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**School of Social and Political Sciences**

**Resisting re-imaging: theorising resistance to culture-led regeneration with a case study of Workers City as a response to Glasgow European City of Culture 1990**

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**Abstract**

This dissertation theorises the possibilities for resistance under the conditions of culture-led regeneration, with an empirical case study of Workers City's response to Glasgow European City of Culture 1990. I firstly establish the relationship between culture-led regeneration, neoliberalism and depoliticisation. I then examine how theorisations of the political have been redrawn in such contexts. I argue that post-political theory rightly makes space for the role of culture in theorisations of resistance. However, I contend that attempts to delineate the properly political deny the multiplicity of resistance under neoliberal hegemony. This argument is support with an empirical case study of Workers City, in which I argue that the group's materials demonstrate the various nature of resistance, which defy attempts at definition.

## Introduction

*'Discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized.'*

- **Michel Foucault (1971: 211)**

*'Stop being reasonable and start being awkward.'*

- **The Glasgow Keelie (1990: 3)**

Culture-led urban regeneration is a pervasive strategy in modern urban planning in postindustrial cities. The strategy is used to 'rehabilitate and revitalise' (Sing & Yoh 2016: 1) urban localities, and has been credited with bringing both economic and social prosperity to postindustrial localities (Myerscough 1990; Palmer 2004; Garcia 2004; Garcia 2005; Johnson 2009). Yet the benefits of this restructuring are disputed, notably in terms of socio-spatial inequality which is argued to be both produced and emphasised by culture-led urban regeneration (Mooney 2004; Helms and Cumbers 2006; Tretter 2009; Gray 2015). Moreover, it has been argued that neoliberal ideology underpins culture-led regeneration, and facilitates a depoliticisation of the public sphere (Gray 2015; Tarazona Vento 2016). Accordingly, there are debates around the nature of resistance under such conditions. Selected post-political scholars argue that, in such contexts, some forms of resistance work to reinforce a neoliberal hegemony (Swyngedouw 2011; Haughton *et al* 2016). This dissertation offers a contribution to theorisations of resistance under the problematic ideological conditions of culture-led regeneration. I firstly make explicit the connection between neoliberalism, depoliticisation and culture in culturally regenerated urban spaces, locating debates around possibilities for resistance within this context. Then, through an empirical case study of Glasgow-based collective Workers City's response to Glasgow European City of Culture (ECoC) 1990, I offer a reconsideration of post-political theorisations of resistance, and argue for a broader understanding of how resistance under the conditions of culture-led regeneration.

While previous studies have investigated specific resistance practices under culture-led regeneration (Lahdesmaki 2013; Buser 2013), they have failed to situate these techniques within a wider context of neoliberal hegemony and its depoliticising effects. I argue that this context is essential to an understanding of culture-led urban restructuring. Similarly, while selected studies have examined Workers City's model of resistance to culture-led

regeneration with reference to neoliberalism (Mooney 2004; Miller and Rodger 2013) and the post-political condition (Gray 2015), these studies have not fully considered the nuances of the visual and written techniques employed by the group. This dissertation therefore attempts to address this gap in knowledge through an in-depth empirical case study, which both draws on post-political literature as a theoretical framework and attempts to interrogate this framework. I use content analysis to identify key themes and practices in these texts, as a means of understanding how the group constituted an 'aesthetics of resistance' (Strickland Distribution 2014) in response to culture-led regeneration. By analysing these themes and practices through post-political theory, I bring to light the effects of the subversive, culture-oriented practices employed by the group, and argue that such techniques helped enact prefigurative political resistance, alongside more customary strategic tactics. This analysis highlights the amorphous and multiple nature of resistance, thereby challenging what I argue to be narrow conceptions of the 'political proper' in post-political literature (Haughton *et al* 2016; Swyngedouw 2011).

A wealth of academic studies note that we are living through a sustained era of gentrification and unequal urban restructuring, driven by neoliberal urbanism (Helms and Cumbers 2006). Consequently, cityscapes across the United Kingdom are perennially being 'radically transformed' (Glasgow City Council 2006 *in* Leslie 2016) under the celebrated banner of arts and leisure-based regeneration strategy (Paton, Mooney & McKee 2012). At the same time, it is argued that movements which resist such urban restructuring strategies are increasingly fragmented (Gray 2015; Paton 2016). This research therefore offers a timely contribution to theorisations of contentious politics under culture-led regeneration. By offering a broadened understanding of what constitutes resistance in a post-political age, I advocate a fluid appraisal of modes of resistance in the face of a hegemony which is itself amorphous.

Chapter one is divided into two parts. The first section is a critical engagement with literature on culture-led regeneration. I review firstly studies that hail the strategy as a panacea for postindustrial social and economic problems, before considering the work of scholars who counter this argument by highlighting the neoliberal context and depoliticising consequences of culture-led regeneration. The second section is a discussion of theories of cultural resistance as counterhegemonic strategy in a post-political context, developing post-political literature as a theoretical framework for analysis. Chapter two outlines the methodology of the research, providing a rationale for the selection of Workers City as an appropriate case

study, and outlining how evidence was collected and analysed. Chapter three undertakes an in-depth analysis of Workers City's published materials, followed by a discussion of the findings in the context of the literature review. I conclude with a summary of the research and suggest areas for future study.

**RQ:**

- What are possibilities for resistance under the conditions of culture-led regeneration?

**Sub-RQ:**
- To what extent do Workers City's publications challenge definitions of 'the political' in post-political literature?

**Chapter one: Literature review**

The literature review is divided into two sections. The first section provides a contextual review of literature on culture-led urban regeneration as a postindustrial restructuring strategy. Within this, I firstly engage with studies which posit the benefits of culture-led strategy, before moving on to outline arguments which offer a critique of the strategy. Accordingly, I consider connections between culture as an urban restructuring method and its ideological drivers and consequences, namely neoliberalism and depoliticisation, drawing on the work of key post-political theorists. The second section is a discussion of possibilities for resistance in light of the ideological context outlined in the preceding section. I consider debates around the nature and possibilities of resistance practices under the conditions of culture-led regeneration, focussing on strategies which employ tools of culture as a means of resistance. By extension, I explore ideas of détournement and prefiguration as tools of resistance within in a post-political, neoliberal age, providing contextual examples in modern movements for resistance.

### 1.1. Culture-led regeneration

*'For Culture too, is politics'*
- **Freddy Anderson (1990: 2)**

### 1.1.1. The problematic rise of culture-led regeneration

The 1970s and 1980s saw the collapse of the manufacturing industry across the United Kingdom and parts of western Europe. The resulting deindustrialisation left a legacy of economic and social deterioration across once prosperous areas (Walsh *et al* 2008). Governments and local authorities responded by restructuring urban localities, in an attempt to remedy postindustrial decline by remaking the physical and economic structures of affected cities. In the late 1980s, culture-led regeneration emerged as a prominent strand of this strategy. While the multifarious relationship between culture and the mechanisms of gentrification had been established prior to the proliferation of culture-led regeneration (Zukin 1987), this emergent form of restructuring explicitly emphasized culture and creativity as a 'driver for urban economic regeneration' (Paddison & Miles 2007: 1). Broadly defined as the 'transformation and regeneration of places through cultural activity' (Garcia

2008), the strategy was implemented on a large-scale for the first time in the United Kingdom in Glasgow. The former industrial heartland and second city of the Empire was crowned European City of Culture (ECoC) 1990, a Europe-wide annual programme designed to 'improve the quality of life in these cities and strengthen their sense of community' (European Commission 2017) through culture and art. The programme was jointly proposed by a Conservative government in Westminster and Labour city council in Glasgow, and was subsequently met with extensive acclaim in local and national media, as well as cross-party political rhetoric (Garcia 2005: 842). Following Glasgow ECoC 1990, culture-led regeneration strategy ascended the urban policy agenda with an 'extraordinary rapidity' (Miles & Paddison 2005: 834), owing to considerable support from New Labour and the 'Third Way' politics of the 1990s (Mould 2015: 34). Presently, culture-led regeneration remains ever-present in city planning strategy across Europe (Gomez 1998). As a result, postindustrial cities such as Glasgow are perpetually regenerated through large-scale cultural events (Paton, Mooney & McKee 2012).

Despite its dominance and popularity, culture-led regeneration remains a complex and problematic issue, as typified in the case of Glasgow. The city's transformation from postindustrial wasteland to vibrant cultural city is a pervasive and widely documented narrative (Leadbetter 2015; BBC 2011; The Scotsman 2010). As a result, Glasgow is held up as an archetypal 'model for post-Fordist rehabilitation through cultural regeneration and symbolic image reconstruction' (Gray 2015: 6). In spite of this, the city continues to suffer widespread social and economic deprivation, with mortality rates in some inner-city areas measuring as the worst in the United Kingdom and among the worst in Europe (Walsh *et al* 2008). Culture-led regeneration is thus 'enmeshed in a confusing mass of sociological and cultural issues' (Vickery 2007: 13), with the ECoC programme noted as a particular site for these tensions (Lahdesmaki 613). In what follows, I attempt to elucidate some of these issues, outlining arguments around the nature and ideological framework of culture-led regeneration. In doing so, I set forth a political context for resistance in the face of this prevalent modern urban restructuring strategy.

### 1.1.2. Culture as a panacea

In addition to the wealth of hyperbolic media and policy rhetoric hailing the transformational effects of culture-led regeneration (Glasgow City Council 2007; xx), a number of academic studies on the effects also espouse the strategy's benefits (Myerscough 1990; xx; xx). Predominantly, examinations have attempted to measure the effects and legacy of culture-led regeneration quantitatively. Specifically, in the case of Glasgow ECoC 1990, studies showcase a wealth of positive economic data including increased visitor numbers (Palmer 2004: 113), increased employment figures and a jump in citywide business income (Myerscough 1988; Myerscough 1990). However, the approach has been criticised by those who note the methodological narrowness of quantitatively measuring social effects (Boyle & Hughes 1991). Consequently, studies have developed alternative measurement techniques for assessing the effects of culture-led regeneration, such as longitudinal qualitative analyses, based on soft indicators such as positive media coverage and selected anecdotal evidence (Garcia 2005; Bailey *et al* 2004). Such studies purport to demonstrate the positive social legacy of culture-led regeneration. In light of these largely optimistic assessments, culture-led regeneration assumes an almost utopian quality. In 'boosting city confidence', and making cities 'richer places to live' (Johnson 2009: 119), culture-led regeneration acts as panacea for postindustrial decline. The mechanisms of this are outlined explicitly in Richard Florida's 'creative class' theory (Florida 2002; Florida 2014). Florida hypothesizes that culture-led regeneration draws a new class of people to postindustrial cities. Attracted and sustained by the diversity, creative arts and leisure capacities of an urban locality, this distinct class wield 'considerable economic power' (Florida 2002: 18) and as a result drive prosperous economies. Accordingly, by engaging with creative regeneration strategies, cities may shift from 'old paradigms of development' (Florida 2002: 17) and thus overturn the negative legacy of deindustrialisation. In contrast to creative cities, urban localities which continue to employ old organizational capitalist models remain 'trapped by their past' (Florida 2002: 23), and as such are destined to economic decline. Culture-led regeneration is thus hailed as a new paradigm, which renews 'working-class districts' (Florida 2002: 25) through the replacement of industrial-era capitalism with a new and prosperous, culture-led economy with widespread benefits.

### 1.1.3 The neoliberal context

In the face of criticism concerning the methodological shortcomings of his theory (Glaesser 2005), Florida draws on influential urban theorist Jane Jacobs to dismiss his critics as

'squelchers…political, business, and civic leaders that divert human creative energy by posing roadblocks and saying "no" to new ideas' (Florida 2004). However, scholars such as Neil Gray (2015) and Jamie Peck (2007) maintain that Florida's theory paradoxically both relies on and sustains the prevailing hegemony. Crucially, in espousing a 'creativity fix' (Gray 2015: 167), Florida fails to acknowledge the interplay between culture-led regeneration and existing neoliberal structures. Rather than enabling a revolutionary 'geography of class' (Florida 2002: 18), culture-led regeneration offers little more than a 'soft policy fix' (Peck 2007) for the shortcomings of neoliberalism. In his rebuttal of Florida's theory, Peck asserts that the 'discourses and practices of creative-cities policymaking are barely disruptive of the prevailing order of neoliberalism' (Peck 2007). While the transference from industrial manufacturing economy to postindustrial creative economy may demonstrate a shift in urban policy and economic structures, this shift is not a novel solution. Instead of remedying issues of inequality which are produced by neoliberal urbanism, culture-led regeneration has been 'crafted to co-exist with urban social problems, not to solve them' (Peck 2007). Both qualitative and quantitative analyses lend this argument empirical foundation. Specifically, in the case of Glasgow, studies have demonstrated that culture-led regeneration in the city has acted to gloss over longstanding socio-spatial inequalities such as widespread deprivation, particularly in peripheral housing schemes (Johnston & Mooney 2007), and to exacerbate emergent socio-spatial inequalities, through a restructured economy which relies heavily on low-paid service sector jobs (Helms & Cumbers 2006).

The complex relationship between culturally regenerated cities and neoliberalism is further brought to light through an understanding of how culture functions as a commodity under neoliberalism. Wendy Brown offers a succinct definition of neoliberalism as the governance of 'non-wealth generating spheres…in market terms…through market metrics, market techniques and practices' (Brown 2015). From this definition, it leads that culture is one such sphere, undergoing a pervasive 'financialization' (Harvey 2008: 33) under neoliberal logic. Marxist urban geographer David Harvey attempts to understand the use of culture as both a symptom and reinforcement of neoliberalism through a development of Marx's theory of monopoly rent (Harvey 2002). From the 'undeniable' (Harvey 2002: 93) starting point that culture has become a commodity, Harvey posits that culture in our cities has been purposefully 'Disneyified' (Harvey 2002: 96) for the purposes of neoliberal competition. Capitalists shape and modify culture for commercial gain under the fundamentally competitive, profit-oriented logic of neoliberal capitalism. He argues that culture-led

regeneration works to remake the city according to neoliberal market logic as a 'directly or indirectly tradable item which is in some crucial respects unique and non-replicable' (Harvey 2002: 94). In other words, under culture-led regeneration, a city's culture and history are knowingly and selectively reshaped in the restructuring process, to ensure a city is marketable and profitable. As a result, the culture of a restructured city is adapted and distorted, to align it with profitability. Consequently, citizens are left with an 'impoverished concept of culture' (Vickery 2007: 2) in regenerated communities, with inauthentic culture reified, while genuine culture is marginalised. Furthermore, the mechanisms and effects of culture-led regeneration, and by extension the 'Disneyified' culture of regenerated cities, are always ideologically charged. Consequently, culturally-regenerated cities and the culture associated with it are shown to be 'vehicles for ideology (Balibrea 1999: 188). Elliot Tretter (2009) applies Harvey's thesis to the case of Glasgow ECoC, arguing that 'the cultivation of Glasgow's distinctiveness formed the basis for the ability to earn monopoly rents' (Tretter 2009: 111). As a result, as Simon Kovesi notes, the city's varied and often radical history and culture were selectively appropriated and reduced to the 'pedestrianised, sanitised commodification for a city of consumer' (Kovesi 2013: 125).

### 1.1.4. The post-political context

For some scholars, the ideological context of culture-led regeneration is ostensibly depoliticising. As Mari Paz Balibrea (1999) contends in her challenge of the 'Barcelona model' of urban image remaking, culture-led strategy is 'a process bringing with it the imposition of a certain postmodern hegemony' (Bailbrea 2010: 200), namely a shift to a democracy of consensus. Amparo Tarazona Vento (2016) makes this connection explicit in her assessment of urban restructuring through entrepreneurial image remaking in Valencia. Vento argues that neoliberal 'mechanisms' employed in reimaging spaces are 'intimately linked to processes of depoliticisation' (Vento 2016: 8). These mechanisms, such as the transfer of control from citizens to semi-public bodies, are, for Tarazona Vento, evidence of a general trend within a post-ideological age towards a 'consensual politics where ideological struggle does not exist' (Vento 2016: 71). This assessment draws on theorisations of the post-political condition, as variously argued in the work of key post-political scholars such as

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Chantal Mouffe (2005), Jacques Ranciere (2004) and Slavoj Zizek (1999).[1] Developed as a means of articulating 'the contours of a post-Cold War political economic order' (McCarthy 2013: 19), post-political literature is broadly concerned with the 'repression of antagonism' (Wilson & Swyngedouw 2014: 2) in modern society, attempting to understand how politics might hope to operate as we live through an apparently uncontested neoliberal hegemony (Fukuyama 1992). This repression is 'institutionally configured' (Wilson & Swyngedouw 2014: 5) through modes of governance which privilege technocracy over democracy (Nolan and Featherstone 2015: 2). As a result, opportunities to express dissent are profoundly reduced, resulting in what Erik Swyngedouw terms the 'evacuation of the political proper' (Swyngedouw 2010: 3). In such contexts, it is argued that dissent becomes 'the art of the impossible' (Zizek 2000: 199). Once radical forms of resistance are now 'carefully choreographed by the state' (Swyngedouw and Wilson 2015: 309), and in some cases even act to reinforce the existing neoliberal ideology (Swyngedouw 2011: 377; Zizek 2007). Consequently, this depoliticisation is argued to uphold the existing hegemonic order, while simultaneously offering an illusion of participation and control to citizens. Culture-led regeneration, with its neoliberal ideological underpinning, is argued to be one conduit of depoliticisation. Neil Gray (2015) applies this argument to the case of Glasgow, in his assessment of the culture-led regeneration of Speirs Lock in the north-east of the city. Citing the lack of genuine community participation in the redevelopment of the area, Gray argues that culture-led regeneration strategies implemented by Glasgow City Council worked to 'augment' (Gray 2015: 173) post-political discourse in the area. The study notes that public consultation events surrounding the area's redevelopment were little more than insincere public relations exercises (Gray 2015: 182). As a result, Gray argues that creativity fixes offer the illusion of participation without 'disrupting an overall logic of urban accumulation' (Gray 2015: 193). Therefore, culture-led regeneration is both a tool for depoliticisation, and sets the parameters for cultural activity, which becomes depoliticized through 'policy invocations of culture' (Dinardi 2014: 16). As Chantal Mouffe argues, these invocations of culture 'semiotic techniques in order to create the modes of subjectivation which are necessary for its reproduction.' (Mouffe 2012: 8).  It follows that, in a post-political age, culture-led regeneration upholds existing neoliberal structures, exacerbates inequality and, as a result, acts to foreclose dissent and reduce the possibilities for resistance. This, I will argue,

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[1] Within post-political literature, the facets and consequences of depoliticisation are heterogeneous and widely contested. The scope of this study does not allow for an exhaustive consideration of these arguments. For a detailed overview of the nuances of post-political theory, see Wilson & Sywngedow (2015).

has important implications for considerations of if and how resistance may be structured under culture-led regeneration, and the role culture itself plays in this resistance.

## 1.2. Theorising resistance

### 1.2.1. Politics and the political

As I have demonstrated, culturally regenerated cities are intimately linked with neoliberalism through the commodification of culture. As a result, some scholars deem these urban localities to be fundamentally post-political spaces. How then, in such an uneven and ostensibly depoliticised terrain, might citizens hope to resist? To understand how resistance in such contexts might be constituted, it will first be useful to consider how post-political literature reappraises accepted notions of politics. My analysis will focus primarily on the distinction between 'the political' and 'politics' as offered by Erik Swyngedouw (2011). Drawing on fellow-post political theorist Jacques Ranciere's division between politics and the police (Ranciere 2004), Swyngedouw contends that in the post-Cold War age of neoliberal hegemony, accepted understandings of what constitutes politics need to be re-examined. He argues that 'politics' is made up of

> power plays between political actors and the everyday choreographies of policy making within a given institutional and procedural configuration in which individuals and groups pursue their interests. (Swyngedouw 2011: 373)

Politics in this sense is that which takes place within existing institutions and hierarchies. Swyngedouw's definition includes widely accepted notions of political action which may appear to be sites of contestation, such as policy debates or fiercely-run election campaigns. These are not, however, truly political. For, as Swyngedouw and Wilson (2015) argue, in a post-political society, the existing 'framework of debate and decision-making does not question or disrupt the existing state of the neoliberal political-economic configuration' (Swyngedouw & Wilson 2015: 5), as evidenced previously in Gray (2010) and Vento's (2016) studies of depoliticisation through culture-led regeneration. As such, traditional resistance strategies such as oppositional party politics or issue-based campaigning are argued to be 'stale and impotent' (Glaser 2015), and an ineffective means of enacting any real, structural change. Moreover, according to Swyngedouw, some strategies for resistance

are 'an active part of the process of post-democratization' (Swyngedouw 2011: 377). Slavoj Zizek (2007) elucidates this idea in his analysis of protests against the Iraq War. He argues that the protests demonstrated a 'mutual parasitism' (Zizek 2007: 7) between protesters and the state who observed and but failed to acknowledge the protest. The protesters were unable to enact any real change, but went home satisfied with their supposed expression of dissent, while the state 'calmly accepted' (Zizek 2007: 7) their protest, yet proceeded with the occupation of Iraq regardless. This type of 'politics' therefore both accepts and legitimises the existing order (Wilson & Swyngedouw 2015: 309).

In contrast to 'politics', Swyngedouw offers the 'political' (Swnygedouw 2009: 607). The 'political' is that which does not engage with the hegemonic order but instead actively upsets it. For Swyngedouw, the political 'is not about expressing demands to the elites to rectify inequalities or un-freedoms' (Swygnedouw 2014: 3). Instead, in truly political action hegemonic institutions are not appealed to, but 'dislocated, transgressed' (Swyngedouw 2009: 607). The political is therefore that which creates a 'dissensual space' (Swyngedouw 2011: 376) which does not appeal to the logic of neoliberal hegemony but instead attempts to operate outside it. The 'political' is exemplified in movements such as Occupy Wall Street which sowed the 'seeds of dystopia' (Swyngedouw and Wilson 2014: 6) in 2011. Occupy Wall Street initially neglected to articulate any coherent demands to 'existing institutions' (Butler 2012), a move which widely derided as a failure of the movement (Schwartz 2011). However, for some this move was a not an omission but a deliberate and effective rejection of existing institutions. As one Occupy member writes in 2011, 'when a group puts out a list of specific demands, the first thing they are doing is acknowledging the legitimacy of the power structures of our society by asking them to "meet" those demands.' (Marshall 2011). The type of resistance advocated by Swygendouw as truly 'political' is can be read as a form of prefigurative politics. As Breines (1980) defines it, prefigurative politics is not concerned with strategy and demands. Instead its 'most acute concern (is) to avoid duplication of the hierarchical and manipulative relationships characteristic of society' (Breines 1980: 422). The political proper is, in this way, that which attempts to embody the changes it seeks to enact. Such movements emphasise the primacy of 'social relations, decision-making, culture, and human experience' (Boggs 1977: 100), over traditional political decision making structures. Swyngedouw's rethinking of the political grants importance of prefigurative political movements which seek to be the change (Leach 2013) rather than appealing to existing institutions for change,. Therefore, this post-political reconceptualisation of the

political perhaps suggests that to resist, citizens should pursue a 'social rather than political revolution (Day 2005:16). The post-political distinction between the 'political' and 'politics' therefore emphasises the primacy of non-traditional forms of resistance, and the role of the social and the cultural in effective resistance.

### 1.2.2. A politics that doesn't look like politics

This reconsideration of the political which incorporates social and cultural aspects has important consequences for theorisations of resistance to culture-led regeneration. As I argued in the first section of this chapter, culture has become an important tool in the imposition and maintenance of neoliberalism in culturally regenerated postindustrial cities. As such, culture has become a crucial site of resistance. E.P. Thompson's 1959 statement on the primacy of culture in relation to politics is pertinent to consider. As he writes, 'questions of "culture" …are not peripheral to the "real political issues" of class power; they are central to the whole way of struggle.' (Thompson 1959: 52). Charles Masquelier develops this statement through a comparison between new social movements which emphasise and engage with culture, and the strategies and actions of 'old social movements' (Masquelier have that traditional political strategies espoused by 'classical Marxists and 'old' social movements' (Masquelier 2013: 4) fail to articulate these cultural aspects. Such strategies tend to focus on 'bread and butter' (Masquelier 2013: 4) issues of class and labour, fundamentally neglecting new horizons and locations of resistance. In culturally regenerated cities these include 'struggles over community, culture and their various individual and socialised forms' (Cumbers, Helms & Swanson 2010). Swyngedouw's 'political', with its emphasis on experience outside of existing institutions, therefore allows for a consideration of what Stephen Duncombe terms cultural resistance, or 'a politics which doesn't look like politics' (Duncombe 2002: 10). The primacy of engaging with new forms of resistance in response to culture-led regeneration is made explicit in the work of David Harvey. For Harvey, to constitute 'spaces of hope' (Harvey 2002: 109) in a depoliticised terrain, resistance must acknowledge culture. As he writes of capitalists who restructure cities in the hope of profit:

> By seeking to trade on values of authenticity, locality, history, culture, collective memories and tradition they open a space for political thought and action within which socialist alternatives can be both devised and pursued. That space deserves intense exploration and cultivation by oppositional movements that embrace cultural producers and cultural production as a key element in their political strategy. (Harvey

2002: 109)

What Harvey here highlights is the necessity of a political engagement with culture as a means of resisting the commodification of culture. This argument is echoed by Chantal Mouffe, who advocates what she calls an 'artivism' which incorporates both the political and the aesthetic. In actively engaging with culture, activists can attempt to renegotiate the shifting boundaries of neoliberal hegemony. As she writes, 'by putting aesthetic means at the service of political activism, this 'artivism' can be seen as a counter-hegemonic move against the capitalist appropriation of aesthetics.' (Mouffe 2012: 8). In their empirical study of Stokes Croft in Bristol, Buser *et al* (2013) maintain that 'cultural resistance offers 'prospects for a new progressive political opening' (Buser 2013: 622). They argue that the cultural resistance moves politics away from defined boundaries by drumming up 'mutual enthusiasm' (Buser et al 2013: 606) even amongst activists who have different political agendas.

However, not all resistance which acknowledges the constraining conditions of culture is considered to be 'political'. For example, theorisations of resistance which advocate cultural non-engagement as a means of circumventing existing institutions are rejected by post-political literature. Tactics of silence and passive acceptance of culture as resistance (Baudrillard 1988; Wagner 2012) are discounted as 'feeble post-modernisms' (Swyngedouw *et al* 2003: 13) which support and in some ways relish the depoliticising conditions imposed by culture-led regeneration. Similarly, post-political literature argues against the work of theorists who advocate resistance through an internal engagement with hegemony from its 'interstices' (Zizek 2007). These types of cultural resistance include strategies such as 'excorporation' (Fiske 1989: 13) and commodity activism (Mukherjee & Barnet-Weiser 2012), which have been espoused as a means of counter-hegemonically navigating and remaking the culture of neoliberalism. In such theorisations, consumers and citizens ostensibly produce new and resistant meaning through subtly transgressive cultural acts such as ripping their jeans (Fiske 1989: 15) or buying green products (Littler 2012: 76-92)[2]. Accordingly, this argument is based on the premise that 'since there is no '"outside" to the logics of contemporary capitalism…one can no longer – if one ever could – stand outside the system to critique it' (Mukherjee and Barnet-Weiser 2012: 2). However, these theorisations are argued to be 'unfocused and sporadic' (Cook 1992: 234), assigning political intent to

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[2] See also James C. Scott's *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* for a discussion of how non-hegemonic actors might hope to resist through transgressive acts such as lateness.

passive actions. As such, the 'lurking promise of political resistance' (Mukherjee & Barnet-Weiser 2012: 4) is unrealised, as it is unable to fully confront the totalising conditions of neoliberal hegemony. Perhaps most significantly, the notion of a 'semiotic democracy' (Fiske 1989: 235) in which meaning is remade by citizens regardless of political intent, lacks the fundamental antagonism which is 'constitutive of the political' (Zizek 1999: 20) in a post-political age. As a result, such practices are dismissed as another facet of the domination of market forces over the truly political, contributing only to the 'reproduction of the system' (Mouffe 2012: 8). For, as Laclau and Mouffe (2011) write, in an age of transnational corporations and neoliberal hegemony, to adequately resist 'one needs to establish a frontier and define an adversary…One needs to know what one is fighting for, what kind of society one wants to establish' (Laclau & Mouffe 2001: xix).

Cultural resistance must therefore actively attack or disrupt the existed order to truly constitute the political. One possible strategy for resistance which explicitly purports such an antagonistic engagement with the dominant culture are techniques of subversion and appropriation. This idea is exemplified in the technique of détournement, a practice which arose from the avant-garde Lettrist ideals of the 1940s and 1950s, and was subsequently developed and implemented in the 1960s by Situationist International (SI). SI advanced the technique in response to the premise that society has come to be a 'Spectacle', in which the real and authentic has been replaced by superficial representations. In the society of the spectacle, 'all that once was directly lived has become mere representation' (Debord 1994: 5). In response to this, Guy Debord and SI sought to highlight and disrupt the conditions of the Spectacle. By taking 'words, meanings, theories and experiences of the spectacle' and reworking them in 'an opposing context' (Plant 1992: 3), such strategies question the logic of capitalism, which the SI argued had, in the late 1960s, entered unquestioned into all areas of society (Plant 2002: 5). As Debord writes, It is not just that the relationship to commodities is now plain to see, commodities are now all that there is to see; the world we see is the world of the commodity (Debord 1994 : 42). The practice remains prevalent today, having been adopted by SI's contemporary posterities the Adbusters, who take aim at consumer culture through the practice of culture-jamming (Sandlin and Millam 2008: 325). Culture-jammers use the technique as a resistance tactic in a hyper-commodified society. In doing so, these practices are used to 'jam the pop-culture marketers and bring their image factory to a sudden, shuddering halt' (Lasn 1999: 128). In this way, Fiske's maligned semiotic democracy

is developed into a 'semiotic Robin Hoodism' (Klein 2000: 283), where meaning is actively taken back and developed into something new as a means of resistance, rather than passively remade with limited intent.

The political value of aesthetic strategies which disrupt and deny is advocated by post-political scholar Jacques Ranciere, most specifically in his discussion of 'dissensus' (Ranciere 2010: 5). Dissensus, according to Ranciere, is that which recentralises the idea of contestation through aesthetic means. Within this, Ranciere advocates a collapse of the distinction between aesthetics and politics, for 'it is the very idea of the difference between the proper and the improper that serves to separate out the political from the social, art from culture, culture from commerce' (Ranciere 2010: 25). To constitute a truly political aesthetic, cultural resistance must work to actively and antagonistically disrupt existing boundaries and distinctions. Ranciere writes:

> Political activity is whatever shifts a body from the place assigned to it or changes a place's destination. It makes visible what had no business being seen, and makes heard a discourse where once there was only place for noise (Ranciere 2010: 25)

Through reappropriating the tropes of culture to make meaning which is 'starkly at odds with the one that was intended' (Klein 2000: 282), such techniques purport to 'bring out the contradictory truth of the essence of the spectacle' (Swyngedouw 2002: 159). By antagonistically reworking the dominant culture, activists like SI and the culture-jammers therefore present a truly 'political' resistance by highlighting the conditions of 'what had no business being seen'. (Ranciere 2010: 25)

The 'political' nature and consequences of such techniques are further elucidated when considered in light of Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of carnivalesque (Bakhtin 1968). For Bakhtin argues that in the freewheeling atmosphere of the medieval carnival parody, pastiche reign as hierarchies that are constantly unsettled. In such a context, 'walls crumble' (Bakhtin 1968: 72) and the official structure is degraded. This collapse of hierarchies may be achieved primarily through aesthetic means. Employing techniques which subvert accepted discourse, practices such as such as détournement and culture jamming allows for 'temporary suspension' (Bakhtin 1968: 10) of the accepted hierarchy. In its place, new forms and understandings are able to flourish. As Bakhtin writes, this suspension 'both ideal and real, of

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hierarchical rank created during carnival time' allows for 'a special type of communication impossible in everyday life' (Bakhtin 1968: 10). This special type of communication practices, for Swyngedouw (2002), takes place in a location reminiscent of Edward Soja's 'Third Space' (Soja 1998), which emphasises mulitplicities and hybridity over fixed and immutable definitions of place (Swyngedouw 2002: 163).[3] A conception of resistance in this way is as autonomous, and outwith the normal hierarchical rules. In providing 'a kind of "free space"... freed from the limits and constraints of the dominant culture' techniques such as culture jamming 'can experiment with new ways of seeing and being and develop tools and resources for resistance (Duncombe 2002). Consequently, techniques which flout rules and subvert accepted hierarchies allow for the creation of a new culture which operates outside the logic of existing political organization models.

However, the value and logic of these practices is disputed. While Debord and the Situationists employed the techniques in response to the co-option of Dadaist and avant-garde as a commodity (Flyverbom and Reinecke 2017: 7), carnivalesque techniques of subversion and parody are not themselves immune from appropriation. Klein (2000) notes that culture jammers borrow 'visual legitimacy' (Klein 2000: 295) from the consumer culture they seek to resist. As a result, their output is contingent on an understanding of this type of culture. Christine Harold (2004) further articulates this argument, stating that culture jamming 'perpetuates a commitment to rhetorical binaries—the hierarchical form it supposedly wants to upset' (Harold 2004: 191). As such, brands and marketers are more than happy to adopt and adapt the tools of culture jamming, reappropriating these once again, to be used for the purposes of capitalism (Klein 2000: 296). As Duncombe contends, 'the appropriators can always be appropriated' (Duncombe 2002: 13).

For Swyngedouw, this perpetual reappropriation is further evidence of the post-political condition. He cites the example of the increasing normalisation 'normalisation' of Situationist art as further evidence of the post-political condition. He notes that SI's once radical and transgressive materials now feature on 'the covers of scholarly books' and 'in the corridors of fashionable urban museums' (Swyngedouw 2002: 163). For Swyngedouw, this a warning to activists, in that they must always be aware of the imposing and depoliticising

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[3] See also Michel Foucault's heterotopia (1986) and Henri LeFebvre's spatial triad (1991). Soja's theory is a descendant of both theories, with an emphasis on renegotiation of existing boundaries.

conditions of neoliberalism and continual attempt to confront these. Swyngedouw argues that to avoid reappropriation, activists should pursue 'alternative and concrete urban practices' which go beyond 'mere words or semiotic deconstructions' (Swyngedouw 2013: 252). However, Swyngedouw's thesis is accused of a reliance of 'vague clichés of multiplicity and openness' (Variant 2010). Furthermore, in advocating a definition of the 'political' which privileges the cultural aspects of resistance over more traditional forms, the ability to enact real structural change against the logic of capitalism is questioned. While the primacy of culture should not be denied, there is, as E.P. Thompson (1959) argues, 'a tendency to assert the absolute autonomy of cultural phenomena without reference to the context of class power' (Thompson 1959: 51). Thompson regards this totalising view of culture as a mistake, going on to describe it as 'a shame-faced evasion of that impolite historical concept – the class struggle.' (Thomson 1959: 51). This brings us to what I argue to be the central criticism of form of 'artivisim' (Mouffe 2012: 8): can art 'really recompose political spaces or only parody them?' (Berrebi 2008: 1). The debate is exemplified in arguments around the increasing fragmentation on the left. Stuart Hall in 2006 articulated concerns about fragmentation in the face of neoliberalism. Hall writes, 'of course there are sites of resistance but I don't see how they cohere as a political programme, as a philosophy, even a statement' (Hall in Fenton 2008: 230). Grassroots movements which emphasise the culture over politics often become as 'atomised single-issue campaigns' (Glaser 2015). Such movements tend to reject 'grand narratives' (Glaser 2015), yet as Glaser argues, such narratives are connecting and necessary (Glaser 2015). As Fenton writes, 'Without a common binding solidarity and a sustaining political programme, multiplicity results in no more than fragmentation and dispersal' (Fenton 2008: 230). In this view, without elements of traditional politics, the social and cultural elements of prefigurative politics movements post-political 'political proper' brings to the fore are fragmentary. Mark Engler and Paul Engler (2014) warn of something similar in their overview of prefigurative politics. They argue that in many culture-led prefigurative movements 'the stronger the identity and cohesion of the group, the more likely people are to become alienated from other groups, and from society' (Engler & Engler 2014: 9). Such groups are reluctant to network with other sites and institutions of resistance, and as such contribute to political fragmentation.

### 1.2.3. Reshaping, not obliterating

As I have demonstrated, Swyngedouw's properly 'political' rethinks the boundaries of resistance, and allows for a broadened conception of resistance which incorporates the social and the cultural. However, I would argue that Swyngedouw's definition, in spite of its emphasis on a 'multitude of singularities and the plurality of possible modes of becoming' (Swyngedouw 2011: 377), paradoxically precludes some forms of resistance. The distinction 'between social protest movements that seek to influence policy-making and politicizing movements that seek a wider transformations of the instituted order.' (Haughton *et al* 2016: 488) is presently starkly. James McCarthy reads value in the acknowledgement of the post-political condition as provided, yet takes issue with the starkness of the distinction between politics as usual and the political proper. He contends that we should 'resist the call to produce a universal, schematic account of what constitutes ''the properly political.''' (McCarthy 2013: 24). For McCarthy, to present such a defined account of the political proper is to do the political activism 'a great disservice' (McCarthy 2013: 24). Beveridge and Koch (2017) similarly take issue with the pervasive narrative of the 'political proper'. They argue that while we should not reject theorisations of the post-political and or the idea that it exists, post-political theorists such as Swyngedouw reading of its effects is too 'fatalistic' (Beveridge & Koch 2017: 33). Instead, they argue that the post-political condition 'reshapes, but does not obliterate politics' (Beveridge and Koch 2017: 33). To illustrate this, they give the imagined example of call centre workers who campaign against their employers for better pay. What begins as an atomised movement, is quickly absorbed into larger institutions with support from trade unions. Beveridge and Koch (2017) argue that in such a context it would be wrong to dismiss the movement. They argue that the distinction between the political proper and all other movements, denies the 'radical or emancipatory quality' of 'real-world' movements (Beveridge & Koch 2017: 33). In defining the 'political' only as the 'heroic' actions such as carnivalesque and totalising prefigurative movements such as Occupy is to fundamentally reduce political agency where it is needed most.

This argument is given a specific cultural dimension by Wendy Larner (2015). Larner, in her study of CoExist movement located in Stokes Croft in Bristol, offers a reevaluation of the political proper. In her study of Coexist's networked of Larner argues that while the 'active and deliberate experimentation in a wide range of spheres has become integral to the

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processes of political reinvention after neoliberalism' (Larner 2015: 204). Rather than representing the demise of politics, it is out of (inevitably incomplete, paradoxical and compromised) experiments…that new political formations will emerge.' (Larner 2015: 204). Viewed through the prism of hegemony, Larner's theory is therefore not inherently pessimistic about the realm of the politics. While Larner's account is largely based on the collaborative working processes of radical social enterprise. Larner maintains that there is a 'tendency to position neoliberalism as all-encompassing has made it difficult to see already existing alternatives, and has stifled exploration of the political implications of such approaches.' (Larner 2015: 192). CoExist, according to Larner, have managed to self sustain while also

For Cumbers, Helms and Swanson (2010), the solution lies in an engagement with Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony (Gramsci 1971). They argue that, in recent academic work, there is a tendency towards a totalising rhetoric concerning the effects of urban restructuring on the working class. They argue that this type of rhetoric treats the working class in urban restructuring as 'passive victims' (Cumbers, Helms and Swanson 2010: 46). In order to offer a more nuanced appraisal war of position and war of movement in understanding the cultural and discursive aspects of class struggle' (Cumbers, Helms and Swanson 2010: 48). Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's articulate this explicitly as a solution to the post-political condition in their seminal work *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (2001). Rather than dismissing activity which engages with existing institutions as 'non-political' (Swyngedouw 2013: 1), they argue that the multiplicity of movements and the multiple ways which non-hegemonic actors negotiate institutions must be acknowledged. As they write, 'This moment of tension, of openness, which gives the social its essentially incomplete and precarious character, is what every project for radical democracy should set out to institutionalise' (Laclau & Mouffe 2001: 190). Viewed in conjunction with the examples provided by Larner (2015) and Beveridge and Koch (2017), it is apparent that an acknowledgement of the many possibilities for resistance to ever-changing neoliberal hegemony is important. 'multiple and indeterminate routes, sites, forms, and trajectories of politics and political change' (McCarthy 2013: 24).

## 1.3.Conclusion

A review of existing literature has sought to demonstrate that culture-led regeneration is a problematic issue, which is inextricable from neoliberalism. Consequently, the strategy and the culture it proliferates have become entangled with issues of depoliticisation. In such contexts, our conception of the political requires a careful re-evaluation. Post-political literature provides a useful prism through which we can conduct this evaluation, helping us recentralise the role of culture in constituting resistance, and bringing to the fore forms of resistance which work outside existing institutions and seek to challenge and disrupt a pervasive and commodified culture.

However, redrawing the boundaries of the political is also problematic. I do not deny the primacy of the acknowledging the post-political condition in reappraising resistance in the face of changing and pervasive hegemonic structures. However, what the latter half of the literature review sought to demonstrated is that theorisations of resistance starkly delineate the political proper are in some ways misguided. To refuse  the political agency of 'non-heroic' (Beveridge & Koch 2017: 33) movements which nonetheless possess 'political' elements is a short-sighted view of resistance.

**Chapter two: Methodology**

The previous chapter argued that while post-political literature offers a useful reappraisal of the role of culture in resistance, fixed and immutable definitions of what constitutes the political in the context of culture-led regeneration are problematic. As such, they fall short of offering an appropriate way of understanding resistance to culture-led regeneration. Consequently, this chapter outlines the methodological framework adopted as a means of offering a more nuanced appraisal of possible strategies for resisting culture-led regeneration. I begin with an overview of the empirical case study examined in Chapter three, Workers City. I provide a rationale for the selection of the material, with a discussion of Workers City's declared aims, history and organisation, situating the group in the context set out in the literature review. The chapter concludes with an outline how of the empirical evidence was collected and analysed.

## 2.1. Workers City: aims, history, organisation

Material published by Glasgow-based collective Workers City was used to examine the possibilities for resistance under culture-led regeneration. These publications were chosen as a case study to investigate the research question for a number of reasons. Firstly, Workers City offer an explicit example of resistance to culture-led regeneration. The group formed in 1988 in direct response to the announcement by Glasgow City Council that the city had been crowned ECoC (The Strickland Distribution 2014), and were unequivocal in their opposition to Glasgow ECoC 1990, with their output considered to be 'strikingly antagonistic' (CCA 2016). Their adopted moniker is a reference to Glasgow's Merchant City, a designated 'cultural quarter' (People Make Glasgow 2017) in the heart of the city which was extensively redeveloped and is perhaps the most 'heavily promoted example of Glasgow's alleged urban renaissance' (Gray 2010). The area takes its name from Glasgow's empire-era tobacco lords (People Make Glasgow 2017) and its transformation from postindustrial wasteland to cultural hotspot was a flagship feature of the Glasgow ECoC 1990 programme. The name 'Workers City' contests this history. As group member James Kelman (2006) writes, 'was chosen to directly challenge "Merchant City", highlighting the grossness of the fallacy that Glasgow somehow exists because of the tireless efforts of a tiny patriotic coalition of fearless 18th

century entrepreneurs and far-sighted politicians.' (Kelman 2006: 12). The group therefore represent an unequivocal challenge to the narrative of culture-led regeneration, and as such offer an appropriate test case for understanding possibilities for resistance to culture-led regeneration more broadly.

Furthermore, as noted in Chapter one, Glasgow ECoC 1990 was the first time culture-led regeneration had been implemented on a large scale in the United Kingdom. The ECoC programme was, in 1990, in its relative infancy and Glasgow's designation is viewed as a 'turning point' (Palmer 2004: 47) in the programme. This was the first time the accolade had been given to a city without an existing celebrated cultural dimension[4], and as such the first time it had taken on an image remaking function. Thus, while the output of Workers City's may in some ways appear to predate ideas of the late capitalist post-political city in its technocratic dominance, in examining work which sought to resist culture-led regeneration at its inception, they offer an example of resistance to culture-led regeneration in its infancy. In attempting to resist a fledgling policy,

The group's publications were also chosen due to their status as cultural artefacts. It should be noted that as well as producing the materials examined here, members of Workers City also took part in wider activity which challenged the official Glasgow ECoC narrative, such as participation in 'Self Determination and Power' symposium in 1990 which brought Noam Chomsky to the Govan area of Glasgow (Barsky 1998: 216-217), alongside 'media work and direct action' (Strickland Distribution 2014). However, the publications offer a defined example of the 'aesthetics of resistance' (Strickland Distribution) which the group proposed to undertake. As group member and publication editor Farquhar McLay states, Workers City wished to form an attack 'on the cultural front' (McLay 1990: 12). As such the role of culture in constituting resistance for the group was paramount. For the group, culture is deemed to be an essential tool in political discourse, and in particular in opposing the ECoC programme. As group member Hugh Savage points out: 'I learned from artists as well as propagandists' (Savage *in* Dickson 1990). As Gray (2010; 2015) has previously noted, Workers City were pioneering in their emphasis on the conditions of social reproduction as a site of struggle, as well as more economic sites of struggle. Therefore, concentrating specifically on their textual

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[4] European City of Culture winners prior to 1990: 1985 Athens, 1986 Florence, 1987 Amsterdam, 1988 Berlin, 1989 Paris.

and visual communication as a means of resistance was deemed the most appropriate method for understanding their 'aesthetics of resistance' which closely interacts with ideas of cultural resistance as outlined in the literature review.

The group published a varied body of written and visual material over a relatively concentrated period of time (1988 – 1993). In examining an output which took place over such a short timeframe and which directly traces the transformative narrative arc of Glasgow ECoC as outlined by Myerscough (1988; 1990), my study thus makes use of a direct contextual correlation between the material and the implementation and arising conditions of Glasgow 1990, ECoC. In focusing on such a short lived provides an in-depth examination of the machinations and tools used by the Workers City movement. I maintain that using a single case study model here is beneficial. While the case study is not able to provide an analysis of impact of the Workers City's material on effecting radical change, an in-depth single case study model in this instance is appropriate as a means of understanding how resistance functioned under these explicit conditions.

The organisation of Workers City was also relevant to the selection of the material. Workers City state that they were structured non-hierarchically, with no party affiliation or fixed political position. The group comprised a broad collection of writers, artists and activists, including well-known Scottish literary personalities such as James Kelman and Alasdair Gray, [5] as well as local agitators and poets with no professional connection to any literary or artistic establishment (Workers City 1988: 151-157; The Reckoning 1990). Yet the group did not emphasise the celebrated status of its more well-known participants and organized themselves without leadership or any party affiliation. Of the group's position and philosophy, contributor and editor Farquhar McLay explains:

> The Workers City Group is not a political party. We do not have the financial resources available to our opponents. We do not…try to force our ideas down anyone's throat. We argue. And when we have argued things out we try to place our point before the public. Naturally among ourselves we disagree in regard to many things. But one thing upon which we are all agreed is this: the city belongs to its people and not to the political gangsters and the big-money men whose only interest in Glasgow is what they can milk it for (McLay 1990: 4)

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[5] While writers such as Kelman and Gray are mentioned here in the context of their relative level of fame, it should also be noted that they positioned themselves as anti-establishment in many ways. As such a consideration of their work as symbolic of a literary or artistic establishment at this time is problematic (Kovesi 2013; Bernstein 1999).

In this sense, it has been argued that the organizational structure and radical aims of Workers City have been viewed as a precursor to non-hierarchical, horizontal movements such as Occupy Wall Street (Miller and Rodger 2013: 88). This has led writers such as Johnny Rodger and Mitch Miller to proclaim that the organization of Workers City 'anticipate broad-based movements…while belonging to an era that had none of the advantages of the latter movement in terms of the accessibility of mass communication devices.' (Miller and Rodger 2013: 88). Workers City, in this way, appear to represent some form of Swyngendouw's political proper.

## 2.1.Data collection and analysis

The project relied on an online archive of Workers City's material, freely available digitally at www.workerscity.org[6]. The digital archival work was undertaken by Spirit of Revolt, which was then published online by Glasgow collective The Strickland Distribution, 'an artist-run group supporting the development of independent research in art-related and non-institutional practices' (www.stricklanddistro.com). The material accessed consisted of two anthologies of writing *Workers City* (1998) and *The Reckoning* (1990) which contained 58 written contributions spanning genres of documentary reporting, short story and poetry, and 20 digitised versions of the group's self-produced newssheet *The Glasgow Keelie*, published intermittently from 1990 to 1993. Owing to the timeframe in which the texts were produced (1988 – 1993), all of the materials were deemed relevant to the research question. As such, the project analysed all of the writing and newssheets in the Workers City archive, in order to avoid selection bias. Additional materials depicting official cultural artefacts, which Workers City reference and rework in their publications, were also accessed from the Glasgow Museum Collections online library. These are presented as a means of comparison.

The materials were examined using content analysis. All material was reviewed and key themes were identified. While Workers City's materials were published and distributed within a relatively short period, the work is extraordinarily rich and varied in its visual and textual content, spanning an array of genres and styles. As such, it's necessary to acknowledge that many themes which emerged during my analysis are not considered here,

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[6] The collection is also physically available at The Mitchell Library, Glasgow.

owing largely to issues of scope and size of this study. Nonetheless, three prevalent themes identified were deemed most relevant to answering the research question at hand: subversion, authenticity and calls to action. Visual and written practices were assigned to these categories, and subsequently analysed against ideas of the post-political theoretical framework discussed in the preceding chapter. These themes were deemed most appropriate to understanding the possibilities for resistance to culture-led regeneration as they most closely matched the points of tension which emerged in my review of the literature.

**Chapter three: Workers City's aesthetics of resistance**

'Surely it is time we stopped looking elsewhere. The answer is here now.'

**– Farquhar McLay (1990: 4)**

Having considered debates around culture-led regeneration and the political, I now move on to an analysis of Workers City's publications as a means of interrogating understandings of resistance. I conduct this analysis in two parts. The first is subdivided into three categories, matching the themes which were identified during content analysis. The second section syntheses the findings of the analysis and offers conclusions in light of the literature review in chapter one. Considering these elements together allows us to contribute to an understanding of resistance to culture-led regeneration, both supporting and challenging arguments around the political proper which were outlined in the literature review.

## 3.1. Findings

### 3.1.1 Subversion and parody

Workers City's make extensive use of visual and written techniques of subversion and parody in their publications. The most frequent subjects of this subversion and parody are the institutions of power and the officials who implemented the Glasgow ECoC 1990 programme. Importantly, this parody is often achieved through reworking of images and language which were deemed to be culturally important in the official Glasgow ECoC narrative. For example, the front page of the first issue of *The Glasgow Keelie*, published in April of 1990, is adorned with a black and white image which reads 'There's a lot of con gowing on in 1990' (**Figure 2.**) in art nouveau-style lettering. This image is reworking of an official logo which was used to promote Glasgow ECoC (**Figure 1.**). This logo was developed as part of a £3million branding and marketing contract for the project awarded to London-based advertising behemoths Saatchi and Saatchi (Hewison 2015: 280; Gold and Revill 2004). The campaign aimed primarily at drawing external stakeholders such as tourists and overseas investors (O'Neill 2017: 27) to the city, as well as appeasing 'yuppies' (The Glasgow Keelie 1990: 1), a Glasgow-baseed cultural elite who Workers City frequently attack as the beneficiaries of 'Culture City' (The Glasgow Keelie 1990: 1). Workers City

offer a 'détournement' (Debord 1994: 27) of the logo, using the same lettering as the original, with an alternative message. To fully understand the implications of Workers City's détournement of the image, it is important to note that the official Glasgow ECoC image is itself an appropriation. The logo uses lettering in the style of Charles Rennie Mackintosh, famed Glaswegian artist and architect of Glasgow School of Art. The use of Mackintosh's style in the official logo is significant. It illustrates Glasgow City Council's use of culture as a facet of 'place marketing' (Edwards & Imrie 2015: 175), using the artistic output of Mackintosh in an attempt to capitalise on the city's uniqueness and authenticity (Harvey 2002). In reworking this signifier of culture-led regeneration, Workers City's détournement is an exposition of the ideological conditions of the culture-led regeneration. It directly confronts the  It enacts a powerful resistance against the strategy, by antagonistically highlighting the conditions of the original appropriation, which can be read as an attempt to 'Disneyify' (Harvey 2002: 96) culture, creating a monopoly rent from the city's existing cultural signifiers.

The most frequent figure of parody in Workers City's publications is Pat Lally. Lally was the 'colourful and all-powerful leader of Glasgow District Council' (Scotsman 2010) throughout ECoC. He was regarded as an architect of Glasgow's ECoC bid, and as such was a ubiquitous and well-regarded presence in the media throughout the implementation of the programme (The Scotsman 2010). Conversely, in Workers City's publications, Lally is ridiculed and demeaned. He is characterised as 'DooLally' (McLaughin 1990 (September): 2), a play on the Scottish slang word for crazy and the city of Glasgow is named Lallygrad 1990 (September: 1), in reference to Stalingrad. Visually, Pat Lally is depicted nailed to the cross on the second page of Workers City's second anthology of writing *The Reckoning* (1990). This image of Lally, crucified and smiling benevolently is a détournement of Salvador Dali's famous work *Christ of Saint John on the Cross* (1951) (**Figure 4.),** which was, in 1990, housed in Glasgow's Kelvingrove Art Gallery[7]. Workers City superimpose Pat Lally's head on top of the image, captioning it 'Salvador Lally: Ascending to Heaven' (**Figure 3**.) The image is an incongruous appropriation of both Salvador Dali's celebrated work, and of Lally himself, the figurehead of ECoC. The appropriation is an example of the Bakhtin's

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[7] It is worth nothing that Glasgow City Council's acquisition of the painting was met with controversy in 1952, with local art students protesting that the money invested in the piece could have been better spent on provisions for local artists (Glasgow Life 2012). The image was also repeatedly vandalised throughout its Glasgow tenure (Glasgow Life 2017), suggesting a historical ambivalence to the image.

carnivalesque grotesque, of which the essential principle 'is degradation, that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of the earth and body in their indissoluble unity.' (Bakthin 1968: 18). This is degradation of the authority figures and images associated therefore offers an altneratice from the hierarchical structures of ECoC.

**Figure 1**. There's a lot Glasgowing on in 1990



THERE'S
A LOT
GLASGOWING
ON IN 1990.
CULTURAL CAPITAL
OF EUROPE.

**Figure 2.** There's a lot of con gowing on in 1990



THERE'S
A LOT OF
CON GOWING
ON IN
1990.

**Figure 3.** Pat Lally: Ascending to heaven



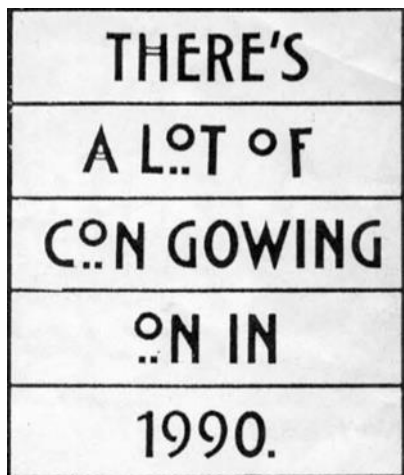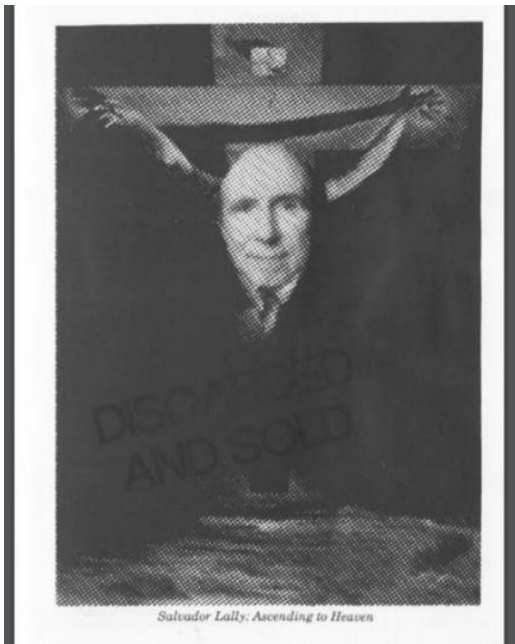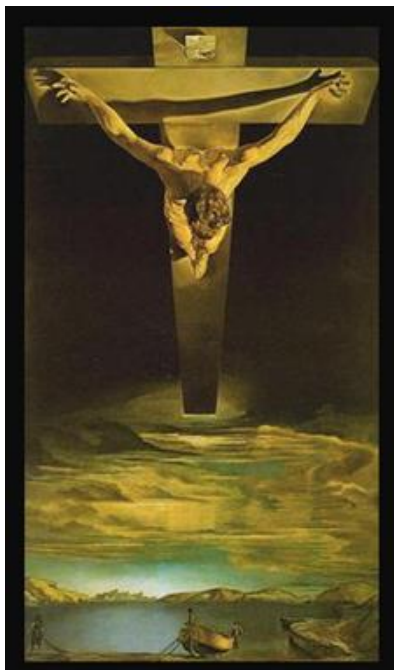Salvador Lally: Ascending to Heaven

**Figure 4:** Christ of Saint John on the Cross, Salvador Dali



The publications also reimagine real life situations in grotesque and vulgar language. For example, selected texts in *The Glasgow Keelie* are presented in a tabloid reporting style, with

headings, subheadings and direct quotes. However, the content of the articles is often invented. For example, one headline in The Glasgow Keelie, April 1991, reads:

> Mr Doug Clelland of Clelland Associates, Castle haven Road, London, whose brainchild Glasgow's Glasgow is set to incur losses of more than six million pounds, now openly admits: "I am crazy".' (The Glasgow Keelie 1991: 5)

'Doug Clelland' referred to here, was at the time of writing, a Glasgow-based architect, who masterminded 'Glasgow's Glasgow' an 'exhibition on the city's history' (Scotsman 2010) which was based underneath Glasgow's Central Station. For Workers City, the exhibition was an insult, particularly when funding for the People's Palace, a museum of radical history on Glasgow Green was being reduced (The Glasgow Keelie 1990: 3)

In another piece, the headline offers a piece about  states:

> "I DON'T GIVE THREE FUCKS"
> says Chief Inspector (The Glasgow Keelie 1991: 3)

Parodying official figures through invented speech and profanity here serves two purposes. Firstly, as demonstrated with the derision of Pat Lally, it degrades official figures of authority, illustrating Workers City's antagonistic attitude towards hierarchical structures and towards ECoC more widely. Secondly, it works to collapse boundaries of genre. The effect of presenting real-life figures

### 3.1.2. Authenticity

In contrast to the figures of authority who Workers City frequently ridicule and degrade, the publications also features a central concern with ideas of authenticity and a real culture. The idea is stated explicitly on the back of the group's first anthology, the self-titled *Workers City*:

> GLASGOW - the working class city par excellence - is under attack. Opportunistic politicians and entrepreneurial admen are concocting a lie. For the sake of a quick buck they are ready to destroy the authentic voice and identity of this city. In WORKERS CITY we hear the real voice of Glasgow (Workers City 1988)

The 'real voice' is communicated by the use of Glaswegian vernacular, which is heavily present throughout all of the publications. For example, Workers City reimagine official

exchanges between the authorities who presided over ECoC in Glaswegian vernacular, captioning official ECoC images with fictional exchanges between elected officials using Glaswegian slang words (**Figure 5**).

**Figure 5.** Pat Lally and Sir Walter MacFarlane of Bearsden discussing 'keich'



*Pat Lally: Look Lord Mac, it's raining cash on Culture City.*
*Lord MacFarlane of Bearsden: Surely you mean Keich, Patrick old chap.*
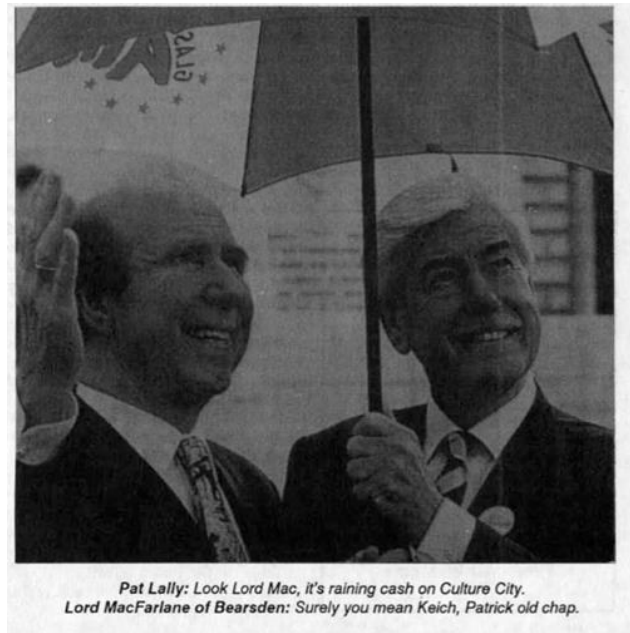
Presenting the image of Pat Lally and Sir Walter MacFarlane in Glaswegian dialect offers a contrast between the official narrative of Glasgow ECoC 1900, and the 'real voice' (McLay 1990) of Glasgow. As Workers City group member James Kelman writes in 1985 of his own extensive use of Glaswegian vernacular in his writing, 'language is the culture – if you lose your language, you've lost your culture, so if you've lost the way your family talk, the way your friends talk, then you've lost your culture' (Kelman 1985 *in* Kovesi 2013: 151). The use of Glaswegian vernacular to skewer or detourn these official images therefore serves to highlight the inauthenticity of the official Glasgow ECoC 1990 narrative, while attempting to reclaim an authentic element of Glasgow culture which Workers City argue that the official ECoC narrative works to obscure.

In a similar way, Frank Sinatra's 'Chicago, Chicago' is reworked in Glaswegian dialect by Workers City group member Jack Withers in *The Glasgow Keelie*:

In Castlemilk or Easterhoose
Thir's no much tae choose

Real high oan the dope wi'oot ony hope
Or oan the booze  (Withers 1990: 3)[8]

Sinatra was invited to sing during ECoC, a move which was roundly criticised by Workers City (xxx). In this way, the work emphasises the role of cultural production (Harvey 2002: 109) and the ability of non-hegemonic actors to agonistically oppose hegemonic narratives, while also creating something from it, a piece of writing in its own right. In this way, Workers City both emphasise the essential role of culture in constituting a resistance to culture-led regeneration and emphasise the role of new horizons and locations of resistance.

In appraising the use of this language, The Strickland Distribution warn that there is as a 'danger of essentialism' (Strickland Distribution 2014) in using Glaswegian vernacular for political means. Workers City risk an 'aestheticisation of the vernacular, reducing it to an oral pose or style a signifier of 'national' distinctiveness.' (Strickland Distribution 2014). I would argue however that the use of the vernacular here is indispensable in attempting to produce something culturally distinct from the official narrative.

Furthermore, in highlighting the contradictions and conditions of the official ECoC narrative as offered as part of the official ECoC narrative, and presenting these alongside work which emphasises non-official language in the form of Glaswegian vernacular, Workers City attempt to with a new, authentic culture. In Workers City's alternative vision of Glasgow, the official culture is not just ignored, or attacked, it is negated. As McLay writes:

> It will be a negation of the official culture of power and domination. It will be based on individuals and small groups coming together to forge a libertarian cultural movement for themselves out of a simple hunger to bring a measure of depth and meaning into their lives. (McLay 1990: 11)

### 3.1.3.  Wider political action

**Figure 6.** A square mile of struggle



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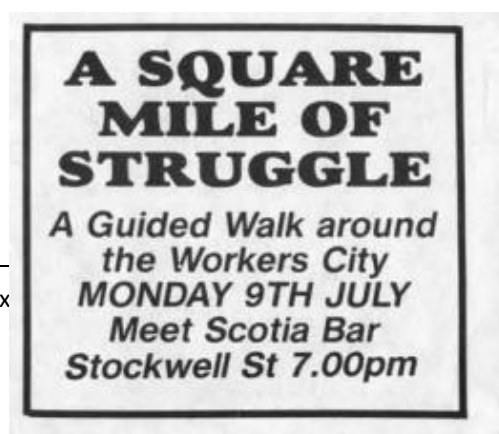
Lastly, it will be important to consider how Workers City's publications engaged with ideas of wider political action in their publications. The publications contain a number of appeals to direct action and references to a variety of political campaigns. As we have seen, figures of authority, particularly those associated with the ECoC project, are subjected to extensive ridicule and attack by Workers City. As such, these calls to action are never associated with party politics, electoral campaigns or voting. Workers City in this way reject an engagement with the 'stale and impotent' (Glaser 2015) party politics which are association with traditional models of resistance. Furthermore, Workers City's materials are not campaign materials, themselves as leaders or any kind of political action. As McLay writes of a meeting chaired by the Workers City group to protest the privatisation of the city's Glasgow Green:

> It was emphasised at the meeting several times that the Workers City Group has no desire or intention of controlling any campaign, that it is the job of the people involved, the group's work is to participate. We have no desire to seek office or positions. The fight can only be won by the ordinary workers uniting to challenge the District Council who no longer even pretend to represent them. (McLay 1991: 4).

Workers City are therefore reluctant to lead campaigns. However, the publications are still used as tools for organising wider political action with calls to action for local history walks, as an alternative to the ECoC cultural events (**Figure 6**.), as well as calls to support wider political campaigns against the Poll Tax (**Figures 7. & 8.**)

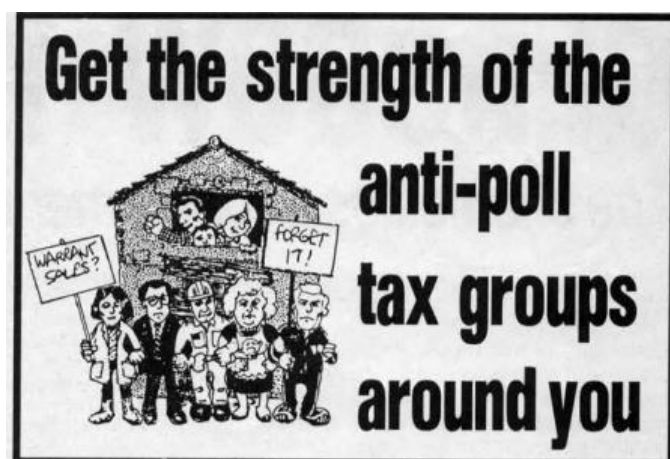**Figure 7.** Get the strength of the anti-poll tax groups around you

**Figure 8.** The Poll Tax is being defeated and together we can win

## The Poll Tax is being defeated and together we can win.

As well as app[...]appeal to readers to sup[...]**Figure 8**.) and to congratulate local schools in their successful campaigns against school closure (**Figure 9**.). Therefore while Workers City are reluctant to lead campaigns and support party politics, what their publications here demonstrate is a willingness to engage and support attempts to influence policy from other institutions. In this sense, the group engage in a form of strategic politics, through campaigning and networking with other institutions as a means of 'building organization in order to achieve power so that structural changes in the political, economic and social orders might be achieved' (Breines 1980: 420).

**Figure 9.** Clydeside Action against Asbestos

For further information on how you can help the campaign, visit: Clydeside Action on Asbestos, 15 St. Margaret's Place (Saltmarket) Tel: 552 88525

**Figure 10.** Congratulations Cranhill

## TELLING THE TEACHERS

The Regional Council proposed to close both the state/protestant school and the catholic school in the Cranhill area.

The local kids showed the adults the non-sectarian alternative by striking for a joint school, in spite of sever objections from the catholic hierarchy and the Regional Council.
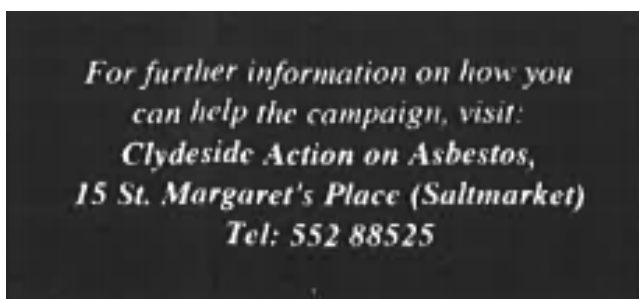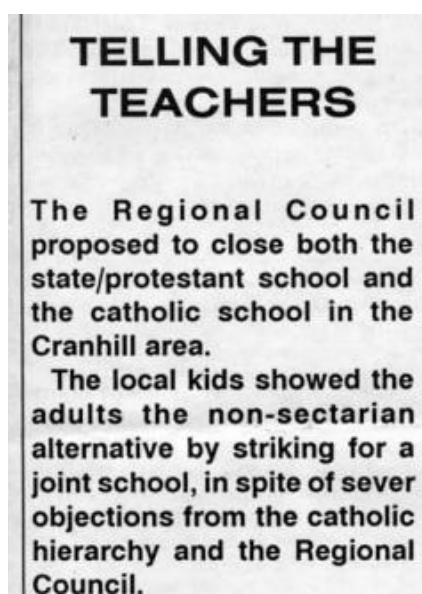
## 3.2. Defying distinctions

My analysis of Workers City's publications brought to light a number of aspects of their resistance under the conditions of culture-led regeneration. Firstly, I found that Workers City convey a distrust of existing hierarchical structures through techniques of parody and subversion, which target both those in power throughout the implementation of Glasgow ECoC 1990 (e.g. Pat Lally, Doug Clelland) and the cultural artefacts which were appropriated as part of an attempt to sell the city of Glasgow during the ECoC campaign. These techniques demonstrating an antagonism (Zizek 1999: 20) relationship to Glasgow ECoC 1990.

Furthermore, the techniques collapse boundaries between styles of writing, and between official and non-official language. By 'blurring boundaries' (Ranciere 2011: 5) in this way Workers City's materials embody Ranciere's idea of dissensus (Ranciere 2010). They collapse distinctions between politics and aesthetics, and making 'visble that what has no place being seen' (Ranciere 2010: 25).

The analysis also demonstrated that Workers City's materials included an emphasis on the authentic culture of Glasgow, through use of Glaswegian vernacular. In this way, Workers City make use of culture as a tool for resistance but do not do so passively. Instead of subtly appropriating tools of culture with unspecified intent, as in Fiske's 'excoporation' (Fiske 1989: 13), Workers City remake culture with explicit political intent. Like the Situationists who preceded them and the culture-jammers who follow them, Workers City seek to reveal the authentic within the inauthentic conditions of culture-led regeneration, 'negating' the official culture.of Glasgow ECoC 1990 with their own cultural artefacts.In this way, Workers City demonstrate aspects of prefiguration, in that they emphasis the 'social' (Day 20015: 16)

Swyngedouw's (2011) rethinking of the 'political' as that which emphasises the social and the cultural has therefore been useful in identified the subtle, culture-oriented ways which Workers City attempt to negotiate new terrains of hegemonic dominance presented by culture-led regeneration. In confronting distinctions, such as those drawn between the official culture of ECoC and non-official language as offered in their grotesque detournements, Workers City present a model of resistance which moves away from that offered in traditional conceptions of resistance, or 'politics', such as electoral politics or old social issues. Instead of solely emphasing the 'bread and butter'(Masquelier 2013: 4) issues of class and labour, Workers City use cultural resistance as a means of highlighting new locations of resistance and new sights of struggle.

However, the analysis also identified facets of strategic action in Workers City's publications. Viewed in conjunction with the antagonistic collapsing of boundaries and emphasis on prefiguration, these tactics problematise Swyngedouw's argument that we must draw a distinction between the political and politics. While Workers City do not engage in networked action to the same extent as the Coexist movement as outlined by Larner (2015) they nonetheless demonstrate a willingness to support campaigns and institutions which aim to make changes from within. In actively partaking in and advocating for wider political movements which campaign against specific facets of policy making  (The Poll Tax campaign; Clydeside Action Against Asbestos).

Rather than attempting to categorise Workers City and their materials, what I wish to emphasise here is the multiple and contradictory nature of their resistance. In using techniques which 'jam' (Lasn 1999: 128) the logic of the hegemonic culture, while simultaneously supporting campaigns which interact with existing institutions, Workers City present a problematic case for Swygendouw's 'politcal'. Their material problematises the fixed distinction 'between social protest movements that seek to influence policy-making and politicizing movements that seek a wider transformations of the instituted order.' (Haughton 2016: 488). In light this, it is important to revisit McCarthy's appeal to the rejection of 'schematic, universal' (McCarthy 2013: 24) definition of the political proper. To do so, I argue, would deny the rich contribution which movements such as Workers City make in attempting to antagonistically renegotiate the shifting conditions of neoliberal hegemonic. To discount the validity of their resistance under the conditions of post-politics would be to fail to read value in the humour and creativity of their resistance.

**Conclusion**

This dissertation set out to investigate the possibilities for resistance under the conditions of culture-led regeneration. The research has contributed to an understanding of resistance to the conditions of culture-led regeneration requires in a number of ways. Firstly, I have demonstrated that it is necessary to acknowledge the ideological context of culture-led urban restructuring strategy. The depoliticising effects of culture-led regeneration importantly bring to light the inadequacies of certain forms of politics, such as electoral campaigning, which may previously have been accepted as resistance but post-political era become appropriated by neoliberal hegemony in a post-political age. These forms of politics are therefore inadequate in appropriately resisting the conditions imposed by culture-led regeneration, and resistance thus requires a reconceptualisation. Post-political literature provides important framework for this reconceptualisation, helping to centralise issues of culture in understanding resistance.

However, through a critical interrogation of this framework, my research has attempted to upset attempts to define the political proper. Following James McCarthy (2014), the study attempted to 'recall and highlight' the 'multiplicity' (McCarthy 2013: 24) forms which resistance may take. The empirical study of Workers City was used to demonstrate this, examining how Workers City employed antagonistic and anti-authoritarian and hierarchical techniques alongside more traditional organisation techniques, acknowledging and supporting campaigns for change against existing institutions. Furthermore, Workers City offer a model of resistance which centralises the role of cultural production in resistance. This demonstrates not only the  As such possibilities for resistance under culture-led regeneration should not be confined by narrow definitions of the political proper (Swyngedouw 2011: Haughton et al 2016).

**Areas for future research**

Due to space restrictions this study was limited to a single case study model. While this offered an appropriate means of investigating how resistance is constituted under culture-led regeneration, and as such challenging ideas about what constitutes resistance according to some post-political scholars, a comparative model would lend further credence to the argument that resistance is multiple and fluid, and as such rigid categorisations require rethinking. To continue this attempt to broaden our understanding of resistance, perhaps more widely than the theorisations offered here, I would suggest a further single case study or comparative studies of resistance movements in the context Glasgow ECoC 1990. Projects such as the Castlemilk Womanhouse programme perhaps more unequivocally resemble Wendy Larner's model of networked resistance in a neoliberal age. As such, it would provide further material for analysis, particularly when viewed alongside the work of more antagonistic movements such as Workers City. Another suggestion area for future research would be a longitudinal study of resistance under culture-led regeneration, as a means of analysing how these develop over a more protracted period of time. This would provide a means of understanding how resistance is constituted under neoliberal hegemony, which I have argued is constantly shifting.

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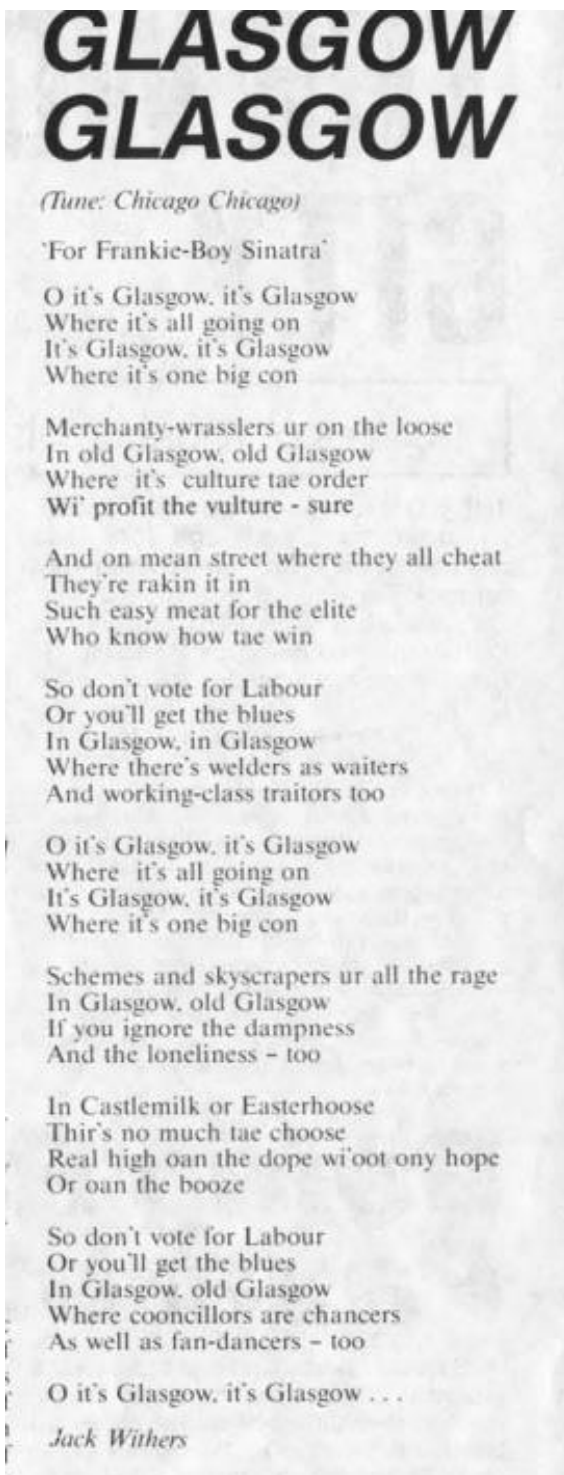
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# GLASGOW GLASGOW

*(Tune: Chicago Chicago)*

'For Frankie-Boy Sinatra'

O it's Glasgow, it's Glasgow
Where it's all going on
It's Glasgow, it's Glasgow
Where it's one big con

Merchanty-wrasslers ur on the loose
In old Glasgow, old Glasgow
Where it's culture tae order
Wi' profit the vulture - sure

And on mean street where they all cheat
They're rakin it in
Such easy meat for the elite
Who know how tae win

So don't vote for Labour
Or you'll get the blues
In Glasgow, in Glasgow
Where there's welders as waiters
And working-class traitors too

O it's Glasgow, it's Glasgow
Where it's all going on
It's Glasgow, it's Glasgow
Where it's one big con

Schemes and skyscrapers ur all the rage
In Glasgow, old Glasgow
If you ignore the dampness
And the loneliness – too

In Castlemilk or Easterhoose
Thir's no much tae choose
Real high oan the dope wi'oot ony hope
Or oan the booze

So don't vote for Labour
Or you'll get the blues
In Glasgow, old Glasgow
Where cooncillors are chancers
As well as fan-dancers – too

O it's Glasgow, it's Glasgow . . .

*Jack Withers*

"Chicago" – Frank Sinatra

Chicago, Chicago that toddling town
Chicago, Chicago I will show you around
I love it bet your bottom dollar you'll lose the blues
in Chicago, Chicago
The town that Billy's Sunday couldn't shut down

On state street that great street I just want to say
They do things that they don't do on Broadway
They have the time, the time of their life
I saw a man he danced with his wife
in Chicago, Chicago my home town

Chicago, Chicago that toddling town
Chicago, Chicago I'll show you around
I love it bet your bottom dollar you'll lose the blues
in Chicago, Chicago
The town that Billy's Sunday couldn't shut down

On state street that great street I just want to say
They do things that they never do on Broadway say
They have the time, the time of their life
I saw a man and he danced with his wife
in Chicago

Chicago, Chicago that's my home town