms of the neo-liberal discourse.'⁷⁴ Barker points to market failures in relation to identity, which was one of the National government's four strategic priority areas.⁷⁵ He asserts that the government contributes to cultural capital by way of its investments which create cultural outputs such as films. Although individuals can also invest in and develop cultural capital, they 'do not always appropriate all the costs and benefits of their investment decision making.'⁷⁶ The concept of cultural capital thus effectively justifies government involvement in the sector in accordance with neoliberal market discourse, although it does not make it much easier to measure outcomes. Barker admits it is very difficult to measure identity, but suggests we can nonetheless identify 'revealed cultural capital' through empirical evaluations of supply and demand in the cultural sector.⁷⁷ The NZFC's application of Barker's argument reinforces the framing of film as a market good with little value in itself, which 'requires legitimacy from the dominant discourse of economics.'⁷⁸

The NZFC's approach to film as an economic sector was not merely rhetorical. It worked more closely with industry practitioners, continuing to devolve funding decisions to independent producers. Its first devolved funding programme had appeared in 1986 when Producer Oriented Development (POD) Schemes were introduced to fulfil the new requirement 'that there has to be some demonstrated market interest for any film before it can get its investment.'⁷⁹ Funds were allocated to established production houses for project development, to 'reduce the centralising influence' of the NZFC and 'devolve both responsibility and accountability' to the industry.⁸⁰ Although there was a risk that funds would not be well spent by producers, the scheme's independence from bureaucratic interference made it a success, according to Joyce, who argues, 'the benefits of creative freedom within a producer structure outweigh the possible disadvantages.'⁸¹ In 1990, the 'Super POD' scheme was successfully

⁷⁴ Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse*, 127. See also Anderson, "Logic of Public Problems."

⁷⁵ Barker, *Cultural Capital and Policy*, 31-42; Harley, "Cultural Capital and the Knowledge Economy".

⁷⁶ Barker, *Cultural Capital and Policy*, 35.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 48-49.

⁷⁸ Jones et al., "NZfilm," 21-22.

⁷⁹ Ruth Jeffery, "Film Policy in New Zealand," in *Film Policy: An Australian Reader* ed. Albert Moran (Queensland: Institute for Cultural Policy Studies, Griffith University 1994), 48.

⁸⁰ New Zealand Film Commission, cited in Waller, "New Zealand Film Commission," 252; Jeffery, "Film Policy in New Zealand."

⁸¹ Joyce, "In Development", 273.

launched for feature productions with either direct investment or loans secured against presales to overseas markets.⁸²

Alongside Harley's discursive strategy and the Board's market orientation, the NZFC faced increasingly stringent requirements in terms of cultural policy objectives and outcomes that necessitated the integration of economic rationalist frames into its accountability documents. The Public Finance Act of 1989 required that the NZFC, as a crown entity, formulate strategic plans and performance measures in its annual reports to the responsible minister. While its statement of 'Role and Operation' in 1986 had focused loosely on producing 'first class films of international calibre'; from 1989, the agency's guidelines were less ambiguous, demanding 'that each project demonstrate the potential for achieving theatrical distribution in at least three major offshore markets; reaching a New Zealand box office take of \$100,000; and returning net earnings equal to at least 50 per cent of costs.'⁸³ These criteria match the explicit connections made between film production, economic development and international promotion in policy documents in the 1990s. In 1996, MoCA stated that the three 'principal SRA [strategic result area] linkages' of the NZFC were 'economic growth', 'enterprise and innovation', and 'external linkages'; it did not mention any social or cultural 'linkages' of film policy.⁸⁴ Skilling suggests although the application of public management principles gave more power to funding agencies to formulate the criteria of cultural policies, the new focus on measurability forced them to articulate their objectives in accordance with the broader goals of the government.⁸⁵

The development of performance indicators is a clear example of the effect of neoliberal discourse on NZFC policy. Judging a film's success by the number of viewers who pay to see it offers a convenient performance measure under the economic rationalist frame.⁸⁶ In annual reports, the NZFC indeed lists its achievements in terms of box office takings in addition to the

⁸² New Zealand Screen Council, "Overview."

⁸³ Waller, "New Zealand Film Commission," 252, 260. Only a few New Zealand films have met these criteria

⁸⁴ Ministry of Cultural Affairs, "1996 Post Election Briefing for the Minister of Cultural Affairs," (Wellington: 1996), 45-46.

⁸⁵ Skilling, "Brave New Zealand", 163; Skilling, "Trajectories of Arts and Culture Policy," 26. See also Pettersen, "Arts Policy and Cultural Diversity", 83-85.

⁸⁶ Australia's Film Finance Corporation suggests that 'viewers per dollar' is an appropriate albeit approximate way of measuring 'quality' and 'cultural relevance' in films. Graham Dempster, "Quality in the Government's Film Program," in *Film Policy: An Australian Reader* ed. Albert Moran (Queensland: Institute for Cultural Policy Studies, Griffith University 1994). Similarly, Peter Morris explains the shift in rhetoric to a focus on economic viability and audience numbers in Canadian film policy from the 1970s. Peter Morris, "Public Policy, Public Opinion," in *Film Policy: An Australian Reader* ed. Albert Moran (Queensland: Institute for Cultural Policy Studies, Griffith University 1994).

number of films supported and, occasionally, audience figures per film.⁸⁷ This approach to measuring outcomes relies on conceptions of consumer sovereignty and a belief that the purpose of cinema is attracting mass audiences. Yeatman quotes Harley's public statement: 'if you want to have a significant cultural impact, you have that by impacting on a significant number of people.'⁸⁸ While a film definitely needs an audience if it is to have any social value, it is possible that a film that increases viewers' social understanding or knowledge may not attract a large audience.⁸⁹ Knowing how many people have seen a film says nothing about the extent of viewers' engagement with the text. Signs of critical rather than commercial success, such as positive quotes from reviews and any awards a film has gained, are occasionally incorporated in NZFC accountability documents.⁹⁰ Presenting any conclusive measure of 'success' in an annual report is problematic, however, as most films have a much longer 'shelf life' than the months of their cinema release.⁹¹

Backlash: conflict between the NZFC and the film community in the 1990s

By the 1990s, the film community was highly critical of the market orientation of government cultural policy, seeing it as a threat to the diversity, vitality and independence of the film industry.⁹² In 1996, Bieringa and Dennis wrote:

The conservatism and bureaucracy, now entrenched in the arts, has meant a loss of freedom in film making in Aotearoa and perpetuated the industry's perennial fragility. The industry has become more and more dominated by the market, less open to risk, driven by economic rather than creative imperatives.⁹³

Similar criticisms were made throughout the arts and culture sector.⁹⁴ Horrocks explains that the state sector reforms were initially welcomed by filmmakers in the hope of unsettling the conservative practices of funding agencies and TVNZ; however, by the end of the 1990s, he worried that state funding for film 'remains grudging in the extreme'.⁹⁵ A 'perennial lack of quotas and funding has ensured that a public appetite for local films and television dramas has

⁸⁷ Conor, "Hollywood, Wellywood or the Backwoods?", 73. The number of cinema attendees for certain films is listed in NZFC annual reports in 2001 (p. 14); 2002 (16); 2004 (16, 20) and 2005 (12-13).

⁸⁸ Yeatman, "Policy and Practice", 162.

⁸⁹ Skilling, "Brave New Zealand", 139.

⁹⁰ Examples can be found in NZFC annual reports in 1997 (p. 18); 2003 (17, 20); 2004 (16); and 2005 (12).

⁹¹ See Petrie, "Coming of Age of a National Cinema," 24-25.

⁹² Dennis and Bieringa, *Film in Aotearoa New Zealand*, 8; Horrocks, "New Zealand Cinema," 135; Calder, "New Zealand Film Since The Piano," 190; Shelton, *Selling of New Zealand Movies*, 173-174, 183; O'Shea, *Documentary and National Identity*.

⁹³ Dennis and Bieringa, *Film in Aotearoa New Zealand*, 8.

⁹⁴ See Albiston, "Reframing Arts and Cultural Policy", 65-71.

⁹⁵ Horrocks, "New Zealand Cinema," 131, 135; Jeffery, "Film Policy in New Zealand," 45-48. While the restructuring of broadcasting resulted in a greater number of people employed in the independent film market, this increase was predominantly in producers with business and administrative backgrounds, rather than a move towards greater artistic or creative diversity.

never become firmly established,' claims Horrocks, suggesting that this allows politicians to contest the rationale for state funding, resulting 'in only token assistance' for the arts, and threatening the survival of the NZFC.⁹⁶ Underlying this view is the assumption that the intrinsic value of New Zealand cinema should guarantee continued state support.

Many critics of the NZFC were concerned that the fear of 'policy capture' had resulted in the agency being run by bureaucrats and business people who had little knowledge of the particularities of the film industry. Filmmakers complained that a lack of understanding about cinema among politicians and bureaucrats hindered the NZFC's ability to meet the needs of audiences and practitioners. Horrocks argues that politicians 'do not understand talk about the potential loss of localness or the idea that there may be important films for small audiences.'⁹⁷ Ruth Jeffery, former NZFC Director of Development, recounts that the introduction of strategic objectives and performance measures from 1989 caused conflict in a 'small, evolutionary, and people-based' industry that perceived too much change in the agency's practices.⁹⁸ The film community blamed the NZFC Board for these changes, although some were clearly the result of government legislation, informed by public choice theory, which was applied indiscriminately across the public sector.

Framing debates on the NZFC

The NZFC evidently occupies a difficult position as it negotiates the sometimes conflicting priorities of governments, industry practitioners and the film community.⁹⁹ Catherine Albiston suggests that debates over arts funding in the 1990s were inhibited by the abstract level at which they took place and 'the pervasiveness of opposing frames'.¹⁰⁰ Horrocks' suggestion that art is seen as 'artifice' and has no established role in New Zealand society may help to explain the lack of common understanding in cultural policy debates.¹⁰¹ Tensions in film funding debates have tended to arise between the opposing frames of 'film as art' and 'film as industry'.

⁹⁶ Horrocks, "New Zealand Cinema," 135-136.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 137. Ian Mune's and Peter Jackson's criticisms are documented in Shelton, *Selling of New Zealand Movies*, 173. While acknowledging the NZFC's role in fostering independent production, O'Shea is adamant that there is too much outside influence on film funding decisions. In *Documentary and National Identity*, 14. See also: Yeatman, "Policy and Practice", 161-165; Pitts, "Cross-Cultural Filmmaking", 126; David Gascoigne, "Film Funds 1 & 2: Slate of Play," *OnFilm*, February 2007, <http://www.archivesearch.co.nz/default.aspx?webid=ONF&articleid=24571> (accessed 11 August 2008).

⁹⁸ Jeffery, "Film Policy in New Zealand."

⁹⁹ Joyce, "In Development", 267.

¹⁰⁰ Albiston, "Reframing Arts and Cultural Policy", 113-114. Naming these frames 'state funding', 'state sector reform' and 'bicultural', Albiston describes the different principles that underline each justification for and approach to arts and culture policy.

¹⁰¹ Horrocks, "New Zealand Cinema," 135-136. See also Pitts, "Cross-Cultural Filmmaking", 66.

While NZFC policy has constantly combined cultural and commercial imperatives, this binary paradigm continues to frame much debate on film policies and funding practices.¹⁰² Waller surmises:

By the mid-1980s, much of the discourse about the film industry came to operate within a pessimistic culture-versus-commerce frame that had not been nearly as prominent in the 1970s. The NZFC's 1985 annual report, for example, began with the assertion that 'a film industry [...] involves an endless tug of war between finance, investment and economic returns on the one hand and art, culture and national identity on the other'.¹⁰³

This binary frame has limited value, as a country cannot have a national film industry without a film culture, or vice versa. Mainstream film production involves both artistic techniques and industrial practices, making the art/industry dichotomy somewhat redundant. Policy debates nevertheless became increasingly polarised as members of the film community reacted to what they saw as a problematic emphasis on film industry over film culture. On the other side of the debate, many politicians and some members of the public and film industry did not believe NZFC funds should be spent on films that were not popular, as demonstrated by commercial success.

International literature on film policy demonstrates the commonality of this dichotomy, which is often framed as elitism versus populism.¹⁰⁴ Higson highlights the tension between 'intellectual discourses which insist that a proper national cinema must be one which aspires to the status of art ... [and] dismiss Hollywood's popular cinema as culturally debilitating;' and a populist discourse which 'suggests that a cinema can only be national, and command a national-popular audience if it is a mass-produced genre cinema, capable of constructing, reproducing, and re-cycling popular myths on a broad scale, with an elaborate, well capitalised, and well resourced system of market exploitation.'¹⁰⁵ Defining the sort of culture that the government should support inevitably leads to criticism for paternalism or elitism, that is, for supposing to know which art forms and cultural activities are 'good' for citizens.¹⁰⁶ The NZFC is

¹⁰² Jones et al., "NZfilm." See, for example, Harley, "Cultural Capital and the Knowledge Economy"; Nick Grant, "The Parting Remarks of Ex-Chairman Barrie," *OnFilm*, February 2007. Joyce and Pitts' theses emphasise the tensions between the economic and cultural objectives of the NZFC. Joyce, "In Development", 64-65, 151-153, 265; Pitts, "Cross-Cultural Filmmaking", 146, 155.

¹⁰³ New Zealand Film Commission Annual Report (1985), p. 3. Cited in Waller, "New Zealand Film Commission," 248, 251. Jacka and Dermody similarly identify these major frames, in *Anatomy of a Film Industry*.

¹⁰⁴ Dermody and Jacka, *Anatomy of a Film Industry*; McGuigan, *Rethinking Cultural Policy*, 114; Mulcahy, "Cultural Policy," 270-271. This is explained as a conflict between the 'public good' and 'consumer sovereignty' frame, in Jennifer Craik, Glyn Davis, and Naomi Sutherland, "Cultural Policy and National Identity," in *The Future of Governance*, ed. Glyn Davis and Michael Keating (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 2000).

¹⁰⁵ Higson, "Concept of National Cinema," 45.

¹⁰⁶ James, *Funding our Culture*, 11; Lewis and Miller, "Introduction.", 2-3; Richard Dyer describes the origins of and alternatives to the intrinsic value, or 'film as art', discourse in "Introduction to Film Studies," in *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, ed. John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 4-5.

vehemently reproached when it is seen as attempting to dictate taste. Hazledine, for instance, complains that it committed ‘artistic interference’ with its ‘policy of favouring “feel-good comedies”’ in the late 1990s.¹⁰⁷

The use of economic indicators to demonstrate the value of a national film industry has received criticism from various circles. While politicians are quick to talk about connections between high profile films and increases in tourism, these links are tenuous, and, as Lawn points out, ‘the methodologies for estimating the economic impact of cultural events have not been rigorous.’¹⁰⁸ Economists and political scientists effectively argue that it is pointless to justify arts funding based on the sector’s contribution to export income or employment, or on the ‘multiplier’ effect, because such arguments can be applied to any dollar spent anywhere in the economy, and do not justify favouring the development of one industry over another.¹⁰⁹ Economic arguments about the value of art and culture nevertheless became commonplace from the late 1970s, displacing the earlier emphasis on creative expression, and were essential justifications of the establishment of the NZFC.¹¹⁰

The intangible nature of culture has been a source of conflict between economic rationalists and cultural nationalists, and the NZFC’s representation of cultural benefits in economic terms has proved somewhat problematic. Participants at a forum on arts funding in 2000 struggled to define ‘cultural capital’; however, ‘if left undefined, it was felt to be a workable phrase’.¹¹¹ This inability to define the concept defeats its purpose, though, as intangible benefits mean nothing in a policy environment dominated by economic rationalism. Although it is possible to measure such quantifiable benefits of a film industry as employment opportunities, it is very difficult to measure the more abstract goals of social cohesion and identity formation. The difficulty of putting a value to these ‘intangibles’ may be one of the reasons why culture was marginalised in public policy in the 1980s and 1990s.¹¹² The specificities of cultural production and consumption contradict some of the basic assumptions of economic analysis, such as

¹⁰⁷ Hazledine, *Arts Funding*, 35-37. Pitts and Yeatman also describe the NZFC’s confused and unwelcome attempts to determine the tone and content of New Zealand cinema in the 1990s. Pitts, "Cross-Cultural Filmmaking", 125, 156; Yeatman, "Policy and Practice", 161.

¹⁰⁸ Lawn, "Arts, Culture and Heritage," 26-27. See also Christopher Madden, "Indicators for Arts and Cultural Policy: A Global Perspective," *Cultural Trends* 14, no. 3 (2005); Eleonora Belfiore, "Auditing Culture: The Subsidised Cultural Sector in the New Public Management," *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 10, no. 2 (2004).

¹⁰⁹ Hazledine, *Arts Funding*; Nicholas Garnham, in O'Halloran, "Towards a 'Third Way'", 108.

¹¹⁰ Waller, "New Zealand Film Commission," 248; Skilling, "Brave New Zealand", 137.

¹¹¹ James, *Funding our Culture*, 6.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 10; Harley, "Cultural Capital and the Knowledge Economy"; Harley, "State of the Arts."

agency theory.¹¹³ That is not to say that economic measurements have no role in cultural policy analysis. However, policy conflicts arise when the intrinsic value argument, which underlies traditional justifications for state support of film, is disregarded because it fails to demonstrate quantifiable benefits.

Although the government's reasons for intervening in the arts and cultural sector were often unarticulated in the twentieth century, they were based on some common understandings of the public benefits of culture. MoCA observed that these benefits included the individual and community desire for aesthetic and communal experiences; opportunities for self-expression, communication and creative development; and increasing understanding of our own and others' experiences.¹¹⁴ Social cohesion and national identity have remained inherent albeit thorny justifications for state funding of film throughout the past thirty years. While national identity can be identified as a constant and fundamental goal of New Zealand cultural policy, it is now considered legitimate only when framed within an economic discourse. This is epitomised in a speech from Harley: 'Our identity is the key to creating a unique positioning for our goods and services from tourism through wine making to filmmaking.... Film creates culture, builds identity and markets that identity to the world.'¹¹⁵ Economic arguments appeared entrenched by the turn of the century, when there was reportedly a general consensus that government funding in the arts, as in any sector, should be directed at achieving 'externalities'.¹¹⁶ The cultural reasons for state support of cinema did not disappear, but there was an emphasis on the instrumental, society-wide benefits of a thriving film industry, rather than the intangible values of cinematographic expression.

Beyond 2000: national cultural policy in a global knowledge economy

Recent developments in cultural policy reflect broader trends in the international political economy. Our globalised, post-industrial society has at times been labelled a knowledge economy, information society, and creative economy. Such titles place a premium on specific

¹¹³ Hazledine, *Arts Funding*, 23-25.

¹¹⁴ Ministry of Cultural Affairs, *Government's Role*, 12-13.

¹¹⁵ Harley, "Cultural Capital and the Knowledge Economy". The economic value of national identity as 'an important substitute for more overt forms of protectionism (such as tariffs) in fostering the successful engagement between domestic producers and consumers' is expressed in Hazledine, *Arts Funding*, 15-16.

¹¹⁶ Arts institutions, James' report concluded, should 'specify the externality in each grant or subsidy' and provide a more transparent process for evaluating externalities. That is, funding decisions should take into account 'the benefits to society of an artistic, cultural or heritage activity', rather than merely focusing on the needs of 'those involved in or particularly interested in arts, culture and heritage.' *Funding our Culture*, 1, 13, 16. See also Hazledine, *Arts Funding*.

types of education and culture, and particularly on the so-called cultural or creative industries which are seen to increase wealth in this post-Fordist era. Globalisation has also refuelled fears of the dominance of United States popular culture, given the size and reach of American-based entertainment conglomerates, which are commonly considered to encourage worldwide cultural homogeneity.¹¹⁷

By the time New Zealand's fifth Labour government positioned the creative industries as a priority area within its economic development programme, such an 'articulation of culture, creativity and nationality as a response to globalisation' had already been made by the Labour party in Australia and the United Kingdom.¹¹⁸ Labour's cultural policy serves to brand the party and epitomises 'third way' politics, allowing the social democrats to differentiate themselves from National while combining traditional socio-cultural reasons for supporting the sector with economic goals, in order to appeal to a wide range of voters.¹¹⁹ It can also be seen as an attempt to overcome the unhelpful dichotomy of 'art' versus 'industry' which shapes so many cultural policy debates. Like other third way parties, Clark's Labour government privileged art that fulfilled the ideal of creating both a cohesive society and dynamic economy. From 2002 on, 'arts and culture' only appeared in policy discourse in the context of the 'creative industries'.¹²⁰ While the definition of arts and culture was broadened to incorporate such diverse activities as fashion design and, in some cases, software creation, this represents, for Skilling, 'a significant narrowing of art's possible functions.'¹²¹ It frames artistic endeavour as a commercial activity that does not aim to serve any spiritual or educational needs but derives value from creating economic and social wealth. This is not a radical break from past cultural policy, though; the creative industries approach retains the structure and principles of

¹¹⁷ Ministry of Cultural Affairs, *Government's Role*, 38; Skilling, "Trajectories of Arts and Culture Policy," 27. Lawn and Beatty, "Getting to Wollywood," 133. For a succinct yet nuanced critique of these arguments, see John Tomlinson, "Internationalism, Globalization and Cultural Imperialism," in *Media and Cultural Regulation*, ed. Kenneth Thompson (London: Sage, 1997).

¹¹⁸ Skilling, "Brave New Zealand", 12, 142; Grierson, "Arts and Creative Industries"; Wilf Stevenson, "Regenerating Britain's Film Industry: What are the Policy Options?" in *Film Policy: An Australian Reader* ed. Albert Moran (Queensland: Institute for Cultural Policy Studies, Griffith University 1994), 44.

¹¹⁹ O'Halloran, "Towards a 'Third Way'", 74-75; Skilling, "Brave New Zealand", 12, 127; Lawn, "Arts, Culture and Heritage," 28. While the 'third way' has relevance, Chris Eichbaum cautions that it is a foreign and vague term that cannot be fully applied to the New Zealand situation, in "The Third Way," in *New Zealand Government and Politics*, ed. Raymond Miller (Melbourne Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹²⁰ Skilling, "Trajectories of Arts and Culture Policy," 27.

¹²¹ Ibid; ———, "Brave New Zealand". This discursive narrowing places no value on art that cannot be commercialised and integrated into the national brand. See also Grierson, "Arts and Creative Industries".

corporate management and instrumental objectives that were introduced over the previous two decades.¹²²

This revitalisation of cultural policy involved a heightened interest in film. Clark described film as ‘a very powerful medium’, and her government’s Growth and Innovation Framework identified the screen production sector as the fastest growing creative industry.¹²³ Over its nine-year term, the Labour-led administration increased its role in the sector and provided unprecedented levels of public funds for film production. It doubled its funding of the NZFC to over \$10 million annually, introduced the Large Budget Screen Production Grant scheme, and established the Film Production Fund with a one-off contribution of \$22 million. Announcements of these schemes, which provided financial benefits for films with international investors, emphasised each programme’s cultural objectives. Several scholars have suggested that Labour’s rhetorical embrace of cultural nationalism and social criticism, evident in these press releases, is at odds with, or obscures, its prioritisation of policies driven by economic nationalism.¹²⁴

A significant aspect of third way politics is a focus on national identity or, more specifically, nation-branding. Rather than a threat, globalisation is framed as an opportunity for New Zealand to develop its own brand, by using distinctive cultural products to give the country a competitive advantage.¹²⁵ Film has long been identified as an ideal vehicle to promote New Zealand’s identity at home as well as its image overseas. Introducing the NZFC legislation to Parliament in 1978, Minister Allan Hightet stated: ‘The new era of New Zealand films will enable the world to see New Zealand and its people as they see themselves.’¹²⁶ Three decades later, as self-appointed Minister for Culture and Heritage, Clark similarly asserted, ‘Film is...

¹²² O’Halloran, "Towards a 'Third Way'", 9; Belfiore, "Auditing Culture." Belfiore and Oliver Bennett suggest that the instrumental argument in arts policy dates back at least 2000 years, in "Rethinking the Social Impacts of the Arts," *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 13: 2 (2007).

¹²³ Helen Clark, "Arts, Culture and Public Policy: PM’s Speech to Winter Lecture Series ", 22 August 2000, <http://executive.govt.nz/Speech.aspx?type=speech&rid=32047> (accessed 20 January 2009). Screen Production Industry Taskforce, "Taking on the World," 1; Conor, "Hollywood, Wellywood or the Backwoods?", 78. Conor points out that exceptional international productions like *Lord of the Rings* would have skewed these statistics.

¹²⁴ Lawn and Beatty, "Getting to Wellywood"; Lawn, "Arts, Culture and Heritage"; O’Halloran, "Towards a 'Third Way'", 100; Lydia Wevers and Mark Williams, "Going Mad Without Noticing: Cultural Policy in a Small Country," *Landfall* 204, (November 2002).

¹²⁵ Conor, "Hollywood, Wellywood or the Backwoods?", 68-69; Skilling, "Brave New Zealand", 121; Wevers and Williams, "Cultural Policy in a Small Country"; Jacqui True, "Globalisation and Identity," in *New Zealand Government and Politics*, ed. Raymond Miller (Melbourne Oxford University Press, 2006); Pettersen, "Arts Policy and Cultural Diversity".

¹²⁶ Hightet, cited in Petrie, "Coming of Age of a National Cinema," 27. Yeatman notices that film’s ability to promote New Zealand overseas, ‘as a cultural entity with a particular sense of national identity’, allowed politicians in the 1980s and 1990s to combine the economic and cultural justifications for funding. In "Policy and Practice", 77. See also Waller, "New Zealand Film Commission."

able to influence the way we see ourselves and our country – and the way the rest of the world see us too'.¹²⁷

New Zealand films are hence assumed to simultaneously address local issues and international audiences. A strong interest in the internal and external projection of national identity is typical of small nations and can be linked to their limited domestic market for cinema.¹²⁸ Some scholars are critical of these dual objectives, which, they argue, are not necessarily compatible. Skilling points to the problematic assumption that 'the attitudes and behaviours necessary for global economic competitiveness [are] also the markers of an authentic New Zealand identity'.¹²⁹ Pitts acknowledges the paradox that the expression of national or cultural identities through cinema is reliant on the global, corporate forces that threaten them.¹³⁰ As Joyce explains, New Zealand's small population, indigenous inhabitants, geographic isolation and economic vulnerability make it impossible to escape the tension between the local and the global in the film industry.¹³¹ Not only do financial inputs and outputs, artistic techniques and technological developments cross borders, but there are flows of human capital back and forth between New Zealand and foreign film industries.¹³²

Clark's government also devoted resources to industry taskforces, following the lead of other third way administrations who have promoted the creative industries. Emphasising 'partnership' between government and industry, the Labour-led administration established taskforces to encourage the film industry to take responsibility for its own problems and to avoid criticism of state intervention without consultation.¹³³ Recent analyses of the film industry which give advice to the government based on the distinctiveness of screen production are considerably more useful for film policy development than the generic principles of the public management reforms of the 1980s and 90s. One such report from 2003 observes that the film industry is project based and characterised by irregular cycles of intense activity, the diverse range of skill sets employed, and an arts-oriented semi-professional ethos that sees individuals working cheaply, or even for free, out of their passionate commitment to film

¹²⁷ Helen Clark, "Building Cultural Identity", 18 May 2000, <http://executive.govt.nz/Speech.aspx?type=speech&rid=31070> (accessed 20 January 2009).

¹²⁸ Petrie and Hjort, "Introduction," 15-18.

¹²⁹ Skilling, "Brave New Zealand," 2.

¹³⁰ Pitts, "Cross-Cultural Filmmaking", 155. Higson similarly describes this paradox as the hegemonic effect of Hollywood standards on national filmmaking, which must appeal to audiences accustomed to American films, in "Concept of National Cinema," 40.

¹³¹ Joyce, "In Development", 274.

¹³² Jones et al., "NZfilm." See also Higson, "Concept of National Cinema."

¹³³ O'Halloran, "Towards a 'Third Way'", 92-99; Clark, "Arts, Culture and Public Policy."

culture.¹³⁴ While recent reports distinguish screen production from other industries, some fail to differentiate between film and television.¹³⁵ There are many similarities and linkages between the sectors; however, in the past, conflating film and television as audiovisual entertainment products has only served to strengthen the commercial model and economic rhetoric of media policy.¹³⁶

The 'uneasy mix of commercial and cultural objectives' within film and television policy is also believed to be the result of fragmented policymaking, due to the lack of structure, direction and resources in New Zealand's history of *ad hoc* cultural policy.¹³⁷ In recent support for film, the key policy actors have been the MCH, the NZFC, Film NZ, CNZ, the Ministry for Economic Development, and the (now defunct) Screen Council. These agencies pursued divergent goals, sometimes with little awareness of each others' initiatives, which did not help to resolve policy conflict.¹³⁸ Historical analyses of cultural policies show that state interventions tend 'to be clustered around key events and anniversaries', and, at times, the government's *ad hoc* actions have 'been merely reactive or opportunistic'.¹³⁹ The Labour government's use of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy to reinforce the national brand and celebrate its model of creative enterprise in the 'knowledge economy' is a notable example.¹⁴⁰

The lack of policy coherence has been identified as a fundamental problem in studies of state support for film, and for the arts in general.¹⁴¹ It has been compounded by the layering of complementary frames and reformulation of competing discourses over several decades.¹⁴² There has been reluctance, however, to formalise a more coherent cultural policy. While it would coordinate government action, ideally making it better articulated and more efficient, a centralised, comprehensive arts policy risks giving the government too much control over

¹³⁴ Jones et al., "NZfilm."

¹³⁵ Conor, "Hollywood, Wellywood or the Backwoods?", 78, 83. See, for example: Screen Production Industry Taskforce, "Taking on the World."

¹³⁶ Conor, "Hollywood, Wellywood or the Backwoods?", 70-83. For an alternative view, see Pitts, "Cross-Cultural Filmmaking", 37-39.

¹³⁷ Ministry of Cultural Affairs, *Government's Role*, 17.

¹³⁸ Conor, "Hollywood, Wellywood or the Backwoods?", 90.

¹³⁹ Ministry of Cultural Affairs, *Government's Role in the Cultural Sector*, 9, 35; Albiston, "Reframing Arts and Cultural Policy", 9, 65-68; O'Halloran, "Towards a 'Third Way'".

¹⁴⁰ Lawn and Beatty, "Getting to Wellywood," 123; Grierson, "Arts and Creative Industries", 8. Clark was explicit in her government's use of the film as 'leverage': 'In seeking to rebrand New Zealand as an upmarket, innovative, dynamic economy, the government is leveraging off both the release of *The Lord of the Rings* and the defence of the America's Cup.' In "Growing An Innovative New Zealand," 7 March 2002, <http://executive.govt.nz/Speech.aspx?type=speech&rid=37410> (accessed 20 January 2009).

¹⁴¹ Albiston, "Reframing Arts and Cultural Policy", 25; Barker, *Cultural Capital and Policy*, 53; Harley, "Cultural Capital and the Knowledge Economy".

¹⁴² Rachel Parker and Oleg Parenta, "Explaining Contradictions in Film and Television Industry Policy: Ideas and Incremental Policy Change through Layering and Drift," *Media, Culture & Society* 30, no. 5 (2008).

cultural production.¹⁴³ Rolf Hugoson explains that the abstract rhetoric of cultural policies is a rational avoidance of aesthetic judgements by the state. While vague goals make it difficult to evaluate cultural policy, they are preferable to removing goals entirely or making them more explicit and hence prescriptive.¹⁴⁴ Clive Gray claims the increasing focus on externalities and government objectives is nevertheless evidence of a growing tendency for cultural policy to be more prescriptive.¹⁴⁵ As McGuigan points out, however, even the measurement of instrumental objectives 'conveniently avoids difficult questions of aesthetic value.'¹⁴⁶

As outlined above, the 'principle of non-prescription' and 'arm's length' funding arrangements are tenets of cultural policy, designed to ensure artists' independence from the state. A 2004 discussion paper on screen production funding clearly outlines Labour's position:

The government has no role in the creative process itself but can play a major part in fostering a supportive environment in which the various elements contributing to screen production can be developed and encouraged to interact in an effective manner.¹⁴⁷

While Clark's administration had no intention of dismantling those principles, it was more prepared than previous governments to intervene in the sector, framing its role as a 'partnership' with industry. Furthermore, its approach to film funding did not simply ignore tensions between cultural and commercial objectives. Rather, it attempted to overcome the dichotomy by framing artistic and industrial development as complementary aims of state support for cinema.¹⁴⁸ A statement from MCH on the Film Production Fund makes this clear: 'As well as helping to develop an international film industry, a strong domestic environment is necessary for non-commercial, cultural objectives.'¹⁴⁹

Filmmakers threatened by the third way?

Scholars have rung alarm bells at the perceived co-option of artists by the state, seeing the discursive change within third way politics as a threat to artistic freedom. The narrow framing

¹⁴³ Albiston, "Reframing Arts and Cultural Policy Designs", 25. See also Hugoson, "Rhetoric of Abstract Goals."

¹⁴⁴ Hugoson, "Rhetoric of Abstract Goals." The 'crisis' regarding aesthetic values in cultural policy is also described in McGuigan, *Rethinking Cultural Policy*, 94.

¹⁴⁵ Gray, "Commodification and Instrumentality in Cultural Policy," *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 13, no. 2 (2007).

¹⁴⁶ McGuigan, *Rethinking Cultural Policy*, 114

¹⁴⁷ Ministry for Culture and Heritage, "Review of Government Screen Funding Arrangements: Discussion Paper," (2004), 4-5. This echoes similar statements made in MoCA's report in the late 1990s and MCH Statements of Intent, for example: 'Neither Ministers nor the Ministry seek to predetermine the nature of this country's cultural development, nor dictate the cultural choices or preferences of its citizens.' See Pettersen, "Arts Policy and Cultural Diversity", 82.

¹⁴⁸ See Newman, "Regions and Runaways"; Clark, "Arts, Culture and Public Policy."

¹⁴⁹ Judith Tizard, "Funding into the Arts, Culture and Heritage Sector: Questions and Answers," Ministry for Culture and Heritage, <http://executive.govt.nz/minister/tizard/arts/qa.htm> (accessed 2 July 2009).

of artistic activity in current political rhetoric, Skilling argues, ‘threatens what Clark herself describes as art’s “time honoured functioning of serving as conscience and critic of society”’.¹⁵⁰ This academic approach is based on an understanding that an important function of art is to critique rather than celebrate social customs, which is informed by modernist ideals of artists as creative individuals, often critical outsiders, whose role is to question, challenge and provoke society.¹⁵¹ Third way cultural policy, in contrast, brings artists into the mainstream, normalising creative actors as ‘exemplary knowledge workers’.¹⁵² Hazledine had noted at the turn of the century:

the assumption – which seems rather to have slipped through the dialogue unchallenged – that what creative people do is indeed sustaining of national identity contradicts with the accepted idea that artists ‘challenge, reject, even abuse “society’s” smugly held values and conventions.’¹⁵³

These critics of recent cultural policy raise important questions for which they are unable to provide answers. Skilling’s criticism that ‘diversity has been carefully managed for branding and nation-building purposes’ may actually exaggerate the government’s influence over cultural production.¹⁵⁴ Such concerns at least show a heightened awareness of some problematic notions that had previously been overlooked in policy discourse. Skilling raises some pertinent issues, particularly: ‘does the requirement that art promote a sense of national unity proscribe expression that accentuates difference and division? Does the requirement that it make a contribution rule out disruptive, ‘difficult’ art?’¹⁵⁵ Although these are difficult questions to answer, they are worth asking, and are explored in this thesis. Pitts’ findings suggest that filmmaking has not been compromised by the government’s nation-branding exercise. Highlighting the institutional accommodation of cultural pluralism alongside ‘Brand New Zealand’, she argues there is in fact increasing creative diversity in New Zealand cinema at the start of the twenty-first century.¹⁵⁶ Critical analysis of cultural policy discourse clearly needs to be undertaken with consideration to its actual effects on the practices of cultural production.

¹⁵⁰ Skilling, "Trajectories of Arts and Culture Policy."; Skilling, "Brave New Zealand", 145; Clark, "Arts, Culture and Public Policy"; Grierson, "Arts and Creative Industries", 9.

¹⁵¹ Skilling, "Brave New Zealand", 125. See also Wevers and Williams, "Cultural Policy in a Small Country."

¹⁵² Skilling, "Brave New Zealand", 158-160.

¹⁵³ Hazledine, *Arts Funding*, 16-17. Wevers and Williams raise similar concerns, blaming the blandness and homogeneity in the art scene on Labour’s ‘artist-friendly’ policies, in "Cultural Policy in a Small Country," 15. Tim Corballis offers an alternative view in "Against Creativity," *Landfall* 205 (May 2003).

¹⁵⁴ Skilling, "Brave New Zealand", 124. This could be seen as an example of the overly ‘state-centric view on governance’ that characterises political science. Pierre, "Disciplinary Perspectives," 481-484.

¹⁵⁵ Skilling, "Trajectories of Arts and Culture Policy," 29-30. Grierson poses similar questions, in "Arts and Creative Industries", 4.

¹⁵⁶ Pitts, "Cross-Cultural Filmmaking", 155. Petrie also expounds the diversity in contemporary New Zealand cinema, in "Coming of Age of a National Cinema." See Chapter One.

This is precisely what the following chapters endeavour to do, taking short film as an exemplary site of tension between cultural policy and film practices.

Summary: trends in New Zealand film policy

One of the clear trends over the last forty years has been the increasing recognition of the importance of arts and culture in general, and film in particular, by successive governments. While Labour governments have tended to increase film funding levels, and National has been inclined to cut government grants, both parties have demonstrated their political commitment by establishing ministerial responsibilities and supporting public agencies in the sector.¹⁵⁷ Throughout their history, notes Skilling, 'there has been more agreement than divergence in the approaches of the two major political parties.'¹⁵⁸ Different governments have had varying expectations of film, though, resulting in a shifting emphasis on national identity, cultural or creative expression, and the promotion of New Zealand overseas. Recent policy rhetoric has centred on the combined social and economic objectives of nation-branding, firmly framing film as a commercial product within a global industry.¹⁵⁹

Government funding has evidently been crucial to the development of the New Zealand film industry, and this has been actively encouraged by the film community, a subaltern counter public determined to see New Zealand people, places and stories on the big screen. While funding levels have increased overall, they are prone to fluctuation, and susceptible to governments' shifting rationales for supporting film production. Along with fragmentation, incessant instability is a key characteristic of cultural policy in New Zealand and can be seen in the many initiatives started (and sometimes abandoned) by MoCA/MCH and the NZFC over the last three decades. Widespread concern about the fragility of the local film industry peaked in the 1990s.¹⁶⁰ The lack of clear direction and agreed goals of government intervention in the sector is a significant factor, but there are sound reasons for abstract goals in cultural policy. Consequently, it is funding issues that are defined by filmmakers, bureaucrats and academics as

¹⁵⁷ The first ministerial portfolio for the arts, later known as 'Cultural Affairs', was established by Labour in 1975 within the Department of Internal Affairs. In 1991, the National government replaced it with the stand-alone Ministry of Cultural Affairs. The profile of this Ministry was vastly increased in 1999 when Clark became Minister of Culture and Heritage. Labour initiated and supported the creation of the NZFC, but it was a National government who passed its enabling legislation in 1978.

¹⁵⁸ Skilling, "Trajectories of Arts and Culture Policy," 26. Yeatman provides evidence of the similar discourse employed by political parties to describe their approach to film funding, in "Policy and Practice".

¹⁵⁹ Conor, "Hollywood, Wellywood or the Backwoods?", 90-91. This hybridisation of discourses is typical in contemporary public policy; see note 74 above.

¹⁶⁰ Dennis and Bieringa, *Film in Aotearoa New Zealand*, 8; Calder, "New Zealand Film Since The Piano," 190; Horrocks, "New Zealand Cinema," 135; Pitts, "Cross-Cultural Filmmaking", 126.

'the perennial issue' facing the NZFC and, more generally, the cultural sector.¹⁶¹ Ironically, the reputation of New Zealand filmmakers as resourceful and innovative has been due in part to this low level of funding and official training.¹⁶² Reiterating Joyce, we can conclude that the NZFC is 'exceptionally vulnerable to the political and economic environment within which it operates.'¹⁶³ Conor sums up accordingly: 'The government-supported national cinema is characterised by a struggle, a boom and bust cycle and the constant justification of its need [for] and use of public funds.'¹⁶⁴

Despite routine criticisms of its board membership, track record and functions, the NZFC remains at the heart of the industry.¹⁶⁵ It has had to operate in a somewhat hostile environment over the last decade, despite its contribution to high production levels during this time. Prolific producer John Barnett is an especially scathing critic of the Film Commission.¹⁶⁶ Along with Hazledine, he argues that it has become increasingly inefficient, as overheads doubled while production funding decreased between the mid 1990s and early 2000s.¹⁶⁷ The 2003 Screen Production Industry Taskforce (SPIT) report also implies that the NZFC stifles the industry; it calls for a departure from cultural funding and 'the climate of dependence'.¹⁶⁸ It is particularly critical of the NZFC monopoly on marketing and sales when the agency's 'primary imperative is cultural rather than commercial'.¹⁶⁹ Conversely, Conor and Pitts raise concerns that the industry orientation of the Screen Council, which was responsible for reviewing the government's achievement of cultural and economic benefits in the screen production sector, would cause it to prioritise market objectives over cultural values in its assessment of policy outcomes.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶¹ O'Halloran, "Towards a 'Third Way'", 81. See also James, *Funding our Culture*; Shelton, *Selling of New Zealand Movies*.

¹⁶² Jones et al., "NZfilm," 55-56.

¹⁶³ Joyce, "In Development", 265. See also Horrocks, "New Zealand Cinema," 134-135.

¹⁶⁴ Conor, "Hollywood, Wellywood or the Backwoods?", 120.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 74.

¹⁶⁶ See, for example, Barnett, "November 11 Opinion Piece: Commission & Inquiry " *OnFilm*, November 2008, <http://www.onfilm.co.nz/> (accessed 20 November 2008); Matt Philp, "So You Wanna Be in Pictures?" *North & South*, June 2009, 49-50.

¹⁶⁷ Philip Wakefield, "Unofficially Official - Film Fund Finite," *OnFilm*, May 2005, <http://www.archivesearch.co.nz/default.aspx?webid=ONF&articleid=18439> (accessed 11 August 2008). Shelton also describes Barnett's disapproval of the NZFC acting as a sales agency, in *Selling of New Zealand Movies*, 29, 159. Hazledine, *Arts Funding*, 35-37. Hazledine's comments demonstrate a limited understanding of filmmaking, however. Suggesting that it is now possible to make 'quite presentable feature films' for less than \$50,000, and that filmmakers need to 'find their own artistic, technical and financial solutions to the problems of creating and selling films', he overlooks the extent to which local filmmakers have gained an international reputation for their resourceful methods of low budget filmmaking.

¹⁶⁸ Screen Production Industry Taskforce, "Taking on the World," 82.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 8. This criticism recalls earlier debates on the sales agency, as recounted in Shelton, *Selling of New Zealand Movies*.

¹⁷⁰ Conor, "Hollywood, Wellywood or the Backwoods?", 88; Pitts, "Cross-Cultural Filmmaking", 143.

While some industry insiders complain of excessive bureaucracy and interference on the part of the NZFC, others suggest that directors have greater creative freedom and face fewer bureaucratic procedures in New Zealand than in other countries.¹⁷¹ Most of these criticisms come from a perspective that is more concerned with film as 'business', while academic accounts generally present the NZFC in a more favourable light, focusing on its cultural imperatives. An exception is the CANZ study which considers capability issues in film; it is one example of an industry-oriented report that considers cultural issues and acknowledges the impressive contribution the NZFC has made to the development of the film industry.¹⁷² Other authors also point to the high 'hit rate' of New Zealand films compared with other national cinemas.¹⁷³ Nevertheless, the difficulty these films have in reaching audiences and returning profits makes the NZFC an easy target for critics whose ideas are firmly rooted in economic rationalism.

This chapter has highlighted some of the complementary and contradictory objectives within film policy discourse in New Zealand. While the binary oppositions of industry/art (or commerce/culture) and local/global (or national/international) continue to frame much debate and scholarship on film funding in New Zealand, government policy and NZFC discourse constantly combine these directives, often ignoring the tensions between them. These dichotomies tend to oversimplify complex positions and processes, yet they can help to identify shifts in discourse and contradictory frames. Making movies to reach the largest possible local audience is not necessarily the same as supporting films that are likely to appeal to a niche group of international critics. The increasing tendency to frame policy within an economic rhetoric, even when referring to cultural values, explains the reasons for the application of performance measures by CNZ and the NZFC and their narrowing definition of short film.

¹⁷¹ Philip Wakefield, "Hopes High for New Film Commission Board," *OnFilm*, August 2006, <http://www.archivesearch.co.nz/default.aspx?webid=ONF&articleid=22850> (accessed 11 August 2008). Roger Donaldson, who has extensive overseas experience, says that in New Zealand: 'you don't get held back by bureaucracy or people having a preconceived idea of what a filmmaker is or what sort of training you should have'. In Petrie and Stuart, eds., *A Coming of Age*, 228. Following the collapse of Kahukura productions in 2002, Peter Jackson publicly attacked the NZFC, claiming 'that film crews and suppliers ... had been "abused and vilified by these self-serving bureaucrats"'. Jackson had previously told the *New York Times* that, as a director, he benefited from a great degree of creative freedom in New Zealand. Cited in Shelton, *Selling of New Zealand Movies*, 183. See notes 167 and 169 above for further references to industry criticism.

¹⁷² Jones et al., "NZfilm."

¹⁷³ Pitts points out that 100 per cent of publicly funded films are released in New Zealand, compared with only 40 per cent in the United Kingdom. Pitts, "Cross-Cultural Filmmaking". This is probably due to the NZFC's insistence on script development, see Joyce, "In Development". Shelton agrees: 'Given that the number of films produced in New Zealand since film-making began is less than the total produced by Hollywood in a year, the success rate is extraordinary.' *Selling of New Zealand Movies*, 186.

These developments are examined in the following chapter, which considers the manner in which policy discourse translates into the specific criteria of New Zealand's short film funding programmes.

Chapter Three: Short Film Funding Policies and Programmes in New Zealand

Although Clark's administration promoted film as a popular art form and a valuable creative industry, its celebratory embrace was essentially limited to one type of production. Both the national and international objectives of film policy under the fifth Labour government, like those before it, espoused the industrial norm of fictional feature film production. Short or experimental films were never mentioned in MCH policy statements or the many public addresses given by Clark as Minister between 1999 and 2008. Short film was also largely ignored by industry reports on the screen production sector. It continued nonetheless to occupy a significant position within NZFC policy and contributed to maintaining New Zealand's international reputation for quality filmmaking. This chapter examines the different mechanisms employed by government agencies to fund short film in New Zealand, and explores the ways in which those agencies frame short filmmaking in relation to government objectives and cultural policy storylines.

Particular attention is paid to the NZFC Short Film Fund, which offers the highest level of financial support for short film production in New Zealand via the Executive Producer (EP) Scheme. Since its establishment in 1985, the Short Film Fund has ensured that a constant stream of high quality short films from New Zealand has flowed to international festivals, even in the 1990s when low government support made fully financing feature films near impossible for the NZFC. Despite the public and political indifference to short film, the NZFC recognises its important role in sustaining activity within the film sector and in encouraging both emerging and experienced filmmakers to increase their skills and forge creative partnerships. Fundamentally, the NZFC acknowledges and endorses the critical capital gained by internationally successful short films. The NZFC does not explicitly acknowledge the potential for experimentation and innovation within the short film programme it administers, however. Those objectives have tended to be associated with the fund for film and video making managed by CNZ. As this chapter demonstrates, there is increasing alignment between both agencies' framing of short film that reflects the impact of economic rationalism on their methods of policy implementation and evaluation. My analysis of the EP funding process and selected films in subsequent chapters demonstrates the effects of this increasingly narrow framing of short film.

All three public funding programmes dedicated to short film in New Zealand – the Screen Innovation Production Fund (SIPF, now the Independent Filmmakers Fund), the EP Scheme and the Post Production Fund – were established in the late 1990s to replace similar programmes that had been operating since the mid 1980s (see Figures 1 and 2). NZ On Air has also occasionally supported short filmmaking, as shown in Figure 1. NZ On Air recently launched an additional scheme to support digital media projects that could include innovative short films aimed at new delivery platforms. Originally set up in 2008 as a contestable fund for content targeting children and youth, the Digital Content Partnership Fund is designed to operate for four years. Following changes to the Broadcasting Act, the Fund now offers up to \$1 million a year to creators of audiovisual content of any genre that targets audiences on platforms other than traditional broadcast channels.¹

While the Minister of Broadcasting is responsible for NZ On Air, both agencies administering specific funds for short film are monitored by the MCH. Put simplistically, their core mission and objectives represent different sides of the ‘art/industry’ dichotomy: CNZ’s mandate is *arts* funding, whereas the NZFC exists to support the *film industry*. The level of support offered to short film also distinguishes the agencies. Whereas short film funding constitutes just over ten per cent of NZFC total expenditure each year, it accounts for approximately one per cent of CNZ’s budget.² The CNZ-administered SIPF has nonetheless been an integral part of New Zealand film culture over the past decade. Its establishment and operation will be discussed before the NZFC’s own policies and schemes for short filmmaking are examined.

Creative New Zealand’s support for films

Following the establishment of the NZFC in 1978, CNZ’s predecessor, the QEII Arts Council, continued to fund artistic and experimental films, as well as documentaries and educational films, through what was initially called its Creative Film Fund. In 1984 this became the Creative Film and Video Fund, a partnership between the Arts Council and the NZFC, which was also supported by TVNZ and NZ On Air at different times in the 1990s. After a performance review of the Fund in 1996, NZ On Air relinquished its partnership, and the

¹ Previously, the Broadcasting Act required NZ On Air to insist that the projects it funded have a free to air broadcast outcome. NZ On Air, "Digital Content Partnership Fund 2009," www.nzonair.govt.nz/files/television/DCPF_RFP_2009.pdf (accessed 4 May 2009). Director Chaz Harris suggests that short filmmakers could apply to this fund to gain support for online series, which might be an ideal way to further develop their skills, in "Opportunities Beyond the Box," *TAKE*, Autumn 2009, 11.

² See Appendix 3.

scheme was replaced by the SIPF. The key objective of the Creative Film and Video Fund was retained for the SIPF. Its purpose was ‘to support innovation in the moving image arts’.³ CNZ defines moving image arts as ‘visual arts projects which draw upon film making practise [sic],’ which encompasses a broad spectrum of screen productions including installations and experimental projects as well as narrative and documentary films.⁴

<i>Name of fund</i>	Creative Film & Video Fund	Creative Film & Video Fund	Screen Innovation Production Fund	Independent Filmmakers Fund
<i>Period</i>	1984 - 1994	1994 - 1996	1996 - 2009	2009 -
<i>Annual budget</i>	<i>Information not available</i>	\$565,000	\$500,000 - \$650,000	\$540,000
<i>Sources of funding</i>	Arts Council NZFC TVNZ	CNZ: \$195,000 NZFC: \$185,000 NZ On Air: \$185,000	CNZ: \$250,000 (\$300,000 from 2006) NZFC: \$250,000 (\$350,000 from 2004)	CNZ NZFC
<i>Structure</i>	Peer review: Funding partners each nominate 1 member to panel	Peer review: Funding partners each nominate 1 member to panel	Peer review: 4 panel members from film/art sector and 1 member of CNZ Arts Board	Initial assessment by funding advisor then peer review by panel chaired by member of CNZ Arts Board
<i>Frequency</i>	3 rounds per year	3 rounds per year	2 rounds per year	1 round per year
<i>Objective</i>	To support innovation in the moving image arts (emerging and established film and video makers)	To support innovation in the moving image arts (emerging and established film and video makers)	To support innovative, experimental and non- commercial productions by emerging and experienced moving image makers.	To support innovative, high quality, non- commercial projects by experienced film and moving image makers
<i>Types of films eligible</i>	Drama and experimental/ alternative	Drama and experimental/ alternative	Experimental, short drama, animation, documentary, dance, installation and digital feature	Experimental, short, animation, documentary, dance, moving image art and feature
<i>Types of grants</i>	Production and post production costs	Production and post production costs	Production, post production and duplication costs	Production and post production costs and travel grants
<i>Average projects</i>	37 per year (43% drama, 57% experimental)	51 per year (61% drama, 39% experimental)	35 per year	<i>Information not yet available</i>
<i>Average applications</i>	105 per year	160 per year	192 per year (value: \$3.1 million)	<i>Information not yet available</i>
<i>Maximum grant</i>	<i>Information not available</i>	<i>Information not available</i>	\$15,000 - \$35,000	Category 1: \$70,000 Category 2: \$30,000

Figure 1: Film funds administered by Arts Council/Creative New Zealand⁵

³ Yeatman, "Policy and Practice", 108-109.

⁴ Creative New Zealand, "Glossary," <http://www.creativenz.govt.nz/tabid/4866/language/en-NZ/Default.aspx> (accessed 14 April 2009).

⁵ Information taken from Creative New Zealand website (www.creativenz.govt.nz) and press releases, and also: Yeatman, "Policy and Practice". Cole-Baker, "Short Film." See also Appendix 4.

⁶ Creative New Zealand, "How to Apply: Assessment," <http://www.screeninnovation.govt.nz/how/assessment.html> (accessed 19 December 2008).

During its thirteen years of existence, the SIPF was jointly funded by CNZ and the NZFC, but administered solely by CNZ. The SIPF allowed CNZ to specifically target film and video as art forms, providing finance for approximately 35 projects annually, in accordance with its Arts Development objective. Over the course of a two-day meeting, applications were judged by the five members of the SIPF assessment panel.⁶ Former SIPF panel member Lawrence McDonald explains the role of the fund in relation to the broader screen production sector, illustrating its simultaneous pursuit of industrial and artistic imperatives:

As a partnership between Creative New Zealand and the New Zealand Film Commission, [the SIPF] must contribute to both the wider New Zealand film industry and the development of that broad and multifarious terrain known as the visual arts. And given the large number of documentary applications it always receives, the Fund sometimes finds itself compensating for the deficiencies of our television service.⁷

While the SIPF specifically targeted ‘emerging talent’, it also catered for non-commercial projects by established filmmakers and by recognised artists with experience in other media or artistic domains.⁸ Priority was given to projects with budgets of less than \$15,000 detailing both production and post production costs, especially when the applicant had not yet produced a substantial body of work. CNZ advised applicants that the maximum amount that could be requested – if the proposal was for a feature film project – was \$25,000, although the SIPF panel occasionally awarded grants of \$30,000 to \$35,000 to exceptional projects.⁹ Applications were assessed according to their ‘potential to support the emergence of new creative talent’, ‘artform and media innovation’, and the project’s ‘artistic merit’ as well as its ‘viability’ in terms of budgeting and planning.¹⁰ Despite the emphasis on innovation and experimentation, narrative rather than experimental films constituted the majority of applications.¹¹ Yeatman points out that ‘a definition of innovation is not included [in SIPF guidelines] and it is therefore

⁷ Lawrence McDonald, "Innovation the Key," <http://www.screeninnovation.govt.nz/news/items/innovation.html> (accessed 11 August 2008).

⁸ Creative New Zealand, "About the Fund," <http://www.screeninnovation.govt.nz/about/index.html> (accessed 19 December 2008).

⁹ Creative New Zealand, "Information for Applicants: March 2004 - Feb 2005 " www.creativenz.govt.nz/funding/programmes/sipf.html (accessed 18 April 2005). For details of the grants in excess of \$30,000, see the following CNZ press releases: "Screen Fund Announces Grants to Short Film," 17 May 2000, <http://www.creativenz.govt.nz/node/2112> (accessed 3 December 2008); "Scarecrow Documentary Among Screen Fund Grants," 19 October 2000; "Experimental Film Features In Screen Fund Grants," 6 June 2001.

¹⁰ Creative New Zealand, "Information for Applicants"; Creative New Zealand, "The Funding Guide" (2008), 94.

¹¹ McDonald, "Innovation the Key"; Yeatman, "Policy and Practice", 105. This was especially true whilst NZ On Air was a funding partner.

¹² Yeatman, "Policy and Practice", 110. CNZ now provides a definition of innovation as ‘the creation of value out of new ideas, new products, new arts experiences, new services and/or new ways of doing things.’ In "Glossary."

left to the panel members to assess for themselves whether or not projects fit this criteria.¹² McDonald confirms that while panel members invoked the Fund's criteria in their assessments of applications, this was not 'a straightforward measurement', and the SIPF guidelines were suitably vague:

The key word in the Fund's name is innovation and it recurs throughout the list of criteria. Thankfully, the guidelines are sufficiently broad to allow various kinds and degrees of innovation, enabling the panel to negotiate the sometimes conflicting demands made on the Fund because of its unique role.¹³

Given the Fund's broad remit and limited resources, it is no surprise that the biannual funding rounds were highly competitive. On average, eighteen per cent of SIPF applications were successful between 2000 and 2004, receiving grants from \$500 to \$35,550.¹⁴ The number of applications each year varied, although it grew from 2000 onwards, peaking at 236 in 2002/03.¹⁵ The increasing number of applications was attributed to the growing interest in screen production resulting from the success of films like *Lord of the Rings*, as well as the 'considerable growth in the number of tertiary educational institutions offering film and video production courses.'¹⁶ It may have been the increased pressure on the Fund that led to its demise.

Following discussions between CNZ and the NZFC, but without prior public warning, CNZ announced in late 2008 that the upcoming funding round would be the final one for the SIPF.¹⁷ The SIPF was replaced by the Independent Filmmakers Fund (IFF), which caters for largely the same range of innovative, non-commercial audiovisual work, but introduces new criteria and a modified assessment process. Most significantly, it offers higher value grants and targets 'experienced film and moving image makers'.¹⁸ CNZ funding is no longer directed at emerging filmmakers; applicants to the IFF must demonstrate that they have a substantial track record in

¹³ McDonald, "Innovation the Key"; Sandy Gildea, Interview with the author, 12 March 2009. Gildea similarly highlights the word 'innovation' to distinguish the SIPF from NZFC's Short Film Fund. The SIPF, she says, 'was all about innovation, challenging and pushing the boundaries'.

¹⁴ See Appendix 4.

¹⁵ This contrasted with a decreasing number of Arts Board project funding applications between 1999 and 2005. Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa, "Annual Report 2005 - 2006," (2006), 23-25. Average SIPF applications per year: 192 to the value of \$3.08 million; average grants per year: 35 to the value of \$490,615. See Appendix 4.

¹⁶ McDonald, "Innovation the Key." Grants were not available to films that formed part of school or university coursework, though. NZFC EPs also experienced a record number of submissions in 2002/03, and gave similar explanations for the 'onslaught' of applications. In Philip Wakefield, "Short Film Fund Deluged," *OnFilm*, November 2002.

¹⁷ Creative New Zealand, "Independent Filmmakers Fund," <http://www.creativenz.govt.nz/Funding/ScreenInnovationProductionFund/IndependentFilmmakersFund/tabid/4790/language/en-NZ/Default.aspx> (accessed 5 December 2008).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Take*, "All You Ever Wanted to Know about the... Independent Filmmakers Fund," no. 54, Autumn 2009: 3.

film or audiovisual production. There are now two categories of grants for production and post production proposals. The first offers investments of up to \$70,000 for highly experienced filmmakers whose work has received both national and international recognition. The higher level grant aims to cater for projects with durations of over 44 minutes, but ‘senior level’ applicants are invited to submit shorter projects so long as they do not qualify for NZFC finance via the EP Scheme.¹⁹ The second category provides grants of up to \$30,000 for filmmakers with ‘a significant track record’ whose work has received national recognition.²⁰ According to Juliette Veber, Short Film Sales and Marketing Manager at the NZFC, the second category targets ‘up and coming filmmakers’ with projects similar to those catered for by the SIPF.²¹ The NZFC’s cultural relevance criteria has been introduced (and highlighted in bold font) for all applicants: ‘All applications for Category One and Category Two must have significant New Zealand content, as defined by Section 18 of the New Zealand Film Commission Act 1978.’²² CNZ now also offers travel grants to film directors who have made a film with SIPF or IFF finance that has been accepted into a significant niche festival that is not on the NZFC ‘A’ list, such as a dance or experimental film festival.²³

CNZ-administered support for short film appears to have been reframed in a market-oriented discourse. Its previous purpose was ‘to *provide grants* to emerging and experienced moving-image makers for innovative, *experimental* and non-commercial moving-image productions.’²⁴ The objective of the IFF, on the other hand, ‘is to *invest in* exceptional, innovative, *high quality*, non commercial projects by *experienced* film and moving image makers striving to *engage audiences* throughout New Zealand and beyond.’²⁵ CNZ states that this restructure aimed to respond better to ‘barriers and opportunities within the industry’ and ‘presented an opportunity

²⁰ Creative New Zealand, "Independent Filmmakers Fund."

²¹ Juliette Veber, Email interview with the author, 5 May 2009.

²² Creative New Zealand, "Independent Filmmakers Fund."

²³ In support of their application for a travel grant, CNZ-funded filmmakers must provide a letter of invitation from the festival and written confirmation from the NZFC Short Film Manager attesting ‘that the non A-list festival would provide an important and significant opportunity for the filmmaker.’ A maximum grant of \$5,000 is available for travel, accommodation and per diem costs. Creative New Zealand, "Additional Support," <http://www.creativenz.govt.nz/Funding/IndependentFilmmakersFund/AdditionalSupport/tabid/4869/language/en-NZ/Default.aspx> (accessed 8 April 2009). This is based on the NZFC travel grants, which are discussed later in this chapter.

²⁴ Creative New Zealand, "Screen Innovation Production Fund." (Emphasis added.)

²⁵ Creative New Zealand, "Independent Filmmakers Fund." (Emphasis added.)

to align the fund with Creative New Zealand's new Project Funding model and the New Zealand Film Commission's investment in filmmaking in New Zealand.'²⁶ Veber reiterates these motives in the same terms, but also highlights the growing problem of non-completed projects as a key reason for the change:

Feedback from the sector through project completion reports coupled with statistical information from previous Screen Innovation Production funding rounds indicating an 82% decline rate, prompted Creative New Zealand and the New Zealand Film Commission to examine the barriers and opportunities within the industry.²⁷

Harley asserts that the motivation for the change was the findings of research on independent documentary making in New Zealand, which prompted a consensus between CNZ and the NZFC 'that fewer projects should be financed, enabling a higher level of grants to be offered, especially to senior filmmakers aiming to engage audiences with quality projects.'²⁸ The new name also avoids confusion with the Screen Production Incentive Fund ('the SPIF'), launched in 2008.²⁹

There were clearly several factors contributing to the introduction of the IFF, most importantly a desire to support established documentary and fiction filmmakers and to ensure higher quality projects are made and actually delivered. Whereas CNZ support for short film was initially framed as a means of encouraging innovative forms of artistic expression, its discourse is now imbued with professionalism and economic rationalism. The new scheme is underpinned by a desire to achieve efficiency by supporting higher profile products and curbing non-completion. This represents a clear disjuncture from the original purpose of the CNZ-administered fund for short film. Cole-Baker's description of the SIPF, for example, framed it in quite different terms to those used above to explain the IFF: 'Filmmakers applying to this fund are encouraged to make very small and manageable films, and to utilise the easy access of new technologies, such as shooting on digital formats.'³⁰

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Veber, interview.

²⁸ Ruth Harley, "From the Chief Executive," in *Report of the New Zealand Film Commission for the year ending 30 June 2008* (New Zealand Film Commission, 2008), 5. See Creative New Zealand and New Zealand Film Commission, "Research into New Zealand's Independent Documentary Sector" (2008), <http://www.creativenz.govt.nz/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=s364pJQFYvg%3D&tabid=4790&language=en-NZ> (accessed 17 April 2009).

²⁹ See Ministry for Culture and Heritage, "New Zealand Screen Production Incentive Fund – Outline," 3 July 2008, <http://www.mch.govt.nz/publications/screen-production-fund/index.html> (accessed 22 May 2009).

³⁰ Cole-Baker, "Short Film," 55.

³¹ Creative New Zealand, "Project Funding Changes – Update," <http://www.creativenz.govt.nz/Funding/Reviewofprojectfunding/tabid/4785/language/en-NZ/Default.aspx> (accessed 12 February 2009).

The IFF was established as part of CNZ's new contestable project funding system in February 2009, which introduced 'innovation' as a criterion in the artistic assessment of all projects, not only moving image productions.³¹ In contrast to the loose application of 'innovation' under the SIPF, as described above by McDonald and Yeatman, the term is now defined by CNZ as 'involving the *creation of value* out of new ideas, new products, new arts experiences, new services and/or new ways of doing things.'³² An emphasis on strategy and accountability was evident in CNZ's explanation that its new funding system would align with its strategic targets and enable CNZ 'to measure the impact of its investments more effectively.'³³ The agency also explains that each proposal will be evaluated according to 'two types of assessment – artistic and strategic.'³⁴ The discourse employed by CNZ to introduce the IFF resembles that used by the NZFC to describe the Short Film Fund, as the following discussion will illustrate. The rest of this chapter outlines the NZFC's production and post production funding programmes for short film, with reference to performance reviews conducted in 1997 and 2007, as well as to other policy documents which rationalise funding methods.

NZFC support for short films

In 1985 the NZFC established the Short Film Fund with special project funding from the Lottery Grants Board to 'fill the major gap in the industry between purely commercial production and feature films' and to encourage 'new film-makers and new approaches to film-making'.³⁵ Prior to the establishment of NZ On Air in 1989, the Short Film Fund supported a wide range of films under 70 minutes including tele-features and television documentaries, but it generally offered partial funding only for projects aimed at broadcast television. The early success of the Short Film Fund has been attributed to then Executive Director Booth's foresight

³² Creative New Zealand, "Glossary." (Emphasis added.) This definition does not specify what sort of value is being referred to, so it nonetheless allows for a range of interpretations.

³³ Creative New Zealand, "Q2. Why is Creative New Zealand Changing its Project Funding System?" <http://www.creativenz.govt.nz/Funding/Reviewofprojectfunding/ReviewFrequentlyAskedQuestions/tabid/4787/lan guage/en-NZ/Default.aspx> (accessed 12 February 2009). 'These changes will help us to be more responsive to the arts sector's needs and to ensure that investment in the development of projects, initiatives and support for the sector meet our strategic priorities.' Creative New Zealand, "The Funding Guide: Changes to Project Funding and Special Opportunities," <http://www.screeninnovation.govt.nz/files/changes-to-project-funding.pdf> (accessed 12 February 2009).

³⁴ *Take*, "Independent Filmmakers Fund," 26.

³⁵ Quotes taken from NZFC Annual Reports in 1986 and 1987. Cited in Waller, "New Zealand Film Commission"; New Zealand Film Commission, "Short Film Fund: Background," in *Short Film Fund Discussion Paper* (1997).

to fund two theatrical short films per year, each with a budget target of \$120,000.³⁶ Dubbed ‘bonsai epics’, these films garnered critical attention and sold to territories around the world. The precedent was set by Alison Maclean’s fourteen-minute black and white film *Kitchen Sink* (1989), which was selected to screen in competition at the Festival de Cannes and consequently generated over \$90,000 in sales revenue.³⁷

<i>Name of fund</i>	Short Film Fund	Short Film Fund	Short Film Fund EP Scheme	Short Film Post Production Fund
<i>Period</i>	1985 - 1991	1991 - 1997	1997 -	1997 -
<i>Annual budget</i>	\$1 million (\$1.5 million from 1989)	\$1 million (\$900,000 from 1995)	\$750,000 (\$1 million from 2004)	\$140,000
<i>Sources of funding</i>	Lottery Grants Board	Lottery Grants Board	Lottery Grants Board/Government	Lottery Grants Board/Government
<i>Structure</i>	Board-appointed panel advised by 2 part-time consultants	Sub-committee of NZFC Board/ Creative and Industry Development Unit	Devolved: Three independent production groups contracted	Short Film Manager assesses applications (previously Board-appointed committee)
<i>Frequency</i>	3 rounds per year	3 rounds per year	1 per year per EP	As needed
<i>Objective</i>	To encourage new filmmakers and to make high quality short films.	To produce cinematic short films as entities in their own right and to encourage the development of creative talent for feature filmmaking	Talent development: To identify and support future feature filmmakers	Talent development: To support and showcase the work of future feature filmmakers
<i>Types of films eligible</i>	Short dramas, TV dramas and documentaries (up to 70 minutes)	Short narrative films and tele-features (up to 70 minutes)	Theatrical short films under 15 minutes	Short films (on video) selected to screen in competition at ‘A’ list festival
<i>Types of grants</i>	Production & post production funding	Production & post production funding	Production funding	Post production funding; travel grants
<i>Average projects per year</i>	<i>Information not available</i>	11 short dramas, 1 animation, 1 documentary, 1 one-hour TV drama	3 films per EP (total: 9 films per year)	4 films (total: 39 films 1997-2007)
<i>Average applications</i>	<i>Information not available</i>	100 per year	140 per EP	<i>Information not available</i>
<i>Maximum grant</i>	\$120,000	\$120,000	\$70,000 (\$100,000 from 2004)	\$20,000 (\$30,000 from 2004)

Figure 2: Short Film Fund administered by New Zealand Film Commission³⁸

³⁶ Fitzgerald, interview; New Zealand Film Commission, "Short Film Fund Discussion Paper," (1997); Shelton, *Selling of New Zealand Movies*, 73,

³⁷ Cole-Baker, "Short Film," 59; Shelton, *Selling of New Zealand Movies*, 101.

³⁸ Information taken from: Yeatman, "Policy and Practice"; Waller, "New Zealand Film Commission"; New Zealand Film Commission, "Short Film Fund: Background"; Joyce, "In Development", 146; Veber et al., "Review."

In 1991, following the drastic funding cut by the National government, the Short Film Fund was administered by a sub-committee of the NZFC Board and documentaries were no longer eligible for funding unless they could prove their international sales potential. Although the Short Film Fund Committee operated relatively independently and represented 'a range of voices and tastes', a performance review in 1997 suggested alternatives to this method of short film support.³⁹ Following industry consultation, the NZFC decided to replace the committee with three Executive Producer groups who were each allocated \$210,000 to select and oversee the production of at least three short films over a 12 month period. Initially labelled the 'Talent Development Initiative', this funding programme came to be known as the Short Film Fund Executive Producer Scheme, commonly called short film 'pods'. In allocating tender contracts to Executive Producers (EPs), the NZFC considers 'the strategies for development and production; the budgets; the film industry experience of the key personnel; and their desire for a variety of approaches and styles.'⁴⁰ The assessment process and funding criteria of the Short Film Fund did not change dramatically as a result of this restructure. The most significant changes pertained to the process of application and selection, rather than objectives or outcomes. Independent EPs tend to take a more proactive and interactive role than the committee in inviting, evaluating and developing short film projects.⁴¹

The NZFC Short Film Post Production Fund was introduced concurrently to provide grants for short video work to be finished to film where there was evidence of 'significant market interest'.⁴² This allowed short films financed by the EP Scheme to be finished to video tape and only get printed on the more expensive medium of film if needed for a cinema screening. A film funded by the NZFC or any other source would be eligible for post production funding of up to \$20,000 if it were selected to compete in a major international ('A' list) festival or for domestic theatrical release. The NZFC marketing department uses a coding system to rate

³⁹ Fitzgerald, interview. See also Waller, "The New Zealand Film Commission: Promoting an Industry, Forging a National Identity," in *Contemporary New Zealand Cinema: From New Wave to Blockbuster*, ed. Ian Conrich and Stuart Murray (London: I.B. Tauris 2008), 2; Cole-Baker, "Short Film," 51; Yeatman, "Policy and Practice", 160.

⁴⁰ New Zealand Film Commission, "Report of the New Zealand Film Commission for the year ending 30 June 2000," (2000), 14. See Appendix 5 for a list of contracted EPs from 1997 to 2007.

⁴¹ Yeatman, "Policy and Practice", 193, 226. The role of the EP and their specific criteria are explored further in the following chapter.

⁴² The NZFC explained it as such: 'The fund was intended to ensure that funds spent in postproduction were spent when cinema release was assured.' New Zealand Film Commission, "Report of the New Zealand Film Commission for the year ending 30 June 1999," 16.

⁴³ Veber et al., "Review," 25. Festivals for short films and features are assessed separately; the NZFC only considers eight festivals to be 'A' list festivals for feature films. A similar approach to coding festivals exists in other countries too, although their 'A' lists tend to be shorter. See, for example, Beaudry, Chen, and Smith, "Short Film Research Study", 15

festivals from 'A' to 'D'; its categorisation of 'A' list festivals encompasses the world's top film festivals (currently eighteen) that it defines as 'major events with prestige and influence'.⁴³ Within a year, the Post Production Fund guidelines were narrowed to concentrate on these major international festivals, and consequently films with a distribution agreement for domestic theatrical release were no longer eligible for post production funding.⁴⁴ Acceptance at these festivals is extremely competitive and offers filmmakers an unparalleled opportunity to present their work and build their reputation. An increasing number of festivals accept non-competition films in digital video format, including all 'A' list festivals except Cannes and Berlin; however, selectors still seem to prefer film.⁴⁵ Generally considered the most prestigious festival in the world, Cannes is also one of the most demanding, requiring the films it screens to be a 35mm print and a world première.⁴⁶

Applications to the Post Production Fund used to be judged by a board-appointed committee who met on average six times a year, but in recent years they have been assessed by the NZFC Short Film Manager. Any New Zealand short film that is selected for an 'A' list festival but has not been completed to a suitable standard to screen in the festival qualifies for NZFC post production funding. The fundamental evaluation made of an application is the Short Film Manager's scrutiny of the budget. The NZFC has been praised by filmmakers for its quick turnaround on applications, which enables producers to meet tight festival deadlines.⁴⁷ Between one and eight short films qualify each year for post production funding according to the criteria stated above. Many of these films have received production funding from the SIPF, while others have been self-funded by the filmmakers. NZFC EP projects were eligible too, until production budgets were increased from \$70,000 to \$100,000 in 2004 and all films were subsequently required to be finished on 35mm print. At the same time, the maximum grant per film from the Post Production Fund was also increased by 50 per cent. The augmentation of budgets followed the Labour government's increased funding of the NZFC.

⁴⁴ New Zealand Film Commission, "Report" (1999), 12. Nonetheless, the NZFC has ignored this policy on at least one occasion, when only one film qualified in a given year for post production financing. In 2001/02, for instance, a series of programmes featuring New Zealand short films received post-production costs in order to be screened on TV4. "Report" (2002), 12.

⁴⁵ Veber et al., "Review," 18.

⁴⁶ Cole-Baker, "Short Film," 58; Sue Murray, "Review of NZFC's Sales and Marketing Operation," ed. New Zealand Film Commission (2008).

⁴⁷ New Zealand Screen Council, "Kitty Case Study," <http://www.nzscreenouncil.co.nz/marketing/film/kitty.htm> (accessed 1 December 2008).

The increase in budgets was, according to the background information provided in the 2007 Review of NZFC Short Film Strategy (2007 Review), designed with the goal of 'relieving pressure on the post-production fund'.⁴⁸ Although the Post Production Fund had provided finance for five short films that year, interviews with current and former NZFC employees reveal the fund did not appear to be under pressure.⁴⁹ It seems the 2007 Review should have read 'post production budgets' instead of 'the post-production fund'. Veber explains that following a review in October 2003, the NZFC decided to increase the sum available to EPs to enable all filmmakers to complete their projects to 35mm print without stretching their post production budgets.⁵⁰ In 2005, this requirement was refined further: EPs were requested to allocate 'production finance for at least three 15 minute (maximum length) 35mm theatrical short films'.⁵¹ Cole-Baker notes that most EPs had already self-imposed the requirement that films be completed to a 35mm print before the NZFC changed their criteria. She summarises the arguments for and against finishing to video (tape, now a digital format):

In one sense, finishing to tape is a sensible option: most short films will only have a life on tape, primarily used for television sales, unless they are accepted to one of the main festivals. Some smaller festivals will screen films on tape, again making the costs of a print unwarranted.... However, this does little to encourage or appreciate the work of the many technicians who make significant sacrifices (usually financial) for the making of a short film: what happens to the quality of the lighting or Dolby Digital sound mix if a production only finishes on tape?⁵²

In 2007, a group of EPs recommended that the NZFC conduct annual reviews of technological changes as they relate to festival screening formats in order to determine whether there is an ongoing need to finish films to a 35mm print.⁵³ Many are adamant, nonetheless, that support from the Post Production Fund continues to greatly assist filmmakers whose work is otherwise not finished to an adequate technical standard to project onto a big screen. Although she questions the value of offering short film production funding, NZFC Board member and former EP Vanessa Alexander (Pickpocket Films, 2002-2004) describes the Post Production Fund as

⁴⁸ Veber et al., "Review," 23.

⁴⁹ Veber, interview; Gildea, interview. When asked about the Post Production Fund, Short Film Manager from 2002 to 2004, Gildea states, 'It wasn't a concern in terms of budget that too many films were being selected in competition for an 'A' list festival.'

⁵⁰ Veber, interview.

⁵¹ New Zealand Film Commission, "Tender for Short Film Executive Producer Role: 2004/05 - 2007/08," 3.

⁵² Cole-Baker, "Short Film," 54.

⁵³ The EPs participating in the meeting on 1 August 2007 were Ainsley Gardiner, Nik Beachman, Catherine Fitzgerald, Matthew Horrocks, Rawiri Paratene, Shuchi Kothari, Sarina Pearson, Christina Milligan, and Roger Grant. Veber et al., "Review," 18-20.

‘really crucial’ in helping launch the careers of short filmmakers, pointing in particular to successful applicants whose films had been self-funded or financed by the SIPF.⁵⁴

The Post Production Fund also offers financial assistance for directors and, in some cases, producers, to attend one ‘A’ list film festival with their selected film in its first year of release.⁵⁵

Attending these festivals enables directors to promote their work, help build their profile, and make contact with potential investors, buyers and fellow filmmakers. Former Short Film Manager Sandy Gildea explains:

‘A’ list festivals are where the international film community meets, so attending those festivals with your short film can help put an emerging filmmaker on the radar ... it gets them in front of other festival directors, buyers, distributors, funders, etcetera.⁵⁶

Directors who have received NZFC assistance to attend these festivals attest to the value of this support in terms of learning about the global film industry, particularly aspects such as marketing and sales, and meeting potential investors or future collaborators.⁵⁷ It is at these events that many local filmmakers realise the unique nature of NZFC support; it is fairly rare for a state-funded film agency to pay for festival submissions and travel costs, while also actively marketing films made both with and without its support.⁵⁸

Shifting definitions of ‘short’ film

A key rationale for reforming the Short Film Fund in 1997 was the perceived need for a greater variety of film durations. The NZFC hoped to enable filmmakers to work with longer formats than previously allowed so as to better prepare them for feature filmmaking.⁵⁹ Of the four

⁵⁴ Vanessa Alexander, Interview with the author, 23 March 2009.

⁵⁵ Funding is available for economy airfares, mid-range accommodation and airport transfers to New Zealand based applicants only. New Zealand Film Commission, "NZFC Short Film Post Production Fund," (2007). A further elaboration of the travel grants was provided by Veber in our interview: ‘If a New Zealand short film is invited to a qualifying ‘A’ list festival, the director can apply for a travel grant of up to \$5,000 to attend the festival. If the short is invited to an ‘A’ list festival with a significant market attached i.e. Cannes or Berlin, the producer of the short is also eligible to apply for travel funds of up to \$5,000 to attend the festival.’

⁵⁶ Gildea, interview. See also: New Zealand Screen Council, "Water Case Study," <http://www.nzscreenouncil.co.nz/marketing/film/water.htm> (accessed 1 December 2008); Veber et al., "Review," 75.

⁵⁷ Roseanne Liang, in Veber et al., "Review," 78; Paul Swadel and James Cunningham, in *OnFilm*, "Abominable Snowmen: Two Go Mad at Film Fest," April 2001; *OnFilm*, "Creating Indelible Images," August 2007; Mark Albiston and Louis Sutherland, "'Better, Stronger, Faster...'" On Making Six Dollar Fifty Man – and More," *OnFilm*, October 2008; Adam Stevens, in Peter Gibbs, "Brothers in Arts," *The Nelson Mail*, 5 December 2001.

⁵⁸ *OnFilm*, "Abominable Snowmen"; Gildea, interview; Cole-Baker, "Short Film," 59-60. Some other national agencies, such as the Australian Film Commission also offer travel grants to filmmakers whose work is screening in significant international festivals. See Tristan Bancks, "The 'Cannes' of Short Film Festivals," *Metro Magazine* 140 (2004).

⁵⁹ New Zealand Film Commission, "Short Film Fund Review – Update," (1997), 1; Cole-Baker, "Short Film," 51-52.

⁶⁰ *OnFilm*, "Big Issues for Short Film Fund," July 1997; New Zealand Film Commission, "Discussion Paper."

options presented in its 1997 discussion paper, three included making medium length films for television, in the hope that this would increase filmmakers' awareness of market demands and create more realistic expectations of professional screen production.⁶⁰ This was seen as an essential response to the paucity of local, independent television production which, in other countries, offers filmmakers opportunities to develop their skills.⁶¹

Despite allowing for longer films, the EP Scheme did not lead to a greater variety of short film durations. In his research on short filmmaking, Yeatman noted that the average length of NZFC-funded shorts had not increased by 1998, although he suggested that it might take time before filmmaking conventions changed.⁶² In fact, rather than leading to an increased variety of film lengths, the Short Film Fund criteria evolved to adopt an even narrower definition of short film. The NZFC did provide production finance for two television series during this period under the rubric of the Short Film Fund; however, this finance was not offered via the EP Scheme.⁶³ From 1997 to 2003, the NZFC required that short film tender groups ensure the production of 'at least three *non-feature length* films with the available finance, to a minimum of 16mm print or international broadcast quality video.'⁶⁴ For the first two years of the EP scheme, scripts of varying duration were invited from applicants.⁶⁵ After three years, only one consortium had 'no length restriction', while the others specifically focused on shorter films: Swad Saunders aimed to produce three 10 minute films and Big House requested applicants send in scripts no longer than 12 minutes.⁶⁶ By the 2001/02 funding year, all three EPs specified that they would only produce films shorter than 15 minutes, with one group aiming for a maximum length of ten minutes.⁶⁷

⁶¹ Sorrell, "Chairman's Introduction." Like the SIPF, NZFC's Short Film Fund also faces the difficulty of 'compensating for the deficiencies of our television service'. McDonald, "Innovation the Key." Shortly after her appointment as CEO, Harley publicly expresses her support for a new approach to short film funding, in Mike Houlahan, "Film Commission Has Hand Out," *The Evening Post*, 14 April 1997.

⁶² Yeatman, "Policy and Practice", 191-195. All films funded in the 1997/98 round were between 10 and 15 minutes long, as they had been in previous years.

⁶³ New Zealand Film Commission, "Report" (2001). The series funded were *Mataku* and *The Underwater Melon Man*. Production finance for *Mataku* was offered again in subsequent years; the series also received funding from Te Mangai Paho, TVNZ and NZ on Air.

⁶⁴ New Zealand Film Commission, "Tender for Talent Development: 1997 - 2003/04," 2. (Emphasis added)

⁶⁵ In 1997, the only EP to specify duration in its applicant guidelines was MAP Film Productions, who asked for scripts of up to fifty minutes in length; however, they refined their criteria the following year to films between one and thirty minutes. New Zealand Film Commission, "Short Film Decision Making Tenders 1997: The Outcome."

⁶⁶ New Zealand Film Commission, "Short Film Fund 2000/01," (2000).

⁶⁷ New Zealand Film Commission, "Short Film Fund 2001/02," (2001).

The pressure on a film's budget and desire to maximise its chances of finding an audience at a range of festivals motivated EPs to restrict the length of funded projects. Generally speaking, the longer a film's duration, the more shooting time and film stock it requires. Even if most of the team is working for free or at very low rates, the longer duration increases expenditure not only on rental equipment and consumables such as film stock and sound tapes, but it also raises the cost of processing and editing the film. The requirement that projects be shot on film for less than \$100,000 restricts filmmakers' capacity to make high quality longer length projects. Moreover, if a short film is longer than 15 minutes, it is not eligible to compete in certain 'A' list festival competitions, including Venice, Cannes, and, until 2003, Berlin. The aim of getting into an 'A' list festival is the rationale cited by many EPs when asked why there is such an insistence on short film duration in their criteria.⁶⁸ A longer short film is also much harder to sell. Due to the exhibition constraints of cinema and television, there is little market for short films over 15 minutes in length.⁶⁹ Distributors and sales agents tend to favour films under 10 minutes, preferably no more than 5 minutes, as shorter films are easier to programme in television schedules or before a feature film – on the rare occasion that this occurs.⁷⁰ While some NZFC films are shorter than ten minutes, very few are under eight minutes.⁷¹ Clearly, the primary objective of the NZFC EP Scheme is not to make short films that sell but instead that gain entry into 'A' list festivals.

Although the NZFC acts as a sales agent for its short films, many of which are bought by foreign broadcasters, it never expects a return on its investment, nor do filmmakers. Short filmmakers are motivated by reputation gains rather than financial reward.⁷² While it has sometimes considered an audience development strategy for short film, the NZFC only occasionally devoted resources to domestic distribution initiatives between 1998 and 2006.⁷³

⁶⁸ Christina Milligan, Interview with the author, 24 March 2009; Fitzgerald, interview; Bancroft and Beachman, in Grant, "The Long and the Short of it II."

⁶⁹ Yeatman, "Policy and Practice", 132, 145-6, 190; Cole-Baker, "Short Film," 49.

⁷⁰ New Zealand Film Commission, "Marketing Your Short Film: A Short Guide," (2005); Howe, "Shorts and the Real World"; Elsey and Kelly, *In Short*; Méabh O'Donovan, "A World of Shorts," *Journal of Media Practice* 4, no. 3 (2004).

⁷¹ See Appendix 6. In my sample, which is discussed further in Chapters Four and Five, the shortest film is seven minutes. The majority of films are between 10 and 15 minutes long; the average length is 10.8 minutes.

⁷² Yeatman, "Policy and Practice", 43, 137.

⁷³ It sponsored, for instance, theatrical short film screenings such as the Five for Five programme, which toured eight cinemas around New Zealand with two selections of short films from 1995 to 1998. This series addressed the previous impression that there was a 'dearth' of short films made by women. See Deborah Shepard, *Reframing Women: A History of New Zealand Film* (Auckland: Harper Collins, 2000), 215-216. There is a renewed interest in local audiences, however, which has been facilitated by a diversifying local audiovisual market. 'Exploring opportunities to increase domestic distribution of short films' was one objective stated in: New Zealand Film Commission, "Statement of Intent 2006 - 2009," (2006). As well as currently developing their own website dedicated to short film, the NZFC has in the last few years licensed 45 short films to screen in full length or clips

The Short Film Manager has devoted more of her time to submitting NZFC-funded films to international festivals. Since 1999, the NZFC has set the following yearly target: 'All new shorts with NZFC investment to be offered to a minimum of 10 relevant major film festivals where the focus is on identifying new talent'.⁷⁴ The NZFC has asserted that the audience that matters to its short films are overseas festival programmers: 'In the case of a short film the most effective audience from a career development point of view can be a festival director, agent or agency who will track and support the future career of a filmmaker.'⁷⁵ When it comes to short films, festivals are the market and reputation is the currency. Festival selection, awards and reviews help short films to reach an audience.⁷⁶ As Liz Czach explains, selection in a renowned film festival is a source of 'critical capital' for filmmakers around the world, and affects the sorts of films that are valued within their own national cinemas.⁷⁷ Alexander concurs that 'A' list selection is not only important in terms of a director's career progression, but can also influence local viewers' perception of a film. Pointing to the number of New Zealanders who have watched Academy Award nominee *Two Cars, One Night* but few if any other short films, she says: 'I also think people's interest in short films is governed by how they perform internationally, so we'd be foolish to ignore that.... Actually the critical component or critical success is what drives the [local] short film audience to watch them.'⁷⁸

Relationship between government policy and the NZFC Short Film Fund

The decentralised structure of the EP Scheme was consistent with the principles of the National government at the time of the fund's establishment as well as with those of the Labour government from 1999 to 2008. According to public choice theory, which the National government of the 1990s espoused, state-funded agencies and the arts community have vested interests in public support of the arts. It was therefore believed that departments 'should not provide both policy advice and implementation, and ... there should be as much competition in state service provision as possible'.⁷⁹ Indeed, when Harley was appointed to the NZFC in 1997, after six years at NZ On Air, which embodies the funder-provider split, she expressed concern

on the website NZONSCREEN, 90 short films to Maori Television for its Iti Pounamu series, and 105 short films to Sky's Rialto channel.

⁷⁴ New Zealand Film Commission, "Reports of the New Zealand Film Commission" (2000 - 2008).

⁷⁵ Veber et al., "Review," 17. See also Grant, "The Long and the Short of it II."

⁷⁶ Quy, *Teaching Short Films*, 72; Liz Czach, "Film Festivals, Programming and the Building of a National Cinema," *The Moving Image* 4, no. 1 (2004).

⁷⁷ Czach, "Film Festivals."

⁷⁸ Alexander, interview.

⁷⁹ Albiston, "Reframing Arts and Cultural Policy", 62.

at 'the risk of client capture of the agency'.⁸⁰ The need for competition and role separation was met by putting the EP groups up for yearly tender, and limiting possible contract renewals to a maximum of two consecutive years. Yeatman observes that this arrangement caused 'a shift in the axis of power'.⁸¹ It was no doubt based on the PODS, which were the first instance of devolved funding instituted by the NZFC.⁸² By contracting independent, experienced producers to implement short film funding, the EP Scheme also espouses the third way value of partnership with industry.⁸³ Thus, the devolution of funding decisions to members of the film industry aligned well with the discourse of both the National and Labour (coalition) governments of the past two decades.

Although NZFC criteria on the length and medium of the finished film have become increasingly stringent, the principle of non-prescription has remained central to short film policy. Operating at arm's length from government, the NZFC formulates a strategy for short films to enable a high quantity and quality of short film production. It allows other groups to determine exactly which films are allocated state funds, though, avoiding making any creative decisions itself. Its EP Scheme devolves authority far from the MCH, giving independent producers the power to decide on the 'process and criteria for selecting projects'.⁸⁴ Thus, the EPs, rather than board members or employees, appraise applications according to their preferences in terms of style, themes and genre. Joyce frames this out-sourcing by the NZFC as 'a patronage position', which enables producers to take responsibility for projects, rather than having the NZFC act as a gate-keeping studio, potentially lacking in transparency and accountability.⁸⁵

While the NZFC attempts to avoid picking funding winners, its legal obligations necessitate a careful selection of the external agents who determine which films are worthy of public funding. As a government agency, the NZFC has certain statutory requirements, including formulating strategies and objectives that its board must ensure it follows.⁸⁶ The NZFC is

⁸⁰ Shane Cave, "Harley Reels in Film Commission Job," *The National Business Review*, 14 March 1997. Harley says her experience as CEO of NZOA enabled her to understand the shift in broadcasting policy discourse and the principles of public sector reforms, including 'inputs, outputs and outcomes' and 'audience as proxy for cultural impact.' In "Cultural Capital and the Knowledge Economy".

⁸¹ Yeatman, "Policy and Practice", 170.

⁸² As mentioned in the previous chapter, the PODS were set up in 1986 to allow independent producers to assess scripts and strengthen development procedures, and were considered an effective mechanism. Joyce, "In Development", 150, 273.

⁸³ See Note 133 in Chapter Two.

⁸⁴ New Zealand Film Commission, "Update," 2.

⁸⁵ Joyce, "In Development", 268.

⁸⁶ Ministry for Culture and Heritage, "Governance -The e-Manual," <http://www.mch.govt.nz/agency/boards/governance-manual.html#devolved> (accessed 6 May 2009).

required to present three strategic documents annually to the responsible Minister: a Statement of Intent (SOI), Memorandum of Understanding and an Annual Report. The discourse in these documents varies according to the political and economic climate, as well as the NZFC management, but they always advocate the role of the NZFC in a manner designed to appeal to the current government.⁸⁷ As Joyce points out, the 1990 annual report to the new National government framed short film as a promotional tool and a means of talent development.⁸⁸

The positioning of short film within the NZFC's Statement of Objectives and Service Performance in annual reports demonstrates the ongoing framing of the medium on the basis of its contribution to the feature film industry. From 1998 to 2004, the Short Film Fund was evaluated in accordance with the following objective: 'To support initiatives which develop the projects and talent for distinctively New Zealand feature films, which play to bigger New Zealand audiences and generate better returns on investment – both cultural and financial.'⁸⁹ The NZFC reformulated its objectives and performance measures in 2005, in accordance with the Crown Entities Act 2004.⁹⁰ It now considers short film production in relation to its goals of 'cultural capital', 'cultural storytelling' and 'a vibrant international profile', which are framed according to its key strategy: 'A flow of *successful feature films* is the optimum way of fulfilling the NZFC's purpose of growing the NZ film sector.'⁹¹ Thus, NZFC policy discourse does not accord short film any intrinsic value as a form of cultural expression; its worth is instrumental, as a launch pad for future feature filmmakers. This point is repeated throughout the 2007 Review papers, where an intent focus on the strategic goal of talent development leaves no space to discuss the potential of short film to be appreciated by New Zealand audiences. A report on a meeting with EPs provides the only instance of considering short films as cultural artefacts in their own right.⁹² In the other seventy-eight pages of the Review, cultural objectives are rarely mentioned.

⁸⁷ Joyce, "In Development", 84.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 195.

⁸⁹ New Zealand Film Commission, "Report," (1999), 43. Previously, the short film scheme was positioned within Creative Development & Industry Support, which had the following objective: 'To encourage the development of creative talent, and facilitate a dynamic film environment in New Zealand'. In "Report of the New Zealand Film Commission for the year ending 30 June 1998," (1998), 45.

⁹⁰ For a discussion of the shift in emphasis from outputs to outcomes in public service delivery expectations as a result of this legislation, see Richard Shaw, "The Public Service," in *New Zealand Government and Politics*, ed. Raymond Miller (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2006), 281-282.

⁹¹ New Zealand Film Commission, "Reports" (2005-2008) and "Statement of Intent 2006 - 2009," 10-14. (Emphasis added.)

⁹² 'Report on Short Film Fund Executive Producer Meeting', in Veber et al., "Review," 19. 'Cultural output in own right' is the fourth and final goal of the short film programme according to meeting attendees. This point is not developed, though. The other three goals involved professional development and increasing filmmaker profiles, which align more closely with NZFC short film policy. See note 53 above for a list of EPs attending the meeting.

The language and principles contained in MCH and NZFC strategic plans permeate the discourse of the Film Commission as well as that of its contracted executive producers. EPs are free to propose any criteria they think appropriate; however, by way of the tender process, the NZFC selects which criteria will be implemented, and thus retains control of the scheme. The NZFC tender documents for Short Film Fund EPs display an insistence on industry experience and a desire for strategic plans that match NZFC policy. Yearly tender requirements specify that the holders of EP contracts must have ‘a substantial filmography’ and determine a strategy ‘for finding, identifying and developing talent for feature films’.⁹³ Veber adds: ‘Ideally the EPs would be short film producers who are looking to make the leap to feature film producing.’⁹⁴ A broad strategy with measurable outcomes is not essential to gain an EP contract but is desirable. Tenders ‘may include a strategy for delivering outcomes within the wider talent development brief, over and above the films, and a way of measuring the achievement of these outcomes.’⁹⁵

The emphasis on future feature filmmakers is framed in a similar way in NZFC internal and external communication as well as in guidelines for applicants prepared by EPs.⁹⁶ The description of travel grants available for directors and producers through the Post Production Fund also focuses on filmmakers with specific plans of pursuing a career in the movie industry: ‘Priority will be given to teams who have a feature film project in development.’⁹⁷ Even in spoken discourse, EPs express their support for short film within the NZFC frame of talent development. Karl Zohrab, co-executive producer for 2002 to 2004 as Littlejab Pictures, states, ‘the key outcome for shorts – from a producing point of view and from the NZFC’s point of view – has always been about developing and identifying talent.’⁹⁸ Similarly, in an *OnFilm* interview, co-executive producer Nik Beachman (Short Intercept, 2004-2006) invokes the NZFC objective to explain the need to allow for creative freedom within the scheme: ‘You have to acknowledge it’s a talent development initiative and people need to be able to make mistakes.’⁹⁹

⁹³ New Zealand Film Commission, "Tender for Talent Development" and "Tender for Short Film Executive Producer," 2.

⁹⁴ Veber, interview.

⁹⁵ New Zealand Film Commission, "Tender for Talent Development" and "Tender for Short Film Executive Producer," 2.

⁹⁶ ‘The directors for the short films selected will be expected to have already made, at the very least, one substantial film as evidence of their potential, and to be focussed on what they believe will best assist, demonstrate and develop their filmmaking talent.’ This exact phrase is repeated in the following NZFC documents: "Update," 2; "Tender for Talent Development," 2; "Tender for Short Film Executive Producer," 2. Similar criteria are set out by EPs, who often specify that applicants demonstrate aptitude and ambition for feature filmmaking. See Chapter Four.

⁹⁷ New Zealand Film Commission, "NZFC Short Film Post Production Fund."

⁹⁸ Screen Council, "Water Case Study."

⁹⁹ Nick Grant, "Interview: The Long and the Short of it" *OnFilm*, November (2008), <http://io.knowledge-basket.co.nz/iomags/contents/magz/text/onfilm/2008/Nov/onf0190.html> (accessed 18 February 2009). In our

The framing of filmmakers as talented professionals building a career, rather than artists exploring their craft or communicating with the wider public, aligns with the political discourse of the knowledge economy and creative industries. Shortly before the change of government in 1999, this connection was made explicit by NZFC chairperson Sorrell and Harley, who described the film industry 'as a high growth, high margin knowledge based business' that contributes to 'other New Zealand based content industries'.¹⁰⁰ Sorrell and Harley invoked the dominant discourse to reinforce their argument about the 'talent drain'.¹⁰¹ Their statements demonstrate the NZFC's strategic use of creative industries discourse to convey the value of state-funded filmmaking prior to the arrival of the fifth Labour government.

The focus on the creative entrepreneur in the government's framing of cultural industries strengthens the perception of New Zealand filmmaking as an auteur-driven industry. Clark's speeches tend to contain a modernist celebration of the individual artist combined with an instrumentalist account of celebrity artists as creative entrepreneurs. In a speech where she describes 'arts and culture as a seed bed for the creativity and lateral thinking which drives new ideas', Clark asserts: 'It is educated, skilled, creative and enterprising people who are going to drive New Zealand's future as a nation.'¹⁰² Horrocks' work allows us to trace this discourse back to the fourth Labour government's deliberate attempts to reframe nationalism within the New Zealand film and television sector. He writes: 'Their choice of cultural hero was the positive-thinking entrepreneur, American in style and global in ambition, diametrically opposed in his own way to the troubled "man alone" of the "culture of unease".'¹⁰³ In her analysis of the fifth Labour government's cultural policy, Lawn similarly refers to 'the pursuit of what might be called a "star-making machinery" where cultural achievers are upheld as national icons to rival the heroes of the sporting and commercial worlds.'¹⁰⁴ *Lord of the Rings* director Peter

interview, Gildea made similar remarks regarding her involvement with the scheme as NZFC Short Film Manager: 'It was a development scheme, you need to let people hold enough of their own reins without being overly prescriptive.'

¹⁰⁰ Harley, "Cultural Capital and the Knowledge Economy"; Sorrell, "Chairman's Introduction."

¹⁰¹ See notes 53 and 54 in Chapter Two. 'A term commonly associated with New Zealand films is the "Talent Drain". A trend has existed with directors leaving for Hollywood after only a short but successful period within the New Zealand film industry.' Ian Conrich and Sarah Davy, *Views from the Edge of the World: New Zealand Film*, (London: Kakapo Books, 1997), 8. Sorrell stated: 'In an economy moving from dependence on commodities to maximising the value of knowledge and communication technologies, these people are the key resources. They are the people who will attract the international capital New Zealand needs to grow a sustainable film industry.' In "Chairman's Introduction."

¹⁰² Helen Clark, "The Chapman Lecture Series, in Honour of Emeritus Professor Robert Chapman," 20 November 2000, <http://executive.govt.nz/Speech.aspx?type=speech&rid=33104> (accessed 20 December 2008). See also Clark, "Arts, Culture and Public Policy"; Grierson, "Arts and Creative Industries".

¹⁰³ Horrocks, "New Zealand Cinema," 131.

¹⁰⁴ Lawn, "Arts, Culture and Heritage", 22

Jackson became the poster boy for this new image of the creative New Zealander, and was mentioned in various speeches by Clark and Harley.¹⁰⁵ Director of *Two Cars, One Night* (2003), Waititi's career path is similarly highlighted as a successful example of NZFC short film policy.¹⁰⁶

The spotlight on directors can be criticised for its failure to acknowledge the important roles played by other members of the filmmaking team. In addition to highlighting the director in policy documents, the NZFC makes it 'very clear' to EPs that the Short Film Fund 'is about director talent development'.¹⁰⁷ The emphasis on festival selection reinforces the auteur focus as the director, more than any other contributor to a film, benefits from a festival screening.¹⁰⁸ EPs acknowledge that short filmmaking offers opportunities for cast and crew development as well as the key creatives,¹⁰⁹ yet their funding guidelines tend to omit recognising the role of the wider team. In the past decade, only one EP has expressed an intention to encourage skills development in a field other than writing, directing or producing. Gardiner and Curtis of Whenua Films (2004-2006) included in their tender the aims of helping 'crews' as well as writers, directors and producers to develop careers in filmmaking and encouraging 'industry wide talent development through all skills'.¹¹⁰ They are thus the sole consortium whose criteria expressly acknowledge the extensive collaboration involved in short filmmaking. As *This is Her* (Katie Wolfe, 2008) producer Rachel Lorimer says: 'In this most collaborative of art forms every contribution has an impact on what ends up on screen.'¹¹¹

This suggests a break from the 'prevailing New Zealand "art-house" ethos' and dominance of writer-director 'auteurs', as described in the 2007 Review.¹¹² Of the 123 films that received finance through the EP Scheme and Post Production Fund between 1997 and 2007, 76 per cent were made by writer-directors.¹¹³ The centrality of the director as the key creative in NZFC policy is thus reinforced by creative industries' discourse (top-down) and filmmaking practices

¹⁰⁵ See, for example, Helen Clark, "Address to Innovation Conference," 7 March 2002, <http://executive.govt.nz/Speech.aspx?type=speech&rid=37546> (accessed 20 January 2009); Clark, "Speech at Opening of the Lower Hutt Film Unit", 7 February 2000, <http://executive.govt.nz/Speech.aspx?type=speech&rid=30450> (accessed 20 January 2009); Ruth Harley, "How We Created World Class Performance" (paper presented at Innovate, Christchurch, 6 March 2002); Lawn and Beatty, "Getting to Wellywood," 135.

¹⁰⁶ New Zealand Film Commission, "Reports" (2004), 9; (2005), 4; (2007), 4; Veber et al., "Review," 18. Waititi's celebrated career trajectory is discussed further in the following chapter.

¹⁰⁷ Milligan, interview.

¹⁰⁸ Veber et al., "Review," 47.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 5, 19.

¹¹⁰ New Zealand Film Commission, "Short Film Fund Guidelines," (1997-2008).

¹¹¹ Rachel Lorimer, "Image Cap & Post Workflow: Hindsight," *OnFilm*, April 2008.

¹¹² Veber et al., "Review," 55-60. This report nevertheless emphasises the importance of 'successful partnerships' and the importance of creative team formation.

¹¹³ Ibid., 22.

(bottom-up). It is further compounded by the international political economy of film and the auteur approach in cinema studies.¹¹⁴ Christina Milligan, former NZFC Short Film Committee Chair and recent EP (Shorts Conbrio, 2006-2008), is concerned at the lack of support for writers due to the high number of writer-directors receiving short film funding: 'I think our filmmakers have suffered because of the strong support for the auteur theory.'¹¹⁵ Joyce also believes: 'There is a false perception of the primacy of auteur directors in New Zealand filmmaking. In practice, very few take sole responsibility for scriptwriting and when they have, it has often been only on their first films.'¹¹⁶ There is nothing to suggest that the NZFC has addressed her concern that short film policy in the 1990s 'favoured an auteur philosophy, encouraging projects already written by writer/directors, and rarely providing finance for the development aspect of short film.'¹¹⁷ Recently, however, some EPs have effectively dedicated time and resources to short film development, as discussed in the next chapter.

NZFC documents, such as its 2007 Review, refer explicitly to 'the business that is the film industry' but not to film culture as such.¹¹⁸ This reflects comments made by former NZFC chairperson Barrie Everard: 'the over-arching objective of the board during [the early 2000s] was to get everyone to understand that we are in a business, and to instil a knowledge of the business in the executive and then in filmmakers.'¹¹⁹ The framing of filmmaking as a professional activity resulting in consumable products, rather than a form of artistic expression with wider cultural or social benefits, reflects the NZFC's market-orientated strategy. While the NZFC has always been oriented towards a film industry, the political dominance of economic rationalism alongside cultural nationalism caused it to shift from a 'producer orientation to market orientation' in the 1990s.¹²⁰ This is exemplified by the NZFC's reformulated strategic plan and mission statement in July 1998. The agency's new purpose statement – 'contributing to the creation of cultural capital in Aotearoa/New Zealand through popular feature films' – Sorrell explained, 'reflects a change in emphasis from sustaining an industry, to investing in films which reach a wider audience, particularly in New Zealand.'¹²¹

¹¹⁴ Shelton and Petrie point out the importance of the director in the overseas success of national cinemas. Shelton, *Selling of New Zealand Movies*, 95; Petrie, "Coming of Age of a National Cinema," 16. Andrew Sarris' codified principles of the auteur theory are presented in Robert Kolker, *Film, Form and Culture* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1994), 163-164.

¹¹⁵ Milligan, interview.

¹¹⁶ Joyce, "In Development", 273.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 195. On the limitations of the auteur approach, see also Shepard, *Reframing Women*, 15; Yeatman, "Policy and Practice", 23.

¹¹⁸ Veber et al., "Review," 8.

¹¹⁹ Grant, "Parting Remarks."

¹²⁰ Yeatman, "Policy and Practice", 167; Pitts, "Cross-Cultural Filmmaking", 125.

¹²¹ Sorrell, "Chairman's Introduction," 6. As discussed in the previous chapter, the NZFC developed the concept of 'cultural capital' to convey the social benefits of national cinema within an economic discourse.

This reframed objective aligned closely with the approach of the incumbent National and incoming Labour-led governments. Both parties positioned arts funding as a policy aimed at strengthening national identity, which each identified as a key government goal.¹²²

In its 2007 Review, the NZFC reiterated that the purpose of the Short Film Fund was the development of creative talent whose future work would contribute to the NZFC's key long-term outcome: 'New Zealand films and filmmakers will generate a significant component of our cultural capital/national identity.'¹²³ Here, cultural capital and national identity are conflated and presented as complementary outcomes of audience-focused film funding. Even though the audience for short film is limited, the EP Scheme encourages filmmakers to concentrate on making films for viewers, rather than merely for themselves, representing the NZFC orientation towards markets instead of producers. Every year, the guidelines of at least one EP include criteria that require applicants to demonstrate a clear idea of the intended audience for their film.¹²⁴

Although it tends to frame the idea as 'cultural capital', New Zealand identity remains the core imperative of the NZFC. Section 18 of the New Zealand Film Commission Act continues to determine which short film projects are eligible for funding, now including, as mentioned above, those allocated finance via CNZ.¹²⁵ The concepts of cultural relevance and national identity are contested by filmmakers, though. Yeatman provides examples of short film directors and producers who question the use of cultural relevance as an allocation criterion and raise concerns about authorising particular definitions of national culture.¹²⁶ Pitts similarly contests the NZFC definition of New Zealand film, suggesting that short films whose main characters are neither Pakeha nor Maori like *Eating Sausage* (Zia Mandviwalla, 2004), which received production funding from the SIPP, and *Fleeting Beauty* (Virginia Pitts, 2004), which was rejected by two NZFC EP groups, apparently 'on the basis that it was not a "New Zealand film",' help to redefine New Zealand cinema.¹²⁷ The NZFC has noticed that an increasing number of funding applicants challenge contemporary understandings of New Zealand culture. Its 2006 SOI reveals: 'The concept of "National Cinema" is being challenged by filmmakers in

¹²² Barker, *Cultural Capital and Policy*. For Labour, arts funding contributed to 'the 'Key Government Goal: Strengthen National Identity and Uphold the Principles of the Treaty of Waitangi'. Ministry for Culture and Heritage, "VOTE Arts, Culture and Heritage," (2002), 4.

¹²³ From the NZFC SOI, cited in Veber et al., "Review," 8.

¹²⁴ New Zealand Film Commission, "Short Film Fund Guidelines."

¹²⁵ Big Shorts, a NZFC EP in 2008-2009, make this explicit to applicants, providing a link to Section 18 on their website: "FAQS," <http://www.bigshorts.co.nz/faqs.html> (accessed 13 June 2009).

¹²⁶ Yeatman, "Policy and Practice", 150-151.

¹²⁷ Pitts, "Intercultural Short Filmmaking," 140, 145.

the same way that writers and painters have interrogated the NZ identity of their art forms in the past.'¹²⁸ The NZFC recognises that it must support an increasingly diverse palette of films, yet frames this 'broadening definition of New Zealand film' as a threat to national identity formation:

The challenge for the NZFC is to interrogate this trend further both financially and culturally through consultation with the industry, and a study of other culturally-based industries to ensure that while the concept of national cinema may be evolving and broadening, it does not lose its core potency.¹²⁹

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Labour-led government identified film as the ideal vehicle to fulfil both the internal and external dimensions of its national identity goal in a globalised environment. In addition to helping New Zealanders understand themselves and each other, the government hoped that NZFC-funded films would promote the New Zealand brand overseas. More than any other NZFC programme, short film schemes are clearly focused on international audiences. This focus, however, can be attributed in large part to the NZFC's market orientation and strategic focus on talent development, rather than any response to government discourse on globalisation. Gaining international attention has always been a key objective of NZFC short film policy.¹³⁰ In the 1990s, Yeatman found that the NZFC tended to give applicants 'implicit suggestions rather than explicit directives' in regards to increasing their short film's chance of international success.¹³¹ Some recent EPs admit that the significance of international festivals influences their selection of projects for development. Andrew Bancroft of Short Intercept reveals, 'I was aware of picking shorts that were festival-friendly.... I also think our sensibility tends to reflect some of the sensibilities of festival programmers and what's valued in cinema overseas.'¹³²

Although presenting a film at prestigious festivals can be highly advantageous for the 'critical capital' of a producer or director, it is arguable whether this actually helps to generate 'cultural capital' in New Zealand. Bancroft questions the emphasis on the international success of short films, saying that rather than considering their relevance for local audiences, 'we're sort of

¹²⁸ New Zealand Film Commission, "Statement of Intent 2006 - 2009," 8. Deputy Chief Executive Ivancic also comments on what Wakefield describes as a 'generational shift' in filmmaking: 'There is more of a shift towards picking stories that are less strongly focussed in terms of New Zealand content.' In Wakefield, "Doing unto Others." See also notes 25 and 27 in Chapter Two.

¹²⁹ New Zealand Film Commission, "Statement of Intent 2006 - 2009," 13, 30.

¹³⁰ Shelton, *Selling of New Zealand Movies*. The NZFC discovered the benefits of festival attention in the 1980s, and in the 1990s it was short film in particular that helped to increase the visibility of New Zealand cinema.

¹³¹ Yeatman, "Policy and Practice", 131. He was referring to the 1995 NZFC publication that listed overseas buyers' preferences for short films, which the agency later said overemphasised the marketing agenda. See also Joyce, "In Development"; New Zealand Film Commission, "Discussion Paper."

¹³² Grant, "Long and the Short."

celebrating and showcasing what was successful at overseas festivals.’¹³³ Furthermore, even if a filmmaker attracts international interest in a proposed feature film, there is no guarantee that the project will be carried out in New Zealand.¹³⁴ New Zealand audiences do not necessarily appreciate features from filmmakers favoured by international festival directors or attendees, either. There is indeed a history of successful short film directors whose subsequent feature film gains critical international acclaim but not popular domestic success.¹³⁵ The NZFC presents a correlation between short film success (directors whose films have been selected for ‘A’ list festivals) and feature success (directors whose films attain at least two of four NZFC-determined performance measures); however, closer analysis of their data reveals that ‘A’ list short film directors are more likely to fulfil the international measures of success than achieve high results at the New Zealand box office.¹³⁶

The emphasis on measurable, strategic targets in NZFC policy causes a narrow focus on quantitative outcomes that fails to account for the full value of a film. Apart from the ‘Report on Short Film Production and Professional Development Survey’, which includes a qualitative questionnaire on short filmmakers’ experiences and expectations, the 2007 Review focuses on quantitative indicators to measure cultural goals. For example, ‘The Statement of Intent for 2006 – 2009 identifies broader cultural objectives which can be assessed by the festival/marketplace results identified in the Survey...’¹³⁷ The performance measures used ‘to benchmark “success” in the Review are based on NZFC’s feature film assessment criteria: ‘Critical acclaim/A list festivals; National identity/New Zealand box office; International sales/ROI [Return on Investment].’¹³⁸ While using a financial indicator to measure international sales is logical, the relationship between ‘National identity’ and ‘New Zealand box office’ is highly tenuous. It rests on the unfounded assumption that a New Zealand film that attracts a large local audience automatically engenders a sense of national identity. While this

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ The Professional Development Survey Report that was carried out as part of the 2007 Review nevertheless suggests that the majority of NZFC-funded short filmmakers wish to continue working in New Zealand. Veber et al., "Review," 49-50.

¹³⁵ For example: *Crush* (Alison Maclean), *Chicken* (Grant Lahood), *Memory and Desire* (Niki Caro), *The Ugly* (Scott Reynolds) and *The Irrefutable Truth About Demons* (Glenn Standring). See Shelton, *Selling of New Zealand Movies*. There are, however, many counter examples of short filmmakers whose feature films achieve both critical and popular acclaim, such as Caro’s later film *Whale Rider*, Brad McGann with *In My Father’s Den*, and Jane Campion with *The Piano*.

¹³⁶ Out of a total of forty feature films produced with NZFC finance between 1996 and 2006, twenty-two were made by directors whose short film had been selected for an ‘A’ list festival. Of these twenty-two ‘A’ list directors, only eight directed feature films that were successful at the New Zealand box office (returning more than NZ\$600,000). Sixteen of these twenty-two films nonetheless met another measure of success, either high international sales or ‘A’ list festival selection. Based on data in Veber et al., "Review," 27-29.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 42.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 12.

indicator may reflect a feature film's likelihood of meeting the NZFC's key cultural objective, as a certain number of viewers is necessary for a film to have any social impact, it in no way reflects the audience's level or nature of engagement with the film. Obviously, these monetary measures are unsuitable for evaluating short films, which rarely have any significant financial return. Hence the NZFC's measurement of a short film's success is in terms of critical rather than financial capital. Making meaningful evaluations of film policy is not as simple as calculating box office takings or a return on investment.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the NZFC endows short filmmaking with value when it is seen to contribute to the national feature film industry. My examination of NZFC policy documents, public statements and EP funding guidelines has found little mention of artistic expression, technical innovation or engagement with local audiences. Short film is framed instead as an opportunity for future feature filmmakers to develop their skills, build creative relationships, and showcase their talent. EPs wisely recommend that the NZFC recognise 'the benefits of short films over and above the transition of the key creatives to features', suggesting the agency consider opportunities for various members of the cast and crew 'to test innovation, new technologies and to build skills and experience'.¹³⁹

Experimentation was a value encouraged by the SIPF, but it is not a stated objective of the EP Scheme or the IFF. This suggests a narrowing in the range of short film projects eligible for state funding, although the actual effect of CNZ's new scheme is yet to be seen. The increasing similarity in the discourse used by the NZFC and CNZ reflects the agencies' alignment with the dominant ideologies of recent governments whose approach to cultural funding has been shaped by the discourses of economic rationalism and the creative industries. The similar framing of the IFF and the Short Film Fund raises the question of whether there is now any significant aesthetic or regulatory difference between the funds administered by CNZ and the NZFC. Previously, the NZFC clearly differentiated its Short Film Fund from the SIPF by classifying the latter as more of an entry level programme. NZFC Short Film Fund tender documents state unequivocally: 'It is expected that the demands on film makers would be at a reasonably high level – clearly distinguished from the Screen Innovation Production Fund.'¹⁴⁰ EPs accordingly

¹³⁹ Ibid. See note 53 above.

¹⁴⁰ New Zealand Film Commission, "Update," 2; "Tender for Talent Development," 2; "Tender for Short Film Executive Producer," 2. This is reiterated in the 2007 Review, which frames the SIPF as financial support for 'less experienced filmmakers', and by Barrie Everard's description of the SIPF as 'providing opportunities for first-time

demand that their projects have high production values, quality scripts and are shot and printed on film.

The insistence on film as a delivery format has enabled the NZFC to clearly distinguish its funding programmes from those administered by NZ On Air and CNZ. The accessibility of digital equipment and proliferation of short films 'gives a new weight to the integrity of a short film scheme that requires a filmmaker to confront the standards, procedures and market constraints necessitated by the budget required to produce and finish on film'.¹⁴¹ A major difference between the SIPF and the Short Film Fund was that CNZ's fund had more specific criteria regarding the types of projects eligible for funding, and it supported a much wider range of films in terms of form, style and content. In contrast to the SIPF's overriding objective of media innovation, the Short Film Fund is designed to enable the professional development of filmmakers seeking a career in the industry. SIPF grants were awarded to applicants who planned to take risks where necessary for experimentation or innovation, even if their work was not assured of an audience.¹⁴² The SIPF consequently allowed for failure more readily than the NZFC EP scheme. The NZFC now focuses intently on 'success' in both the IFF and Short Film Fund, which it measures according to pre-established criteria.

The NZFC's clear and consistent focus on feature films, and subsequent framing of short film as a 'stepping stone' or 'calling card', has been influenced by its statutory requirements and the dominant economic discourse in public policy. It resembles the dominant framing of short film in the United States and Australia, where, according to Dermody and Jacka, 'Even when the intrinsic worth of shorter, non-mainstream film production is argued, the argument frequently slides toward placing features first.'¹⁴³ Although the NZFC funds short films to be presented on the international stage, particularly in European festivals, where they are judged as art forms in their own right, the dominant policy discourse in New Zealand does not allow state-funded short film to be framed as a cultural artefact with intrinsic value. It necessitates strategic reasons for supporting film, accompanied by policy outcomes that can be evaluated against that strategy. By positioning short film within its policy of developing talented feature filmmakers, the NZFC curtails its apparent openness to style and content. This strategy has been constant

film-makers.' In "Chairman's Introduction," in *Report of the New Zealand Film Commission for the year ended 30 June 2004* (New Zealand Film Commission, 2004), 5; Veber et al., "Review", 8

¹⁴¹ Veber et al., "Review," 46.

¹⁴² Yeatman, "Policy and Practice", 108. 'The Screen Innovation Production Fund will give priority to moving-image art projects that are innovative, risky and experimental in nature.' Creative New Zealand, "Screen Innovation Production Fund."

¹⁴³ Dermody and Jacka, *Anatomy of a Film Industry*, 15. See also Chapter One, particularly note 18.

since the restructure of the Short Film Fund in 1997. Interestingly, NZFC policy has not changed much in that time despite a significant increase in funding and a third way government appreciative of the cultural and economic benefits of cinema. This may be due in part to the protection from political interference offered by the New Zealand Film Commission Act 1978.¹⁴⁴ Government policy is perhaps less influential, then, than hegemonic discourse.

The most significant development in the last decade has been the entrenchment of neoliberal discourse in NZFC policy and practices. Increasingly prominent strategic, measurable goals in cultural policy and agencies' accountability documents have been accompanied by a discursive political emphasis on the value of national cinema as a creative industry. This represents an alignment between NZFC, CNZ and MCH policy, which suggests a strengthening of the creative industries discourse favoured by the Labour-led government and a marginalisation of other approaches to cultural policy.

This thesis attempts to take a broader approach than that of the NZFC in its evaluation of short film policy. The following chapters examine the ways in which the content and style of state-funded short films correspond with NZFC policy and EP guidelines. In these chapters I apply a close reading of narrative, genre, cinematographic style, themes, setting and characters, in an examination of the extent to which the films themselves embody the principles of the criteria and policy that enabled them to receive public finance. Particular attention is paid to similarities between the selected films, which indicate the kinds of projects favoured by the EP Scheme. If NZFC short films are supposed to demonstrate the skills relevant to feature filmmaking, then we might expect their style and content to resemble those of feature-length movies favoured by the market. There is a possibility, however, that short film funding agents encourage qualities that they deem desirable, regardless of contemporary policy discourse. The next chapters thus investigate the relationship between short film policy and practice and consider the influence of dominant political discourses on cultural production.

¹⁴⁴ Watson, "Effect of Funding Policies," 128.

Chapter Four: Measuring Success in NZFC Short Filmmaking

This chapter evaluates the NZFC EP Scheme from 1997 to 2007 according to its own goals. Drawing on the data and discourse presented in the 2007 Review, I elaborate on the EP funding process and examine its output in greater detail. This is achieved through the selection and analysis of a sample of sixteen short films funded by the EP Scheme, and interviews with short film producers and funders, with reference to research from academic and industry sources that discuss short filmmaking. My sample, listed in Appendix 6, includes two short films financed by a different EP from nearly every funding year between 1997 and 2007.¹ From each year, I selected the most ‘successful’ short film, according to the number of ‘A’ list festivals at which it screened, and a less successful film that did not screen in any ‘A’ list festivals or many local or less valued international festivals. Each film has been analysed and its creators’ career trajectories researched in order to consider the extent to which the project meets the goals of the NZFC as well as the criteria set by the independent EP. In doing so, this chapter critically examines the use and application of performance measures in the 2007 Review. While the limited size of my sample does not make for substantive quantitative measures, it does represent a third of the films financed by the Short Film Fund in the period studied, so gives a just indication of key statistics. Moreover, quantitative assessments based on my data correspond fairly accurately with those in the 2007 Review.

As a devolved programme, the NZFC’s control of the EP Scheme is essentially limited to setting tender requirements and selecting independent producers to carry out funding decisions. The EP groups accept submissions from filmmaking teams directly and oversee the development, production and delivery of the films to the NZFC. In accordance with the NZFC’s overarching talent development strategy, the agency can exert an influence on the short films for which it provides finance by directing the EPs to call for specific delivery formats or lengths. The NZFC’s Short Film Manager can also, if necessary, intervene if problems arise during the production or post production process.² It is independent executive producers who formulate the criteria and assess funding applications, thus implementing short film policy. Their principal criteria in determining which projects to support are the quality of the script and

¹ In order to have a representative sample, I selected films from different EPs each year. In two instances, films funded by the same EP in different years were selected. Due to issues of availability, my sample includes only one film from each year in the first and last two years of the period studied. The same criteria nonetheless applied for those films funded by NZFC-appointed EPs in 1997/98 to 1998/99 and 2005/06 to 2006/07: one film was determined as successful by the NZFC and the other less successful, and they were each funded by a different EP.

² Milligan, interview; Gildea, interview.

the potential of the creative team. These two aspects will be explored and evaluated in the following analysis. Firstly, though, a fairly straightforward measurement will be taken of the primary target of NZFC support for short film.

Measuring production targets

‘Investment in (at least) 9 short films per annum’ has been the key performance indicator (KPI) for NZFC short film production since the EP Scheme was established.³ The 2007 Review concludes that the EP Scheme achieves this target.⁴ Each consortium is contracted to deliver ‘at least three’ short films.⁵ It is rare that an EP decides to finance more than three films or divide its allocations unevenly and thus significantly vary the amount available for each project. As a result, Cole-Baker argues, ‘some films are effectively “overfunded” and others “underfunded”.’⁶ Variations on the three-way split have occurred though, notably in 2000/01 when Frame Up Films financed four short films. The increase in project quantity and reduction in their budgets did not adversely affect the production group’s output. All four films were delivered, and two of them – *The Hill* (Tainui Stephens, 2001) and *Watermark* (Damon Fepulea’i, 2001) – were selected for two or more ‘A’ list festivals.⁷ Although it received only \$31,500 in production financing from the NZFC, which represents less than a third of the current average allocation, *Watermark* had high enough production values to win Best Short Film, Best Performance and Best Cinematography at the New Zealand film festival Drifting Clouds in 2003.⁸

Irrespective of the level of funding from the NZFC, there are rare instances of a film not being completed. Neither the risk of non-completion nor the fact that it has happened at least once in the past decade is explored in the 2007 Review. The NZFC measures its investment in projects, but does not assess whether at least nine short films are delivered each year. There are two principal reasons for this apparent omission. The first is that films are not always delivered on

³ New Zealand Film Commission, "Background"; Veber et al., "Review," 3, 43.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ New Zealand Film Commission, "Tender for Talent Development: 1997 to 2003/2004," and "Tender for Short Film Executive Producer Role: 2004/2005 - 2007/2008."

⁶ Cole-Baker, "Short Film," 53.

⁷ Similarly, in 1997/98, MAP Film Productions funded four projects, which were all completed, including two that screened at A-list festivals.

⁸ Veber et al., "Review," 63; Godzone Pictures, "Watermark," http://www.godzone.co.nz/films_wm_content.htm (accessed 24 April 2009). *Watermark* thus gained higher acclaim than any other film entered into the New Zealand competition programme for Drifting Clouds International Short Film Festival in 2003. Selected from 80 entries, the other finalists included: *Still Life* (Sima Urale); *The Platform* (Robin Walters); *Tick* (Rebecca Hobbs); *Little Cold Cowboy* (Michael Reihana); and *Beautiful* (Adam Stevens). *OnFilm*, "Drifting Clouds With Silver Lining," February 2003.

time. According to filmmakers surveyed by the NZFC, the average time to develop, produce and deliver a short film funded by the EP Scheme is 1.35 years. While one in five films funded between 1998 and 2006 took only six months to complete, 13 per cent of filmmakers required between three and five years to deliver their short film.⁹ Animated projects can take even longer. The NZFC is still waiting for a short animation to be delivered that was funded by Godzone in 2001/02; another animation financed by the former Short Film Fund, *Egg and Bomb* (George Port, 2005), took ten years to complete.¹⁰ If annual reports indicated the number of funded projects completed each year, they would exclude the films that take longer than expected to be finished. Furthermore, a focus on yearly targets obscures the long shelf life of a short film, which often continues to be sold and screened for several years after its completion.¹¹

Nonetheless, we can calculate the number of completed films funded by the EP Scheme from 1998/99 to 2005/06, thus excluding any recent projects that may yet be delivered. On average, a total of nine films invested in by EPs every funding year has indeed been delivered. An exception is 2000/01, when Frame Up's additional project brought the total up to ten. Also, in 2001/02 and 2004/05, one of the films selected by an EP group was not completed, which reduced the total to eight films during those years. The incomplete projects were *Hatto* (EP: Godzone Pictures), the animation project mentioned above that Veber still expects to be delivered, and *One Moment Please* (EP: Whenua Films), which was abandoned after receiving a grant of \$102,000.¹²

Another reason that the NZFC chooses not to measure its outcome strictly in terms of completion is because it places value on the process of short filmmaking, not merely the final product. One could argue, following public choice theory, that the agency seeks to protect itself from criticism for non-delivery and ensure it continues to benefit from public funding. However, as in any creative endeavour, there is a certain level of risk in short film production, and it is foreseeable that some projects simply fail to be completed. Furthermore, it is possible to frame those failures as analogous with the objective of talent development. Along with

⁹ Veber et al., "Review," 52.

¹⁰ Veber, interview; Gildea, interview. The current and former Short Film Manager agree that animation projects are more likely than live action shorts not to be finished on time.

¹¹ Quay, *Teaching Short Films*, 61; *OnFilm*, "Beating the Drumm for Short Films," April 2001, <http://www.archivesearch.co.nz/default.aspx?webid=ONF&articleid=10> (accessed 5 December 2008).

¹² Veber et al., "Review," 66, 77. In our interview, Veber explained: '*Hatto* is a more ambitious project than the filmmakers originally realised, and it has been difficult for them to balance completing the short with running their own business.'

NZFC employees, many EPs refer to the need to allow filmmakers the space to learn from their own mistakes.¹³ Even when films do not achieve the desired results, they may still have helped the filmmaker's development. Fitzgerald (Blueskin Films, 2004-2006), for instance, asserts:

I don't think there's anybody who has made a short film with the Film Commission's money that it hasn't helped them advance their career in some way, or clarify where they want to work in the business.... Some of them might have been some fairly expensive lessons, but they've kick-started the next great film.¹⁴

This attitude is echoed in a recent *Listener* article, which suggests that, in filmmaking, 'failure can pay dividends down the line', quoting Harley's broad justification: 'it's all developmental of the industry.'¹⁵ Therefore, the solely quantitative evaluation of completion rates has limited value, as it reveals very little about the process or criteria applied to funding decisions. The figures above indicate that non-completion of short films is not a common problem for the NZFC, but they say nothing about the quality of the projects funded. The quality of funding applications, according to the EPs, depends largely on the script submitted.

EP criterion: script quality

Script quality is a determining factor in short film funding decisions. Although not every EP cites the script as their primary consideration in evaluating funding applications, for those mentioned below, it was the most important factor, and the quality of each script had a significant impact on all EP funding decisions. Frame Up Films (1999-2001) indicated in their funding guidelines that they would focus on the script, explaining their criteria in greater detail than most other EPs: 'We are looking for cinematic sensibility – that is comprehensive narrative underpinned by subtext and metaphor and an awareness of the language of cinema.'¹⁶ In their public call for applications, Godzone Pictures (2001-2003) stated, 'all we are looking for is GOOD STORIES!'¹⁷ Their guidelines elaborated that they were seeking to fund well written scripts that contained original ideas, a complex multi-layered narrative, and a clear focus on the human condition.¹⁸ Milligan summed up the proportional importance of the script in Shorts Conbrio's evaluation process: 'the script was 90 percent of it and then the director was another 7 percent of it and then everything else was the other 3 percent.'¹⁹ While the evaluation of

¹³ Fitzgerald, interview; see note 104 in previous chapter.

¹⁴ Ibid. On the issue of short film non-completion, Gildea similarly says, 'The important thing to stress is that it is a development fund... You could say it's a cheap way of finding out about people's fiscal abilities.'

¹⁵ Guy Somerset, "Lights, Camera, Action," *Listener*, 3 January 2009, 40.

¹⁶ Frame Up Films, "Short Film Fund Guidelines 1999/2000," (New Zealand Film Commission, 1999).

¹⁷ Screen Producers and Directors Association, "NZFC Short Film Fund 2001/2002," *spadaNEWS* 64, July 2001, <http://www.spada.co.nz/documents/News01-07.pdf> (accessed 8 April 2008).

¹⁸ Godzone Pictures, "Short Film Fund 2001/2002," (New Zealand Film Commission, 2001).

¹⁹ Milligan, interview.

funding applications is no exact science, these figures clearly indicate the importance of the script to the EP.

The insistence on script quality is consistent with the intention of the NZFC to support the development of talented writers, in addition to producers and directors, through the Short Film Fund.²⁰ It also reflects the unwritten rule that EPs finance narrative films in order to prepare successful applicants for fictional feature filmmaking. The NZFC tender requirements do not specify the type of short films that should be funded, other than stating that they must be 'theatrical short films', that is, films that are an appropriate length and format for cinema exhibition.²¹ However, unlike the SIPF (or IFF), EPs' support for short films is, in actuality, limited to short fiction films. Occasionally, NZFC-appointed EPs fund a film that blends elements of non-fiction with another genre, such as the Simmonds brothers' animated documentary films, *A Very Nice Honeymoon* (2006) and *Noise Control* (2008). The fund does not, however, cater for pure documentaries. This has been a source of frustration for local documentary filmmakers, and was one of the reasons for the replacement of the SIPF with the IFF.²²

The guidelines provided by EPs usually make clear their preference for fiction films; nearly every consortium in the period studied states that they intend to fund films with a strong 'story', 'narrative', or 'dramatic premise'.²³ Yeatman observes that even though there is some demand for experimental and artistic short filmmaking in New Zealand, many people who study, fund and make films believe that storytelling is as important in a short film as in a feature.²⁴ Cooper and Dancyger, along with other scholars and filmmakers, suggest that this is due to a human need for storytelling, which helps us to better understand the world in which we live as well as our own dreams and fears.²⁵ This focus on narrative films can be linked back to the predominant cultural nationalist rationale on which the NZFC was founded. The expression used by Highet, at the introduction of the NZFC Act 1978, epitomises this view: 'We need our own stories and our own heroes.'²⁶ Thus the focus on short fiction films rather than any other form is consistent with the NZFC's cultural mandate.

²⁰ New Zealand Film Commission, "Update," 1.

²¹ New Zealand Film Commission, "2006 - 2007 Tender for Short Film Executive Producer Role," (2006), 3.

²² See note 30 in Chapter Three.

²³ New Zealand Film Commission, "Short Film Fund Guidelines."

²⁴ Yeatman, "What Makes a Short Fiction Film Good?"

²⁵ Cooper and Dancyger, *Writing the Short Film*, 89; Marian Evans, "Stories that might not otherwise be told," *TAKE* 54, Autumn 2009; Raskin, *Art of the Short Fiction Film*, 173; Turner, *Film as Social Practice*, 200-201.

²⁶ Highet, cited in Shelton, *Selling of New Zealand Movies*, 25.

Analysis of the EP guidelines from 1997 to 2007 reveals shifting preferences for certain types of scripts. One guideline is constant: the quality of the script or strength of the narrative is specified among the criteria of every EP in the period studied. Occasionally ‘innovative’ or ‘imaginative’ proposals are called for, and from 2000 onwards, especially since 2004, some EPs have invited ‘challenging’ or ‘edgy’ films.²⁷ Such specific criteria do not appear in NZFC objectives or guidelines for tender groups, but are necessarily approved by the NZFC through the tender process, and reflect some of the qualities of film that were celebrated in public statements by representatives of the NZFC and MCH (see previous chapters).

Aspects such as the craft and originality of a script are intangible concepts, and qualities such as ‘imaginative’ and ‘challenging’ are inherently subjective, making short film policy implementation difficult to evaluate. The NZFC makes no attempt to discuss or dictate short film outcomes in aesthetic terms. In his analysis of the use of vague and abstract rhetoric in cultural policy, Hugoson asserts, ‘The welfare state quite simply is not meant to give support based on aesthetic judgement’.²⁸ Dermody and Jacka observe that the Australian Film Commission (AFC) does not review the style or content of the films it funds either, due to an ‘apparent fear of aesthetics ... and some fear of creative interference of a government fettering individual creative inspiration.’²⁹ They find, however, that the policies and practices of public film funding caused the emergence of an ‘AFC genre’, which combined ‘aesthetic and political-cultural influences from a foreign-dominant film culture’ with the values of Australian nationalism.³⁰ The reluctance of the NZFC to evaluate creative decisions in terms of aesthetic influences is likely to be a strategic decision, yet it ignores the potential contribution of short films to the development of cinematic techniques, the circulation of ideas and identities in the cultural public sphere, and the representation of New Zealand to local and overseas audiences. These issues will be explored further in the following chapter, while an assessment of script quality is detailed below.³¹

²⁷ New Zealand Film Commission, "Short Film Fund Guidelines."

²⁸ Hugoson, "Rhetoric of Abstract Goals," 331.

²⁹ Dermody and Jacka, *Anatomy of a Film Industry*, 73.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 89-92, 156. See note 7 in the next chapter.

³¹ For the purpose of this analysis, I assume that the completed film accurately reflects the final script used for shooting, unless research indicates otherwise. In most cases, the script submitted as part of the initial funding application was subjected to a process of rewriting. The final selection of projects was then based on a revised script from each shortlisted project, which became the blueprint for production and post production.

The role of the EP in script development is worth considering, as this is an essential stage in the creation of many, though not all, short films. Quay observes that during development short films are often ‘reworked and repositioned to meet the demands of possible investors.’³² It is hence at the script revision stage that a funding policy may have the most effect. Many EPs consider overseeing development to be one of the responsibilities of holding the Short Film Fund contract. Several EPs told the NZFC in August 2007:

Script development is a critical path in the learning process of making a film but it is not necessarily emphasised within the short film funding model. This was felt to be a critical success factor both in the quality of the shorts themselves as well as in instilling the understanding of script development in future feature filmmakers.³³

This concern for script revision corresponds with the NZFC policy on development in feature filmmaking.³⁴

Yeatman suggests that a proactive approach to calling for applications and helping develop projects distinguishes the EP Scheme from the more formal and distanced funding process of the previous Short Film Fund Committee.³⁵ Bancroft and Beachman saw it as part of their role as EPs to put their shortlisted projects through an extensive process of script revision in order to better prepare filmmakers for the reality of feature film development.³⁶ Bancroft explains that the film *Nature's Way* (Jane Shearer, 2006) offers ‘a really good example of our process’: although he and Beachman thought co-writers Shearer and Steve Ayson had submitted a very good first draft, they gave the pair some ‘really staunch feedback’, encouraging them ‘to see the story in another light, and [discover] something else that was stronger and better that they wanted to tell.’³⁷ Shearer confirms that the feedback from Short Intercept helped the writers to transform the script from ‘a dark fairy tale’ into ‘a psychological fantasy horror’:

We had a month to re-write and took into account the comments from [Short] Intercept. We developed a more real character in the murderer and based the whole story around him. The result was we wrote a far better film script.³⁸

Short Intercept reported to the NZFC that the successful reception of *Nature's Way*, as well as their other short films, *Run* and *Fog*, proved the value of script development.³⁹ Milligan reveals

³² Quay, *Teaching Short Films*, 58.

³³ Veber et al., "Review," 19. See note 53 in Chapter Three.

³⁴ Joyce, "In Development"; Newman, "Regions and Runaways"

³⁵ Yeatman, "Policy and Practice", 172-181. All the EP groups in 1997/98 – MAP, Morrison Grieve and BPS – emphasised the importance of dialogue with applicants and assisting in development.

³⁶ Bancroft says, ‘one of our jobs was to prepare people to make feature films, and that really means prepare people for development with the occasional opportunity to actually make the film.’ In Grant, "Long and the Short".

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Shearer, cited in *OnFilm*, "Natural Progression," August 2006.

³⁹ Veber et al., "Review," 19-20. After screening in competition at Cannes, Melbourne and London, *Nature's Way* was voted Best Short Film at international film festival Paris Cinema (2007) and at the Air New Zealand Screen Awards (2006).

that Shorts Conbrio even provided script advice to some Maori filmmakers with shortlisted projects that the EPs did not expect to select for funding.⁴⁰

Occasionally, EPs do not encourage script development, though. In 2003/04, Method Films requested applicants send nothing less than ‘a finished and polished screenplay ready for production’.⁴¹ While one of the films they funded, *Nothing Special* (Helena Brooks, 2004), was selected to compete at the Festival de Cannes, the filmmakers might have benefited from a more rigorous development process. The film was initially rejected funding on its first application to Pickpocket Films, but Alexander gave co-writers Brooks and Jaquie Brown some useful advice, which encouraged them to rewrite the script and then submit it to another EP the following year.⁴² Brooks believes the script should have been revised further, however, as problems arose at the post production stage when it became apparent that there were flaws in the story.⁴³ Brooks and Editor Margo Francis nevertheless managed to overcome these issues by cutting out three scenes and re-ordering others, producing a film that would eventually find both international and local success.⁴⁴

Another successful short film from the sample studied that did not undergo script development is *This is Her*. ‘The script arrived fully formed, written in an evening by [Wolfe’s] *Shortland Street* colleague Kate McDermott,’ writes Diana Wichtel; ‘You have to wonder whether part of the film’s success was that it escaped the endless reworking that so often happens.’⁴⁵ Wolfe agrees that film scripts can be ruined by an overdose of input from ‘too many arbiters of taste’.⁴⁶ In this case, it was not EP policy to skip the development phase. Indeed, one of the goals of Shorts Conbrio, as expressed above, was to offer shortlisted projects advice on scripting. In the case of *This is Her*, however, there was no perceived need to revise the script, which came from an experienced television writer. The film’s success has subsequently proven

⁴⁰ Milligan, interview: ‘All of us worked very specifically with a number of Maori filmmakers who were shortlisted, some of them specifically for that purpose, because we knew we weren’t going to fund them but we wanted to be able to give them some input. We could see that they were quite early in their career and they were worth supporting, in terms of specific information.’ Supporting Maori filmmakers was one of Shorts Conbrio’s objectives. New Zealand Film Commission, “Short Film Fund Guidelines.”

⁴¹ Method Films, “Short Film Fund Guidelines 2003/04,” (New Zealand Film Commission, 2003).

⁴² *New Zealand Herald*, “Crazy New Zealand Offering for Cannes,” 23 April 2005; Helena Brooks, Interview with the author, Cannes, 16 May 2005.

⁴³ Brooks, interview.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* Francis was assisted by Doug Dillaman and Jochen Fitzherbert. In addition to Cannes, *Nothing Special* screened at two other ‘A’ list festivals and at least five other international festivals, as well as in the MIC Homegrown programme at the New Zealand Film Festivals. In 2007, it was voted most popular film at the Openair Short Film Festival at the Auckland Festival AK07, beating classic New Zealand short films *Lounge Bar* (Don McGlashan, 1988) and *Lemming Aid* (Grant Lahood, 1994).

⁴⁵ Diana Wichtel, “This is Her,” *NZ Listener*, February 21-27, 2009.

⁴⁶ Wolfe, cited in *Ibid.*

the high quality of the script.⁴⁷ Bancroft and Beachman suggest that the need for development is more pronounced when scripts are submitted by writer-directors whose experience has mostly been in an image-based industry such as advertising. Bancroft explains:

it's a huge leap for someone who is an expert at manipulating literal and visible designs to start thinking in terms of the invisibility of a story, the invisibility of something that happens inside a character and inside an audience.⁴⁸

Filmmakers who intend to explore cinematic language in their short film might not benefit from writing a complete script before starting filming. In the United Kingdom, there is concern over an 'obsession' with short film scripts, as expressed by British funding executive Maggie Ellis: 'It can be over-bureaucratic to demand a full script as part of the commissioning process.'⁴⁹ Local filmmaker Patrick Gillies, who unsuccessfully submitted his short film *Kitty* (2002) to several EPs, thinks the NZFC might place too much emphasis on script quality.⁵⁰ *Kitty* was eventually allocated finance through the SIPF and, once completed, screened at various international and domestic festivals, before being broadcast internationally on cable, satellite and free-to-air television. Gillies believes the project was turned down by NZFC EPs due to the lack of dialogue in the script.⁵¹ Five out of the sixteen films in my sample contain no dialogue, though, so it is clear that NZFC tender groups do fund films that rely on non-verbal communication.

How do funding executives and producers decide if a short film script is good? While they are all guided by their published criteria, EPs do not apply an exact formula in their appraisal of script quality. When asked about script evaluation, EPs often talk about the 'X-factor', or use abstract concepts such as the need for a script to "'grab" the reader' or 'jump out and say "make me"'.⁵² As Fitzgerald avows, this judgement is unquantifiable and unpredictable: 'There is always this element of intuition, luck, timing, zeitgeist.'⁵³ Industry-based and academic researchers agree that it is almost impossible to predict whether a film will gain critical or

⁴⁷ Obviously, there are also other reasons for the film's success, but it is unlikely that *This is Her* would have been selected for A-list festivals and voted Best Short Film at the Prague and St Tropez festivals if its script was poor. In fact, it was one of three films nominated for 'Best Screenplay for a Short Film' in the 2008 Qantas Film and Television Awards.

⁴⁸ Grant, "Long and the Short."

⁴⁹ Ellis was Commissioner of the London Film and Video Development Agency in 2001. Cited in Elsey and Kelly, 122

⁵⁰ Screen Council, "Kitty Case Study."

⁵¹ Gillies says, 'I think the reason it wasn't successful was the script; it's a hyperbolic vignette - relying heavily on visual humour - so it didn't come across very well on the scripted page.' Cited in Ibid.

⁵² Morrison and Pardington, cited in Yeatman, "Policy and Practice", 177-178; Fitzgerald, interview; Trevor Haysom, Letter to the NZFC, 25 May 1999.

⁵³ Fitzgerald, interview.

popular acclaim.⁵⁴ Furthermore, as Yeatman has noted, the answer to the question ‘what makes a short film good?’ depends on the context and on the role short film plays in the life of the respondent.⁵⁵ Ultimately, the selection of a script for funding is based on personal taste.⁵⁶

Nonetheless, extrapolating key characteristics from my interviews and from written texts on short film production, it is possible to highlight the features of a good short screenplay. The first is simplicity. Patricia Cooper and Ken Dancyger write: ‘The simplicity lies in the restricted number of characters, often no more than three or four, and the level of plotting, which is usually a simple story.’⁵⁷ Milligan describes this as the ‘right size story’, pointing out that new writers and directors often struggle to achieve this economy of style as ‘they tend to want to cram everything in’ to prove all that they are capable of doing.⁵⁸ Maclean and Linda Cowgill agree that ‘keeping it simple’ should be one of the main goals of novice short filmmakers.⁵⁹ One way of achieving this is by capturing a moment, and writing what can be called an ‘extended vignette’.⁶⁰ As Cooper and Dancyger advise, the best short film scripts do not convey a complicated plot but, rather, offer ‘a glimpse of someone at a particular - very likely pivotal - moment in his or her life’.⁶¹ An excellent example of this is *Two Cars, One Night*, which hones in on a random but memorable meeting between two children who are waiting in parked cars for their parents to leave the pub.

Other characteristics of a good short screenplay include its treatment of emotions and use of visual images to tell the story. Films written ‘from the heart’, that connect with audiences, and ‘touch the soul’ are sought by some EPs.⁶² Scholars interested in short film agree that, ‘the best shorts have a resonance that lingers with the audience long after viewing.’⁶³ Several EPs emphasise a visual rather than dramatic form of storytelling, which can draw attention away from the script to the director’s ‘vision’.⁶⁴ Until 2004/05, the majority of EPs required only a script and the director’s and producer’s curriculum vitae in the initial submission. Since then,

⁵⁴ Pinfold et al., "Capability Study," 9-10; David Hesmondhalgh, *The Cultural Industries*, 2nd ed. (London: Sage, 2007), 19.

⁵⁵ Yeatman, "What Makes a Short Fiction Film Good?"

⁵⁶ Cole-Baker, "Short Film," 52; Fitzgerald, interview. For an interesting discussion of the influences on and evaluation of personal tastes pertaining to arts funding decisions, see David E W Fenner, "Is One Taste Better than Another? A Case for Aesthetic Realism," *Journal of Arts Management, Law & Society* 28, no. 4 (1999).

⁵⁷ Cooper and Dancyger, *Writing the Short Film*, 5.

⁵⁸ Milligan, interview. See also note 22 in Chapter One.

⁵⁹ Richard Raskin, "Interview with Alison Maclean,"; Cowgill, *Writing Short Films*, 15.

⁶⁰ 'Worksheet 10: Narratives and Plotlines', in Quy, *Teaching Short Films*.

⁶¹ Cooper and Dancyger, *Writing the Short Film*, 9.

⁶² Milligan, interview; Fitzgerald, interview.

⁶³ Elsey and Kelly, *In Short*, 4. See also Cowgill, *Writing Short Films*, 7.

⁶⁴ Bancroft, in Yeatman, "Policy and Practice", 190.

all EPs have given the option of including director's notes or a treatment in an application, with Nomadz Unlimited and Reservoir Films (2006-2008) stipulating that applicants send in documents outlining the director's vision and intentions.⁶⁵ This guideline reinforces the centrality of the director, as discussed in the previous chapter.

For some producers, a character-driven narrative is essential. Only three EPs in my sample specified the importance of characterisation in their guidelines, though. Morrison Grieve (1997/98) expressed an interest in scripts with 'strong stories and compelling characters'; Shorts Conbrio indicated a preference for 'a film that gets under the skin of its characters'; and Whenua Films included in their criteria: 'Narrative or character driven stories'.⁶⁶ These production groups did not necessarily select films with strong characters, though. The first, Morrison Grieve, funded the digital animation *Infection* (James Cunningham, 1998), which has a strong narrative but no developed characters: the protagonist in *Infection* is a computer virus that takes the form of a mutant hand. The selected films from Shorts Conbrio (*This is Her*) and Whenua Films (*Shadow Over the Sun*) are character focused, though. Interestingly, the narrative in both is driven by a woman whose experience of motherhood is central to the story. These represent two of the three films in the sample studied which have a female protagonist.⁶⁷ The narrator of *This is Her*, Evie, has a strong voice, which sets the film's distinctively cynical tone, while the silent young mother in *Shadow Over the Sun* (Rachel Douglas, 2007) is difficult to identify or empathise with, making the former film much more compelling than the latter. This offers a partial explanation for the different levels of success of these films.⁶⁸

While innovation is a criterion more relevant to the CNZ-administered fund than the NZFC Short Film Fund, it occasionally appears in EP guidelines. Morrison Grieve, Pickpocket and THE (1998-2000) all use the term 'innovative' in their criteria, while Swad Saunders (2000-2002) seek 'original and fresh scripts', Method want 'original and creative' films, and Short Intercept are interested in projects with a 'visionary form and/or theme'.⁶⁹ The requirement that films be 'original' is increasingly common. Specifying these ideal characteristics of films does not necessarily mean that all submissions embody them, however. Trevor Haysom (THE)

⁶⁵ New Zealand Film Commission, "Short Film Fund Guidelines."

⁶⁶ Ibid. See also Yeatman, "Policy and Practice", 177-178.

⁶⁷ The only other film out of the 16 studied with a female protagonist was *Trust Me* (Virginia Pitts, 2000), whose central character is a pre-pubescent girl.

⁶⁸ Other factors which account for the success of *This is Her* are discussed later in this chapter. In addition to the characterisation, narrative and tone, the cinematography and editing in Wolfe's film are also a superior quality to those in *Shadow Over the Sun*.

⁶⁹ New Zealand Film Commission, "Short Film Fund Guidelines."

expressed his disappointment at the 'number of more conventional narratives offered by the filmmaking community', stating in 1999: 'Surprisingly, originality and innovation or the "X" factor has been lacking in many of the 95 scripts received to date.'⁷⁰ Haysom was pleased to fund *Te Po Uriuri* (Toby Mills, 2001), which is an innovative adaptation of a Shakespearean sonnet to a traditional Maori setting.⁷¹

For most EPs, the potential audience of the film is an important consideration. The majority of tender groups include the goal of reaching a target audience in their funding criteria. 'We talk about audience a lot,' observes Milligan when revisiting Short Conbrio's tender applications and guidelines, suggesting that audiences want to be entertained, in the broadest sense of the word, which can mean challenging viewers or making them laugh or cry.⁷² Bancroft explains the audience focus:

the purpose of being EPs is not to make films you'd personally like to see, the purpose is to recognise projects that have an audience, to recognise what that audience is, and to help the filmmakers engage with that particular audience in the most effective way.⁷³

Like other EPs, Short Intercept acknowledge the crowded nature of the short film marketplace, and underline the importance of a film having an original voice or an 'edge' that makes it stand out.⁷⁴ This does not mean that genre films are discouraged. On the contrary, genre helps filmmakers to shape and to understand audience expectations. As Bancroft points out, his consortium was willing to fund films that reinterpreted or advanced their genre in a way that was likely to interest viewers: 'the key to genre films [is that] you need to be really smart so it's less likely to disappear in the morass of genre filmmaking that drowns the world.'⁷⁵ These comments distinguish NZFC-funded film from experimental cinema, which is less concerned with appealing to an audience.⁷⁶

⁷⁰ Haysom, letter.

⁷¹ Interestingly, the year after its release, the first Maori language feature film, also based on a translation of Shakespeare, was completed: *Te Tangata Whai Rawa O Wenei/The Maori Merchant of Venice* (Don Selwyn, 2002). Apart from their literary source and the contribution of Guy Moana as Production Designer on both films, however, the productions have little in common. Selwyn had directed the Maori translation of *The Merchant of Venice* as a stage play in 1990 before spending ten years seeking funding to turn it into a film, so it cannot be argued that *Te Po Uriuri* was the inspiration for the feature. "The Production," He Taonga Films, http://homepages.ihug.co.nz/~hetaonga/merchant/the_production.html (accessed 26 May 2009).

⁷² Milligan, interview.

⁷³ Bancroft, cited in, Grant, "Long and the Short of it II", 29.

⁷⁴ Ibid. See also Big House, in New Zealand Film Commission, "Short Film Fund 2001/02."

⁷⁵ Grant, "Long and the Short of it II," 29.

⁷⁶ Horrocks, "Experimental Filmmaking," 57-58; Shepard, *Reframing Women*, 126.

EP criterion: experience and potential of the creative team

In addition to the script and audience considerations, the skills and experience of the creative team are a determining factor in the NZFC short film funding process. According to an Industry New Zealand (INZ) report, the focus on prior experience is a logical requirement of investors in a project-based industry that depends on human creativity: 'The individual track records of the people seeking the funding are likely to be important quality signals from the viewpoint of those providing the risk capital.'⁷⁷ Given the framing of the Short Film Fund as a director talent development programme, the director's CV can be the key determinant of a successful application. The NZFC tender requirements do not provide instructions as to how EPs should implement this strategy, other than to say:

The directors for the short films selected will be expected to have already made, at the very least, one substantial film as evidence of their potential, and to be focussed on what they believe will best assist, demonstrate and develop their filmmaking talent.⁷⁸

Cole-Baker suggests that before the EP Scheme was established, the NZFC Short Film Fund catered for experienced filmmakers only. Whereas previously filmmakers were often required to demonstrate their capability by making a SIPF-financed film, the emphasis on short film as a 'stepping stone' has led to younger filmmakers being supported.⁷⁹ NZFC data does not reveal any trends over time but does show that approximately two thirds of filmmakers are aged between 24 and 35 years when they first receive funding from an NZFC EP. While 34 per cent are under 30 years old, only 17 per cent are over 40 years old.⁸⁰ Indeed, Alexander admits that, as Pickpocket Films, she decided not to fund a project with an excellent script on the grounds that it was submitted by an experienced filmmaker.⁸¹ Conversely, some EPs, such as Short Intercept, prefer funding experienced directors who have a greater chance of gaining critical acclaim.

There is no mention of particular expectations of the producer or writer, or any other key roles, in NZFC policy documents. In their guidelines, however, especially in recent years, EPs often

⁷⁷ Pinfold et al., "Capability Study," iv.

⁷⁸ New Zealand Film Commission, "Tender for Talent Development" and "Tender for Short Film Executive Producer Role."

⁷⁹ Cole-Baker, "Short Film," 54-55. See also: Elsey and Kelly, *In Short*, 124; Watson, "Effect of Funding Policies," 129-130.

⁸⁰ Veber et al., "Review," 48.

⁸¹ In our interview, Alexander explained that she wanted to select applicants who had never previously received NZFC funding. 'I loathe and heartily disapprove of the idea that you can get \$100,000 three times in a row,' she asserted, adding that she chose not to fund the film that she 'liked the best' because it came from a director who had already made a successful feature film.

focus on the skills or motivation of the producer. Since 2003/04, all EP guidelines have included the requirement that producers have the appropriate skills and experience to deliver a quality film. Little Jab Pictures (2002-2004) specify the need for an experienced producer with market knowledge; Blueskin Films highlight the value of a producer who marries creative and financial management skills; and Method Films indicate that significant filmmaking experience for the producer would consist of 'at least one significant short film and/or considerable work in a field such as television drama or advertising'.⁸² Other EPs are vaguer, signalling merely that applicants (usually the producer, but sometimes the director) demonstrate filmmaking skills, experience and/or potential.

A significant function of the EP is fostering good relationships among the creative team. Milligan suggests the development of teams is an inherent requirement of Short Film Fund tender holders.⁸³ The 2007 Review examined 'team building' as an objective and found that although a quarter of the respondents to its survey 'had not worked together again with one or more of the creative team,' 75 per cent of its sample had collaborated on another project.⁸⁴ It concluded: 'Functional partnerships which appear to withstand the rigors of the filmmaking process are clearly being established through short film production.'⁸⁵ Fitzgerald explains that creative partnerships are essential in a small, independent film industry, and agrees that short films are a good way of testing working relationships.⁸⁶ Team-building is therefore often one of the EP's goals. Many EPs encourage applications from new teams, and some welcome submissions without a director or producer attached, occasionally indicating their willingness to help form teams where necessary. Generally, EPs indicate that developing strong director/producer teams with the potential to make feature films together is an important objective of the NZFC fund. This is epitomised in Matthew Metcalfe and Jesse Warn's guidelines: 'Method Films believes strongly in the benefits and necessity of strong director/producer teams that are committed to a feature film career.'⁸⁷ Ironically, *Nothing Special*, the film they funded in the sample studied, did not meet this objective. The producer and one of the executive producers left the project before it was completed, and none of the creative team has worked together again. Brooks continues to work in television advertising;

⁸² New Zealand Film Commission, "Short Film Fund Guidelines."

⁸³ Milligan, interview.

⁸⁴ Veber et al., "Review," 51.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Fitzgerald, interview. Joyce agrees, emphasising the relationship between the writer and the director, in "In Development", 273.

⁸⁷ New Zealand Film Commission, "Short Film Fund Guidelines."

she has not progressed to feature film production, or even development with the NZFC, and is now based in the United Kingdom.⁸⁸

A better example of the ideal short film relationship is that forged in 2003 between Waititi and Gardiner, both of whom were in their late twenties at the time. While Gardiner already had significant experience as a film and television producer, *Two Cars, One Night* was Waititi's first film as director, and the pair's first project together.⁸⁹ They fulfilled the same roles on a second NZFC-funded short film, *Tama Tu* (2004), when they were also joined by high profile film actor Curtis, who that year established production company Aio Films (now Whenua Films) with Gardiner. As Whenua Films, cousins Gardiner and Curtis produced Waititi's first feature, *Eagle vs Shark*, and are now producing his second feature, *The Volcano*, which is based roughly on *Two Cars, One Night*.⁹⁰ The pair also managed a NZFC Short Film Fund contract between 2004 and 2006. The 2007 Review praised this partnership for releasing *Tama Tu* immediately following the success of *Two Cars, One Night*, and following up both films with ideas for features ready for development: 'Whenua Films provides a good example of a producer and director team who have not only made well realised films, but who have a deliberate business strategy.'⁹¹

Industry reports often note the importance of interpersonal networks and skills development in the screen production sector. A capability study commissioned by INZ, for instance, finds that the local screen production industry suffers from a skills shortage, lack of practical training and lack of investment in research and development.⁹² The report's authors highlight the importance of talent development, particularly in filmmaking: 'Successful talent teams are the basis of a successful film industry, and working occasionally does not give opportunities to build on shared knowledge, skills and success.'⁹³ They suggest that emerging talent needs encouragement from government agencies and established operators to build their contacts and

⁸⁸ Emma Blomkamp, "Nothing Special, Really," *The Lumiere Reader*, 15 June 2005, <http://www.lumiere.net.nz/reader/item/82> (accessed 10 April 2009). Flying Fish, "Helena Brooks," <http://www.flyingfish.co.nz/newsite/index.php> (accessed 3 June 2009). Alicia Hamilton, "Something Special about Nothingness," *Mindfood*, 26 September 2008, <http://www.mindfood.com/at-helena-brooks-nothing-special-short-film-kea.seo> (accessed 1 July 2009). Brooks says she is still working on a feature film script, though.

⁸⁹ Waititi had nonetheless established a reputation for himself as an actor and comedian, and had exhibited paintings and photographs. Alexander explains that she considered Waititi's combination of visual media skills and experience with actors on a film set to be relevant skills in her evaluation of his application. Fitzgerald was also a co-producer on this project, but, as she explains, 'the core relationship' was between Gardiner and Waititi.

⁹⁰ New Zealand Film Commission, "The Volcano Finds Transmission," 2 February (2009), <http://wellington.scoop.co.nz/?p=1022> (accessed 27 April 2009).

⁹¹ Veber et al., "Review," 18, 74-75.

⁹² Pinfold et al., "Capability Study," 24-27.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 56.

develop collaborative relationships, but they never mention short film as a potential means of achieving these goals.⁹⁴ Similar reports by CANZ and the SPIT also highlight the need to develop human capability and nurture current and future 'talent' but completely overlook short film as a site for skills development, (re-)training and talent identification.⁹⁵

NZFC goal: transition from short to feature filmmaking

The all important transition from short to feature films is a key target examined in the 2007 Review, which also acknowledges the challenge this represents for the majority of filmmakers. Veber reveals that the Review was undertaken at the request of the MCH who wished 'to determine whether successful shorts did in fact lead to successful features.'⁹⁶ The 2007 report refers to the two measurable targets for the short film programme identified in NZFC's Strategic Plan: the number of films invested in and 'a 25% transition of key creatives from shorts to cinema feature project development.'⁹⁷ The double bind embodied by this objective was acknowledged when the EP Scheme was set up:

The NZFC remains committed to providing finance for short film making because short films do offer one kind of opportunity for film makers to display and explore their talent on the big screen. It does recognise, however, that theatrical short films (especially those under 15 minutes) by themselves do not provide all the skills and experience required to prepare film makers for making feature films.⁹⁸

The problematic 'shortfall between shorts and features' is also discussed by Bancroft and Beachman, who acknowledge the different skills required in short and feature filmmaking, but who suggest short film production is nonetheless an essential step in a New Zealand filmmaker's career.⁹⁹ At the meeting organised as part of the 2007 Review, EPs suggested there was a need to manage filmmakers' expectations, as too many directors assume they will move into feature filmmaking on completion of their short film: 'In reality the number of filmmakers capable of making a feature is going to be small.'¹⁰⁰ While 36 per cent of filmmakers who delivered a short film with NZFC production or post production finance between 1997 and 2007 have since worked as a key creative on a feature film or accessed NZFC development funding, only 10.6 per cent of the NZFC-supported short filmmakers have

⁹⁴ Ibid., 7.

⁹⁵ Jones et al., "NZfilm."; Screen Production Industry Taskforce, "Taking on the World," 57-62.

⁹⁶ Veber, interview.

⁹⁷ Veber et al., "Review," 42.

⁹⁸ New Zealand Film Commission, "Discussion Paper." This is discussed extensively in Yeatman, "Policy and Practice".

⁹⁹ Grant, "Long and the Short of it II," 28-29.

¹⁰⁰ Veber et al., "Review," 20.

been credited as writer, producer or director on a feature film.¹⁰¹ This figure is higher for directors and producers whose short films screened in an 'A' list festival, which represents half of the 73 short films completed in the decade studied.¹⁰² Fifty-two percent of these 'successful' directors and sixty-five percent of the producers accessed feature development and/or production funding from the NZFC, with 17 per cent of these filmmakers actually making a feature with NZFC funding.¹⁰³

These figures reveal that one in four short filmmakers who receives NZFC EP finance will also receive funding to develop a feature film, but the analysts of this data do not consider whether these filmmakers are more or less likely than others, who have not made NZFC-funded short films, to succeed in producing and completing their feature film. The fact that the majority of filmmakers who have benefited from NZFC short film finance have not progressed to feature film development or production does not seem to concern the authors of the Review. They acknowledge that significant hurdles obstruct the transition from short to feature filmmaking, a point that was also made during the 1997 review of the Short Film Fund: 'There remains a need, however, for opportunities to make longer films targeted at a defined audience.'¹⁰⁴ In 2007, the Review authors surmise that the statistics detailed above are 'reasonable figure[s] based on the informal industry standard of a ratio of 1:10 projects in development going into production.'¹⁰⁵ Alexander is sceptical about the use of development financing as a benchmark for the transition from short to feature filmmaking, arguing that 'the fact that we offer [short filmmakers] development funding to get a feature up is completely meaningless if those people go nowhere.'¹⁰⁶ She decries the lack of critical analysis in the 2007 Review: 'It's not a document that really sets out to explore the question of "how effectively has this worked?" It's a KPI, box-ticking exercise.'¹⁰⁷ Alexander suggests that a closer examination is needed of the skills and experience required to make feature films, arguing that 'the most successful directors to transition from shorts' are strong writers who already work as directors of television commercials or drama.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 10.

¹⁰² Ibid., 4.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 11.

¹⁰⁴ New Zealand Film Commission, "Discussion Paper," 4.

¹⁰⁵ Veber et al., "Review," 11, 17. Newman confirms that the rate of one feature in every ten developed going into production is similar to international standards, in "Regions and Runaways," 22.

¹⁰⁶ Alexander, interview.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

In my sample, eleven out of sixteen directors had previous experience as short film and/or television commercial (TVC) directors. Every director whose film was selected for 'A' list festivals had screen production experience: three had made short films that they had either self-funded or directed while overseas (Cunningham, Pitts and Shearer); three had directed TVCs (Burger, Stevens and Brooks); and one had directed television drama (Wolfe). The only 'successful' director without any previous directing experience was Waititi, who had nonetheless won acclaim as a film actor, stand-up comedian and visual artist.¹⁰⁹ Interestingly, few of the producers of films selected for 'A' list festivals had produced a professional short film previously, although Paul Swadel had directed short films as well as TVCs. Fifty percent of the 'successful' short film producers had already produced a feature film with NZFC finance, though (Gardiner, James Wallace, Steve Sachs, and Leanne Saunders). The others all had production experience in TVCs (Mark Foster) or film and television (Felicity Letcher and Fitzgerald).

Previous short film production experience – including publicly-financed short films – was no guarantee of festival success. Two of the films' producers had made a SIPF-financed film (Laina Cheung and Jeff and Phill Simmonds) and one director had already made another NZFC-financed short film (Brian Challis), but their films in my sample were not selected for 'A' list festivals. Similarly, two directors, who had made SIPF-funded films (Douglas and Lala Rolls) did not release 'successful' NZFC short films. Regardless of festival selection, the small number of filmmakers who had received SIPF finance before NZFC funding (two directors, one producer and one pair of writer/director/producers out of a total of thirty-four individuals with credits as director and/or producer) suggests a weak correlation between the two funds. CNZ funding can therefore no longer be considered a 'stepping stone' to the NZFC Short Film Fund.¹¹⁰

As a form of industry support, the Short Film Fund also aims to support EPs who have the potential to become feature film producers. According to David Gascoigne, the biggest challenge facing the film industry is the need for more experienced producers.¹¹¹ Petrie agrees about the importance of producers, as he believes the 'creative and commercial quality' of New Zealand films has been achieved not only by talented directors but by way of collaborative

¹⁰⁹ See note 89 above.

¹¹⁰ In the mid 1990s, it was believed that having completed a film with Arts Council funding improved a filmmaker's chances of a successful application to the NZFC Short Film Fund Committee. Watson, "Effect of Funding Policies," 129-130. See also Cole-Baker, "Short Film."

¹¹¹ Gascoigne, "Film Funds 1 & 2."

alignments between the NZFC and the independent producers who ‘nurture talent and projects to fruition’.¹¹² The EP Scheme presents an opportunity to promote producers. In his 1996 article, Waller notes: ‘The NZFC also came to conceive of (and to rationalize?) the Short Film Fund as a way of economically supporting the industry at large by “maintaining production activity for independent producers”.’¹¹³ The scheme not only provides EPs with professional development and networking opportunities, but pays them an annual fee of \$30,000 for their assessments of proposals and close monitoring of the production and delivery of the films. Sometimes this helps to cover EPs’ company overheads while they develop feature films.¹¹⁴ As Milligan points out, however, the EP’s job does not finish at the end of the contracted period, and, especially for a consortium with three executive producers, the fee does not go far when spread between several people over two to three years.¹¹⁵ Fitzgerald and Milligan reveal that opportunities to build relationships with filmmakers and the NZFC were more important motivations for them to become EPs than the financial reward.¹¹⁶ The INZ Capability Study notes that an important issue for the NZFC ‘is how to integrate and empower producers to take risks; something which is very difficult to do when they are living on the dole, or holding a struggling production company together.’¹¹⁷ Currently, members of the NZFC may realise that the EP Scheme helps to achieve this goal, but they do not express this function in any official documentation.

NZFC goal: support Maori filmmakers

Although there is no statutory requirement that the filmmakers benefiting from funding represent a diverse range of New Zealanders, the NZFC pays close attention to the level of support offered to Maori filmmakers. The group mentioned earlier as the ideal short film partnership thus fulfils another objective of the NZFC: the development of talented Maori filmmakers. Gardiner is of Te-Whanau-a-Apanui, Ngati Pikia and Ngati Awa descent; Curtis is Ngati Hauiti and Te Arawa; and Waititi is Te-Whanau-a-Apanui descent. Waititi undeniably has great talent as a cinematic storyteller, and *Two Cars, One Night* was selected for funding not to meet any goals of tokenistic representation but because it was an original and viable idea

¹¹² Petrie, "Coming of Age of a National Cinema," 17. Petrie also champions the important work of the cinematographer, in *Shot in New Zealand: The Art and Craft of the Kiwi Cinematographer*.

¹¹³ Waller, "New Zealand Film Commission," 254.

¹¹⁴ Fitzgerald, interview.

¹¹⁵ Milligan, interview. As Appendix 5 shows, very few short films are completed within the EP’s contracted funding year.

¹¹⁶ Fitzgerald, interview; Milligan, interview.

¹¹⁷ Pinfold et al., "Capability Study."

for a short film, with an excellent script, and its creative team possessed the appropriate skills and experience to realise the project. Nonetheless, Waititi's ethnicity may have helped to propel his successful transition into feature filmmaking. Waititi's indigenous genealogy brought him to the attention of Bird Runningwater, Director of the 'Native Program' at the Sundance Institute, who invited the first-time filmmaker to participate in the Institute's Screenwriters/Directors Lab and encouraged Academy members to watch his film, thus supporting its nomination for an Academy Award in 2005.¹¹⁸ *Two Cars, One Night* won several 'Best Film' awards at various international festivals and may have been nominated for an Oscar regardless of Runningwater's support, but Waititi nonetheless describes his experience at the Sundance Institute's Lab as 'invaluable'.¹¹⁹ Although Waititi is adamant that he will not be pigeon-holed as a 'Maori filmmaker', he has benefited from opportunities available to him due to his ethnicity.¹²⁰ Aaron Lister claims that Waititi strategically uses his cultural identity without ever 'slip[ping] into providing the slice of cultural exotica or sentimentalism that shadows the depiction of Maori in film, art and literature.'¹²¹ These observations offer further support for the NZFC claim, mentioned earlier, that Gardiner and Waititi have effectively taken a strategic approach to their filmmaking partnership.

There are three other films in my sample with Maori directors: *Te Po Uriuri*, *This is Her* and *Turangawaewae* (Peter Burger, 2003). Apart from *This is Her*, these films all feature Maori characters and narrate culturally specific stories. As outlined in the previous chapter, the NZFC's emphasis on the contribution of Maori filmmaking to its national identity mandate became increasingly explicit in the late 1990s. Accordingly, the second performance measure of 'quality' in short film production was modified in 1999 from '*the annual business plans of the Executive Producers*' to '*the annual business plans of the Executive Producers, which will be assessed according to published criteria, including responsiveness to Maori filmmakers*'.¹²² That year, all Short Film EPs included the goal of encouraging Maori filmmaking talent in their

¹¹⁸ Beaudry, Chen, and Smith, "Short Film Research Study"; Peter Griffin, "Disney's Kiwi Misfits," *Idealog* 11 (2007), <http://idealog.co.nz/magazine/september-october-2007/features/disneys-kiwi-misfits> (accessed 13 April 2009).

¹¹⁹ Waititi, cited in Stella Papamichael, "Taika Waititi on Eagle vs Shark," *Film Network* (2007), <http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/filmnetwork/A25613516> (accessed 3 February 2009); Griffin, "Disney's Kiwi Misfits"; *New Zealand Herald*, "The Many Faces of Taika," 10 August 2007. It was at the Sundance Lab that Waititi workshopped scenes from his first draft of *Eagle vs Shark*, which enabled him to polish the script, notably helping him to shape the story from a drama into a comedy and 'find the right offbeat tone for the film.'

¹²⁰ Waititi states, 'I don't ever want to be seen as a Maori artist. I'd rather be an artist who just happens to be Maori – and not like my art must always, and necessarily, reflect being a Maori.' In Campbell, "Taika Waititi." The NZFC also offered Gardiner an additional travel grant that she would not have received if not for the agency's rationale of supporting Maori filmmaking. Pitts, "Cross-Cultural Filmmaking", 174.

¹²¹ Lister, "Two Artists, One Car," 47.

¹²² New Zealand Film Commission, "Reports" (1999; 2000), 45. (Original in italics.)

guidelines.¹²³ There was not such an explicit focus on Maori filmmakers in subsequent years, although some EP groups target Maori producers or directors, while others, such as Nomadz Unlimited, encourage applications for 'culturally diverse films'.¹²⁴ The NZFC has continued to focus on bicultural outcomes, though, in accordance with government policy.

Since 2002, Short Film Fund tender applicants have been required to include a strategy 'for identifying and developing Maori key creatives' in their business plan.¹²⁵ They are also encouraged by the NZFC to each select at least one Maori film for funding.¹²⁶ When the NZFC reformulated its strategic targets in 2005, it introduced a new KPI in relation to its objective of supporting Maori films and filmmakers: 'Number of Maori key creatives in features, digital films, signature television and shorts.'¹²⁷ The 2007 Review, in contrast to the discussion and evaluation papers circulated a decade earlier, also includes statistical analysis of the level of support for Maori short film makers.¹²⁸ This emphasis on Maori filmmakers aligns with two dominant discourses: biculturalism founded on the legally entrenched Treaty of Waitangi principles and the pursuit of a unique national brand, which forms part of the creative industries' response to globalisation (see Chapter Two).

The increased informality and diverse criteria of the EP Scheme, compared with the previous committee structure, may heighten the likelihood of less experienced and disenfranchised filmmakers receiving funding.¹²⁹ Yeatman cites the example of BPS (1997-1999): 'Dorthe Scheffmann's production group abandoned any semblance of a formalised funding policy and sought informal contact through the telephone and fax.'¹³⁰ Scheffmann estimates that, as a result of this informal practice, fifty percent of the applications received were for Maori and Polynesian based projects. Having operated a more formal application process in 1998, Haysom decried the low number of Maori applicants, and began working with Barry Barclay and Nga Aho Whakaari to identify new Maori filmmakers. In 1999 THE consequently added

¹²³ New Zealand Film Commission, "New Zealand Film Commission Short Film Fund 1999/2000 Guidelines."

¹²⁴ New Zealand Film Commission, "New Zealand Film Commission Short Film Fund 2006/2007 Guidelines."

¹²⁵ New Zealand Film Commission, "Tender for Talent Development"; "Tender for Short Film Executive Producer Role."

¹²⁶ Pitts, "Cross-Cultural Filmmaking", 174.

¹²⁷ New Zealand Film Commission, "Reports."

¹²⁸ Minutes from the meeting with the Short Film EPs reveal that this was in fact a response to a suggestion by Rawiri Paratene rather than an initiative of the NZFC. Veber et al., "Review," 07, 19.

¹²⁹ Yeatman, "Policy and Practice", 194.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 227.

the objective: 'To actively encourage Maori filmmakers and to establish relationships with the Maori film and TV community.'¹³¹

Equity of opportunity is an important consideration in an evaluation of short film funding programmes.¹³² The cultural diversity of directors in my sample reflects a certain equality of outcome in terms of the range of filmmakers supported. While the majority are Pakeha, there is also Fijian-European Rolls and New Zealand-Italian Paolo Rotondo. As mentioned above, four films had Maori directors, representing a quarter of my sample. The 2007 Review similarly found that 25% of short films funded through the EP Scheme had Maori key creatives.¹³³ Gender equity is less balanced: the EP Scheme funds roughly one third women to two thirds men, with six out of the sixteen films in my sample being directed by females, only one of which was made before 2004. This figure is only half a percentage point out from NZFC research for the decade to 2007, which shows 37 per cent of Short Film Fund projects have female directors.¹³⁴ Although the Maori and female directors have a higher success rate than their Pakeha male counterparts in terms of 'A' list festival selection, there are many who have not (yet) directed feature films but continue to fulfil other roles in the screen production industry.¹³⁵ This may be indicative of deeper structural inequity in the film industry that short film initiatives cannot counter alone.

Conclusion

The criteria set by EPs are much more specific than the vague goals of NZFC policy. They are not entirely prescriptive, though, as submissions sometimes fail to meet their criteria and EPs' application of published guidelines is quite flexible. The success of particular films like *Infection*, which does not exactly correspond with the criteria of the consortium that funded it, demonstrates the advantage of a flexible approach in the application and evaluation of funding criteria. On the other hand, as the next chapter will show, quality films such as *Cockle* (Brendan Donovan, 2004) and *Fish out of Water* (Rolls, 2005), which obey short filmmaking conventions, do not always achieve critical success. There is no precise formula to predict how well a film will be received, so it is necessary to allow EPs the creative freedom to make

¹³¹ In his letter to the NZFC, Haysom also quotes Barclay's response to his advertisement: 'Maori (mostly historically and mostly sound) are often not pushy applicants...'

¹³² Milligan, interview; Alexander, interview. See also Chapter Five.

¹³³ Veber et al., "Review." This exceeds the proportion of Maori in the population. See Chapter Four.

¹³⁴ Evans, "Stories that might not otherwise be told," 25.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 19-22; Veber et al., "Review"; Pitts, "Cross-Cultural Filmmaking", 175-176.

instinctive judgements on submitted scripts. Some practitioners have been concerned that an insistence on script quality prevents films with little or no dialogue from receiving funding, but my analysis reveals that this is not the case. Insistence on script quality and development, when appropriate, seems to contribute to the critical success of NZFC short films.

NZFC strategic targets concentrate on results that are easy to measure: the number of films invested in and the number of funded filmmakers who make a successful transition from shorts to features. The first target obscures non-delivered films and their reasons for non-completion. Although potentially inevitable, the NZFC does not consider measures that might prevent or at least limit the number of failed projects. The second measure of success can be critiqued on three grounds. Firstly, its focus on development ignores the large number of films that never go into production. Secondly, it lacks any sort of comparison. The NZFC offers no indication as to whether there are directors, producers and writers of feature films in development who have taken another route to feature filmmaking. They may have made shorts financed by themselves, other public agencies, or film or art schools; or gained experience in the television industry – in drama, documentary or commercial production. The NZFC could present evidence in the form of research on the background of successful local feature filmmakers to ascertain model career paths. Instead, it assumes short filmmaking is the best training ground despite its awareness of the difference between short and feature filmmaking. Thirdly, the emphasis on directors admittedly mirrors the focus in much film scholarship, criticism and financing decisions, yet it ignores many other creative personnel who have a significant impact on the film text. It overlooks directors of photography, editors, sound designers, and production designers, as well as the rest of the crew, not to mention the cast, writers and producers.

In a policy environment that necessitates performance measures, ‘A’ list festival selection presents itself as a convenient indicator of critical success. The Post Production Fund uses this indicator as its sole criterion of eligibility, and it is the ultimate objective of the EP Scheme. Framed in this way, NZFC support for short film can be judged as effective if the films it finances attain critical capital. Considering the high standards of ‘A’ list festival programmers, their selection of every second EP-financed short film for official screening or competition represents a high ‘hit rate’ for the NZFC. Hence the structure of the Short Film Fund has contributed to building New Zealand’s international reputation for quality filmmaking. If the rationale for subsidising short filmmaking is to showcase talented directors, building their profile as well as that of the New Zealand film industry, then we might conclude that the Post

Production Fund and, to a lesser but still significant extent, the EP Scheme, are highly successful funding programmes.

This focus on the product rather than the process of short filmmaking detracts from the NZFC talent development objective, however, as it prioritises talent showcasing over skills development. EPs tend to focus on the process of talent development in their formulation and application of funding criteria. Every EP emphasises certain criteria that they deem most salient. For some, this is encouraging the formation of new teams; for others, it means ensuring that quality short films likely to engage and entertain an audience are produced. These varying criteria help to ensure diversity within NZFC-funded films; however, if the rationale for subsidising short filmmaking is the development of skills that will enable filmmakers to progress immediately to feature filmmaking, we could conclude that the EP Scheme and Post Production Fund are not highly effective. Yeatman indeed concludes that ‘short film is not necessarily a suitable form for feature film experience although it is perceived to be useful as a form of show-casing the products of the creative talent.’¹³⁶ This chapter has discussed, in accordance with Yeatman’s thesis and the NZFC reviews in 1997 and 2007, the limitations of short film production in terms of skills development for feature filmmaking. Unfortunately, none of these studies have actually investigated the types of skills that are developed in short film production. As Yeatman suggests, though, ‘Under this [development objective], given the context of the marketing discourses used by the Film Commission, it would make more sense to support more low budget features rather than the nine shorts proposed by the Talent Development Initiative [EP Scheme].’¹³⁷ Alexander agrees:

I’ve watched a lot of short filmmakers make short films and not go on to work as directors, whereas I made a [low budget] feature and went on to work as a director, so I’m not totally convinced that making a short film on your own gives you a career.’¹³⁸

This point was a key consideration in the restructure of the Short Film Fund in 1997, which aimed to increase the length of films that could be funded under the scheme. However, as noted in the previous chapter, the criterion of length and form actually became more specific as the EP Scheme evolved. EPs and NZFC staff decided that the scheme would be more beneficial to filmmakers if it resulted in films that were eligible for selection in prestigious international festivals.

¹³⁶ Yeatman, "Policy and Practice", 228.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 191.

¹³⁸ Alexander, interview. Alexander has mostly worked as a director of television drama, not feature films, though.

The NZFC is not unusual in its approach to short film. British government agencies, for instance, also frame short filmmaking as a means of servicing the feature industry by way of skills training and talent spotting.¹³⁹ Local industry reports often highlight the importance of human capability development within the screen production sector, yet none of the studies discussed above, from INZ, CANZ, or the SPIT, consider short film as a potential means of meeting this objective. There are many other reasons for financing short film production that are not encapsulated in the NZFC talent development objective, though. Short film can be seen, for instance, as a site for the development of filmmaking style and technical experimentation, as well as a vehicle for communicating socially meaningful ideas. The next chapter addresses these issues by looking past the tangible goals of the NZFC and its appointed EPs to consider the role of NZFC-funded short film in the cultural sector, and, specifically, its relationship with national cinema.

¹³⁹ Quy, *Teaching Short Films*, 35.

Chapter Five: Evaluating NZFC Short Films as Cultural Capital/ National Identity

It is the artists of New Zealand who will brand this country very clearly and very strongly in all its wonderful, terrible ways.¹

The short films funded by the NZFC must meet the same basic criteria as all other projects receiving its support. In particular, they must meet the statutory requirement of demonstrating ‘significant New Zealand content’² and contribute to the agency’s primary objective: ‘NZ films and filmmakers will generate a significant component of our cultural capital/national identity’.³ This objective aligns with governmental discourse on strengthening national identity through cultural funding, a refrain that recurs in policy statements and speeches throughout the history of the NZFC and MCH. The discourse of cultural nationalism is increasingly interrogated, though, as is clear in this recent acknowledgement by Gascoigne: ‘What does “significant New Zealand content” mean these days?’ He insightfully concludes that, for film funding agencies, ‘the question is: to what extent will this film, if made, contribute well to this country's national cinema?’⁴ However, as the INZ report on screen production asks, ‘how can we measure the success or otherwise of policy in support of national identity, and how can we articulate aspirations in this regard?’⁵ The report, which uses financial yardsticks even when it discusses political and cultural goals, illustrates the limitations of economic rationalist discourse in cultural policy evaluation.⁶ Quantitative measures, as the previous chapter suggests, do not adequately appraise all the goals of film policy.

This chapter addresses some of the issues that are overlooked in the NZFC 2007 Review, by assessing the output of the EP Scheme according to the values of national identity and cultural diversity. Drawing on the sample described in the previous chapter, I examine the range of stories, cultural representations and socially meaningful messages contained in EP-funded short films. Considering short film’s possible framing as a cultural commodity that forms part of a nation-building (or nation-branding) project, this chapter illustrates the sort of nation our successful short films represent.

¹ Preston, Public Service Conference.

² Section 18, "New Zealand Film Commission Act."

³ New Zealand Film Commission, "Statement of Intent 2006 - 2009," 9.

⁴ Gascoigne, "Film Funds 1 & 2."

⁵ Pinfold et al., "Capability Study," 17-18.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

Although short film is discussed in a few disparate articles from local magazines and international journals, and receives brief attention in some graduate students' theses, there is no study of New Zealand short film texts with which to compare this research. My analysis therefore draws on international scholarship on short films as well as writing on New Zealand national cinema to identify the distinctive features of NZFC-financed short films. This chapter analyses the aesthetic trends and political representations within NZFC-funded short films, hoping to reveal a more diverse range of cultural identities than the dominant representation found in the 1980s in the 'AFC genre'.⁷ In addition to my own interpretation, distinctions will be made, where relevant, between films that achieved international and/or national acclaim and films that were less successful. These distinctions help to reveal the preferences of foreign festival programmers as well as those of local audiences.

As a training ground and show reel for the future feature filmmaker, the NZFC-funded short film must reflect the skills required for commercial feature-length movie production. For that reason, NZFC-funded short films often mirror the characteristics of NZFC features, which tend to be hybrid films drawing on both Hollywood genres and the tradition of art cinema in New Zealand. These films, whether they are short or feature length, are aimed at a global marketplace where national origin constitutes a genre. Alan Williams explains that 'on the film festival and the art house/independent cable channel circuit, a visible national origin is *de rigueur*, almost as important as a visible author/director.'⁸ Czach points out that international festivals are pervaded by issues of cultural nationalism and national identity, and their politics of selection reinforce the canonisation of national cinema.⁹ It is therefore in the interests of a New Zealand filmmaker seeking international and subsequent domestic acclaim to ensure their short film contains markers of national specificity that conform to the New Zealand label.

Both Joyce and Yeatman cite members of the film community who believe that knowledge of 'a marketable short film format' informs funding decisions, generating a 'bias towards character driven theatrical narrative', and often resulting in films with distinctive lighting and

⁷ Dermody and Jacka argue that the national identity represented in the dominant genre produced by the Australian Film Commission (AFC) tends to be 'politically conservative, embodying an Anglo-Saxon, masculinist and populist set of themes, values and concerns'. Dermody and Jacka, *Anatomy of a Film Industry*, 156. See also ———, *Anatomy of a National Cinema*. Turner, *Film as Social Practice*, 193-197.

⁸ Williams, *Film and Nationalism*, 18. See also Petrie, "30 Years On," 166; Crofts, "Reconceptualizing National Cinema/s", 38-39.

⁹ Czach, "Film Festivals."

visuals, bizarre characters and a twist at the end of the tale.¹⁰ This trend has been simply labelled as ‘quirky’.¹¹ Some producers cite cultural reasons rather than film funding practices as dominant influences on the types of films produced, however. Bruce Sheridan (Morrison Grieve, 1997/98) refers to ‘the limitations of New Zealand story telling’ and, along with Neil Pardington (MAP, 1997-1999), describes the New Zealand film industry as very reactive and focused on style rather than story and character.¹² While it is difficult to establish the exact causes of such aesthetic trends, it is possible to identify salient patterns in short filmmaking and their possible precedents. This chapter endeavours to do so by describing a close analysis of the sample in the context of relevant film scholarship.

Short film production as national cinema

Despite its status as a marginal form of cultural production, short film can be located within New Zealand national cinema. As Petrie asserts, national cinema is the accumulation of ‘feature films, documentaries and shorts’, which represent the diverse range of people and ideas within a country.¹³ Short film is an integral part of cinematic heritage, especially in small nations where it has, at times, been the only continuity in film production.¹⁴ At first glance, it may appear that scholars studying New Zealand cinema focus narrowly on feature-length movies, from which they extrapolate key characteristics, dominant practices and recurrent themes. Many comprehensive as well as selective studies of New Zealand national cinema do take short filmmaking into account, however.¹⁵ The ensuing section draws on the academic framework for considering national cinemas and the defining features of New Zealand national cinema, as outlined in the introduction, to analyse the films in my sample in the context of contemporary New Zealand filmmaking.

¹⁰ Morrison and Pardington, cited in Yeatman, "Policy and Practice", 144-148, 184-185. After publishing a list of overseas buyers' preferences for New Zealand short films in its 'Programmes of Assistance and Policy Guidelines' book in 1995, the NZFC suggested that this gave the misleading impression that 'sales potential was of greater importance in decision making than was in fact the practice.' New Zealand Film Commission, "Discussion Paper." See also Joyce, "In Development", 240-241.

¹¹ Cole-Baker, "Short Film," 50; Joyce, "In Development", 235-241; Norelle Scott, cited in Shepard, *Reframing Women*, 201.

¹² Yeatman, "Policy and Practice", 185-186.

¹³ Petrie, "30 Years On," 162. See also Robson and Zalcock, *Girls' Own Stories*, 30.

¹⁴ Watson, "Effect of Funding Policies," 123; Quy, *Teaching Short Films*; Gareth Evans, "Foreword – Glimpse Culture: Celebrating Short Film," in *In Short: A Guide to Short Film-making in the Digital Age*, ed. Eileen Elsey and Andrew Kelly (London: British Film Institute, 2002), xi.

¹⁵ See, among others: Watson, "Effect of Funding Policies"; Horrocks, "Experimental Filmmaking"; Shepard, *Reframing Women*; Lealand and Martin, "Aotearoa/New Zealand"; Petrie, "How Others Have Seen Us"; Cole-Baker, "Short Film"; Pitts, "Cross-Cultural Filmmaking".

Some theorists draw our attention to the difference between the homogenising construct of nationalism and the more legitimate concept of national specificity in cinema.¹⁶ Hayward offers a framework for studying the specific features of national cinema, which usefully distinguishes the national specificity of a film from its relationship with nationalism or exploration of national identity.¹⁷ She demarcates ‘seven discernible typologies that will assist in the enunciation of the “national” of a cinema’: narratives, genres, codes and conventions, performance, celebrities, cinema of the centre and of the periphery, and national myths.¹⁸ These categories are elaborated below and applied to my close reading of NZFC short films.¹⁹ This enables me to identify, firstly, the specific features of these texts’ style and content in order to determine whether they represent ‘significant New Zealand content’ in addition to the provenance of their creators and finance. Secondly, I will analyse the ways in which these texts engage with discourses in New Zealand society, notably the ideologies of national identity, social cohesion and critical artistic expression. This chapter does not identify every artistic inspiration that shaped the creation of the selected short films, yet it does consider the literary form on which the script was based, where appropriate. It also assesses the extent to which the themes of these films align with representations typically connected to the exploration of national identity in New Zealand films and literature, such as loneliness or isolation, and childhood or adolescence.

The question that arises is: do NZFC-funded short films reflect, challenge or deconstruct hegemonic discourses on national identity? This enquiry emerges from the concerns of scholars, as described in Chapter Two, that the creative industries discourse dominating cultural policy, especially under Third Way governments, may restrict the ability of artists to critique the prevailing social order. With finance from the state, and a public institution acting as gatekeeper, one might assume that NZFC short films reproduce dominant discourses. On the other hand, the EP Scheme was set up to encourage the creative autonomy that is possible within short film, which is not as constrained by industrial practices as feature filmmaking, and it has enabled less established directors to develop and showcase their authorial talent.

¹⁶ Hayward, *French National Cinema*. Paul Willemsen, in Petrie and Hjort, "Introduction," 12.

¹⁷ Pitts makes this point, also referring to Sarah Street, in "Cross-Cultural Filmmaking", 17, 30.

¹⁸ Hayward, *French National Cinema*, 8-14.

¹⁹ The categories not applied in this study are celebrities and cinema of the centre and the periphery. The ‘star as sign’ typology is generally not applicable to short film, as the low production budgets and alternative distribution outlets make high profile actors less important than in feature filmmaking. It could be argued that the ‘star as sign’ is less relevant in independent filmmaking in any case. While the cinema of the centre/periphery framework represents a useful way to consider dominant and alternative discourses within films, it is not possible to apply it effectively to New Zealand national cinema due to its limited production and distribution modes and the reliance on international investment and sales.

Following this line of reasoning, it is possible to categorise short films as oppositional or peripheral works that challenge the ideas represented in mainstream feature filmmaking. The following analysis considers my sample in relation to Hayward's typology, with a view to ascertaining the relationship between these short films and hegemonic discourses.

Short film analysis

Narrative

As well as constituting an important factor in EPs' evaluations of the quality of a project, the narrative of a short fiction film often reflects ideas from its place of origin. The narrative in any film, explains Hayward, 'calls upon the available discourses and myths of its own culture.'²⁰ The prime example of this is the literary adaptation, which draws on an existing story from the nation's cultural heritage.²¹ According to Brian McDonnell, one in every five New Zealand fictional feature films made in the last thirty years has been adapted from a local work of literature. McDonnell suggests that investors are reassured by ideas that are based on popular or respected novels, however, 'the need for adaptation skills equals those required to write an original script', and the success of the original work is no guarantee of an effective adaptation to cinema.²²

Adaptation proves to be an appealing technique for short film writers: five of the sixteen scripts in this study were originally literary adaptations. As Shepard illustrates, some effective New Zealand short films are based on short stories.²³ Representing 31 per cent of my sample, the proportion of adaptations from literature is much higher than the 21 per cent identified by McDonnell within New Zealand feature films since 1988.²⁴ Only one of these short screenplays (*Beautiful*) directly adapts a local text, though; another was loosely inspired by the style of Katherine Mansfield's short stories (*Shadow over the Sun*)²⁵; and three are based on foreign literary traditions. *Te Po Uriruri* is a tragic love story, set in sixteenth century Maori society, but based on Shakespeare's Sonnet 147, parts of which are quoted by the films' characters, in Maori with English subtitles. *Nature's Way* was originally based on a fairytale

²⁰ Hayward, *French National Cinema*, 15.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

²² Brian McDonnell, "The Adaptation of New Zealand Literature to Film: A Case-Study Approach," in *Contemporary New Zealand Cinema: From New Wave to Blockbuster*, ed. Ian Conrich and Stuart Murray (London: I.B. Tauris 2008), 147.

²³ Shepard, *Reframing Women*, 142-147.

²⁴ McDonnell, "Adaptation of New Zealand Literature."

²⁵ Rachel Douglas, "Director's Notes," in *Shadow Over The Sun* (New Zealand Film Commission, 2008).

but its script was reworked so extensively that it became a quite different story.²⁶ *Fish Out of Water* is not a direct adaptation either, but rather a modern day parable that draws its inspiration from Greek legend.²⁷ The script for *Beautiful* (Adam Stevens, 2001), however, was adapted from a play written (and performed) by New Zealanders Jason Hoyte and Jonathan Brugh.

Beautiful and *Nature's Way* are the most effective of these adaptations. Although *Te Po Uriruri* and *Fish Out of Water* each adapt the original source material in an innovative manner, the characterisation in both films lacks sophistication. With minimal or no dialogue, the somewhat stiff performances in *Fish Out of Water* and the melodramatic acting in *Te Po Uriruri* make it difficult to identify with the characters in each film. Both *Nature's Way* and *Shadow over the Sun* are also without dialogue, but Shearer is more effective than Douglas at creating an atmosphere rich in feeling and full of suspense. The cleverly scripted and well delivered dialogue in *Beautiful*, which is ironically juxtaposed with shots positioning the characters' small fishing dinghy in the idyllic setting of Great Barrier Island, makes for a highly enjoyable film. It is therefore not surprising that, while the other films were not selected for any 'A' list festivals, *Beautiful* was officially selected for the Montreal, New York, Melbourne and Sundance festivals, and *Nature's Way* screened in competition at Cannes, as well as at many other international festivals. Both films also won Best Short Film at the New Zealand Screen Awards in 2003 and 2006, respectively. This suggests that an effective adaptation has a good chance of gaining critical capital from both local and foreign sources.

Live action short films that are not adaptations from literature tend to be personal films based on the filmmaker's life experience. The writers of *Turangawaewae*, *Nothing Special*, *This is Her*, *The Freezer* and *Two Cars, One Night* have all revealed that they drew on their personal or family history to inform their scripts.²⁸ It is also likely that the character-driven narratives in *Rock* (Brian Challis, 2003), *Trust Me* (Pitts, 2000) and *Cockle*, which all contain realistic characters in coming-of-age stories, are based on their creators' personal experiences. This finding is in accordance with scholars' observations that short filmmakers often have personal

²⁶ See previous chapter, particularly notes 37 and 38.

²⁷ The main female character – an attractive but manipulative woman who insists she join the protagonist as he rows to work – is named The Siren in the film's credits. In Greek legend, the Sirens were women who lured passing sailors to their destruction by distracting them with their beautiful singing. Hamish Chalmers and Mike Fowler, *Ten Short Films for Schools: Ten New Zealand Short Films and Teaching Resources* (Christchurch: Visual Learning, 2005), 33.

²⁸ Blomkamp, "Nothing Special, Really"; Cristy Lytal, "Short Shot: This is Her," Sundance Institute, http://festival.sundance.org/2009/news/article/short_shot_this_is_her/ (accessed 4 May 2009); Taika Waititi, "Director's Notes," in *Two Cars, One Night* (New Zealand Film Commission, 2006); Blueskin Films Ltd, *Turangawaewae: He Korero* (2003); M.F Films, "The Freezer: Press Kit," www.mffilms.co.nz/press/the_freezer (accessed 9 March 2009).

motivations for making their work rather than a strong commercial idea of their target market.²⁹ Comments made by Jeremy Howe suggest that the recurrent themes in NZFC-funded short films mirror those in countries with a similar film culture. Howe observes that short films tend to be shaped by the narrative interests of the young adults who make them, portraying 'a world often dominated by children and adolescents'.³⁰ Local producers explain that young writers often draw on their childhood experience as material for short films. Shuchi Kothari suggests that for young creators of short films, 'The present can be too messy and the past is an easier place to rest your head.'³¹ Alexander adds that short films 'usually require a "small moment with big significance" and these are often more common in childhood.'³²

Another narrative model common in 'quirky' New Zealand cinema, according to Joyce, is open-ended narratives and sometimes paradoxical endings.³³ This specific storytelling style contrasts with the general principle that closure is needed in the short film, as in any narrative form. Closure, explains Raskin, leaves the viewer with a sense of completeness and provides the filmmaker with the opportunity to leave a meaningful image or message in audiences' minds.³⁴ In contrast to Joyce's observation, all the films in my sample use at least one of the closure strategies detailed by Raskin in his analysis of story design in the short fiction film. Generally achieved through specific shot composition or editing techniques, the most common closing strategy in these films is a physical departure of the character(s) from the frame or a lapsing into a prolonged stasis, which represents a disengagement from the story 'and a signal that nothing more will happen in the film'.³⁵ Thirteen of the sixteen films in the sample end in this way, although many combine this technique with another closure strategy, either a return to the initial situation or a symbolic event or gesture.³⁶ This is epitomised in the final, high-angle wide shots that distance the viewer from the characters in order to achieve disengagement in *Beautiful* and *Shadow over the Sun*.

Nothing Special and *Rock* are the only films with an open-ended narrative. Although the framing of the final image of the bloody, broken rock in the latter film recalls the establishing

²⁹ Yeatman, "Policy and Practice", 148; Raskin, *Art of the Short Fiction Film*, 3.

³⁰ Howe, "Shorts and the Real World." Howe is former Head of Short Films for BBC Drama and Director of Brief Encounters International Short film Festival.

³¹ Kothari, cited in Script to Screen, "Writing Outstanding Shorts," *Writer's Room* (2007), http://www.script-to-screen.co.nz/uploads/Writing%20Outstanding%20Shorts_Final.doc (accessed 5 May 2009).

³² Alexander, cited in *Ibid.*

³³ Joyce, "Quirky New Zealand Films," 56.

³⁴ Raskin, *Art of the Short Fiction Film*, 171.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 80.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 171.

shot, thus representing a return to an earlier situation after a significant change, this point-of-view shot does not reflect narrative closure. The viewer does not know whether the rock has actually killed or only injured the boy's mother, nor is it clear whether his action was accidental or deliberate. This ambiguity is intentional and is achieved by ending the film 'just before the consequences of Ralph's actions would have been discovered'.³⁷ The black comedy *Nothing Special* reflects the narrative pattern described by Joyce. It ends suddenly on a close-up shot of its protagonist Billy, whose alarmed reaction to the word 'special' suggests that not much has changed despite his best efforts. Although this ending fits the mould of a 'quirky' New Zealand film, it is an anomaly in NZFC short films, as all the other films selected display fairly strong closure strategies.

Characters

Strong characters are often the driving force of a narrative and offer audiences a point of identification within a short film. Although scriptwriters are generally advised to create characters that actively pursue their goals, passive characterisation is possible in the short film format, which, unlike the feature film, cannot sustain complex character development.³⁸ Passive characters are also common in locally produced feature films.³⁹ Of the thirteen live action films in my sample, only four centre on characters who actively pursue a goal: *The Freezer* (Rotondo, 2002), *Te Po Uriuri*, *Fish out of Water* and *Nothing Special*. Whether the characters are active or passive, NZFC short films tend to portray them in their everyday lives, undertaking simple activities. Billy does monotonous paperwork in *Nothing Special*; the murderer watches television, vacuums and folds washing in *Nature's Way*; the men in *Beautiful* and the love interest in *Fish out of Water* spend their time fishing (but are never seen to catch anything); and the children play with a plastic ring in *Two Cars, One Night*, a Barbie doll in *This is Her*, and a rock in *Rock*. Raskin suggests that character interaction with objects and décor plays a significant storytelling function in the short film by quickly revealing the behavioural attributes and inner lives of characters and situating them in the material world.⁴⁰ The interaction between actors and props in the selected films reinforces the passivity of characters who seem to accept their existing social situation, making use of the objects available to them but not searching for anything out of their reach.

³⁷ Brian Challis, "Director's Notes," in *Rock: Press Kit* (New Zealand Film Commission), 2.

³⁸ Cooper and Dancyger, *Writing the Short Film*, 133; Dudding, "Four "Homegrown" Shorts"; Raskin, *Art of the Short Fiction Film*, 95.

³⁹ Joyce, "Quirky New Zealand Films," 56; Read, "Tradition of Art Cinema."

⁴⁰ Raskin, *Art of the Short Fiction Film*, 93, 172.

It is interesting to note the demographic composition of the society represented in these films. With the range of directors funded, as noted in the previous chapter, one might expect a rough reflection of cultural diversity in EP-financed films. However, the results suggest NZFC short films continue to focus on the same sort of character who was over-represented in early New Zealand feature films: the Pakeha male. Excluding the animations, there are ten films with a male protagonist and only three with a female lead character. Moreover, seventy-seven per cent of the main characters in my sample are Pakeha or European.⁴¹ This is close to the eighty per cent of New Zealanders who identified as European in the 2001 census, but it does not represent the changing demographic trends in New Zealand, where European or Pakeha now constitute only 68 per cent of the population.⁴² The remaining twenty-three per cent of films studied have a Maori male protagonist, which suggests Maori are also over-represented compared to population statistics. There are no films in my sample with characters, either principal or secondary, of any other ethnic identity, except for the Dalmatian immigrants in *A Very Nice Honeymoon*. During the same period, however, New Zealand filmmakers were casting actors of different ethnicities in films that did not directly receive production finance from the NZFC. Between 2003 and 2007, for example, Korean, Indian, Czech and Russian characters appear in SIPF and self-funded films that eventually benefited from NZFC post production grants (*Eating Sausage*, *Clean Linen*, *Fleeting Beauty*, and *Cargo*), not to mention a number of dramatic short films featuring Pacific Island voices.⁴³

It is possible that an increasing tendency to fund films with central characters from other ethnic groups is unapparent in this analysis, but is emerging in NZFC short films. The diverse characters in the more recently released *Take 3* (Roseanne Liang, 2008), *Coffee & Allah* (Sima Urale, 2007), and *The Graffiti of Mr Tupaia* (Christopher Dudman, 2006) could be seen as evidence of a less exclusive definition of 'New Zealand film'. Pitts highlights the selection of Nomadz Unlimited for an EP contract in 2006 and 2007 as a signal of a more inclusive, multicultural approach to filmmaking in New Zealand.⁴⁴ Nomadz Unlimited was indeed the EP

⁴¹ This figure includes the recent Anglosaxon immigrant in *Shadow over the Sun* and Evie in *This is Her*, who is played by Mia Blake, a New Zealand actress of mixed ethnicity.

⁴² Frank Nolan, "Census Snapshot: Cultural Diversity," (Statistics New Zealand, 2002); Statistics New Zealand, "QuickStats About Culture and Identity," (2006). According to the 2006 census, New Zealand's population is made up of: 15% Maori, 7% Pacific, 10% Asian, 68% European or Pakeha, and 1% 'other'.

⁴³ Of the 24 dramatic short films made between 2000 and 2006 by Pacific Island New Zealanders that have screened in annual festival 'Pollywood Shorts', only two were funded by the NZFC. Sixteen were shot on DV format. Pitts, "Cross-Cultural Filmmaking", 205, 209. See also Shepard, *Reframing Women*, 201-202.

⁴⁴ Pitts, "Cross-Cultural Filmmaking", 211. She writes: 'Through this decision, the agency has devolved a portion of institutional power (i.e. money and decision-making) to two filmmaker-academics (Sarina Pearson and Shuchi

of *Take 3* and the producer of *Coffee & Allah*, but different EPs are responsible for selecting *Coffee & Allah* (Whenua Films) and *The Graffiti of Mr Tupaia* (Short Intercept). This could be seen as a positive sign that more EPs are now funding films with culturally diverse characters. Nevertheless, it is clear that the growing number of New Zealanders who do not identify as Maori, Pakeha or European are under-represented in short films financed by the NZFC EP Scheme from 1997 to 2000.

Further analysis can be taken of the films' secondary characters to determine whether these films represent a monocultural, bicultural or multicultural society. Of the three films with Maori protagonists, two of them feature only Maori characters, and in the third, *Turangawaewae*, Pakeha are not absent, but they appear only as minor characters. The dialogue in *Two Cars, One Night* is in English, whereas most or all of the characters in *Te Po Uriruri* and *Turangawaewae* speak Maori. The films with Pakeha protagonists also represent a monocultural world; their secondary characters tend to be Pakeha too. The exceptions are *The Freezer* and *A Very Nice Honeymoon*, although the latter only briefly depicts Maori characters alongside the Dalmatian couple. *The Freezer* features Maori characters in significant roles alongside its Pakeha protagonists, but presents the two cultures living in separate worlds. There is also no example of a cross-cultural romance, which has appeared as a popular allegory for race relations in New Zealand feature films.⁴⁵ Despite government and NZFC discourse suggesting an embrace of bicultural and multicultural values in film policy, the society represented in these films is overwhelmingly homogenous, suggesting a country dominated by Pakeha, where Maori tend to live in separate communities, with little contact between the two main cultures. This contrasts with observations of the 'new wave' of New Zealand films that purportedly reflect a diverse, culturally confident society at the beginning of the twenty-first century.⁴⁶

Further observations of over-represented groups may be explained by dominant filmmaking patterns and the constraints of the short film form. Children play a significant part in ten of the sixteen films in my sample, several of whom are only children with solo parents. Four films are narrated or shot from a child's perspective: *Two Cars, One Night*; *The Freezer*; *Trust Me*; and

Kothari) who not only theorise multiculturalism, but who also research and make films cross-culturally as a matter of course.'

⁴⁵ Stephanie Joy Christie, "Intimate Strangers: Cross-Cultural Romance in New Zealand Film" (MA Thesis, University of Auckland, 2005); Keown, "Nationalism and Cultural Identity," 197.

⁴⁶ Petrie, "Coming of Age of a National Cinema," 13, 42; Lealand and Martin, "Aotearoa/New Zealand"; Noah Cowan, Director of Toronto Film Festival, cited in Petrie, "How Others Have Seen Us," 158; Albert Moran and Errol Vieth, *Historical Dictionary of Australian and New Zealand Cinema* (Lanham: Scarecrow, 2005), 298.

Rock. This is a high proportion, given that the target audience of these films is not children, but it is not surprising if one considers the tendency of New Zealand narrative art and international short films to tell coming-of-age stories. As for the lack of siblings and nuclear families presented, this might simply be due to the limitations of the short film, which does not allow filmmakers the space to introduce many characters.

In addition to the age, gender and ethnicity of characters, New Zealand short fiction films can be distinguished by the actors' performances. Hayward draws attention to 'gesturality and morphology', or 'traditions of performance', as a marker of national specificity in film: 'Gestures, words, intonations, attitudes, [and] postures,' she elaborates, '... are deeply rooted in a nation's culture.'⁴⁷ In some of the short films in my sample, the actors' performances and carefully scripted dialogue are distinctive signs of the text's nationality. This is epitomised by Romeo in *Two Cars, One Night*, who lifts his eyebrows and chin - 'in a typically Maori greeting'⁴⁸ - and addresses his brother in an authentic manner: 'eh, bro?' Ocean Mercier interprets the verbal and gestural exchange between Romeo and Polly in this film as reflecting the ritualised encounter of a *powhiri*.⁴⁹ The performance of these characters is so culturally specific that Waititi was not confident the film would be appreciated by foreign audiences.⁵⁰ Comments posted on the film's Internet Movie Database page reveal that while the characters' speech is indeed incomprehensible to certain overseas viewers, this authenticity is the aspect of the film that some New Zealanders appreciate the most.⁵¹ Crofts argues that while the 'authenticity and frisson' offered by such culturally specific texts appeal to overseas audiences; in addition to foreign praise, incomprehension and misunderstanding are possible responses to these films.⁵² The interaction between the two men in *Beautiful* similarly evokes typical mannerisms of Pakeha males. The film's satirical critique of Pakeha masculinity is not as significant as the picturesque setting to some overseas viewers, though. Its synopsis on Manchester's Reel North Short Film Showcase website opens with the following statement:

⁴⁷ Hayward, *French National Cinema*, 12

⁴⁸ Mercier, "Films of Taika Waititi," 43.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 40-47.

⁵⁰ Campbell, "Taika Waititi."

⁵¹ Jake from Georgia, describes the film as 'wonderful (although occasionally infuriatingly thick native accents make it tough to catch all of the asides)', in 'Wonderfully Real, Stunningly Acted- A True Joy', 24 April 2004; similarly, Bob from Birmingham says, 'Aside from the rather grating accents (to my ear at least) and the difficulty in quickly catching onto the dialect of the characters, I must confess that I found this a surprisingly fresh and charming short film.' In 'A charming unassuming little film', 26 March 2007. On the other hand, Amandajean from New Zealand comments: 'What makes this film all the more unique are the thick East Coast (of New Zealand) accents, which most New Zealanders can relate to and make the film extremely realistic.' In 'Very New Zealand, very real and easily lovable', 3 December 2005. Internet Movie Database, "IMDb User Comments for *Two Cars, One Night*," <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0390579/usercomments> (accessed 9 April 2009).

⁵² Crofts, "Reconceptualizing National Cinema/s," 40-42.

'Ever considered emigrating Down Under? You may well do after watching the aptly named, Beautiful.'⁵³

There are a few films in my sample that do not feature distinctive New Zealand gestures or linguistic features, including the animations *Infection* and *Grass* (Simon Otto, 2004), and the live action films *Fish out of Water* and *Shadow over the Sun*. Of these films, only *Infection* was selected for an 'A' list festival and sold to television companies in Europe, Japan, Australia and the United States. This is an interesting point, because filmmakers have at times been advised that films without dialogue are more likely to attract sales.⁵⁴ Many novice filmmakers find it difficult, however, to tell a story through meaningful visual images rather than dialogue. Moreover, these films may be less likely to appear in international festival programmes due to their lack of nationally specific gesturality and morphology. Agenda-setting film festivals often seek shorts that reflect their place of origin while bringing something new or different to their genre.⁵⁵

Genre

In its study of the Short Film Fund, the NZFC found that the majority of films produced between 1997 and 2006 were described by their creators as drama, one quarter as comedy, and the remaining fourteen per cent were categorised as science fiction, fantasy, thriller or animation.⁵⁶ These are very broad categories, and while they clearly show that NZFC short films tend to be narrative dramas, the genre 'drama' can encompass many different styles of filmmaking.⁵⁷ It is difficult to categorise my sample in this way because many of the films blend and adapt different genres and sub-genres. The animations, for instance, are all quite different genres: *Infection* is an action/thriller, *Grass* is a comedy, and *A Very Nice Honeymoon* is a documentary. These categories also obscure the fact that two of the nine films classed as

⁵³ Reel North, "Beautiful," <http://www.reelnorth.co.uk/archive/beautiful.htm> (accessed 3 April 2009).

⁵⁴ Screen Council, "Kitty Case Study." On the other hand, festival programmer Mike Plante says excellent dialogue is something that is likely to impress him in short film selection, in "Confessions of a Short-Film Programmer," *Filmmaker - The Magazine of Independent Film* 12, 2 (2004), http://gateway.proquest.com.ezproxy.auckland.ac.nz/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:iipa:&rft_dat=xri:iipa:article:citation:iipa00244804 (accessed 1 December 2008).

⁵⁵ Evans, "Glimpse Culture," xiv.

⁵⁶ Veber et al., "Review," 53. In 2006, eighty-six of the 197 filmmakers (writers, producers and directors) who received short film production or post-production finance from the NZFC since the establishment of the EP Scheme responded to a questionnaire conducted by former NZFC Short Film Manager Kate Kennedy. The following results represent the respondents' description of the genre of their short film: Drama 61%, Comedy 14%, Comedy/Drama 10%, Comedy/Thriller 1%, Thriller 5%, Animation 5%, Sci-Fi/Fantasy 4%.

⁵⁷ Cooper and Dancyger, for instance, prefer to distinguish between melodrama, docudrama, hyperdrama, and the experimental narrative when discussing short filmmaking. In *Writing the Short Film*.

drama are historical drama – *Te Po Uriuri* and *Shadow over the Sun* – neither of which achieved festival success. Three of the ‘dramas’ could equally be classed as comedy.

It is not straightforward to apply genres associated with feature films to short films. As Saara Cantell argues, ‘to try to see (or make) short films using the tools created for feature films seems as meaningless as to read and interpret poetry with the same criteria as novels.’⁵⁸ Cooper and Dancyger hence suggest eight alternative ‘framing devices’ that better suit the short form, and can be applied to both live action and animated films, which I have applied to my sample, with only slight adaptations.⁵⁹

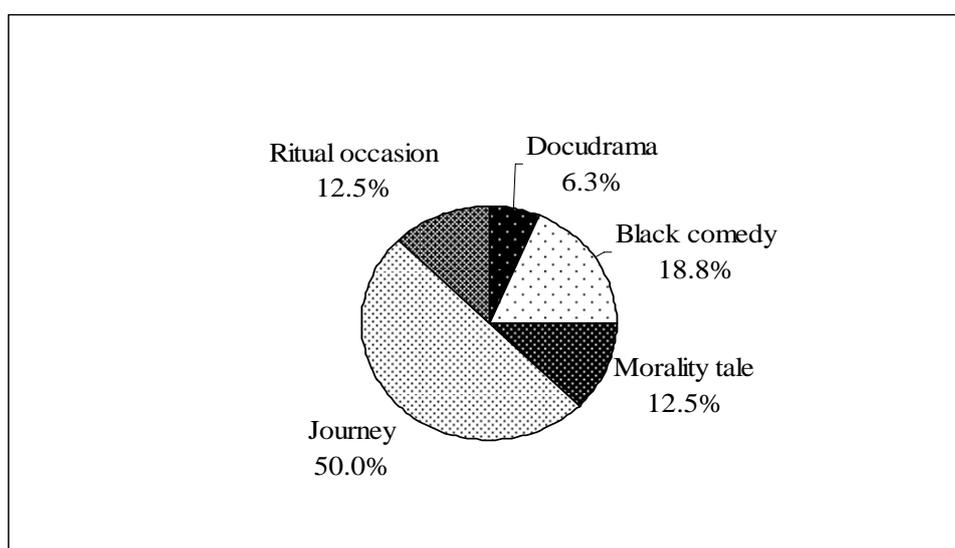


Figure 3: Genre in NZFC short films

As Figure 3 shows, the most common frame is the ‘journey’, which is interpreted broadly here as a single character-driven narrative containing several scenes in multiple locations. As the typical story frame of the feature film, as well as many other forms of narrative art, it is perhaps not surprising that many films in my sample reproduce this structure.⁶⁰ This is slightly lower than the proportion of films identified as ‘drama’ in the NZFC survey mentioned above, but it would be fair to say that many of the films in the category of ‘journey’ could be described as

⁵⁸ Saara Cantell, "Poetry on Screen or Visualised Jokes? An Approach to the Genres of Short Fiction Films," *P.O.V.* 18, December 2004: 112.

⁵⁹ Cooper and Dancyger, *Writing the Short Film*, 114. These frames are: ‘the docudrama, the “mockumentary”, the comedy, the satire, the fable, the morality tale, the journey, and the event or ritual occasion.’ I label one film as docudrama, three as satire or black comedy, two as fable or morality tale, eight as the journey or ‘mini feature’, and one as ritual occasion. Some of these categorisations are debatable in the case of films that cross over the boundaries, such as *Beautiful* which is both a satire and a ritual occasion, and films that sit between ritual occasion and journey, such as *Rock and Cockle*, or between black comedy and journey, such as *The Freezer*. According to my analysis, the dominant structure of *The Freezer*, *Rock and Cockle* is the journey.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 118.

drama. This typology allows a clearer distinction between the different forms of narrative drama, though. The films which employ the 'journey' frame conform to a more conventional narrative structure, and can therefore be considered in relation to feature film genres. Notably, *Infection* and *Nature's Way* feature conventions of the action and horror genres respectively. The other films in this category do not draw on one dominant Hollywood genre, but can be classified more broadly as 'art' films.⁶¹

An alternative framing device to the journey is employed by every second filmmaker in the sample. Documentary is underutilised, with only one docudrama (*A Very Nice Honeymoon*) and no 'mockumentary'. This can be clearly linked to NZFC directives; as described in previous chapters, the support for documentary projects under the Short Film Fund was basically discontinued in 1997. I group the morality tale and the fable together because both are allegories whose intention is to offer a moral lesson to viewers.⁶² *Grass* and *Fish out of Water* fall into this category, although both could also be described as a sort of 'journey' given their conventional narrative structure. Both these films had limited festival success, suggesting that the morality tale is not a highly popular genre among short film specialists.

The framing device of the ritual occasion or 'extended vignette' appears to be much more appealing to critics and festival programmers, many of whom bemoan the number of short films that are treated as 'calling cards' and structured as 'compressed features'.⁶³ These short film enthusiasts consider it an advantage that the short format is less constrained by the constraints of genre storytelling and the narrative conventions of feature films.⁶⁴ As mentioned in the previous chapter, *Two Cars, One Night* is an excellent example of a film that provides a snapshot of a character at a pivotal moment in his life. *Trust Me* also depicts a defining moment between siblings, and, although it was not quite as highly acclaimed as Waititi's film, it screened in competition at several 'A' list festivals.

I prefer to use the label 'black comedy' rather than Cooper and Dancyger's 'satire' to capture the distinctly New Zealand inflection of this sub-genre in *Beautiful, Nothing Special* and *This is*

⁶¹ I am referring to *Te Po Uriuri*, *Rock*, *Turangawaewae*, *The Freezer*, *Cockle*, and *Shadow over the Sun*.

⁶² Cooper and Dancyger, *Writing the Short Film*, 118-119.

⁶³ Dick Ross, cited in 'Worksheet 24d: Writing short films', Quay, *Teaching Short Films*; Martin, "The Seconds Pile Up"; Plante, "Confessions of a Short-Film Programmer"; Raskin, "On Pacing," 159.

⁶⁴ Quay, *Teaching Short Films*, 54; Scheffmann, in Richard Raskin, "The Beach: An Interview with Dorthe Scheffmann," *P.O.V.* 3 (1997), http://pov.imv.au.dk/Issue_03/TheBeach/TheBeach3.html (accessed 16 April 2009); Maija Howe, "Maija Howe Welcomes the Destination Film Festival," *RealTime* 83 (2008), <http://www.realttimearts.net/article/issue83/8874> (accessed 27 April 2009).

Her. Whereas film satire uses ‘excessive humour and exaggerated character, story, and language’,⁶⁵ black comedy derives its often cynical humour from its treatment of serious subjects that are not usually considered humorous.⁶⁶ The three films listed above treat the following respective subjects in a humorous manner: sexual orientation and homophobia; dysfunctional parenting and a desire to conform; and marital infidelity. According to an NZFC-commissioned survey, local audiences appreciate the prevalence of this dark humour in New Zealand films, labelling it, after landscape, the most distinctive feature of New Zealand cinema.⁶⁷ The fact that it is a significant genre in my sample, and that all three of these films won significant international and domestic acclaim confirms that it is a ‘successful’ style in NZFC short films.

Codes and conventions

Other elements that imbue a film with a New Zealand flavour are the technical codes and cinematic conventions favoured by local filmmakers. Common codes of the New Zealand art film include careful shot composition to tell the story through visual images; the use of soundtrack to create a tense atmosphere or comment on action; some distortion in camerawork or mise-en-scène; and the landscape as a metaphor for the mood or interior state of characters.⁶⁸ Short filmmakers are often encouraged to tell their stories through distinctive visual images and a carefully constructed soundscape, rather than dialogue. In some short films, however, dialogue is not only appropriate but essential. Raskin points out that ‘there are two modes of storytelling in the modern short: the non-verbal and the dialogue-based – each fully legitimate and each producing its share of little masterpieces from year to year.’⁶⁹ While *Trust Me* and *Te Po Uriuri* have minimal dialogue, five other films in my sample have no dialogue and rely entirely on sound and visuals to tell their story. The most successful of these is *Nature’s Way*, which also follows the other conventions of New Zealand art cinema, even though it can be described as ‘a psychological fantasy horror’.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Cooper and Dancyger, *Writing the Short Film*, 117.

⁶⁶ Black comedy can be defined as ‘a type of comedy dealing with grotesque or unpleasant situations which attacks comfortable assumptions about social taboos, for example, by treating death as comic.’ In “Bloomsbury Guide to Human Thought,” ed. Kenneth McLeish (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Ltd, 1993), <http://www.credoreference.com/entry/343580> (accessed May 01, 2009).

⁶⁷ Duncan Stuart, “What Makes New Zealand Film Distinctive?” in *A Coming of Age: Thirty Years of New Zealand Film*, ed. Duncan Petrie and Duncan Stuart (Auckland: Random House, 2008), 111.

⁶⁸ Read, “Tradition of Art Cinema.” The first three characteristics on this list are also typical of international art cinema and short films.

⁶⁹ Raskin, *Art of the Short Fiction Film*, 47.

⁷⁰ Shearer, in “Natural progression,” *Onfilm* August 2006.

Nature's Way is a typical New Zealand film in its use of the natural landscape as an emotional metaphor and creator of atmosphere. Often shown in wet, windy weather, underscoring the power of the elements, the native bush is dense and wild, letting little light in, and contrasts with the sterile and mundane subdivision where the main character lives. Shots of identical houses in residential suburbs similarly connote a sense of repressive conformity in *Grass*, *Nothing Special*, and *This is Her*. Scholars and audiences alike assert that the depiction of landscape is a defining feature of New Zealand cinema.⁷¹ According to postcolonial theorists, regional geography is an important element of nationalism in both indigenous and settler societies.⁷² The bush is also an important setting in *Te Po Uriuri*, while the location of the dinghy on sea water is an essential element of characterisation in *Fish out of Water* and *Beautiful*. *Two Cars, One Night* does not depict picturesque landscapes, but the sped up imagery of clouds against the evening sky in the opening sequence effectively locates the film in 'the land of the long white cloud'.⁷³

Setting is used to contextualise characters and convey their socioeconomic situation in *The Freezer*, *Turangawaewae* and *Two Cars, One Night*. In all three of these films, the poverty of Maori is suggested through the interaction between character and setting. This is most explicit in *Turangawaewae*, which translates as 'a place to stand'. Tiare, the main character, carries with him a piece of turf on which he builds unusual shrines, and he keeps another, larger piece of grass underneath his bed. His detachment from society due to his lack of a permanent place to stand is illustrated by these props.⁷⁴ It is possible to interpret Tiare's cultural dislocation as a result of British colonisation. Wi Kuki Kaa, the actor who plays Tiare, describes the piece of turf as a metaphor for a people whose land 'was stolen by the government.... This is a symbol of being landless.'⁷⁵

In many short films, props are endowed with symbolic meaning, and a character's relationship with an object or the setting constitutes an important element of storytelling.⁷⁶ The passivity of characters, as suggested by their interactions with everyday objects, was discussed above. In

⁷¹ Stuart, "What Makes New Zealand Film Distinctive?" 101; Read, "Tradition of Art Cinema," 13-15; Williams, "Waka on the Wild Side," 187.

⁷² Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), 40; Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, "Introduction," in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (London: Routledge, 1995), 152; Alan Lawson, "The Discovery of Nationality in Australian And Canadian Literatures," in *Ibid.*; Elizabeth Jacka, "Australian Cinema," in *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, ed. John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 518.

⁷³ Quy, *Teaching Short Films*, 53.

⁷⁴ Chalmers and Fowler, *Ten Short Films for Schools*, 13.

⁷⁵ Wi Kuki Kaa, in *Turangawaewae: He Korero*.

⁷⁶ Raskin, *Art of the Short Fiction Film*, 169-170.

addition to helping to contextualise characters and depict their inner lives, props in several of the films convey figurative meaning. The spider, for example, is a loaded image with many possible interpretations. In *Trust Me*, it serves to clearly differentiate the sisters, and can be seen as representing the female aversion to spiders that is condoned by society.⁷⁷ While the more childlike Billie enjoys playing with the spider; her older, more feminine sister is terrified of it. Where the interaction with and fear of the spider is thus symbolic of socially constructed femininity, the central object in *Rock* can be read as a symbol of stoic but dangerous masculinity, as well as a point of difference between the world of the child and that of the adult. The film's director has described his interest in the isolated status of Ralph and his imaginative friendship with 'Rocky', which contrasts with Ralph's mother's disapproving attitude towards the rock. Challis explains, 'I'm interested in making films about (New Zealand) males who deal with the world by not talking about issues, who run away or sulk, and can't communicate unless completely enraged.'⁷⁸ The symbols in these films thus communicate messages about gender constructions within New Zealand society.

The possibility for a political reading of the carefully selected props in *Two Cars, One Night* is demonstrated by several scholars. Both Mercier and Jo Smith refer to the book about 'Crazy Horse' that Romeo's brother Ed is reading: *The Fetterman Massacre* is an account from a colonial perspective of a Native American leader who fought to preserve the traditions of his people.⁷⁹ Mercier interprets this as suggesting that, 'Ed's struggle, as a potential leader, is one of taking on Western tools of education to teach himself about the coloniser.'⁸⁰ Every academic analysis of Waititi's film also describes the symbolic value of the plastic ring given to Romeo by Polly. For Mercier, it represents a *koha* (gift) exchanged at the *powhiri*, while it also plays with gendered, Pakeha notions of ring-giving in heterosexual relationships.⁸¹ Quy also refers to the ring's signification of commitment and marriage, and adds, 'it carries connotations of aspirations to wealth'.⁸² While all commentators agree that the exchanging of the ring represents the defining moment in the alliance formed by the characters, Lister suggests that this action also symbolises power and the 'brief connection ... forged between the filmmaker

⁷⁷ This signification of the spider is described by Kilntberg, in Gail De Vos. "Tales, Rumors, and Gossip: Exploring Contemporary Folk Literature in Grades 7-12." Libraries Unlimited, 1996), <http://books.google.com/books?id=M8bvN93y-fIC&pg=PA186&dq=spiders+folklore+and+mythology&lr=&ei=HHsNSNGgNZOKsgO2sqnHAQ&sig=rfYxr-r7pktGmHuA31vEUL99rn8> (accessed 22 April 2009).

⁷⁸ Challis, "Director's Notes."

⁷⁹ Jo Smith, "Bicultural Temporalities: Time and Place in *Two Cars, One Night*," in *Place: Local Knowledge and New Media Practice*, ed. Danny Butt, Jon Bywater, and Nova Paul (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2008), 58; Mercier, "Films of Taika Waititi," 44.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Quy, *Teaching Short Films*, 57.

and his audiences over those eleven and a half minutes.⁸³ *Two Cars, One Night* thus epitomises Raskin's assertion that good short films 'remind us that *every moment is filled with opportunities that can either be seized or allowed to slip by.*'⁸⁴

National myths

The meaning of *Two Cars, One Night* can also be interpreted in relation to myths of nationalism. The film has been positioned within the frame of bicultural nationalism, but in opposition to the hegemonic version of it, which, according to Mark Williams, emerged in the 1970s and 80s as a determined effort to overcome the 'paternalism, hierarchy and exclusiveness' of early Pakeha nationalism.⁸⁵ Smith asserts that Waititi's lyrical treatment of time dramatises the social situation of the characters, and his self-reflexive cinematic style encourages the audience to think about the representations in the film, 'and by extension, the larger socio-political climate of Aotearoa/New Zealand.'⁸⁶ While some might read the distinctly Maori voice and absence of Pakeha characters in *Two Cars, One Night* as signalling a sort of Maori nationalism, Smith argues that Waititi refuses to endorse either a Maori or a Pakeha epistemology of national identity, and instead offers an alternative vision to 'the progressive logic of orthodox bicultural politics'.⁸⁷ Lister agrees that the film is not supposed 'to be read solely on Maori terms' and points to Waititi's disavowal of the label of 'Maori artist'.⁸⁸

It is possible to consider *Two Cars, One Night* as an updated or alternative version of the progressive bicultural myth represented in another successful NZFC-funded short film, *Avondale Dogs* (Gregor Nicholas, 1994). That black and white film also lyrically captures the subjective experience of a boy clearly situated in the area where the writer-director grew up, and is based on his autobiographical experiences and a desire to express a parallel subtext. 'One of the principal things that I was trying to do in the film was to create beautiful moments out of apparently austere environments,' states Nicholas.⁸⁹ Waititi echoes, 'By nature, when faced with grim circumstances, we tend to look for the light, the warmth, the beauty in life.... I

⁸³ Lister, "Two Artists, One Car," 48.

⁸⁴ Raskin, *Art of the Short Fiction Film*, 173. (Emphasis in original.)

⁸⁵ Mark Williams, "Crippled by Geography? New Zealand Nationalisms," in *Not on any Map: Essays on Postcoloniality and Cultural Nationalism* ed. Stuart Murray (Devon: University of Exeter Press, 1997), 27.

⁸⁶ Smith, "Bicultural Temporalities," 45-51.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 52-55.

⁸⁸ Lister, "Two Artists, One Car," 47-48. See also note 120 in Chapter Four.

⁸⁹ Nicholas, cited in Raskin, "An Interview with Gregor Nicholas on *Avondale Dogs*," *P.O.V.* 1 (1996), http://pov.imv.au.dk/Issue_01/Avndldg/Avndldg7.html (accessed 16 April 2009).

want to show how human contact creates something special in a not so special environment.’⁹⁰ Both auteurs use the exchange of a plastic ring at the climax of the film to symbolise the intimate yet innocent bond between a pair of young friends. In light of Lister’s identification of the ring as a symbol of power and Mercier’s inference of the inversion of the male role as ring-giver, this exchange in *Two Cars, One Night* can be read as an intertextual reference that suggests a transfer of benevolent power from the young Pakeha male in Avondale (who gives the ring to a Maori girl) to the young Maori female on the East Coast (who gives it to a Maori boy).

These films both end on an image of the protagonist that encourages the audience to contemplate the future ahead of this character. While the final two-shot of Paul and Glenys in *Avondale Dogs* deliberately suggests a robust future partnership between the two cultures,⁹¹ Smith argues that the sense of foreboding and vulnerable framing of Romeo in the closing sequence of *Two Cars, One Night* underlines the precariousness of the character’s situation.⁹² The overriding tone in Waititi’s film is nonetheless warm and humorous, offering viewers the hope that its characters will resist being pulled into the world of their parents and instead embrace their creativity and spontaneity to forge an alternative future.⁹³ Waititi’s demonstration of his creative talents through this film and his subsequent success suggests that he is doing just that, whilst refusing an essentialist label of his cultural identity.

Very few NZFC short films tackle social problems in an overt manner or engage directly with questions of national identity. *The Freezer* and *Turangawaewae* are the only other films in my sample that challenge the viewer to consider cultural issues of political significance, such as Maori alienation from their land, although it is possible to watch these films without making such an inference. Neither *The Freezer* nor *Turangawaewae* has achieved as high a profile as *Two Cars, One Night*, so their representations have not been publicly discussed by critics or scholars. Along with two other films in this sample, these three texts have been included in an educational resource pack featuring ten New Zealand short films.⁹⁴ Resource developer Hamish Chalmers points to the ironically cheerful song ‘Haere Mai’ in the opening sequence of *Turangawaewae*, which ‘was probably written to welcome Queen Elizabeth II’ for her

⁹⁰ Waititi, "Director's Notes."

⁹¹ Raskin, "Interview with Gregor Nicholas."

⁹² Smith, "Bicultural Temporalities."

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 50-54.

⁹⁴ The other films are *Fish out of Water* and *Nothing Special*. Chalmers and Fowler, *Ten Short Films for Schools*.

coronation tour of New Zealand in 1953.⁹⁵ While he focuses on the song's reference to 'D-Day' and the fragmented, frightening war flashbacks in the film, it is also possible to read this soundtrack selection as a political reference to the arrival of the British in New Zealand, especially given the portrayal of the issue of Maori alienation from ancestral land. In contrast to Waititi's film, *Turangawaewae* engages with a discourse of Maori nationalism, in both a cultural and political manner.⁹⁶ The plight of Tiare in this film suggests that clutching at spiritual symbols is not sufficient to recreate a lost identity; he needs to return to his *marae* with the support of his *whanau*. The ending in this sense contains a similar message to that in *Whale Rider* (Niki Caro, 2002) and *Once Were Warriors* (Lee Tamahori, 1994). These films can all be read as a return to the myth that Maori 'derived their identity from their whakapapa and turangawaewae (a home place), and that those umbilical connections were best preserved by living close to one's extended family, home marae and urupa (cemeteries).'⁹⁷ The sudden, violent flashback that interrupts an otherwise harmonious homecoming in *Turangawaewae* is a reminder by writer Wiremu Grace that this is not a simple solution that will automatically cure a painful past.

The Freezer explicitly highlights disparities between its Maori and Pakeha characters yet does not attempt to offer any solution to the problems they face. This film contrasts the road conditions and buildings in the main street of the Pakeha-dominated town and the rural setting of Panguru, where the Maori characters live.⁹⁸ Although this may represent the social reality of Northland Maori in the 1970s, it perpetuates rather than challenges old stereotypes of Maori as hospitable and friendly but poor, lazy and rural.⁹⁹ *The Freezer* illustrates the challenges a filmmaker faces in representing a culture different to his own. In this film, the children play in the cemetery, drawing cricket wickets on a tombstone before lying in a freshly dug grave. According to Pitts' account of Maori protocol in regards to another film, Rotondo should not have filmed in this location or allowed a grave to be dug as to do so is to invite death.¹⁰⁰ This

⁹⁵ Ibid., 13.

⁹⁶ Maori nationalism can be associated both with the cultural renaissance of Maori from the 1970s onwards and with 'Maori sovereignty, which signified the desire among Maori for a return not only of their alienated land but also of the cultural and political autonomy they had lost through 150 years of domination by the Pakeha.' Williams, "New Zealand Nationalisms," 32.

⁹⁷ Michael King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 2004), 470. Dominant in the early twentieth century, this myth was apparently challenged by Maori who served abroad in wars, 'got a taste of other ways of life in other places, assumed wartime responsibilities far beyond those for which their age and previous experience had prepared them, and returned with altered expectations for themselves and for their people.' See also Keown, "Nationalism and Cultural Identity," 198-199.

⁹⁸ Chalmers and Fowler, *Ten Short Films for Schools*, 23-24.

⁹⁹ See George Bowen, *People and Promises: Maori and Pakeha Relations, 1912-1980* (Auckland: Longman, 2000), 37-41.

¹⁰⁰ Pitts, "Cross-Cultural Filmmaking", 168.

highlights the problem of cultural appropriation, which is an ongoing issue in cultural production.¹⁰¹

Although most New Zealanders live in a city, our films often represent rural settings and small towns. Indeed, the main setting of almost half the live action films is a natural environment or small town. Karl Zohrab (*Little Jab*) reveals that many of the submitted scripts in 2002 were set in 'rural New Zealand'.¹⁰² Some of the selected short films indicate a disjuncture with 'the New Zealand rural myth', though.¹⁰³ Whereas Watson observes that New Zealand feature films underutilised the urban landscape in the 1970s and 1980s, over half of the stories in the short films made between 1998 and 2008 took place in or around a city.

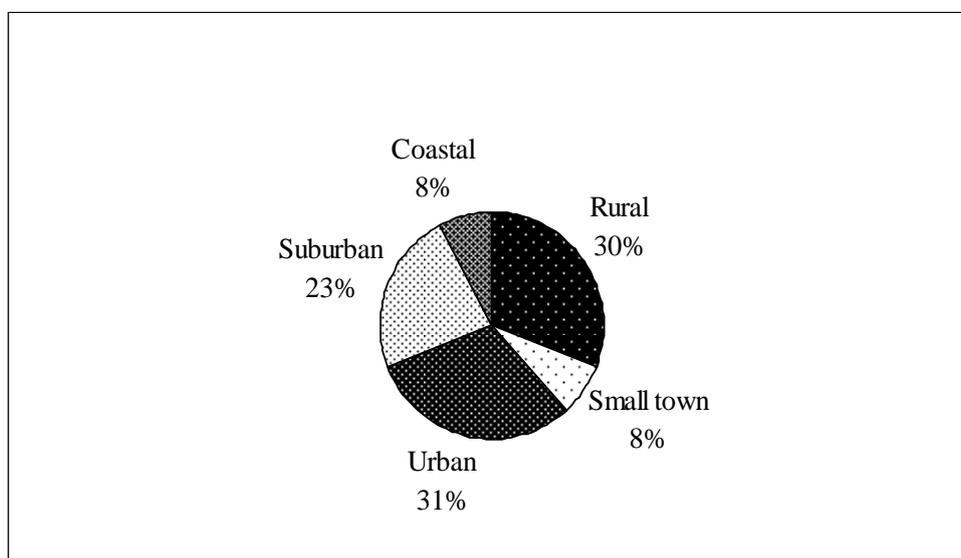


Figure 4: Main setting of live action short films

In general, Pakeha short filmmakers seem less concerned with cultural or national identity than with social roles and gender identity. There are two major themes that recur in NZFC-funded short films: coming of age and gender issues. In the analysis of narrative above, filmmakers' adaptation of personal experience was presented as an explanatory factor for the predominance of coming of age stories. Six of the thirteen live action films in my sample can be described as coming of age stories, while five are predominantly concerned with gender roles. The end of innocence is suggested for the young Pakeha protagonist in *The Freezer* and *Rock*; and a sexual

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 185,197. On the issue of self-representation in film and literature, see, for example, Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, 342-347; Margery Fee, "Who Can Write as Other?," in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (London: Routledge, 1995); Kothari, in *Script to Screen*, "Writing Outstanding Shorts."

¹⁰² Wakefield, "Short Film Fund Deluged."

¹⁰³ Watson, "Effect of Funding Policies," 128.

awakening or awareness of the main character's gender identity is central to *Trust Me*, *Cockle*, *Nothing Special* and *Two Cars, One Night*. The idea of masculinity is explored in *Rock*, *Beautiful* and *Cockle*, while motherhood is a central issue in *This Is Her* and *Shadow Over The Sun*. *Rock*, *Cockle* and *Beautiful* question dominant representations of Pakeha masculinity: *Cockle* depicts the protagonist's struggle to meet social expectations of young New Zealand men to be assertive and physically strong (exemplified by the rugby player); and *Beautiful* gently mocks its characters' homophobic reactions.

Issues of gender roles and relations are prevalent in New Zealand filmmaking, and two distinct traditions of the 'cinema of unease' can be associated with either men or women. The 'Pakeha identity quest' film that dominated New Zealand cinema in the 1970s and 1980s tended to be a film made by men about a man's journey.¹⁰⁴ An overbearing mother – a fairly common archetype in feature films that deal with anxieties about Pakeha masculinity¹⁰⁵ – also appears in *Rock* and *Nothing Special*. There is another tradition in New Zealand national cinema that is associated with women directors, however. The psychodrama emerged as a popular genre among female filmmakers in the 1970s and remained dominant until the late 1990s.¹⁰⁶ *Trust Me*, with its dark mise-en-scène, unsettling images and emotionally intense exploration of fear, sisterhood and desire can be seen to follow in the tradition of the psychodrama. *This is Her*, however, represents a disjuncture from this dominant form of women's filmmaking. Although it deals with feminist issues such as childbirth, marital relationships and female friendships, Wolfe and cinematographer Ginny Loane create a world full of bright colours and sharp images, hugely contrasting with the dark aesthetics expected of New Zealand films, especially those dealing with the same subjects and made by women. Its aesthetics seem more fitting for television, and Wolfe reveals she instructed her team to make the film look like a commercial aimed at female consumers.¹⁰⁷

Other films in this selection also contain an implicit critique of an aspect of New Zealand society, although they can be interpreted in different ways. *Infection* can be seen as making a bold political statement. Its use of generic conventions such as fight scenes and action music

¹⁰⁴ Lawrence McDonald, "A Book Review of Film in Aotearoa New Zealand that ended up as an Essay on Film in Aotearoa New Zealand" *Illusions*: 21-22 (1993).

¹⁰⁵ Campbell, "Kiwi Bloke," 219-222.

¹⁰⁶ Robson and Zalcock, *Girls' Own Stories*, 8.

¹⁰⁷ Wolfe, describing a reaction to her film from an Israeli director of photography at Sundance, explains 'She was saying to me it looks like a commercial – which is completely intentional. That was my instruction: it needs to look like a nappy ad.' In Wichtel, "This is Her." Powell's review of *This is Her* observes: 'With its narration-over-visuals style it occasionally produces the feel of an extended advertisement or an introductory segment to a *Grey's Anatomy* episode.' Powell, "Homegrown."

encourages audiences to support the quest of the computer virus whose mission it is to destroy a student loan. The Student Loan Facility is located in Unibank, a sterile white building that is heavily guarded by eyeballs and syringes, images that can be interpreted as symbolising a watchful, oppressive state. In this sense it reproduces the anti-authoritarianism that is a dominant theme in Pakeha ‘identity quest’ films.¹⁰⁸ On the other hand, especially because it is an animation, this film could be seen simply as an entertaining tale that draws on recognisable themes and generic conventions in an innovative manner.

Also in accordance with thematic tropes in New Zealand national cinema, several films deal with the issue of conformity or being an outsider in society, all in a humorous manner: *Grass*, *Fish out of Water* and *Nothing Special*. The other black comedies, *Beautiful* and *This is Her*, also deal with a serious issue in a cynical or humorous way, arguably reflecting a distinctly New Zealand way of dealing with social problems. According to the NZFC-commissioned audience survey, the humour that makes New Zealand films distinctive ‘seldom goes for the obvious laugh’ and is often used as an ‘edgy’ accompaniment to deeper emotion.¹⁰⁹ Stuart describes the uniqueness of this quirky humour: ‘A definite component of the offbeat quality [in New Zealand films] is the distinct aversion to sunny Hollywood values.’¹¹⁰

Innovation and conformity

It was suggested in the introduction that the two dominant modes of short film – ‘condensed classical narrative’ and ‘experimental’ – can be considered as two extremes on a continuum.¹¹¹ My analysis suggests that short films financed by the NZFC EP Scheme are located more at the conventional than the experimental end of this continuum. No NZFC short film is a pure genre imitation, simply because the codes of feature film genres cannot be directly applied to short filmmaking. None of this selection of short films is a true example of experimental cinema either, if we adopt Raskin’s definition of ‘anti-narrative’ films.¹¹² Nevertheless, the innovative narrative and highly stylised cinematography of *Te Po Uriuri* and lack of distinctive genre conventions and complex structure in *Turangawaewae* make these films somewhat experimental. It is interesting to note that the key creatives on both of these films were Maori.

¹⁰⁸ Campbell, "Kiwi Bloke"; Williams, "Waka on the Wild Side," 188.

¹⁰⁹ Two other core traits listed are: ‘It takes the piss – it functions as an egalitarian tool’ and ‘Our humour has a cultural dimension.’ Stuart, "What Makes New Zealand Film Distinctive?," 111.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 123.

¹¹¹ See note 12 in Chapter One.

¹¹² Raskin, *Art of the Short Fiction Film*, 29.

Arguably, the two most innovative projects in the sample are both animated films. Funded in 1998, *Infection* utilised new digital technology to depict a story about digital technology: the visual representation of a computer virus deployed to eliminate one man's student debt was original, topical and innovative. *A Very Nice Honeymoon* was selected by Blueskin Films, a production company that did not demand innovation but nonetheless required a strong, original script. The Simmonds brothers' treatment of a family story in their film can be described as innovative for its unique blend of archival audio and hand-drawn cartoon images. It also pioneered domestic computer graphics being transferred to film in this way. Phill Simmonds coined the term 'documation' to describe this genre, while he notes that what makes their style unique is the way in which it bucks contemporary trends.¹¹³

3D [animation] is increasingly popular at the moment, so we're working in 2D.... Also, there's nothing 'controversial' about what we're doing and perhaps that's why our work works... The 'shocking truth' simply isn't that shocking any more, so the only way left is to head in the opposite direction to find something startling.¹¹⁴

Although their film did not secure any 'A' list festival screenings, the fresh vision and strong skills of Jeff and Phill Simmonds earned them the title of SPADA Filmmakers of the Year in 2006.

Two other films in my sample demonstrate the potential to test new technical processes on short film, rather than having to conduct a more expensive experiment on a longer film. *Turangawaewae* and *Nothing Special* were at the technical 'cutting edge' at the time for their use of digital intermediate in the post production process.¹¹⁵ This is now a common method of post production for short and feature films.¹¹⁶ The majority of my sample does not contain great innovation in form, style or content, though. The NZFC does not aim to encourage avant-garde cinema but rather films that use conventional techniques that are relevant to feature filmmaking and appeal to a mainstream audience.

The three animated films in my selection do not reflect New Zealand traditions of filmmaking. This is especially true of *A Very Nice Honeymoon*, which combines visual codes of animation

¹¹³ Kay Blundell, "Animators Crowing over Rooster Short Film Win," *The Dominion Post*, 26 November 2008. Simmonds says he was inspired by the British short film *Creature Comforts* (Nick Park, 1989). *OnFilm*, "The Brothers Grin," February 2007. The term 'documation' has also been employed to describe films that do not contain archival audio but use animation to re-enact historical events, such as *Waltz with Bashir* (Ari Folman, 2008).

¹¹⁴ *OnFilm*, "The Brothers Grin."

¹¹⁵ *OnFilm*, "Kiwi Short Cracks Critics' Week," May 2003. *OnFilm*, "Adding Something Special," May 2005, <http://www.archivesearch.co.nz/default.aspx?webid=ONF&articleid=18469> (accessed 1 December 2008).

¹¹⁶ John Belton, "Painting by the Numbers: The Digital Intermediate," *Film Quarterly* 31: 3 (2008).

with documentary-style audio, a technique that had not appeared in any previous New Zealand film. Similarly, *Infection* broke new ground as a digital animation. Overall, though, most films in this study can be considered as extensions of and reactions to New Zealand national cinema. The idiomatic dialogue and behaviour of characters, the predominance of children, the distinctive and metaphoric landscapes, and the humorous treatment of serious subjects are all markers of ‘significant New Zealand content’ in this selection. Several of these films represent continuity in the preoccupation with gender roles and the gender specific approach to filmmaking that marks the tradition of the ‘cinema of unease’. Few of them engage directly with the issue of nationalism but their treatment of masculinity, conformity and coming-of-age tales place them firmly in the realm of New Zealand national cinema. My analysis corresponds with Pitts’ observation of the difference between the subtexts of different strands of New Zealand national cinema. ‘In contrast to the individualism, angst, sexual politics and largely apolitical strands of Pakeha cinema,’ she writes, ‘the politics are (unsurprisingly) very close to the surface’ in the alternative representations of Maori filmmakers who explore socio-cultural issues, such as the importance of family, community and cultural roots, and the problems of urbanisation and economic marginalisation.¹¹⁷

Conclusion

While the selected short films represent a largely homogenous society in terms of cultural identity, they nonetheless display a diverse range of cultural expression. The use of various framing devices and themes, as well as divergent codes and conventions, suggest short filmmakers are not entirely constrained by prevailing definitions of New Zealand national cinema. This reflects the diverse tastes of Short Film Fund EPs as well as the NZFC’s expectations that a wide range of short films be supported. It is remarkable that three films, representing 19 per cent of my sample, are animations. The Short Film Fund is not designed to cater for animated projects, which are not an established form of feature filmmaking in New Zealand. As mentioned in Chapter Three, animated short films are expensive and time-consuming, so have an increased possibility of non-completion. The selection of a short animation by three of the EP groups studied therefore represents a risky decision. Although *Grass* was not particularly successful, the highly innovative style of *Infection* and *A Very Nice Honeymoon*, and their subsequent appreciation by local and foreign audiences, demonstrate the value of allowing EPs the flexibility to make creative funding choices.

¹¹⁷ Pitts, "Cross-Cultural Filmmaking", 212.

The constraints of the short film form in terms of limiting the number of characters may explain in part the failure of these films to reflect a multicultural society. A potential explanation for the strong representation of Maori when other ethnic minorities are absent is twofold. Firstly, it appears that NZFC support for Maori filmmaking is substantive, not merely rhetorical. Therefore, targeted programmes to support historically marginalised groups can be effective in short film policy. Secondly, the orientation towards the international market sees Maori content as a unique selling point for New Zealand films. As Yeatman puts it, ‘the incorporation of indigenous elements within films is an effective commercial strategy’.¹¹⁸ While the following comment by Crofts refers particularly to Australian film in the 1990s, it is an apt description of the climate of international film festivals:

the dominant film-critical discourse is the depoliticizing one of an essentialist humanism (“the human condition”) complemented by a tokenist culturalism (“very French”) and an aestheticizing of the culturally specific (“a poetic account of local life”) One shrewd and successful strategy has been the combination of cultural universals (family madness, artistic ambition, rape) with specific local inflections...¹¹⁹

Petrie, Pitts and Joyce similarly describe the combination of culturally specific representations and universal themes in New Zealand films as a successful formula.¹²⁰ Of the three projects that we could call ‘Maori films’, both texts that represent Maori characters in a contemporary setting (*Two Cars* and *Turangawaewae*) have universal themes (first encounter and socio-cultural alienation) and received critical acclaim at A-list festivals. These films, as my discussion demonstrates, are also the texts that engage most strongly with cultural politics. Although *Te Po Uriuri* was also selected for some international festivals, it did not achieve such a high level of success, possibly because its experimentation with form was not particularly effective.

Short film has been identified as a crucial site for the representation of marginalised voices and as an important entry point for disenfranchised filmmakers.¹²¹ The absence of, for example, elderly, wealthy, openly homosexual and disabled characters in these films suggests that certain voices are privileged by NZFC policies and contemporary filmmaking practices. In my sample, the dominant voice is that of the Pakeha male, who continues to be a central character in short

¹¹⁸ Yeatman, "Policy and Practice", 16. See also Pinfold et al., "Capability Study," 49; Petrie, "30 Years On," 165.

¹¹⁹ Crofts, "Reconceptualizing National Cinema/s," 39-40.

¹²⁰ Joyce, "In Development", 271-274; Pitts, "Cross-Cultural Filmmaking", 289; Petrie, "30 Years On," 165-166. Shohat and Stam argue that ‘universal themes’ actually mean representations ‘palatable to the Western spectator’. In *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, 186.

¹²¹ Shepard, *Reframing Women*, 131, 208; Quy, *Teaching Short Films*, 34; Keown, "Nationalism and Cultural Identity," 207-208; Milligan, interview; Alexander, interview; Robson and Zalcock, *Girls' Own Stories*, 2-7, 30-32.

films, sometimes even those made by a woman writer and director. Although many short filmmakers draw on their personal experiences for material, the main character in each film does not necessarily have the same identity as the writer or director. There are an increasing number of female creative teams, although the majority of NZFC-funded short films are directed and produced by men. It is heartening that Maori are well represented in this sample, but concerning that a greater diversity of cultural identities is not evident. That may already be in the process of changing, but it should be an important consideration of the NZFC in future reviews of its funding policy outcomes.

This chapter has demonstrated that a significant part of short film culture is not only the creation of films and their festival screenings, which the NZFC rightly prioritise, but also the discussion of these films in the wider cultural public sphere. The meanings of short films are truly explored when audiences think, talk and write about them. As my research has shown, films like *Two Cars, One Night*, that gain critical capital overseas are more likely to be studied, reviewed and analysed in New Zealand. The inclusion of less acclaimed but nonetheless quality short films such as *The Freezer* and *Fish out of Water* in educational resources ensures that the techniques and ideas displayed in these films also receive some attention from local viewers.

Within my sample there is a clear preference for personal, narrative films that use cinematic techniques common in both international short filmmaking and New Zealand feature films. The selected short films funded by NZFC EPs between 1997 and 2007 represent a bicultural nation with great geographical diversity and a relatively calm social climate. Set in a variety of natural and urban landscapes, the stories in these films tend to portray individuals in their everyday lives coming to terms with their gender-specific social identity. The setting is important to these characters' sense of self, whether they are fishing in a dinghy at sea, seated in a drab office, running through the wild bush, or walking past a dull residential subdivision. Family is important but there is little sense of community or collective identity. It is a fairly egalitarian society, with no signs of excessive wealth or class conflict, yet Maori poverty is a pressing issue. There is some crime and violence in this society, but there is also a fair amount of compassion and companionship. The humorous treatment of serious issues suggests a droll way of dealing with problems in New Zealand. The high production values and competent use of various cinematic techniques suggest that behind the camera, if not in the diegetic world in

front of it, are some creative and talented individuals who possess the skills and motivation to continue making valuable contributions to New Zealand national cinema.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

Amidst varying frames of film funding and fluctuations in the level of government support, the NZFC has continued to endorse short film. While the NZFC has managed a specific programme for short film production since 1985, it has always been more concerned with feature filmmaking. Recent government and industry policy discourse has continued to largely ignore short film, yet the medium received funding increases from both CNZ and the NZFC from 2004. Given Labour's predisposition to support film as a cultural industry of social and economic importance, one might have expected to see some reforms of short film funding alongside the increases in the sums available. In the wider film sector, there were significant developments, such as the establishment of the Film Production Fund, which represented a stronger push towards highly commercial productions made for a global and domestic audience, using a combination of local resources and international finance. In short film policy, however, there was little change. EP budgets were increased by \$30,000 per film, which still did not bring them up to the \$120,000 allocated to 'bonsai epics' in the late 1980s and early 90s. The funding increase was accompanied by a demand from the NZFC that reflected the existing requirement of most EPs: short films must be finished to 35mm print, ready for theatrical screening. This is a contentious policy, as there is, if anything, a decreased need for films to be finished in this format, especially when most 'A' list festivals now accept digital formats.

Short film policy, like the dominant discourses surrounding film funding, has remained fairly constant, regardless of changes in government and the 'restructuring culture' within New Zealand's public sector.¹ The NZFC Act allows a degree of institutional stability and ensures the ongoing accommodation of cultural nationalism alongside the hegemonic discourse of economic rationalism. This thesis has discussed the major reviews of the Short Film Fund in 1997 and 2007, but other appraisals were also conducted between those times. Veber reveals that there tends to be a review of the Short Film Fund each time 'there is a change of Government, a new NZFC Board is appointed or a new CEO [is employed].'² Although the 1997 review resulted in a major restructure of the fund, the only change following the 2003 review was the budget and delivery format modification detailed above. As discussed in several chapters, the review in 2007 merely reinforced the status quo. With all but one member of the NZFC Board facing the expiry of their term in 2009, along with newly appointed Chief

¹ According to a 1998 report of the State Services Commission, in the New Zealand public service, there is 'a culture in which we reach for the restructuring option instinctively, regardless of the nature of the problem we are trying to solve'. Cited in Shaw, "The Public Service," 279.

² Veber, interview.

Executives of the NZFC and MCH, and a new Minister of Arts, Culture and Heritage, we can expect another review of short film policy in the near future. This is especially likely considering the Government's intentions to review and reform the NZFC.³ Given the ongoing dominance of economic rationalism, it is unlikely that the imminent review of film policy will result in more satisfactory methods of evaluation than those currently in place.

The biggest change to short film policy in recent years has been the restructure of the funding programme administered by CNZ. The replacement of the SIPF with the IFF shifts the target from emerging to experienced filmmakers, offering higher level 'investments' for audience-orientated films, rather than grants encouraging experimentation and innovation. Whether this will make any major difference to the types of projects funded remains to be seen; however, the discourse surrounding the introduction of the new fund signals an alignment with existing NZFC policy and government discourse. Introduced following the election of a National government in late 2008, the principles espoused in the IFF are thus not merely reflective of Labour's third way policies, but represent an entrenchment of the dominant framing of short film as a means to develop and showcase filmmaking talent.

In the past two decades, film policy has increasingly encompassed strategic, measurable goals. David Newman summarises this paradox: 'Although the cultural mandate is explicit [in NZFC discourse], the criteria are measured in economic terms'.⁴ The application of strategic objectives and performance measures is validated by the principles of public management that the NZFC is required to meet, yet this represents a problematic method of evaluating cultural objectives. Assessing the NZFC's performance is extremely complicated and, as Fitzgerald explains, 'it's very easy to focus on the things that are easy to measure, not the things that are meaningful to measure.'⁵ The 'cult of the measurable'⁶ in New Zealand cultural policy gained momentum with the introduction of a new financial management regime in the late twentieth century, under which government funding was determined according to the cost of departments' outputs, making it easier for ministers to manage what was delivered, and encouraging agencies to focus on quantifiable outcomes.⁷ While the NZFC reformulated its objectives to express broader, vaguer outcomes in 2005, the government still requires the

³ Chris Finlayson, "Industry Q&A," *Take*, Autumn 2009; Ministry for Culture and Heritage, "Peter Jackson to Review Film Commission," 18 June 2009, <http://www.mch.govt.nz/pr/peter-jackson-review-film-comm.html> (accessed June 19, 2009).

⁴ Newman, "Regions and Runaways," 15.

⁵ Fitzgerald, interview.

⁶ Belfiore and Bennett, "Rethinking the Social Impacts of the Arts," 137.

⁷ Shaw, "The Public Service," 277.

institution to demonstrate the effectiveness of its policies through quantitative measures. It is important that film funding is justified and targeted, aiming to achieve efficient and beneficial results, yet this narrow focus on tangible outcomes risks obscuring the value of public support for short film production and distribution. It ignores the possible contribution of film funding to wider goals, such as the functioning of a dynamic cultural sphere.

Back in 1987, when neoliberal discourses were only beginning to take root in Australian cultural policy, Dermody and Jacka revealed a deep reluctance within the film sector to examine Australian cinema against political and aesthetic criteria. They observed that resources were invested in assessing issues of financial viability, law, marketing and administration, yet: 'Questions of [filmic] content cannot be asked; there exists no public nor professional discourse in which they can be formulated.'⁸ This thesis has shown that the same can be said regarding the NZFC. Easily identifiable, strategic targets were borrowed from accountability documents and applied throughout the 2007 Review in what was arguably a response to a minister procuring policy evaluation 'that tells them what they wish to hear, rather than what they may need to be told'.⁹

The previous chapter attempts the difficult task of finding a discourse within which New Zealand short films can be assessed against political and aesthetic criteria. This is possible only when an interpretive textual analysis overrides the notion of scientific objectivity. While my analysis is thus somewhat subjective, it draws on wide research to describe, where relevant, the intentions of the filmmakers as well as the reactions of critics and audiences to the films studied. It diverges from traditional evidence-based policy research in that its 'evidence' cannot be boiled down to hard facts. This approach depends on a contextual awareness and invokes the discourses of national cinema, policy framing and the creative industries to describe some of the processes that affect state-funded short filmmaking in New Zealand.

The NZFC determines who selects short film projects for funding and how those proposals are appraised, so its influence on political and aesthetic outcomes is significant, if not direct. The devolved structure of the EP Scheme and absence of specific criteria regarding the style and content of projects eligible for funding make the Short Film Fund appear non-prescriptive. In reality, however, funding decisions are constrained by budget limits, the framing of the scheme

⁸ Dermody and Jacka, *Anatomy of a Film Industry*, 106.

⁹ Richard Shaw, "Consultants and Advisers," in *New Zealand Government and Politics*, ed. Raymond Miller (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2006), 269.

as a pathway to feature filmmaking, the NZFC mandate in regards to nationally specific content, and the use of performance targets such as ‘A’ list festivals. Consequently, financial support is restricted to narrative films of less than 15 minutes, shot and completed on 35mm print and, until recently, predominantly featuring Pakeha or Maori characters and stories. The insistence on narrative dramas that display similar conventions to those of New Zealand feature films results in a predominance of short films with a narrative driven by an individual protagonist and evoking a sense of isolation. Films with recognisably New Zealand settings, ‘festival friendly’ style and format, few characters and personal stories, often depicting family relationships and either everyday activities or coming-of-age experiences consequently dominate the output of the EP Scheme.

The NZFC’s consistent focus on feature film talent development rests on the assumptions that short filmmakers all desire a career in the feature film industry and that short filmmaking involves skills relevant to feature filmmaking. Both these ideas are problematic, although they reflect filmmakers’ views and practices to a certain extent. The focus on the strategy of director talent development reflects a narrow individualistic conception of filmmaking. It encourages policy makers, implementers and analysts to overlook the significant level of collaboration and contributions from diverse members of the cast and crew. It also suggests that the skills developed and techniques explored in the creation of a short film are most likely to benefit the director of that short film. While a festival screening undeniably benefits a director more than any other person involved, there are externalities in short filmmaking that are not accounted for by this focus. Attention is rarely given to the indirect effects of short film production, such as its significant role in the form of research and development for the screen production industry. A cinematographer or editor, for instance, might use the freedom of short film to try a new technique, which, if successful, they are likely to employ in their later work. Moreover, developments in the language of film or in techniques of cinematic storytelling may be borrowed by any other creative artist in society who takes and adapts ideas from existing films. As Reinhard Wolf argues, not only does short filmmaking play ‘a crucial role in the field of technical innovation’; ‘It would be hard to find an innovation in film aesthetics that was not first “invented” and tried out in short film.’¹⁰

‘The problem for cultural policy is to manage the gap between institutional practice and what people actually do’; Wevers and Williams thus argue strongly for a departure from nationalism

¹⁰ Wolf, "What is Cinema – What is Short Film?". See also Quy, "In Short Supply"; Evans, "Glimpse Culture," x; Elsey and Kelly, *In Short*, 4.

in cultural policy in order to give artists the freedom to explore diverse forms of cultural expression.¹¹ The NZFC does grant considerable autonomy to short filmmakers: it allows independent executive producers to set funding criteria and determine their method for making allocation decisions, and it usually does not interfere in the process of development, production, or post production. Therefore, although short films form part of New Zealand national cinema and contribute to the representation of the national brand overseas, nobody insists that local short filmmakers engage with myths of national identity or make specific representations of the nation in their films. Consequently, despite the observations made above regarding the types of films favoured under the EP Scheme, there is often a disjuncture between the ideologies of recent governments and the values and messages represented in publicly-funded short films.

The dominant discourses surrounding film policy are founded on an acceptance of neoliberal values in a global society where the nation-state continues to play an important role. These ideologies are not necessarily represented in the films funded by agencies that employ such discourse. Although NZFC short films tend to have individual protagonists, it is their personal life and relationships with friends, lovers and family members that are important – not their role in society as a consumer, citizen or worker. The creative entrepreneur might be behind the camera, but s/he is rarely in front of it. While short filmmakers often demonstrate the skills relevant to the image of New Zealand as a creative, innovative society, their characters tend to engage in simpler, more traditional activities. The cohesive, multicultural society that the Clark administration embraced is not present in the short films in my sample either, which present a predominantly monocultural world where Pakeha hold hegemonic power. Despite their propensity to represent an egalitarian society, in the sense that there is no class conflict and race relations are not an issue, structural inequalities are highlighted in the form of Maori poverty. Most of these films do not engage with myths of national identity, and those that do tend to mock or criticise traditional ideas, particularly when dealing with the issue of Pakeha masculinity.

During the period studied, there were more diverse representations of characters in short films that were not funded by NZFC EPs than those that were supported by the national film funding agency. While a comprehensive study of all New Zealand short films was not possible in the scope of this thesis, it also seems that there were more diverse representations of New Zealanders in NZFC-funded films before and after the 1997 to 2007 period. Before 1997, the Short Film Fund committee awarded finance to projects whose main characters included an

¹¹ Wevers and Williams, "Cultural Policy in a Small Country," 17. See also Williams, "Waka on the Wild Side."

openly homosexual pair of Maori and Pakeha soldiers (*Twilight of the Gods*, 1995); a son of recent immigrants who speaks Samoan throughout the film (*O Tamaiti*, 1996); and an autistic child who lives with her family in the forest (*Possum*, 1997).¹² Since the period studied, NZFC EPs have funded films whose main characters have included a school cleaner from the Cook Islands (*The Graffiti of Mr Tupaia*); a teenage Maori tagger (*The Speaker*); a Muslim Ethiopian woman (*Coffee & Allah*) and three New Zealand actresses of Asian ethnicity (*Take 3*). These latter films make bolder social or political statements than the films in my sample, and are hence more in line with Clark's description of film as the 'conscience and critic of society'.¹³ They are made by or on behalf of marginalised voices in New Zealand, and encourage a broader definition of what it means to be a New Zealander.

This analysis reveals the difficulty of evaluating film policy within a given timeframe. In her study of NZFC development funding, Joyce points to the dissonance between policy and practice: 'When New Zealand films have been most successful, they have often appeared up to five years after the policy that most influenced them.'¹⁴ For that reason, despite its narrow focus, the longer term analysis in the 2007 Review is much more useful than the application of performance measures in annual reviews. While the NZFC has been slow to recognise the voices of minority cultures and marginalised groups, the agency appears to be paying more attention to these groups in recent years. It has also recently renewed its interest in developing domestic audiences for short film, after a clear focus on international festivals between 1998 and 2006. It is too early to say whether this will have any effect on the types of short films being produced and distributed in New Zealand, but it is promising, especially in light of the increasing exhibition opportunities offered by local broadcasters, websites and film festivals. Pitts writes perceptively:

With more and more domestic audiences being created for the nation's own short films, the local cultural impact of these works is steadily increasing, and this is especially important to those communities inadequately represented in the content and authorial teams of New Zealand feature films.¹⁵

None of the films in my sample are as overtly political as *The Speaker* (Te Arepa Kahi, 2006), which challenges conventional representations of Maori youth and their relationship with the police, whilst directly engaging in commentary on topical political issues such as the controversial Foreshore and Seabed Act passed by Labour in 2004 and National's divisive

¹² See also Joyce, "In Development", 146.

¹³ Clark, "Arts, Culture and Public Policy."

¹⁴ Joyce, "In Development", 270.

¹⁵ Pitts, "Cross-Cultural Filmmaking", 207. See note 73 in Chapter Three.

election campaign billboards in 2005. Of course, in doing this, the film paradoxically embodies the purpose of artistic expression as defined by Clark while actively criticising the policies of her government and actions of the state. Thus it represents the irony of such cultural policy discourse as well as the potential for state-funded films to engage in political debate and social criticism. *Turangawaewae*, *The Freezer* and *Two Cars, One Night* all engage in political discourse too; however, it is possible to watch these films without fully interpreting their implicit critique of sociocultural issues or nationalist discourses. These short films should nonetheless reassure scholars such as Skilling, Wevers and Williams who are concerned that recent cultural policy encourages artists to conform to the mould of creative entrepreneur and prevents them from criticising the prevailing social order.¹⁶ They also suggest that the more conventional representations in the films studied need not mean that contemporary New Zealand filmmakers all demonstrate the complacency characteristic of the consensus in post-ideological society, as described by Tim Corballis and Brian Dunnigan.¹⁷ Nevertheless, these theorists might still be concerned by the lack of radical critique in the films analysed as part of this thesis. While some of these texts engage in an exploration, accentuation, mockery or criticism of issues of social identity, the vast majority contain stories that are much more personal than political. The absence of marginalised groups, counter hegemonic discourses and experimental film practices represented in these texts does suggest a tendency for NZFC short films to reflect the dominant culture. In spite of its potential to be used as a site of experimentation and vehicle for the expression of alternative ideas, short film is predominantly seen as a means to demonstrate a director's ability to make feature films that fit the NZFC criteria of New Zealand content and audience appeal.

There is concern that an increasing focus on the audience may lead to an exclusion of styles and content that have not already proved popular. Combined with an emphasis on the national brand, this might lead to limited representations within New Zealand films that do little more than reinforce existing myths and stereotypes. On the other hand, rather than encouraging the repetition of existing formulas, the audience focus of the NZFC may encourage filmmakers to better connect with the interests and issues relevant to a diverse range of viewers. As Petrie assures sceptics, the national branding effort has not changed the nature of diverse audiences who want different kinds of feature films, nor has it 'undermined the ability of filmmakers to be critical or challenging or to continue to produce dark or troubled images'.¹⁸ The disturbing

¹⁶ Skilling, "Trajectories of Arts and Culture Policy"; Wevers and Williams, "Cultural Policy in a Small Country."

¹⁷ Corballis, "Against Creativity"; Dunnigan, "Making Visible: Reflections on Politics and Film," *P.O.V.* 16 (2003), http://pov.imv.au.dk/Issue_16/POV_16cnt.html (accessed 16 April 2009).

¹⁸ Petrie, "30 Years On," 167.

representation of a child murderer in *Nature's Way* illustrates this point. Thus, the shift within the NZFC from a producer orientation to a market orientation need not be equated with a restriction in the range of films supported. It may even encourage diversity in local filmmaking.

This thesis has demonstrated the manner in which particular discourses, whether deliberately or unconsciously used, affect the perceived results in an evaluation of film policy processes and outcomes. It has evoked the crucial tension between public policy and cultural production that characterises art and film funding discourses. The specificity of filmmaking as an artistic and industrial activity is evident throughout this thesis, which helps to explain the film community's opposition to the use of generic policy goals in this sector. Policies involving state funds generally require that principles of transparency, accountability, and planned outcomes be upheld. Filmmaking, however, is an inherently unpredictable activity that involves risk-taking, and demands that investors, such as agents of the NZFC, make subjective decisions to determine which films are supported while allowing filmmakers the autonomy to produce their work in accordance with their creative vision. Ideally, short filmmakers should be encouraged to take risks and experiment in order to engage audiences and develop new techniques that can be used in other forms of audiovisual production.

It is hard to prove this final point given the current paucity of research on short filmmaking. There are ample opportunities for further scholarship in this regard. A more comprehensive study of New Zealand short filmmaking might be able to demonstrate the techniques developed in this sector that have then been used to enrich feature filmmaking and television production. In terms of 'talent development', a study of short film alongside music videos, commercials, television production and tertiary training would offer a fuller insight into the challenges and opportunities in the screen production sector.¹⁹ While it is important to acknowledge the essential role of the director and significance of his or her vision, research into the important contributions of the producer, writer, and members of the cast and crew would provide a more thorough understanding of the creative process of short filmmaking. A comparison between the films in my sample and a selection of films receiving funding from other sources could confirm or dispel some of my suspicions about the influence of NZFC policy discourse. Another potential form of comparison would be amongst different sectors of cultural production in this

¹⁹ Shepard offers a glimpse of the possibility for a more comprehensive approach in her analysis of Christine Jeffs' TVC work alongside her short films, in *Reframing Women*, 161-162. See also Elsey and Kelly, *In Short*, 16-18; Jones et al., "NZfilm," 44.

country, to consider similarities in the effects of cultural policy discourse on areas such as dance, music, painting or theatre. An international study of short films could provide a broader perspective on the significance of NZFC support and better highlight the similarities and differences between short filmmaking in New Zealand and in other countries. The various studies of New Zealand cinema and international short filmmaking that have emerged from industry, academic and government sources in recent years offer potential for a greater understanding of the international political economy of short film.

While this thesis has not explored the relationship between film and television policy, it is clear that the policies and practices of broadcasters and television funding bodies have a significant impact on the opportunities available to both filmmakers and audiences interested in New Zealand films of all varieties. Factors outside the control of these agencies, such as developments in digital technologies and global communication flows, also offer new opportunities and challenges for cinematic storytellers. Policy makers and analysts should be aware of the fragmentation of audiences and development of niche markets for audiovisual goods. Any future study of short filmmaking should take into account the changing circumstances of cultural production and reception.²⁰

Although this thesis has focused on one funding programme, it has taken care to consider the context within which it operates and its relationships with other funding mechanisms. There are ongoing overlaps between the funds administered by NZ On Air, the NZFC and CNZ. Faced with technological and economic convergence, it may become futile to differentiate between the format on which films are shot or the platform for which they are destined, obfuscating the boundaries between traditional film, television and communications policies. I am not advocating, due to convergence, for all state funding for non-feature length projects to be subsumed under the umbrella of one agency. The greatest advantage of the 'many doors' offered by New Zealand short film policy is the support available, within the constraints set by the NZFC and CNZ, for a variety of projects and range of filmmakers to benefit from the schemes in sometimes quite different ways. Admittedly, this thesis suggests that a greater plurality of filmmakers and diversity of texts could be supported by the EP Scheme. Nonetheless, the support offered by the NZFC is uniquely valuable to filmmakers, especially in

²⁰ Recent developments include the making of 'micro movies' and online series. See, for example, Isomursu et al., "Amateur Video Delivery"; Harris, "Opportunities Beyond the Box"; Clare O'Leary, "Television Meets YouTube: A New Zealand Perspective," (Wellington: Positively Wellington Business, 2007).

an environment where digital media offer greater opportunities for production, but distribution in a saturated marketplace represents a significant challenge.

It is widely accepted that the post production funding, travel grants, and festival submissions provided by the NZFC are worthwhile aspects of its support for short film. The direct involvement of the NZFC in the promotion and distribution of completed films is also in accordance with common practices in the organisation of cultural industries. As David Hesmondhalgh points out, creative work tends to emerge from loosely controlled, autonomous production companies, whereas at the stage of distribution and marketing, senior managers within businesses or cultural bureaucracies often exert tight control over the circulation of cultural artefacts.²¹ The NZFC Post Production Fund enables films selected for high profile international festivals to reach an adequate quality to gain critical capital and represent New Zealand filmmaking overseas, even if they do not meet the criteria set by EPs. This external criterion of eligibility prevents any agent within or outside the NZFC acting as a gatekeeper and allows a greater diversity of short films to represent New Zealand in international festivals. However, it also implicitly enables foreign festival programmers to shape the canonisation of New Zealand cinema.

This thesis has examined the manner in which policy discourse and funding practices impact on professional short fiction filmmaking in New Zealand. It has suggested that a narrow focus on measurable outcomes in public policy fails to demonstrate the wide benefits of short filmmaking. The framing of short film as a 'stepping stone' or 'calling card' for feature filmmaking results in texts that are more conventional than experimental. This instrumental focus does not prevent variety and quality within the short films funded by the NZFC, but it does limit the public and political appreciation of these films, which can make an important contribution to New Zealand national cinema and thus to the circulation of ideas and images within the cultural public sphere.

²¹ Hesmondhalgh, *Cultural Industries*, 24, 210.

Appendix 1

Section A: Sources of short film funding (1998-1999)

Short films

A total of 39 short films worth \$1,397,374 were made in New Zealand in 1998-99. The table below shows the sources of funding for these films.

Source		\$	%
Domestic	Advertising agency	0	0%
	Other production company	0	0%
	Direct with client	0	0%
	Corporate client	0	0%
	NZ on Air	0	0%
	NZ Film Commission	900,528	64%
	Creative New Zealand	387,030	28%
	Broadcaster	0	0%
	Distributor	0	0%
	Sponsor	0	0%
	Self/Own company	29,566	2%
	Private investor	54,000	4%
	Other	26,250	2%
Total domestic funding		1,397,374	100%
Offshore	Advertising agency	0	0%
	Other production company	0	0%
	Direct with client	0	0%
	Government funding	0	0%
	Broadcaster	0	0%
	Broadcaster facilities	0	0%
	Production company/studio	0	0%
	Co-production partner	0	0%
	Sponsor	0	0%
	Parent company	0	0%
	Private investor	0	0%
	Other	0	0%
	Total offshore funding		0
TOTAL		1,397,374	100%

Source: Screen Producers and Directors Association. "Survey of Screen Production in New Zealand 1999." (Colmar Brunton Research, 1999).

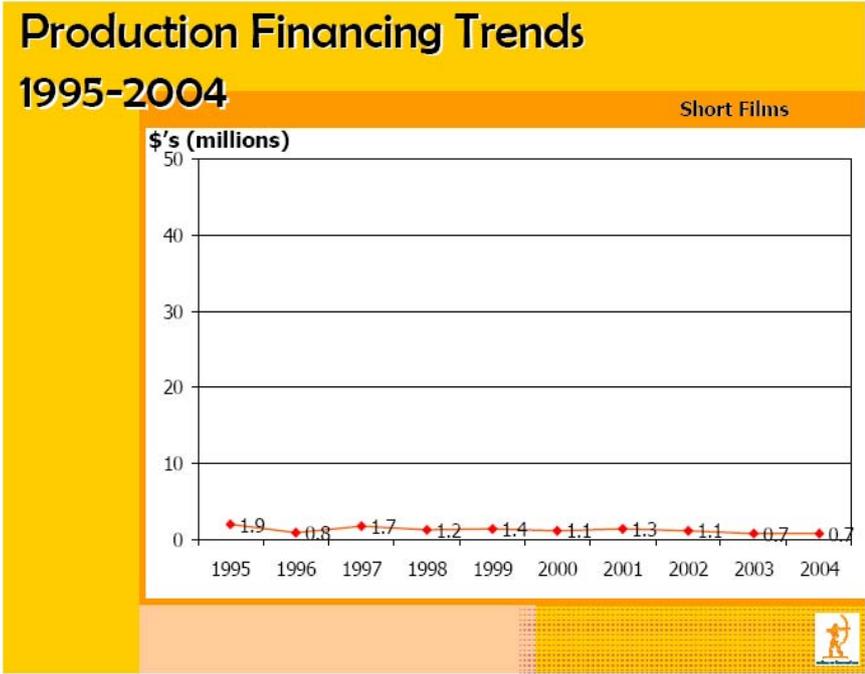
Section B: Sources of short film funding (2001-2003)

Short Film Investment

Source		2001 \$	%	2002 \$	%	2003 \$	%
Domestic	NZ On Air	0	0	250,000	24	0	0
	NZ Film Commission	682,000	53	498,004	47	461,750	0
	Te Mangai Paho	32,000	3	0	0	0	0
	Creative New Zealand	466,355	36	251,899	24	220,773	96
	Self/Own Company	1,000	<1	8,500	1	7,500	3
	Private Investor/Sponsor	12,000	1	29,000	3	0	0
	Other	85,000	7	12,500	1	1,000	<1
	Total Domestic Financing	1,278,335	100	1,049,903	99	691,023	100
Off-Shore	Presale	0	0	8,219	1	0	0
Total		1,278,335	100	1,058,122	100	691,023	100

Source: Screen Production and Development Association. "Survey of Screen Production in New Zealand 2004." (Colmar Brunton, 2004.)

Appendix 2: Short film financing trends



Please Note: Total production budget reported here includes information obtained from New Zealand On Air, Creative New Zealand and estimates from SPADA.

Source: Screen Production and Development Association. "Survey of Screen Production in New Zealand 2004." Colmar Brunton, 2004.

Appendix 3: Short film funding by CNZ and the NZFC (1997-2007)

1997	Sum	Proportion of total expenditure
CNZ spend on SIPF ¹	\$200,000	0.8%
NZFC spend on SIPF and Short Film Fund	\$1,313,741	10.5%

2007	Sum	Proportion of total expenditure
CNZ spend on SIPF ²	\$300,000	1%
NZFC spend on SIPF and Short Film Fund	\$1,415,128	10.7%

¹ Bevin Yeatman, "Policy and Practice: Funding and strategies for short film in New Zealand 1994-1998" (Waikato University, 1998), 235.

² CNZ also supports audiovisual production and exhibition by offering grants for one-off projects, community projects, festivals, and organisations such as the Moving Image Centre. For instance, CNZ granted \$240,000 to the Moving Image Centre for 2006 and 2007, and \$6000 to moving image projects (excluding SIPF grants) in 2007. Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa, "Annual Report 2007 - 2008," 18. One CNZ document reports that the SIPF represented 2% of its expenditure in 2005-2006, however, this figure probably includes the NZFC contribution to the fund. Creative New Zealand, "The Funding Guide," (2008), 2.

Appendix 4: SIPF biannual funding rounds (1999-2005)

Funding round	Number of applications	Value of applications (NZD)	Number of grants	Total value of grants (NZD)
May 1999	57	994,700	18	263,678
May 2000	89	1.38m	19	248,618
October 2000	89	1.45m	14	247,280
June 2001	63	1m	16	230,055
October 2001	110	1.78m	16	235,903
June 2002	81	1.27m	19	249,066
November 2002	133	2.3m	19	233,000
June 2003	103	1.6m	16	248,943
November 2003	90	1.41m	16	231,434
July 2004	95	1.52m	18	258,680
November 2004	106	1.7m	20	270,096
November 2005	97	1.5m	21	270,259

Source: Creative New Zealand press releases.

Appendix 5: NZFC Short Film Fund Executive Producers (1997-2007)

Year	EP Company	EP Names	Funded Projects
1997/98	MAP Film Productions	Stuart McKenzie Neil Pardington Miranda Harcourt	A Funeral (1998) Accidents (1998) Several Ways Of Getting Around (1998) Thinking About Sleep (1998)
	BPS	Riwia Brown Kara Paewai Dorthe Scheffman	Group Therapy (1998) Letters About The Weather (1998) Measureless To Man (Never Produced)
	Morrison Grieve Ltd	Bruce Morrison William Grieve Bruce Sheridan	Infection (1998) Ouch (1998) Willy Nilly (1998)
1998/99	MAP Film Productions	Stuart McKenzie Neil Pardington Miranda Harcourt	A Quiet Night (1999) Grace (1999) Home Kill (2000)
	BPS	Riwia Brown Kara Paewai Dorthe Scheffman	Cow (2001) Little Samurai (1998) Still Life (Ex Luv) (2001)
	THE	Trevor Haysom	Donuts For Breakfast (1999) Te Po Uriuri (2001) The Waiting Room (1999)
1999/00	THE	Trevor Haysom	Pikowae (2003) Rock (2000) Te Ao Kapurangi (2000)
	C & B	Carey Carter Michael Bennett	13 Days Out (2000) Needles And Glass (2000) The Platform (2001)
	Frame Up Films	Rachel Jean Owen Hughes	Camping With Camus (2000) Falling Sparrows (2000) Trust Me (2000)
2000/01	Frame Up Films	Rachel Jean Owen Hughes	Honey (2001) The Hill (2001) Trespass Aka El Lago (2002) Watermark (2001)
	Swad Saunders	Leanne Saunders Paul Swadel	Beautiful (2001) Junk (2001) The French Doors (2001)
	Big House	Mike Smith John Gilbert	Grass (2004) Redial Aka Badinage (2001) Tick (2001)
2001/02	Swad Saunders	Leanne Saunders Paul Swadel	No Ordinary Sun (2004) Ride Aka The Bach (2004) Water (2003)
	Big House	Mike Smith John Gilbert	A Fish Tale (2001) Delores (2002) Turangawaewae (2003)
	Godzone	Liz Difiore Peter Salmon	Hatto (Not Delivered) From Where I'm Standing (2002) The Freezer (2002)
2002/03	Godzone	Liz Difiore Peter Salmon	Closer (2004) Kerosene Creek Aka Tangi (2004) Picnic Stops (2004)

Continued on next page

2002/03	Little Jab Pictures	Karl Zohrab Angela Littlejohn	Cockle (2004) The Little Things (2004) Together Aka Catch (2004)
	Pickpocket Films	Vanessa Alexander	His Father's Shoes (2004) Tiga E Le Iloa (2004) Two Cars, One Night (2003)
2003/04	Little Jab Pictures	Karl Zohrab Angela Littlejohn	Changing Of The Guards (2005) Tama Tu Aka Boys In A Hole (2004) Truant (2005)
	Pickpocket Films	Vanessa Alexander	Fish Out Of Water (2005) Karma (2005) The Man Who Couldn't Dance (2004)
	Method Films	Matthew Metcalfe Jesse Warn	Auld Lang Syne (2004) Nothing Special (2004) Rest Stop (2004)
2004/05	Whenua Films/ Aio Films Ltd	Ainsley Gardiner Cliff Curtis	One Moment Please (not produced) Hawaikii (2006) The Speaker (2006)
	Short Intercept	Nik Beachman Andrew Bancroft Hone Kouka	Fog (2006) Nature's Way (2006) We The Living (2006)
	Blueskin Films	Catherine Fitzgerald	The Word (2006) A Very Nice Honeymoon (2006) Dead Letters (2006)
2005/06	Whenua Films	Ainsley Gardiner Cliff Curtis	Coffee And Allah (2007) Taua (2007) Shadow Over The Sun (2006)
	Short Intercept	Nik Beachman Andrew Bancroft Hone Kouka	Run (2007) The Graffiti Of Mr Tupaia (2008) The Off-Season (in post production)
	Blueskin Films	Catherine Fitzgerald	Journey To Ihipa (2008) The Lethal Innocents (2006) The King Boys (2006)
2006/07	Nomadz Unlimited Ltd	Shuchi Kothari Sarina Pearson	Take 3 (2008) Patu Ihu (2008) Bridge (2008)
	Reservoir Films Ltd	Matthew Horrocks	Choice Night (In pre production) Noise Control (2008) The Road Out Of Town (2008)
	Shorts Conbrio	Christina Milligan Rawiri Paratene Roger Grant	Aphrodite's Farm (2008) This Is Her (2008) Undergrowth (2009)

Appendix 6: Sample of 16 short films funded by the NZFC EP Scheme (1997-2007)

<i>Funding year</i>	<i>Year delivered</i>	<i>EP</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Director</i>	<i>Writer</i>	<i>Producer</i>	<i>Genre</i>	<i>Framing device</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Budget (NZD)</i>
1997/98	1999	MORRISON GRIEVE	<i>Infection</i>	James Cunningham	James Cunningham	Paul Swadel	Animation/Action/Sci-Fi	Journey	9 minutes	55,910
1998/99	2001	THE	Te Po Uriuri/The Enveloping Night	Toby Mills	Toby Mills	Norman Elder, Toby Mills	Drama/Historical	Journey	14 minutes	75,000
1999/00	2003	THE	Rock	Brian Challis	Matthew Stokoe	Laina Cheung	Drama	Journey	15 minutes	65,000
1999/00	2000	FRAME UP FILMS	<i>Trust Me</i>	Virginia Pitts	Virginia Pitts, Jane Warren	James Wallace, Tony Kovacs	Drama/Coming of Age/Horror	Ritual occasion	9.5 minutes	66,500
2000/01	2001	SWAD SAUNDERS	<i>Beautiful</i>	Adam Stevens	Adam Stevens	Mark Foster	Comedy/Satire	Satire/Black comedy	12 minutes	70,000
2000/01	2004	BIG HOUSE	Grass	Simon Otto	Simon Otto, Brent Chambers, Raymond McGrath	Susan Chambers	Animation/Comedy	Morality tale/ Fable	7 minutes	70,000
2001/02	2003	BIG HOUSE	<i>Turangawaewae</i>	Peter Burger	Wiremu Grace	Catherine Fitzgerald	Drama/War	Journey	13 minutes	96,000*
2001/02	2002	GODZONE	The Freezer	Paolo Rotondo	Neil Campbel, Paolo Rotondo	Linda Keown	Drama/Black Comedy	Journey	11 minutes	69,333
2002/03	2004	LITTLEJAB	Cockle	Brendan Donovan	Brendan Donovan	Ian Gibbons	Drama/Coming of Age	Journey	10 minutes	70,000
2002/03	2003	PICKPOCKET FILMS	<i>Two Cars, One Night</i>	Taika Waititi	Taika Waititi	Ainsley Gardiner, Catherine Fitzgerald	Comedy	Ritual occasion	11 minutes	70,000
2003/04	2005	PICKPOCKET FILMS	Fish Out of Water	Lala Rolls	Stephanie Rountree	Natalie Crane	Comedy	Morality tale/ Fable	9 minutes	70,000
2003/04	2004	METHOD FILMS	<i>Nothing Special</i>	Helena Brooks	Helena Brooks, Jaquie Brown	Steve Sachs, Helena Brooks	Black Comedy	Black Comedy	10 minutes	102,150*
2004/05	2006	SHORT INTERCEPT	<i>Nature's Way</i>	Jane Shearer	Jane Shearer, Steve Ayson	Leanne Saunders	Horror/Fantasy/Drama	Journey	11 minutes	100,000
2004/05	2006	BLUESKIN FILMS	A Very Nice Honeymoon	Jeff and Phill Simmonds	Jeff and Phill Simmonds	Jeff and Phill Simmonds	Animation/Romance/Documentary	Docudrama	10 minutes	100,000
2005/06	2007	WHENUA FILMS	Shadow Over The Sun	Rachel Douglas	Rachel Douglas	Michelle Turner	Drama/Historical	Journey	8 minutes	90,000
2006/07	2008	SHORTS CONBRIO	<i>This Is Her</i>	Katie Wolfe	Kate McDermott	Felicity Letcher, Rachel Lorimer	Black Comedy	Black Comedy	12 minutes	100,000

Titles in italics were selected for 'A' list festivals

* Includes post production grant

Appendix 7: Interview Participants

Vanessa Alexander: Board member (NZFC, 2006-2009); Executive Producer for the NZFC Short Film Fund (Pickpocket Films, 2002-2004). Interview, Auckland, 23 March 2009.

Catherine Fitzgerald: Executive Producer for the NZFC Short Film Fund (Blueskin Films, 2004-2006); Director, Creative and Industry Development, then Policy and Planning (NZFC, 1995-2000); Chair of the Short Film Fund (NZFC, 1991-1995). Interview, Auckland, 10 March 2009. Email correspondence 23-24 February, 12 March and 16 June 2009.

Sandy Gildea: Events & Policy (SPADA); Short Film Marketing and Sales, then Short Film Manager (NZFC, 2001-2004). Telephone interview, 12 March 2009. Email correspondence 10 June and 23 June 2009.

Christina Milligan: Executive Producer for the NZFC Short Film Fund (Shorts Conbrio, 2006-2008); Short Film Fund Committee (NZFC, 1993-1997). Interview, Auckland, 24 March 2009. Email correspondence, 10 June 2009.

Juliette Veber: Short Film Sales and Marketing (NZFC, since 2006). Email interview, 5 May 2009.

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Cockle (2004), Brendan Donovan
Coffee & Allah (2007), Sima Urale
Eagle vs Shark (2007), Taika Waititi
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Egg and Bomb (2005), George Port
Fish Out of Water (2005), Lala Rolls
Fleeting Beauty (2004), Virginia Pitts
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Grass (2004), Simon Otto
Infection (1999), James Cunningham
Kitchen Sink (1989), Alison Maclean
Kitty (2002), Patrick Gillies
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Nothing Special (2004), Helena Brooks
O Tamaiti (1996), Sima Urale
Once Were Warriors (1994), Lee Tamahori
Possum (1997), Brad McGann
Rock (2003), Brian Challis
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