

The Community Arts Movement in Scotland, 1962-1990

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

History Department, University of Strathclyde, 2018

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Abstract

This thesis traces the underexplored history of the community arts movement as it developed in urban Scotland between 1962, the year the organisation that became the Craigmillar Festival Society was founded, and 1990, the year Glasgow celebrated its year as European City of Culture. It draws primarily on 24 oral history interviews conducted with practitioners working in Scotland during this period. Bringing these oral testimonies into dialogue with visual and documentary sources, it offers a unique perspective on the social, cultural and political beliefs, objectives and intentions - as well as the concrete achievements - of community artists. This methodology also yields new insights into the relationship between surviving or recorded murals, photographs, playbooks, films and videos, and the processes by which they were made.

Setting the movement within its historical context, this thesis makes a contribution to the growing literature on Scottish culture and counterculture, demonstrating that community arts arose out of a particular convergence of community action, popular culture, welfare state paternalism, and a countercultural emphasis on freedom and self-expression. This thesis also positions community art within the broader fields of community action and community development. It argues a history of the movement contributes to our understanding of the ways in which urban policy was negotiated, implemented and contested at the grassroots during this period. In particular, it situates community arts and community arts practitioners in relation

to the growth of social inclusion policies. As such it contributes to the historiography on community action, urban protest and urban governance.

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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to say thank you to all those who took part in the oral history interviews that form the basis of this thesis. The time you took to share your memories, reflections, insights and in some cases, personal archives of photographs, slides, posters, magazines, paperwork and so on has been invaluable to me and for this I am immensely grateful.

A huge thank you to my supervisors - Dr Angela Bartie, Professor Phil Cooke and Professor Arthur McIvor - for the guidance and expertise you have provided over the past few years. I am particularly grateful to Dr Bartie for all the constructive criticism, thoughtful and detailed feedback on drafts, and advice and reassurance you've offered.

Thank you also to the Scottish Oral History Centre and everyone based there – particularly my fellow PhD students Martin Conlon and Jessica Douthwaite, who made the whole experience that much more enjoyable.

I'm especially grateful also to Eilidh and Jane for being an endless source of fun, friendship and for sharing in the travails of writing (and all the distractions from it).

Finally, none of this would have been possible without the support of my parents, Linda and Adrian, who have cheered me on from the beginning and particularly in the final few months. Thanks a million!

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Abbreviations

ACA	Association of Community Artists
ACTT	Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians
APG	Artist Placement Group
APT	Area of Priority Treatment
CAT	(Craigmillar) Community Arts Team
CCA	Centre for Contemporary Arts
CDP	Community Development Programme
CEMA	Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts
CFS	Craigmillar Festival Society
CND	Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
ECL	Edinburgh Central Library
EDC	Edinburgh District Council
EEC	European Economic Community
EFS	Easterhouse Festival Society
EFWT	Edinburgh Film Workshop Trust
GDC	Glasgow District Council
GEAR	Greater Eastern Area Renewal
GLC	Greater London Council
HCA	Helen Crummy Archive
MSC	Manpower Services Commission

NAS	National Archives of Scotland
NLS	National Library of Scotland
RAA	Regional Arts Association
SAC	Scottish Arts Council
SDA	Scottish Development Agency
SRC	Strathclyde Regional Council
STUC	Scottish Trades Union Council
TBL	The Bridge Library
TWE	Theatre Workshop Edinburgh
VIP	Video in Pilton
WAAF	Women's Auxiliary Air Force
WIP	Women in Profile

Chapter One: Introduction

The first community arts project was established in Scotland in 1962, and the movement gathered pace throughout the 1970s and 1980s.¹ Particularly in the countercultural climate of the late sixties, culture became an inherently political issue. Artists, motivated by the belief that access to the means of artistic production could be a liberating force (and one that should be available to all), sought to bring art into the streets, housing estates, schools, prisons, hospitals and other non-traditional settings. The community arts movement was situated at a key intersection between artists, activists, communities and the state, making it a useful lens through which to examine the varying social and political uses to which art and culture have been put since the 1960s. These include: the fostering of community; the expression and celebration of class and identity politics; protest against lack of amenities or the withdrawal of welfare services; improvements to the built environment; and the push for more participatory forms of democracy.

The movement espoused sometimes radical aims, but by 1990, the year that Glasgow was designated European City of Culture, it had become heavily reliant on public funding. As a condition of this funding, community arts organisations increasingly found themselves responsible for providing educational and social

¹ The Craigmillar Festival Society - discussed in Chapter Three. This surge was part of a broader movement active across Britain, America, Australia and Europe. For a brief overview of the international context, see: Alison Jeffers and Gerri Moriarty (eds.), *Culture, Democracy and The Right to Make Art: The British Community Arts Movement* (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2017), pp.23-25; on the American context, see: Don Adams and Arlene Goldbard, *Creative Community: The Art of Cultural Development* (New York: Rockefeller Foundation, 2001).

work services on behalf of local government.² This outsourcing of welfare was not the only way in which the state (partially, at least) co-opted the movement. Whereas the post-war solution to urban problems such as overcrowding and poor health had been to build new towns, suburbs and estates outside of the city, the 1980s saw a decisive shift towards urban regeneration of older areas. Since the late 1980s, the arts (including community arts) have been treated as a panacea to a wide range of urban problems, and the so-called ‘creative economy’ is now seen as a key driver of the economic regeneration of post-industrial cities.³ Developments within the community arts movement therefore reflect the reorganisation along neoliberal lines of the post-war welfare state - and urban policy more generally - in a world where the arts are valued as an economic as much as a social asset.

Drawing on oral history interviews conducted with practitioners working in Scotland between the late 1960s and the early 1990s, this thesis traces the underexplored history of the community arts movement as it developed in urban Scotland.⁴ Setting the movement within its historical context, it demonstrates that community arts arose out of a particular convergence of community action, popular culture, welfare state paternalism, and a countercultural emphasis on freedom and self-expression. From its earliest days, community arts practice was driven by a number of different rationales. Although this ambiguity left the movement

² Rosie Meade and Mae Shaw, ‘Community Development and the Arts: Reviving the Democratic Imagination’, *Community Development Journal*, 42:4 (2007), pp.413-421.

³ On the rise of the ‘creative economy’ in Britain, see: Robert Hewison, *Cultural Capital: The Rise and Fall of Creative Britain* (London: Verso, 2014).

⁴ The movement was never strictly an urban phenomenon; however, as discussed below (pp.29-30), projects based in urban areas will form the basis of this study.

vulnerable to co-option, it also gave it some degree of leeway to pursue more critical work from within state funding regimes, and different projects (and practitioners) accommodated to the agendas of funders to differing degrees. This thesis uses the history of the community arts movement as a way of generating insight into the broader field of urban governance – particularly the ways in which community-based activists and practitioners negotiated the relationship between community interests and changing urban policy agendas in a period during which the post-war welfare state settlement was undergoing significant transformation.

1.1 Defining ‘Community Art’

Broadly speaking, ‘community art’ signified not a specific art form, but an approach to artistic endeavour based on participation and collaboration.⁵ It encompassed a wide range of activities, with an emphasis on those amenable to non-hierarchical working practices. Projects were sometimes co-ordinated by an artist, but were, theoretically at least, driven by the needs and interests of the community. Most shared a concern with building a better society by ensuring that every individual or community had the right to participate in cultural life and had access to the resources necessary to exercise this right on an equitable basis.⁶ Community artists in Scotland, as elsewhere, also rejected the idea that *consuming* culture was somehow more valuable than *creating* it. Unlike bodies such as the Arts Council of Great Britain (ACGB) and the Scottish Arts Council (SAC), for whom widening cultural access was largely about opening up art galleries and museums to a more

⁵ Owen Kelly, *Community, Art and the State: Storming the Citadels* (London: Comedia, 1984), p.1.

⁶ *Ibid*, p.60

diverse audience, community artists believed that control of the production (and definition) of culture should not be concentrated in the hands of a small cultural elite.⁷ The democratic impulse of early community arts practice was also apparent in the aesthetic forms it took and the public locations in which it was created, displayed or performed.⁸ Certain media such as video or photography found favour because they were relatively cheap, readily available, and untainted by association with older, canonical art practices. Murals, street theatre and other artistic forms more often associated with popular or folk art were also turned to new ends.⁹

Community art has been described as a ‘complex, unstable and contested practice’, and it is clear from interviews conducted with community artists for the purposes of this thesis that what the term meant could vary.¹⁰ Whilst for some, community art was an avowedly political practice, part of a wider culture of contemporary community activism, for others, it was a less confrontational, more social or educational affair. Over time, there was also a decisive (if partial) shift towards projects which focused on a more limited and vaguely therapeutic concern with individual self-esteem, self-expression and wellbeing.¹¹ The term ‘community arts’

⁷ Su Braden, *Artists and People* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), p.6; Kelly, *Storming the Citadels*, p.22.

⁸ Braden, *Artists and People*, p.15.

⁹ For a discussion of folk and popular arts, see: Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel, *The Popular Arts* (London: Hutchinson Educational, 1964); the authors distinguish between folk culture – the culture of ‘ordinary’ people, and popular culture – work performed by professional artists or entertainers, but which draws on the tropes of folk culture – see p.66.

¹⁰ François Matarasso, ‘‘All in this Together’’: The Depoliticisation of Community Art in Britain, 1970-2011’, accessed 20 April 2018, [<https://parliamentofdreams.files.wordpress.com/2013/08/2013-all-in-this-together-matarasso.pdf>].

¹¹ Meade and Shaw, ‘Community Development’.

will be used throughout this study for the simple reason that it was the one most commonly used during the 1970s and 1980s.¹² However, some practitioners were ambivalent about the label, and one of the purposes of this study will be to recapture the contested meanings subsumed within this apparently straightforward term.

1.2 Works Written by Community Artists

To date, there has been no comprehensive historical account of the community arts movement in Scotland. Even the literature on the wider British context is slight, and tends to examine individual organisations rather than the movement as a whole.¹³ A recent edited volume, *Culture, Democracy and the Right to Make Art*, is one of the few studies to reflect on the movement, its achievements, and its longer-term legacy.¹⁴ However, only one of its chapters is devoted to Scotland.¹⁵ The accounts of practitioners from across Britain also offer some useful historical reflection.¹⁶

¹² On the rebranding of community arts during the 1990s, see: Matarasso, 'All in this Together'.

¹³ Tony Coult and Baz Kershaw, *Engineers of The Imagination: Welfare State Handbook* (London: Methuen, 1983); Peter Moser and George McKay, *Community Music: A Handbook* (Lyme Regis: Russell House, 2005); Gillian Whiteley, 'New Age Radicalism and the Social Imagination: Welfare State International in the Seventies' in Laurel Forster and Sue Harper (eds.), *British Culture and Society in the 1970s: The Lost Decade* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), pp.35-50; Kate Crehan, *Community Art: An Anthropological Perspective* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2011); Sam Wetherell, 'Painting the Crisis: Community Arts and the Search for the 'Ordinary' in 1970s and '80s London', *History Workshop Journal*, 76:1 (2013), pp.235-249.

¹⁴ Jeffers and Moriarty (eds.), *The Right to Make Art*.

¹⁵ Andrew Crummy, 'Craigmillar Festival, the Scottish Community Arts Movement of the 1970s and 1980s and Its Impact: A View from Scotland', in Jeffers and Moriarty (eds.), *The Right to Make Art*, pp.83-98.

¹⁶ Geoff Mulgan and Ken Worpole, *Saturday Night or Sunday Morning? From Arts to Industry – New Forms of Cultural Policy* (London: Comedia, 1986); Helen Crummy, *Let the People Sing! A Story of Craigmillar* (Edinburgh: Craigmillar Community Press, 1992); John Fox, *Eyes on Stalks* (London: Methuen, 2002); David Harding, 'Memories and Vagaries' in Malcolm Dickson (ed.), *Art*

Further information can be gleaned from surveys of community arts practice commissioned by funding bodies. Su Braden's 1978 report for the Gulbenkian Foundation, *Arts and People*, offered an overview of approaches taken by practitioners operating in schools, new towns and community centres across Britain.¹⁷ Meanwhile, Naseem Kahn's ACGB report *The Arts Britain Ignores* (1976) drew attention to the ways in which the arts of ethnic minority groups were ignored by national arts institutions.¹⁸

By the 1980s, community arts practice seemed to have diverged far enough from its original aims to prompt some practitioners to question the direction the movement had taken. In his 1984 account *Storming the Citadels*, community artist Owen Kelly warned:

The community arts movement faces several major problems which it has consistently failed to confront. If it does not face these soon, it will become just one more worthy branch of whatever this government chooses to leave of the welfare state. Meals on Wheels, homemade scones, inflatables and face painting: the kindly folk who do good without ever causing trouble.¹⁹

Here, Kelly (again, writing in a British context) raised the issue of what undoubtedly proved to be one of the key fault lines within the movement – its relationship to leftist politics on the one hand, the state on the other. His work

with People (Sunderland: AN Publications, 1996), pp.28-39; David Harding (ed.), *Decadent: Public Art - Contentious Term and Contested Practice* (Glasgow: Foulis Press, 1997); See also: Malcolm Dickson, 'Interview with David Harding', *Variant*, 8 (1990), pp.41-48.

¹⁷ Braden, *Artists and People*.

¹⁸ Naseem Kahn, *The Arts Britain Ignores: The Arts of Ethnic Minorities in Britain* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1976).

¹⁹ Kelly, *Storming the Citadels*, p.1.

analysed the process by which community artists, by taking a pragmatic rather than principled stance, had to mould their practice to coincide with the expectations of funders, ultimately leading to bureaucratisation and dampening political ambitions. Artists, Kelly argued, were no longer activists, but professional ‘quasi-employees’ of the state.²⁰

This obscuring of the movement’s more radical beginnings, and its subsequent association in the popular mind with safe, worthy, and even ineffectual practices, has undoubtedly contributed to its neglect as a possible subject for historical analysis. According to one practitioner, Sally Morgan (writing in 1995):

Community arts has constantly suffered from bad press. Marginalised by an art world that found its cultural radicalism deeply threatening, it has suffered from simplistic analysis, and from being judged against the very standards and assumptions it sought to challenge. As a result there is very little useful mainstream documentation of the history, development and ideology of a movement that sought to change the whole cultural agenda of this country, and which has consistently explored the possibility of finding different ways for art to function in society.²¹

Kelly similarly raised concerns about the movement’s failure to document its own history, something he attributed to the prevailing attitude amongst artists that action was more important than theory or reflection.²² In Kelly’s view, this stance allowed the movement to compromise itself: it was only by forgetting their original aims that community artists could reconcile themselves to dependence on state funding. Lack of historical awareness would, Kelly warned, ensure that new groups and

²⁰ Kelly, *Storming the Citadels*, p.29.

²¹ Sally Morgan, ‘Looking Back Over 25 Years’ in Dickson (ed.), *Art with People*, p.16.

²² Kelly, *Storming the Citadels*, p.2.

artists would come to take the language of the funding bodies at face value, and would fail to look critically at their priorities.²³

As these studies indicate, any exploration of the community arts movement must consider its relationship to left-wing politics and activism. However, it cannot be assumed from these few accounts that radical or leftist beliefs were shared by all. In Malcolm Dickson's volume *Art with People*, Sally Morgan highlights some of the divisions which existed within the movement. As Morgan suggests, although 'all community artists shared a dislike of cultural hierarchies, believed in co-authorship of work, and in the creative potential of all sections of society' and believed 'community arts could provide the blueprint for a truly participatory and egalitarian democracy', not everyone (Morgan included) saw eye to eye with those who sought to align with the labour movement or reject public subsidy.²⁴

It is also important to remember that most work published by practitioners relates specifically to England. The community arts movement developed in diverse ways in different contexts.²⁵ Not only did Scottish communities have their own cultural traditions, Scottish practitioners also operated in their own funding and policy context - as discussed in Chapter Two. It is therefore necessary to consider the aims, politics and practices of community arts projects based in Scotland on their own terms, without losing sight of their relationship to the wider British context.

²³ Kelly, *Storming the Citadels*, p.24.

²⁴ Morgan, 'Looking Back', p.18, pp.24-26.

²⁵ Malcolm Dickson, 'Introduction', in Dickson (ed.), *Art with People*, p.13.

1.3 Culture and Counterculture

The relative lack of critical interest in the community arts movement reflects a broader historiographical neglect of the art and culture of the 1970s. Whereas the sixties – particularly the ‘watershed’ year of 1968 - are remembered as a decade of radical and liberating change, the seventies endure in popular consciousness as a drab decade of strikes, power-cuts and the ‘Winter of Discontent’, the period in which the post-war consensus began to disintegrate.²⁶ The decade has come to be defined by the events leading up to the election of 1979 that brought Margaret Thatcher into power, and is consequently often regarded as little more than a prelude to the apparently inevitable upheavals of the 1980s.²⁷ It is only in the past few years that historians have begun to question what the authors of *Reassessing 1970s Britain* have characterised as the ‘lazy and (subconsciously) political’ assumptions upon which narratives of so-called ‘declinism’ are based.²⁸ Forster and Harper’s account of culture and society in the 1970s makes the case for the seventies as a ‘lost decade’. Bookended by the radical changes of the 1960s and the 1980s,

²⁶ Lawrence Black, Hugh Pemberton and Pat Thane (eds.), *Reassessing 1970s Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), pp.3-4; 1968 was the year in which people took to the streets of America in protest against the Vietnam War; the year of the Prague Spring; and the year in which student protests in France sparked similar events across Europe. In Britain, students at numerous universities and art schools staged protests and sit-ins. See: Catherine Itzin, *Stages in the Revolution: Political Theatre in Britain since 1968* (London: Methuen, 1980), p.2; Lisa Tickner, *Hornsey 1968: The Art School Revolution* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2008). On 1968 in general, see e.g.: Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, c.1958-c.1974* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Carole Fink, Philipp Gassert and Detlef Junker (eds.), *1968: The World Transformed* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

²⁷ Black et al. (eds.), *Reassessing 1970s Britain*, p.1.

²⁸ *Ibid*, p.1.

they have been treated as a forgettable limbo, during which the idealism of the preceding decade dissipated into the individualism of the following one.²⁹ Certainly, the 1970s were a time of economic hardship for many, and economic downturn, precipitated by the oil crisis of 1973, came as a shock after years of apparent post-war affluence.³⁰ To dismiss the culture of the 1970s out of hand, however, is to overlook the ways in which the countercultural developments of the 1960s played out over time.³¹

Despite significant omissions, there exists a small but growing body of scholarship on the culture of the period. Robert Hewison's *Too Much: Art and Society in the Sixties*, which covers the period 1963-75, rejects a strict, decade-based periodisation and considers the counterculture of the 1960s in a broader, post-1968 perspective.³² Hewison's archaeology makes sense of the interrelations between what might loosely be defined as 'high' culture, popular culture, and politics, and unpicks various strands of cultural dissent, including the community arts movement. For Hewison, however, the cultural energies of 1968 had begun to dissipate by the early 1970s, something he attributes both to a conservative backlash against the emancipatory forces that had been liberated during the 1960s, and straitened economic conditions.³³ Consequently, Hewison's account does not place the

²⁹ Forster and Harper (eds.), *British Culture*, pp.1-2.

³⁰ On debates about the 'affluent society' see Lawrence Black and Hugh Pemberton (eds.), *An Affluent Society? Britain's Post-War "Golden Age" Revisited* (Aldershot: Routledge, 2004).

³¹ Forster and Harper, *British Culture*, p.4.

³² Robert Hewison, *Too Much: Art and Society in the Sixties 1960-75* (London: Methuen, 1986).

³³ Hewison, *Too Much*, p.xiii.

community arts movement in its longer-term context. Bart Moore-Gilbert's *The Arts in the 1970s* is another useful collection, illustrating some of the ways in which the cultural and political conflicts of the decade intersected, whilst John Walker, in one of the few surveys of the political art of the period, has argued that the arts took a radical 'left shift' during the 1970s, and sought to engage directly with leftist concerns.³⁴

If British culture during the 1970s has been somewhat overlooked, this is perhaps even more true of developments in Scotland. Despite the enduring belief that 1968 and its aftermath constituted a watershed moment in Western society, it is often held that the counterculture bypassed Scotland altogether.³⁵ This misconception belies a wealth of cultural activity and experimentation, from the avant-garde literature and poetry of Alexander Trocchi, Edwin Morgan and Ian Hamilton Finlay, to the activities of the Citizens and Traverse theatres, to the new galleries set up by the likes of Richard Demarco (the Richard Demarco Gallery, established 1966) and Tom McGrath (the Third Eye Centre, 1975) which both attracted high profile international artists to Scotland.³⁶ As the authors of *Justified Sinners* - a collection of letters and other ephemera produced by key Scottish artists and writers

³⁴ Bart Moore-Gilbert (ed.), *Cultural Closure? The Challenge of the Arts in the 1970s* (London: Routledge, 1994); John Walker, *Left Shift: Radical Art in 1970s Britain* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2002), p.2.

³⁵ Eleanor Bell, 'Introduction' in Eleanor Bell and Linda Gunn (eds.), *The Scottish Sixties: Reading, Rebellion, Revolution* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013), p.14.

³⁶ On Scottish Theatre see e.g.: Joyce McMillan, *The Traverse Theatre Story 1963-1988* (London: Methuen, 1988); Randall Stevenson and Gavin Wallace (eds.), *Scottish Theatre Since the Seventies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996); on the Scottish arts scene more generally, see: Craig Richardson, *Scottish Art since 1960. Historical Reflections and Contemporary Overviews* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).

- suggest, the Scottish counterculture represents a rich and untapped vein of source material.³⁷ Meanwhile, Eleanor Bell and Linda Gunn's work on the Scottish literary renaissance of the 1960s takes issue with the idea of parochialism in Scottish culture by highlighting the international context in which many Scottish authors worked.³⁸ Angela Bartie's work on the Edinburgh Festivals also attends to the cultural ferment of the 1950s and 1960s, but places this radicalism within a broader nexus of (often deeply conservative) ideas about the changing role of arts in society emergent in the post-war period.³⁹ In a later context, Sarah Lowndes' study of Glasgow's contemporary art scene maps the history and ecology of arts practices in the city from the early 1970s onwards.⁴⁰ Continuing in this vein, a history of the community arts movement in Scotland provides a partial corrective to the idea that Scotland lacked its own counterculture. On the contrary, community arts acted as a site where many ideas that were ultimately derived from experimental and avant-garde art movements intersected with popular culture and grassroots community activism.

1.4 Art History

As we have seen, community arts were understood not as an art *form* but rather as an *approach* to creating art.⁴¹ Art produced drew on the imaginative repertoires of artists and participants, and reflected an array of aesthetic influences, old and new.

³⁷ Ross Birrell and Alec Finlay (eds.), *Justified Sinners: An Archaeology of Scottish Counter- culture (1960–2000)* (Edinburgh: Pocketbooks, 2002).

³⁸ Bell and Gunn (eds.), *The Scottish Sixties*.

³⁹ Angela Bartie, *The Edinburgh Festivals: Culture and Society in Post-war Britain* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

⁴⁰ Sarah Lowndes, *Social Sculpture: The Rise of the Glasgow Art Scene* (Edinburgh: Luath Press, 2010).

⁴¹ Kelly, *Storming the Citadels*, p.1.

This eclecticism has not endeared the movement to art critics and art historians. The art world has found it hard to shake off the belief that the worth or importance of a work relates to the reputation of the person by whom it was created - an understanding which art authored by multiple participants disrupts. It has also been easy to ignore community arts because their purported or assumed aim tends to be social rather than aesthetic. Issues of aesthetic quality, it is often supposed, are not the criteria against which it should be judged. Finally, many of the aesthetic traditions or forms (from murals to music hall) which community art referenced have become deeply unfashionable or are themselves subject to critical blind spots.⁴²

Given that community artists largely rejected what they perceived to be the alienating and anti-democratic nature of the art world, taking the rejection of the commodification of the art object and its confinement to the gallery space to its logical extreme, it is perhaps unsurprising that they have not attracted more attention from the art world. Recent scholarship on what might broadly be termed ‘socially engaged’ arts – those which take a political stance by raising questions of participation, collective authorship, the dematerialisation of the art object, and the blurring of art and everyday life - has included some discussion of community arts. However, the movement is often dismissed on both an aesthetic and socio-political level as something of a failure, or used as a lead-in to discussion of more complex

⁴² On the ‘forgotten’ mural tradition in Britain, see: Alan Powers (ed.), *British Murals and Decorative Painting 1920-1960: Rediscovery and New Interpretations* (Bristol: Sansom, 2013).

or theoretically challenging participatory (but essentially artist-led) work.⁴³ Most prominently, Claire Bishop has critiqued the so-called ‘social turn’ in contemporary arts practice.⁴⁴ Bishop is sceptical of the tendency of those on the left to make uncritical assumptions about the political potential of socially engaged or participatory art. Bishop also draws attention to the ways in which New Labour in particular adopted the rhetoric of participatory art, emptied of much of its substance, and used it as a way of pursuing morally prescriptive ‘social inclusion’ agendas.⁴⁵ For Bishop, projects of this sort tend to distract from the real issues of social atomisation and inequality at hand. Bishop’s critique also reminds us that over-dependence on the social effect of art practice can quickly lead to a situation in which art is judged (and funded) on the basis of quantifiable impact - impact as defined as appropriate by government or funding bodies.⁴⁶ As this thesis demonstrates, this instrumentalisation can, in part at least, trace its roots back to community arts initiatives of the 1970s and 1980s. Nevertheless, given the extent to which critiques such as Bishop’s are motivated by the uncomfortable relationship

⁴³ On largely artist-led public and socially engaged art, see: Suzanne Lacy (ed.), *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995); Lucy Lippard, *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society* (New York: The New Press, 1997); Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002); Grant Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

⁴⁴ Claire Bishop, ‘The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents’, *Art Forum International*, 44:6 (2006), pp.178-83.

⁴⁵ Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012), p.5; On New Labour arts policy, see: Hewison, *Cultural Capital*; Matarasso, ‘All in this Together’.

⁴⁶ For an overview of historical debates surrounding cultural value, see: Eleanora Belfiore and Oliver Bennett, *The Social Impact of the Arts: An Intellectual History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

between participatory art and ideological projects such as New Labour, it is worth considering if knowledge of this development serves to occlude an interest in those earlier community arts projects which took a more critical or disruptive stance.

1.5 Community Action, Community Development and Urban Policy

The community arts movement sat within a wider ecology of community action which grew in strength during the 1970s and early 1980s and was concerned with relocating the site of political struggle to the home and the neighbourhood. This was an era - epitomised by the rallying call of the women's liberation movement, 'the personal is political' – during which the conditions of everyday life became the focus of intense political debate and action.⁴⁷ By the late 1960s, enough time had passed since the founding of the post-war welfare state for people to begin to question why poverty, poor housing, low educational attainment and poor health were still such entrenched features of urban life. Consequently, the demands of urban protest movements during the 1970s tended to focus on issues of collective consumption (such as housing, schools, play facilities and health services), securing greater citizen involvement in the policy making process, and the defence of local autonomy and cultural identity.⁴⁸

Community artists were embroiled in these struggles in a number of ways. Community arts was a movement concerned with artistic self-determination and equality, and these values naturally lent themselves to questions of self-

⁴⁷ Manuel Castells, *The City and the Grassroots: A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), p.xv.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p.xviii.

determination and equality more generally. Some sought to take on the politics of representation or cultural access, whilst others produced films, leaflets, posters or theatre for local political campaigns.⁴⁹ Projects which located themselves outside the gallery inevitably raised questions about ownership of public spaces. And although not every project was motivated by overtly political aims, most were concerned with issues of inequality and enfranchisement or giving people a cultural ‘voice’.

The literature on community arts also frequently positions the movement as part of a broader struggle which embraced squatting, environmental issues, women’s liberation, gay rights and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), each of which sought to unite political and cultural action. These groups have often been termed ‘new social movements’.⁵⁰ Theorists argue that new social movements were new in two senses: not only did they constitute new forms of political organisation and collective identity typically based on shared beliefs, lifestyles, or experiences of marginalisation rather than class position, they also represented a new form of politics – one which operated beyond the bounds of the traditional political system and employed novel organisational and campaigning techniques.⁵¹ However, the

⁴⁹ Barbara Orton, ‘Community Arts: Reconnecting with the Radical Tradition’ in Ian Cooke and Mae Shaw (eds.), *Radical Community Work: Perspectives from Practice in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Moray House Publications, 1996), p.176.

⁵⁰ See e.g.: Jurgen Habermas, ‘New Social Movements’, *Telos*, 49 (1981), pp.33–37; Paul Byrne, *Social Movements in Britain* (London: Routledge, 1997); Adam Lent, *British Social Movements Since 1945: Sex, Colour, Peace and Power* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000); Nick Crossely, *Making Sense of Social Movements* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2002).

⁵¹ Alex Mold, “‘The Welfare Branch of the Alternative Society?’” The Work of the Drug Voluntary Organisation Release, 1967-78,’ *Twentieth Century British History*, 17:1 (2006), pp.50-73.

division between ‘old’ and ‘new’ politics was by no means clear cut.⁵² Although community arts projects often expressed countercultural aspirations, they usually sought to obtain them by influencing the machinery and personnel of local government – albeit in dynamic and creative ways which did not necessarily adhere to the bureaucratic norms expected of more established organisations. Moreover, in Scotland, an association with post-material identity politics was less marked than in England; most projects were based in predominantly working-class areas, drew on working-class idioms, and dealt with issues pertaining to the everyday realities of working-class life.⁵³ However, as discussed in Chapter Six, towards the end of the period, community artists grew increasingly concerned with navigating between class interests and newer forms of consciousness and understandings of identity.

Although many of these concerns found their expression at a local level, they are rarely examined from this perspective, and a comprehensive history of community action in the period remains to be written.⁵⁴ However, in recent years, several

⁵² Crossely, *Social Movements*, p.150; Mold, ‘The Welfare Branch of the Alternative Society?’.

⁵³ This is not to say that these movements were completely absent in Scotland: see e.g.: Sarah Browne, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Scotland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014); Jeffrey Meek, *Queer Voices in Post-War Scotland: Male Homosexuality, Religion and Society* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), esp. pp.89-116.

⁵⁴ David Ellis has recently completed a PhD thesis examining the history of community action in Britain: David Ellis, *Pavement Politics: Community Action in Urban Britain, 1968-1987*, Unpublished PhD Thesis (University of York, 2015); One of the few forms of community activism which has received a degree of historical interest is the Tenants’ movement – see, for example: Peter Shapely, *The Politics of Housing: Power, Policy and Consumers* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007); Quintin Bradley, *The Tenants’ Movement: Resident Involvement, Community Action and the Contentious Politics of Housing* (New York: Routledge, 2014); Erika Hanna’s work on housing and building preservation campaigns in Dublin also redirects our attention towards political action conducted

studies have emerged which examine the rise of new forms of non-parliamentary politics in the post-war period. Both Lawrence Black and Matthew Hilton have made the case for the consumer movement in Britain as an important non-parliamentary form of political engagement.⁵⁵ Similarly, Hilton et al argue that during the latter half of the 20th century, many people - disillusioned with the failure of political parties to foreground new identity and issue-based interests - shifted their loyalty to campaigning organisations such as Oxfam and Greenpeace, now known as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).⁵⁶ For Hilton et al, this reconfiguration represents the ‘privatisation’ of politics.⁵⁷ Although this thesis is compelling, it does not adequately engage with the parallel upsurge in grassroots activism during the early 1970s, which was firmly located in the public realm. Moreover, informal, ad-hoc grass-roots groups inhabited a very different space in political culture from the more formal, bureaucratic NGOs.⁵⁸ Despite this, these studies offer a valuable reappraisal of forms of political engagement, not least because they call for an expanded notion of what constitutes political action. A conceptualisation of politics that shifts the focus away from political parties and trade unions is vital if we are to examine the ways in which groups which could not access or did not feel themselves fully represented by official institutions fought

from the grassroots – see: Erika Hanna, *Modern Dublin: Urban Change and the Irish Past, 1957-1973* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁵⁵ Lawrence Black, *Redefining British Politics: Culture, Consumerism and Participation, 1954-70* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Matthew Hilton, *Consumerism in Twentieth-Century Britain: The Search for a Historical Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁵⁶ Matthew Hilton et al. (eds.), *The Politics of Expertise: How NGOs Shaped Modern Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p.1.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p.1.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, pp.3-4.

their political battles. Women, young people, the elderly, the unemployed, the disabled – many within these groups did not have access to these formal representative channels, and to ignore extra-parliamentary politics is to marginalise these groups as political actors.

The growing historiography on the voluntary sector also offers a useful way of contextualising community action. Contrary to the idea that the ‘big state’ undermined the role of the voluntary sector within the post-war welfare state settlement, this literature suggests the ongoing role of the voluntary action (from professionalised charitable organisations to cultures of localised self-help and mutual aid) within the ‘mixed economy of welfare’.⁵⁹ It also emphasises the remarkable growth of the voluntary sector during the 1960s and the 1970s, driven by the ‘rediscovery’ of poverty in the 1960s, and the desire to provide alternative service provision for areas of life not covered by the formal welfare system - from child care to drug rehabilitation.⁶⁰ Within this context, community action groups could act as pressure groups, demanding the expansion of welfare services, but might themselves also function as providers of non-statutory services. Over time,

⁵⁹ Geoffrey Finlayson, *Citizen, State, and Social Welfare in Britain 1830-1990* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), pp.6-8; Nicholas Deakin, ‘The Perils of Partnership: The Voluntary Sector and the State, 1945-1992’, in Justin Davis Smith, Colin Rochester and Rodney Hedley (eds.), *An Introduction to the Voluntary Sector* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), pp.39-63; Pat Thane, ‘The ‘Big State’ Versus the ‘Big Society’ in Twentieth-Century Britain’, in Chis Williams and Andrew Edwards (eds.), *The Art of the Possible: Politics and Governance in Modern British History, 1885-1997: Essays in Memory of Duncan Tanner* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), p.32.

⁶⁰ Thane, ‘The Big State’, pp.39-40; Mold, ‘The Welfare Branch of the Alternative Society?’.

there grew a greater interest on behalf of the state in funding the voluntary sector, which was seen as a cost-effective way of plugging gaps in welfare; under Thatcher, it was favoured as a means of reducing dependence on the statutory sector and encouraging a revival of the ‘Victorian values’ of philanthropic citizenship and individual self-reliance.⁶¹ The questions this literature raises about the association between voluntarism and citizenship, the shifting relationship between voluntary and statutory provision, and issues of professionalisation and funding are all pertinent to the study of community arts groups in Scotland.

Community arts projects based in specific neighbourhoods or housing estates were frequently involved in providing ways of expressing or ameliorating concerns about local quality of life. In some instances, action was initiated at the grassroots. In other instances, it was encouraged and facilitated by a growing number of community development workers employed by local government. As discussed in Chapter Two, community development - a practice centred on strengthening civil society and fostering local cultures of collective organisation and self-help – was first formally established in Britain during the 1950s and expanded rapidly from the late 1960s. Although much of the language and practice of community arts and community development – and their sources of funding - overlap, the relationship between the two has not been subject to any great degree of scrutiny.⁶²

⁶¹ Finlayson, *Citizen, State, and Social Welfare* p.14; Thane, ‘The Big State’, p.41; Mold, ‘The Welfare Branch of the Alternative Society?’; Lucy Robinson, ‘Putting the Charity Back into Charity Singles: Charity Singles in Britain 1984–1995’, *Contemporary British History*, 26 (2012), pp.405-425.

⁶² On community development in Britain, see: Gary Craig and Marjorie Mayo et al., (eds.), *The Community Development Reader: History, Themes and Issues*,

Indeed, the extent to which developments in community art were linked to wider developments in urban policy is frequently overlooked. Although arts policy has always had political dimensions, the relationship between community art and shifting economic ideologies and social policy initiatives (prior to the Blair era at least) is little explored.⁶³ From early attempts to engender community in post-war housing estates, to projects which sought to overcome atomisation and apathy in communities blighted by high unemployment and low expectations, to projects concerned with fighting back against unemployment, the privatisation of social housing, and more general discrimination based on race, class, gender or sexuality, the history of community arts projects in Scotland serves as a barometer of urban change and sheds light on how people reacted to the social and economic upheavals of the period. Many of these aspects of urban life have been explored from a theoretical or social policy perspective, but there are few studies which examine how community-based practitioners understood the role they played in influencing, delivering or resisting these policies, something this study seeks to address.

Perhaps most prominently, urban regeneration schemes have become the subject of a sustained body of critique.⁶⁴ Since the 1980s, local governments have been

(Bristol: Policy Press, 2011); for a discussion of contemporary practice see e.g.: Meade and Shaw, 'Community Development'; Rosie Meade and May Shaw, 'Community Development and the Arts: Sustaining the Democratic Imagination in Lean and Mean Times', *Journal of Arts & Communities*, 2:1 (2011), pp.65-80.

⁶³ On the relationship between arts policy and politics in the post-war period, see: Robert Hewison, *Culture and Consensus: England, Art and Politics since 1940* (London: Methuen, 1995).

⁶⁴ See e.g.: Josephine Berry Slater and Anthony Iles, *Room to Move: Radical Art and the Regenerate City* (London: Mute, 2010); Franco Bianchini and Michael Parkinson (eds.), *Cultural Policy and Urban Regeneration: The West European Experience* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).

instrumental in formulating new policy frameworks designed to harness the gentrifying power of artists and culture to stimulate property values and revitalize economically unproductive urban areas.⁶⁵ As David Harvey argues, regeneration strategies are symptomatic of a global economic framework in which cities have to fight on a competitive basis for inward investment from international financial capital.⁶⁶ Place is now susceptible to the rebranding initiatives of local government and marketing departments, and within this context, local history, heritage and festivals have increasingly been used to showcase the city and raise its profile.⁶⁷ As subsequent chapters will show, attitudes towards such processes amongst community artists were often complex.

1.6 Depoliticisation and Contested Terminology

As early as 1984, Owen Kelly warned that community arts projects were in danger of coming to function as little more than a benign form of ‘therapeutic’ social work, catering to the entertainment needs of groups such as the elderly, disabled or unemployed without ever questioning the deeper structural roots of inequality or leading to further action beyond the confines of the project at hand.⁶⁸ Kelly’s warning appears to have been borne out. It is largely for this reason, Francois Matarasso observes, that the phrase ‘community art’ fell out of favour during the

⁶⁵ On such activities in Glasgow, see e.g.: Neil Gray, ‘Glasgow’s Merchant City: An Artist Led Property Strategy’, *Variant*, 34 (2009), pp.14-19.

⁶⁶ David Harvey, ‘From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation in Urban Governance in late Capitalism’, *Geografiska Annaller*, 71:1 (1989), pp.3-17.

⁶⁷ Kwon, *One Place After Another*, p.52-55.

⁶⁸ Kelly, *Storming the Citadels*, p.1.

1990s, to be replaced with seemingly-innocuous alternative ‘participatory arts’.⁶⁹ This ‘rebranding exercise’ was not simply a semantic shift. Instead, it ‘marked and allowed a transition from the politicised and collectivist action of the seventies towards the depoliticised, individual-focused arts programmes supported by public-funds in Britain today’.⁷⁰

Matarasso refers to these developments as the ‘depoliticisation of community arts’.⁷¹ Certainly, from a contemporary perspective, the relationship between community arts practice and political action seems a tenuous one. Since the 1980s, community arts have become increasingly concerned with individuals rather than collectives. Communities are now rarely understood as broad churches of people united by a common political cause or identity; instead, they are perceived (usually by funding agencies) as groups which share common problems – such as unemployment or poor health – which can be treated apolitically as part of a generalised discourse of ‘wellbeing’.⁷² This understanding of community does not necessarily encourage the forms of cultural emancipation earlier practitioners sought.⁷³ As we have seen, this is, to a large extent, a result of the willingness of community artists to work with institutions whose aims in many instances contradicted their own.⁷⁴ Kelly refers to this tendency as ‘liberal pragmatism’ which, he argues, ‘served, early on, to cripple the political development of the

⁶⁹ Matarasso, ‘All in this Together’.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*; Meade and Shaw, ‘Community Development’.

⁷⁴ Kelly, *Storming the Citadels*, p.20.

community arts movement, and to yolk it to those agencies who had shown an interest in funding it'.⁷⁵

The tendency of critical movements to be co-opted by the state is well documented. Social movement theory offers a number of productive ways of conceptualising this process. Both Castells and Kriesi et al, for example, suggest that social movements have a life-cycle, of which co-option forms the last stage between protest and reform.⁷⁶ Building on this, Hans Pruijt distinguishes between those social movements which are repressed outright and those which are integrated into the state or municipal regimes; of those which are integrated, he distinguishes between those which are institutionalised and those which are co-opted.⁷⁷ Institutionalisation entails a complete take-over by the state, whereby a movement is subjected to formal rules and laws and its personnel professionalised. With co-optation, on the other hand, 'the co-opting organisation embraces certain ideas from the movement, while redefining problems in such a way that solving them does not threaten its own stability'.⁷⁸ For community artists, who were, notionally at least, free to pursue their own agendas or experiment with ideas whilst funded by the state, this model seems appropriate. Pruijt identifies co-optation rather than institutionalisation as a

⁷⁵ Kelly, *Storming the Citadels*, pp.2-3.

⁷⁶ Castells, *The City*; Hanspeter Kriesi et al, *New Social Movements in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis press, 1995).

⁷⁷ Hans D. Pruijt, 'Is the Institutionalization of Urban Movements Inevitable? A Comparison of the Opportunities for Sustained Squatting in New York City and Amsterdam', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 27:1 (2003), pp.133-157.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

hallmark of market-oriented post-Fordist regimes.⁷⁹ As the cost of welfare grows, government moves to cut welfare spending and voluntary initiatives are encouraged to step in to provide the social services for which the state was once responsible. Community arts projects serve this function by helping look after the urban environment and dealing with the potentially 'anti-social' behaviours associated with 'social exclusion' - providing on a voluntary basis the very welfare services the state once itself provided.⁸⁰ Analysis of the extent to which community arts have been co-opted (or, indeed, resisted the logic of incorporation) is yet to be undertaken, particularly with regards to the Scottish context.

At the heart of many of these processes of change is this issue of language. Since the late 1960s, the word 'community' has become a mainstay of political discourse.⁸¹ Appeals to community are often made as though the meaning of the term is self-evident or neutral, rather than open to a wide range of uses and interpretations. Perhaps most commonly, the term is used to refer to the inhabitants of a specific geographical area; increasingly, it has also come to be used to refer to non-place based forms of identity such as race, gender, religion or sexuality.⁸² However, post-structuralist understandings of identity as something fluid and shifting suggest that community is perhaps better conceptualised not as a fixed or stable entity so much as an idea or a process - what Brent calls 'a desire, continually

⁷⁹ Pruijt, 'Is the Institutionalization of Urban Movements Inevitable?'

⁸⁰ Paola Merli, 'Evaluating the Social Impact of Participation in Arts Activities: A Critical Review of François Matarasso's Use or Ornament?', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 8:1 (2002), pp.107-118.

⁸¹ Paul Hoggett (ed.), *Contested Communities: Experiences, Struggles, Policies* (Bristol: Policy Press, 1997), p.9.

⁸² *Ibid*, p.7.

replenishing itself'.⁸³ Meanwhile, as Craig et al argue, the way in which community is used in public policy tends to gloss over the realities of conflict, tension and competing interests apparent at the local level.⁸⁴

As DeFilippis and North have argued, community is both an empirical fact and a powerful normative ideal.⁸⁵ Much of the ideological power of community derives from the values with which it has typically been associated. It is often invoked to imply a (sometimes lost or diminishing) sense of solidarity, mutuality and trust, perceived (particularly in working-class communities) to derive from shared values, face-to-face relationships and kinship networks.⁸⁶ These discourses were apparent, for example, in many of the sociological studies produced in Britain during the 1950s and 1960s which together made up the tradition of 'community studies'.⁸⁷ Although often nostalgic or romanticised, these understandings of community could at times figure in emancipatory politics. As we shall see, throughout the 1970s and 1980s - a period in which the very notion of 'working-class' and 'working-class values' were becoming more complex - the culture of older working-class

⁸³ Jeremy Brent, 'The Desire for Community: Illusion, Confusion and Paradox', *Community Development Journal*, 393:3 (2004), pp.213-223; see also: Anthony Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993).

⁸⁴ Craig and Mayo, *Community Development*, pp.7-8; Peter Baldock, 'Why Community Action? The Historical Origins of the Radical Trend in British Community Work', *Community Development Journal*, 12:2 (1977), pp.68-74.

⁸⁵ James DeFilippis and Peter North, 'The Emancipatory Community? Place, Politics and Collective Action in Cities', in Loretta Lees (ed.), *The Emancipatory City?: Paradoxes and Possibilities* (London: Sage, 2004), p.73.

⁸⁶ Hoggett, *Contested Communities*, p.5.

⁸⁷ For a key example, see: Peter Wilmott and Michael Young, *Family and Kinship in East London* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957); for a critique, see: Margaret Stacey, 'The Myth of Community Studies', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 20:2 (1969), pp.134-147.

communities (and the values associated with them) was frequently referenced by community artists seeking to reinvigorate a sense of solidarity and collective class interest.

Indeed, community - whether understood geographically or in terms of a shared identity – has long functioned as an important site of resistance.⁸⁸ For community activists and organisations, the idea of community offers a powerful conceptual framework, a site of mobilisation where ‘the city’s celebrated ability to allow for the formation of collective political identities and consciousness’ might be realised.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, the term continues to evoke some uneasiness, given its association with conservative views of the past, the problems of inclusion and exclusion it raises, and, particularly since the 1980s, attempts to obscure the absence or withdrawal of state services.⁹⁰ During the 1970s, building ‘community capacity’ to participate in the decision-making and the delivery of state services became a key policy objective, particularly at the level of local government.⁹¹ However, many on the left were sceptical of the ways in which the rhetoric of community was applied, in a bid to secure legitimacy and consent, to a wide range of activities and practices that had very little to do with community empowerment.⁹² Contemporary texts such as *Gilding the Ghetto* (1977) and *In and Against the State* (first published 1979), both written by groups working in the public sector, emphasised that

⁸⁸ Hoggett, *Contested Communities*, pp.9-10.

⁸⁹ DeFilippis and North, ‘The Emancipatory Community?’, p.72.

⁹⁰ Hoggett, *Contested Communities*, p.10.

⁹¹ Marian Barnes, ‘Users as Citizens: Collective Action and the Local Governance of Welfare’, *Social Policy and Administration*, 33:1 (1999), pp.73-90.

⁹² Craig and Mayo, *Community Development*, p.6.

community work was encouraged by the state as a means of obscuring the class relations and structural inequalities inherent in welfare capitalism; managing the social consequences of economic change in a period of economic retrenchment; and shifting the responsibility for providing services onto citizens without devolving commensurate power or resources.⁹³ The ideological value of ‘community’, they argued, lay in its discursive capacity ‘to localise consciousness, minimise sense of class, create rivalry and parochialism’.⁹⁴ As discussed in the concluding chapter, similar critiques have been directed at New Labour and their successors. In the discourse of Third Way politics, community – divested of much of its emancipatory potential – is unmoored from any notion of class or class conflict.⁹⁵ Over time, a moralistic association between ‘community’ and respectable or responsible behaviour has also encouraged the idea that community is something the ‘underprivileged’ somehow lack, or are required to demonstrate.⁹⁶

In Scotland, the particularities of urban policy ensured that many of the inter- and post-war housing estates (where so many community arts projects were based) were home to predominantly working-class populations. These schemes, which were built in a short space of time and had clear administrative and geographical boundaries, made it easy to think of community as a place-based phenomenon. The

⁹³ Community Development Programme, *Gilding the Ghetto: The State and the Poverty Experiments* (London: CDP Inter-project Editorial Team, 1977); London Edinburgh Weekend Return Group, *In and Against the State* (London: Pluto Press, 1980); for discussion, see: Mae Shaw, ‘Gilding the Ghetto and In and Against the State’, *Community Development Journal*, 38:4 (2003), pp.361–366; Craig and Mayo, *Community Development*, p.14.

⁹⁴ Shaw, ‘Gilding the Ghetto’.

⁹⁵ DeFilippis and North, ‘The Emancipatory Community?’, p.77.

⁹⁶ Hoggett, *Contested Communities*, p.9; p.13.

majority of those interviewed for the purposes of this study therefore used the term ‘community’ to refer to the working-class residents of a geographical area. However, to the extent that those involved with community arts were usually either members of the community or sympathetic outsiders, their relationship to these moralistic or prescriptive understandings of community tended to be ambivalent at best, and few shied away from using the term ‘working-class’ or talking in terms of class politics or class interests.

Fundamentally, as Hoggett reminds us, ‘community’ is a politically charged and contested term, whether it is used to secure compliance, or as an alternative base from which to enact critical political gestures.⁹⁷ Any study which traces developments in community arts practice over time, or between different localities and agents, must be sensitive to the way language is used, whether consciously or not, if it is to interrogate the different agendas or understandings it implies.

1.7 Methodology and Sources

This thesis draws primarily on a series of 24 oral history interviews conducted with community artists working in Scotland between 1968 and 1990. Interviewees worked in a diverse range of geographical settings – from housing estates, to New Towns, to rural areas. It has not been possible within the scope of this research to examine each of these contexts in depth. Consequently, this thesis concentrates predominantly on projects in Scotland’s two largest cities, Glasgow and Edinburgh,

⁹⁷ Hoggett, *Contested Communities*, p.14.

whilst acknowledging that there is still a great deal of work to be done on activities in other areas of the country where different social contexts may have prevailed.

Interviews were conducted between 2015 and 2017. These interviews represent the first comprehensive step towards creating an oral history archive of community arts workers in Scotland. Interviewees were recruited through word of mouth, with many interviewees providing other contacts. The majority of interviews took place in the interviewee's home, office, local libraries, or at the Scottish Oral History Centre. Three of the interviews were conducted online via Skype – a method utilised only when interviewees were living abroad, and an interview would otherwise have been unfeasible.⁹⁸

Oral history was selected as a suitable methodology for several reasons. Oral history is often one of the only ways of shedding light on those aspects of social history relating to ordinary, everyday and marginalised groups and practices that would otherwise remain absent from the historical record. Although the labour movement in Scotland has been the subject of a great deal of important and instructive oral history research in recent years, the activities of smaller, less formal and often short-lived community groups have received less attention.⁹⁹ Where few documentary traces have been left behind, interviews allow us to generate new sources which challenge this lack of historical representation in the archives and broaden our

⁹⁸ Interview with Neil Cameron (30 November 2015); Interview with Chris Elphick (10 May 2016); Interview with Ken Wolverton (25 June 2015). All interviews cited in this thesis were conducted by Lucy Brown, unless otherwise stated. See Appendix I for key biographical details of interview participants.

⁹⁹ For an overview of key examples, see: Angela Bartie and Arthur McIvor, 'Oral History in Scotland', *The Scottish Historical Review*, Volume XCII (2013), pp.108–136.

understanding of the field of political and social action. Fittingly, oral history was itself a product of the same impetus towards democratisation of culture that motivated so many community artists.¹⁰⁰ Both practices began to emerge in their modern forms during the late 1960s, and both sought to recover and represent the histories of those usually ‘hidden from history’ – women, children, the working-class, immigrant groups, and other minorities.¹⁰¹ Where oral historians endeavoured to achieve this through the recording process, community artists encouraged people to reconnect with and celebrate so-called ‘ordinary’ culture.

One of the reasons the community arts movement has been neglected for so long is that very few of its artistic outputs have survived. Some of the art forms favoured, such as music and drama, are by their very nature ephemeral. Others, such as murals, have been lost as the walls and buildings they have been painted on have been demolished. Art situated in public spaces, particularly that which is the product of multiple or anonymous artists, is particularly vulnerable to neglect.¹⁰² As Alan Powers notes, art fixed in or outside buildings ‘presents not only physical problems but cognitive ones – paintings become over familiar and on some level we fail to understand what they are doing there, hence the risk of over-painting or

¹⁰⁰ For an overview of the development of oral history in Britain, see: ‘Historians and Oral History’, in Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 3rd Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp.25-81; on oral history in Scotland: Bartie and McIvor, ‘Oral History in Scotland’.

¹⁰¹ There has long been overlap between attempts to recover popular and folk culture and attempts to recover ‘hidden histories’ – see e.g.: Alun Howkins, ‘History and the Radio Ballads’, *Oral History*, 28 (2000), pp.89-93.

¹⁰² Jeremy Howard, Catherine Burke and Peter Cunningham (eds.), *The Decorated School: Essays on the Visual Culture of Schooling* (London: Black Dog, 2013), p.8.

complete destruction'.¹⁰³ In lieu of surviving artefacts, interviews therefore offer a way to recapture what sort of art was made, how it was made, and by whom.

Of course, not *all* primary source material has been lost. Materials which do survive include posters, videos, film, murals, photographs and festival brochures. Although much of this material is appealingly colourful and visually enticing, it tells us very little in and of itself, hinting at projects and events without revealing how they played out in practice. David Reichard has discussed some of the challenges visual ephemera poses, 'including but not limited to determining who created it, how it was used, and what impact it had in its particular context'.¹⁰⁴ Following Reichard's lead, this thesis approaches oral history as a way to 'reanimate ephemera' which can otherwise tell only a partial history of a little documented movement.¹⁰⁵ One of the key debates at the heart of the community arts movement was the relationship between process and product: although surviving art and ephemera bear traces of their production, hinting at a Do-It-Yourself (DIY) ethos or collective authorship, it is through interviews that we gain a clear sense of how individual projects were organised and what they aimed to achieve.

Indeed, one of the strengths of oral history interviews is that they allow us to uncover not only what community artists *did* during the 1970s and 1980s, but also how they thought and felt about their work, both at the time and in retrospect. The subjectivity of memory has sometimes been considered a weakness of oral history

¹⁰³ Alan Powers, *British Murals*, p.19.

¹⁰⁴ David Reichard, 'Animating Ephemera Through Oral History: Interpreting Visual Traces of California Gay College Student Organizing from the 1970s', *Oral History Review*, 39:1 (2012), pp.37-60.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

methodology. However, as oral historians have long pointed out, this apparent weakness is actually one of its strengths.¹⁰⁶ Approached not as a litany of verifiable historical ‘facts’, but as a means of exploring the workings of memory, subjectivity and narrative, the oral history interview allows historians to ask why certain events are remembered in a particular way, how they impacted on individuals on an emotional or psychological level, and how personal and collective memory interact.¹⁰⁷ This emphasis on intentions and perceptions as well as actions is one of the key themes of this thesis, which seeks to uncover how practitioners understood the relationship between their own work, the work of other community artists, and broader shifts in social and political culture - as well as how they have rationalised them since, in the wake of the ongoing neoliberalisation of culture, society and welfare.

My interviews sought to contextualise the interviewee’s practice and their pathway into community art in terms of a brief overview of their early life, education, family background, social lives and political views at the time. Most participants were in their 50s or 60s at the time of interview. Although most were still working, only 11 of those interviewed were still engaged in community arts practice – a factor which may have influenced how interviewees felt about, remembered or sought

¹⁰⁶ Alessandro Portelli, ‘What Makes Oral History Different?’, in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, *The Oral History Reader*, 2nd Edition (London: Routledge, 2006), p.32. For a discussion of the workings of memory, see: ‘Oral History and Memory’ in Valerie Raleigh Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira, 2005), pp.41-75.

¹⁰⁷ For key examples, see: Luisa Passerini, ‘Work, Ideology and Consensus under Italian Fascism’, *History Workshop Journal*, 8 (1979), pp.82–108; Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany: New York, 1991).

(consciously or otherwise) to justify their work, particularly in relation to the professionalisation and bureaucratisation of community arts practice over time. As Abrams reminds us, the interview process offers the narrator an opportunity to shape and project a perception of self; the narration is a performance through which the narrator seeks to obtain ‘composure’ or a coherent and comfortable sense of self and one’s place in the world.¹⁰⁸ Throughout this study, interviewees were asked to reflect on their working lives, and the perceived success or otherwise of their actions - factors which contribute strongly to a sense of self, agency and purpose in the world. Whilst most interviewees were keen to paint the community arts movement – presented by many interviewees as a forgotten, misunderstood, and underfunded practice - in a positive light, those who had moved on to other careers or practices tended to be more willing to reflect on some of the failures or limitations of the movement and their own practice.

Many community arts projects were relatively short lived. Projects rarely boasted more than a few full-time or paid employees, and it was not uncommon for a project to end when those responsible for initiating them moved on, or funding ran out. Like so many community-based initiatives existing outside of institutional frameworks, much of the documentation generated has therefore been lost,

¹⁰⁸ Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (London: Routledge, 2010), p.33, pp.66-67; The notion of composure was coined by Graham Dawson; see: Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire, and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994); on composure and activist subjectivities, see Celia Hughes, ‘Negotiating Ungovernable Spaces Between the Personal and the Political: Oral History and the Left in Post-war Britain’, *Memory Studies*, 6:1 (2013), pp.70-90.

destroyed, or otherwise become difficult to access. In some cases, individual practitioners have kept hold of paperwork, ephemera and other artefacts, but little of this material has found its way into official archives or repositories. Indeed, one of the side benefits of conducting interviews with practitioners is that the interview process has unearthed small repositories of documents and artefacts belonging to interviewees which might otherwise have languished in boxes and filing cabinets in people's homes. Many of these have functioned as a useful aid-memoire during the interview process itself.

In a few instances, significant documentation relating to specific projects is available. Where small-scale projects have grown into something more permanent, archives are more likely to have survived. A key example is Video in Pilton, formed in 1981, which was reconstituted as Screen Education Edinburgh in 2010. Where it once boasted only one member of staff, it is now a charitable body with a formal organisational structure. Consequently, it has had the resources to digitise and archive many of the videos created in the early years of the project. Similarly, the records of Castlemilk Womanhouse have survived because their parent organisation, Women in Profile, developed into a permanent institution, Glasgow Women's Library, where they are now archived. In other instances, archives have been created through the diligence of individuals. Most notably, records kept by Helen Crummy, a leading figure in the Craigmillar Festival Society, have recently been deposited at the Edinburgh Central Library. These include reports, press cuttings, meeting minutes, photographs and letters, offering rich insights into its activities during the 1970s. Although community archiving is not a new

phenomenon, it had only relatively recently received attention from scholars and formal archival institutions.¹⁰⁹ Many of the archives consulted during this study have been underutilised, and in some instances (such as the example of the Helen Crummy archive), they have never been examined at all.

Throughout this study, archival sources have been supplemented where possible with published primary sources. These include newspaper articles (drawn from both the national press and community newspapers such as Easterhouse paper *The Voice*), as well as articles in periodicals concerned with social issues, such as *New Society* and the *New Statesman*. The publications of the Association of Community Artists, latterly the Shelton Trust, which include information packs, manifestos and a regular newsheet, have given an insight into some of the key debates motivating the movement - although these documents were predominantly written by those working in the English context. Meanwhile, the records of the Scottish Arts Council, held at the National Archives of Scotland, shed light on how the movement was viewed by the primary body responsible for developing and overseeing the implementation of arts policy and funding in Scotland.¹¹⁰ Read in conjunction with reports published by the Arts Council of Great Britain, which exerted a strong influence on the tenor of Scottish arts policy, it is possible to trace how policy developed over time, and what this meant for community arts practice. Similarly,

¹⁰⁹ Andrew Flinn, 'Community Histories, Community Archives: Some Opportunities and Challenges', *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 28:2 (2007), pp.151-176.

¹¹⁰ On the history of the SAC, see: Susan Galloway and Huw David Jones, 'The Scottish Dimension of British Arts Government: A Historical Perspective', *Cultural Trends*, 19 (2010), pp.27-40.

the records of local authorities – particularly Glasgow District Council and Strathclyde Regional Council, both archived at the Mitchell Library, Glasgow – give insight into how local authorities sought to utilise community arts, particularly during Glasgow’s year as European City of Culture in 1990. Where possible, this thesis has sought to triangulate visual and ephemeral documentation, written records, and the views and memories of interviewees, to build as rich a picture as possible of the movement as it was experienced at the local level, between communities, and in relation to state funding bodies and policy makers.

1.8 Scope and Thesis Outline

The objectives of this thesis are three-fold. First and foremost, it is an attempt to recover the history of a movement about which very little has been written, asking: what was community art and what did its practitioners seek to achieve? Who were the community artists? What, if anything, was unique about community arts as it developed its Scottish context? Secondly, this thesis contributes to the growing literature on Scottish culture and counterculture (discussed above) in the 1970s and 1980s. Thirdly, building on the idea that community artists were interested in the idea of the social utility of art, this thesis suggests that community art was a response to the particular contours of urban life in this period. As such, a history of the movement contributes to our understanding of community action and community development, as well as the ways in which urban policy was negotiated, implemented and contested at the grassroots. This thesis argues that community art – like many community-based initiatives – could serve a number of different ends, not all of them as radical or agitational as those involved sometimes implied.

Community art could serve as a form of protest; but to the extent that it encouraged mutual aid and alternative service provision, or helped engender self-confidence or improve wellbeing, its aims did not always run counter to those of local government policy initiatives. Much of this uncertainty, this thesis proposes, relates to the fact that the language of self-help, community, participation and active citizenship - or critique of the failures of bureaucratic, state-led solutions to the problems of poverty, housing, and so on – could emanate from both left and right-wing quarters, and serve both emancipatory and more ameliorative ends.

Building on the overview of the literature this chapter has outlined, Chapter Two offers an introductory outline of the community arts movement, exploring its origins and the artistic, political and social motivations driving those who came to call themselves community artists. This chapter also outlines relevant ACGB and SAC cultural policy, as well as the relationship between community art, community development, and major urban policy initiatives.

Chapter Three turns to the activities of the Craigmillar Festival Society, Scotland's first community arts organisation. This chapter positions community arts in Craigmillar as a form of community activism, and examines how the Festival Society used art and culture to improve life in the local area during the 1970s. As this chapter concludes, however, the new forms of participatory democracy sought in Craigmillar did not always deliver their radical promise.

This thread is picked up in Chapter Four, which looks at the Easterhouse Festival Society. Against the backdrop of economic change and public service cuts of the late 1970s and early 1980s, it examines the disjuncture between the radical, left-

wing message of art and drama produced in Easterhouse and the realities of community tensions and dependence on (ever precarious) local authority funding.

Chapter Five uses the example of Scotland's emerging film and video workshops to explore the relationship between 'process' and 'product', which in turn raised questions about aesthetic quality and the criteria by which community arts projects should be judged – a question which was not without political dimensions.

Chapter Six turns to Glasgow's year as European City of Culture 1990. This event was the first time community arts in Scotland was recognised on a large scale at an institutional level, and the first time it received significant local government funding. This chapter argues that community artists often had an ambivalent attitude towards the Festival – recognising that it served certain urban regeneration agendas but also arguing that there was scope to use the money available to help disadvantaged communities and promote a more inclusive notion of Glaswegian culture. However, although the Glasgow 1990 'communities programme' was often presented as an antidote to the more hard-nosed, economically focused aspects of the main Festival, this chapter demonstrates that the programme also supported what would become known during the 1990s as 'social inclusion' policies which sought to improve people's lives through a largely depoliticised wellbeing agenda. Glasgow 1990 therefore foreshadows the two key ways in which the arts have been understood to have value in recent and contemporary urban policy: as a driver of economic regeneration, and a way of dealing with social problems caused by deindustrialisation, job losses and austerity.

Chapter Two: The Beginnings of Community Art

The week-long exhibition *Organised Accident is Art* opened at the Fruitmarket Gallery in Edinburgh in 1977. Organised by Ken Wolverton, an American artist working in Scotland, the exhibition was the first display of community arts to take place in an ‘official’ gallery space in Scotland.¹ Rejecting the traditional, reverential gallery experience, Wolverton envisaged the event as a ‘hands-on exhibition/happening’ which would bring communities, artists and members of the public together to explore people’s creative potentials.² With input from community artists across Edinburgh, Wolverton spent a year organising a programme of interactive events and workshops, including a graffiti mural, a giant indoor climbing net for children, street theatre, dance workshops, video and photography, and a wall montage to which visitors could add their own drawings.³

The exhibition drew people from all walks of life, many of whom might not otherwise have visited a gallery, including school groups and teenagers from housing estates such as Craigmillar and Pilton. In the evenings, seminar groups discussed community arts practice. With art work generated by visitors during the day and discussions taking place between community artists in the evenings, Wolverton felt that ‘[e]ach day the momentum built up an incredible energy. Artist activists and the regular community members were participating on the same level

¹ The event, which had a budget of £3000, was funded by the SAC, the Gulbenkian Foundation, and the Leverhulme Trust; for biographical details of Ken Wolverton, see below pp.57-58.

² Ken Wolverton, ‘Old Bones and Dog Shoes: The Story of Me’, accessed 10 October 2017, [<http://kewolve.com/THE%20STORY%20OF%20ME.html>].

³ *Ibid.*

celebrating the innate human act of creating something from the imagination'.⁴ The exhibition was hugely successful, attracting an audience of over 6,500 in the space of one week.⁵ According to Wolverton, '[a]round 60 artists came together [...] and received nationwide television news twice, BBC radio, local radio and in the press 13 times. Some of the media was very favourable and some very critical but the main objective had occurred – Community Arts became a name in Scotland'.⁶

Many remembered *Organised Accident is Art* as a high point, an event which suggested that community arts practice was finally coming to mainstream attention.⁷ In the early 1970s, community art was largely unheard of. Yet, according to a directory of community arts compiled for the SAC in 1979, there were more than 60 organisations, individuals, and supporting agencies operating in Scotland by the end of the decade, each driven by their own philosophies and methods.⁸ Wolverton attempted to capture something of the freeform ethos of community arts practice in the title of the exhibition:

There was such controversy, argument that went on about my title *Organised Accident is Art* [...] some of the people were [indignant] "I don't like the word 'art'!" others were "I don't like the word 'organised'!"... "I don't like 'accident'!"...and at the end of it, one day, we got in huge raving argument...in the end I stood up, said "Well I don't care! No one's said they didn't like the word 'is'!" [laughs] [...] and I got up and just left the room. And when I went back the next day everyone agreed it as *Organised Accident is Art*.⁹

⁴ Wolverton, 'Old Bones'.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Interview with Rosie Gibson (10 November 2015); Interview with David Harding (25 June 2015); Interview, Wolverton (2015).

⁸ Liz Kemp and Hugh Graham, *Directory: of Community Art and Artists in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Craigmillar Festival Press, 1979).

⁹ Interview, Wolverton (2015).

Given the number of groups and people involved, it is hardly surprising that artists' views on the purpose and practice of community arts often differed. Some felt the word 'art' was elitist; others felt 'organised' was too restrictive for a practice characterised by responsiveness and experimentation; for yet others, 'accident' did not adequately capture their more purposeful approach.¹⁰ Although these arguments indicate a healthy debate about what community arts was, ambiguity and open-endedness did little to make the movement an attractive prospect to funding bodies. Community art was never a high priority for the SAC: although *Organised Accident is Art* appeared at the time to be a turning point, this unprecedented chance to display work in a prestigious space usually reserved for professional artists was to prove something of a one-off.

Over the course of the 1970s the SAC, somewhat begrudgingly, came to recognise and sometimes fund community arts. The issue of financial support hinged largely on the question of whether or not the democratising objectives of community artists squared sufficiently with SAC's commitment to upholding cultural standards. An advisory group set up in 1975 to discuss the issue (chaired by SAC director Sandy Dunbar) provisionally agreed that it *was* within the Council's remit to fund community arts in Scotland.¹¹ However, the suggestion that community arts should, like music, drama, or visual arts, be allocated its own committee and funding pot was continually deferred, and it was later determined by the Council that this

¹⁰ Interview, Wolverton (2015).

¹¹ National Archives of Scotland [hereafter, NAS], ED61/49, *Director's Report 1975*; NAS, SAC 1/2/48, *Minutes of the 48th Meeting*, (23 January 1975); in 1975/6, the SAC provided £15,000 for a variety of community arts projects. See: NAS, SAC 1/2/50, *Minutes of the 50th Meeting*, (15 May 1975).

separate committee was unnecessary.¹² Indeed, misgivings about community arts more generally continued to be aired regularly at committee meetings.¹³ Although a resulting 1975 report noted that community artists were ‘as much concerned with the social and educational welfare of the participants and the community as the intrinsic value of the arts themselves’, the SAC was not keen to encourage the provision of awards based on criteria other than aesthetic merit.¹⁴

The situation was somewhat different in England. In 1969, the ACGB set up the New Activities Committee to process the upsurge during the late 1960s in grant applications from groups and individuals working in multimedia or cross-disciplinary modes that fell outside the Council’s traditional remit. This was followed by the Experimental Projects Committee, active from 1970 to 1973.¹⁵ In 1974, the ACGB set up the Community Arts Working Group under the chairmanship of Professor Harold Baldry. In the same year, the Baldry Report was published, recommending not only that community arts should be funded, but that funding should be overseen by a separate committee: the Community Arts

¹² NAS, CP81/22, *SAC and Community Arts*, (1981); it had originally been agreed that this committee would devise a working definition of ‘community arts’ and appropriate criteria for assessment; criteria were eventually outlined in 1979.

¹³ See e.g.: NAS, SAC 1/2/53, *Minutes of the 53rd Meeting*, (13 November 1975); NAS, ED61/49, *Minutes of the 54th Meeting*, (22 January 1976).

¹⁴ NAS, ED61/49, *Director’s Report 1975*; A 1981 discussion paper recommended that the movement should become a higher priority for the Council but this advice was not taken on board in any substantive way. This paper also advised that normal assessment criteria should continue to apply, with a small degree of flexibility to take into account the value of projects to the community in which they were based - see: NAS, CP81/22, *SAC and Community Arts*, (1981).

¹⁵ Alison Jeffers, ‘Introduction’, in Jeffers and Moriarty, *The Right to Make Art*, p.12.

Committee, established in 1975.¹⁶ Two years later, it was decided that funding for local community arts projects should be devolved to the ACGB's Regional Arts Associations (RAAs) – a process completed by 1982.¹⁷ Meanwhile, in Scotland, the SAC continued to oversee funding for community arts in a direct – if ad hoc – way. Most SAC applications were processed by the Mixed Arts Committee, renamed Combined Arts in 1984.

It would be easy on this account to dismiss community arts in Scotland, to turn elsewhere for a more compelling story. Yet Scotland pioneered some of the most well-renowned community arts projects in Britain (and further afield) including the Craigmillar and Easterhouse Festival Societies (discussed in Chapters Three and Four respectively). This prompts us to ask: who were the community artists, and what motivated them to commit to a field which offered relatively little institutional support? Where had this small yet proactive community that had not existed ten years previously come from, and what was the wider context in which artists were working? This chapter explores the roots of the community arts movement in Scotland and asks why it emerged as and when it did. Using oral history testimonies, it maps some of the influences and personal motivations of community artists and arts workers active in Scotland between the late 1960s and 1990. After first charting

¹⁶ ACGB, *Report of the Community Arts Working Party* (London: ACGB, 1974); Funding for the first year amounted to £176,000, rising to £350,000 the following year; this funding was only available for projects in England.

¹⁷ This is not to say that the ACGB was unequivocal in its acceptance of community arts. In the ACGB's 1975/6 Annual Report, Chairman Lord Gibson dismissed the idea of cultural democracy: in his view, it not only rejected proper distinction between 'good' and 'bad' art, it also insultingly suggested that working-class people were not as capable as the middle-class people of enjoying high art. See: ACGB, *The Arts in Hard Times* (London: ACGB, 1976).

the attitudes towards arts and culture embodied by the ACGB and SAC, it turns to the different ways in which community artists understood their work to have cultural, political and social dimensions. Finally, arguing that from its very beginnings, community art was bound up with the history of the welfare state and its effects - social and physical - on the urban environment, this chapter concludes by contextualising the political and social imperatives of the movement in relation to the interrelated field of community development.

2.1 The ‘Art World’ and Post-war Arts Policy

To understand what community artists were trying to achieve, it is necessary to understand what they were rejecting or critiquing – namely, the entity commonly referred to as the ‘art world’. The term ‘art world’ is usually taken to mean assemblage of institutions and practices – from museums and galleries to curators and critics - which act as guardians of the art object.¹⁸ Over the course of the twentieth century, but particularly during the 1960s and 1970s, the unequal and undemocratic power relations obtaining within the art world came under increasing scrutiny from artists, who regarded it as unfair that the establishment should act as the sole arbiter of what constituted art or culture.¹⁹

The most obvious embodiment of the art world and its values was the Arts Council. Granted permanent royal charter in 1946, the ACGB grew out of the Council for the Encouragement of Music and Art (CEMA), set up in 1939 by the Pilgrim Trust to raise morale during the Second World War. Prior to 1939, state intervention in

¹⁸ Crehan, *Community Art*, p.9.

¹⁹ Belfiore and Bennett, *Social Impact of the Arts*, p.18; Walker, *Left Shift*, pp.6-7.

the arts had been limited.²⁰ When the government made a grant of £50,000 to CEMA in 1940, it was therefore a significant gesture of recognition that the state should bear some responsibility for arts provision.²¹ After the war, CEMA was reconstituted as the ACGB and awarded an annual allocation of Treasury funds. Under the chairmanship of economist John Maynard Keynes, the organisation also adopted the so-called ‘arm’s length principle’, a mechanism designed to distance policy and funding decisions from party politics.²² Meanwhile, as a separate nation with its own cultural traditions, it was agreed (after some debate) that Scotland should be granted some degree of autonomy over its own cultural policy. The Scottish Arts Council began life as the Scottish Committee of CEMA; in 1947 it became the Scottish Committee of ACGB.²³ It was renamed the Scottish Arts Council in 1967, but remained a committee rather than a fully independent body until devolved to the Scottish Office in 1994.²⁴ It was funded throughout on the basis of a mechanism known as the Goschen formula, which guaranteed Scotland a fixed award of 12.08% of all arts funding.²⁵ Over subsequent decades, the SAC operated at what Galloway and Jones have called the ‘double arm’s length

²⁰ Mulgan and Worpole, *Saturday Night*, p.26.

²¹ Bartie, *The Edinburgh Festivals*, p.8.

²² Galloway and Jones, ‘The Scottish Dimension’.

²³ On the intellectual roots of CEMA and the SAC, see: Euan McArthur, *Scotland, CEMA and the Arts Council 1919-1967: Background, Politics and Visual Art Policy* (Abingdon and New York: Ashgate, 2013).

²⁴ Galloway and Jones, ‘The Scottish Dimension’.

²⁵ *Ibid* – this formula applied continuously, excepting a period in the 1950s and the early 1960s during which time Scottish funding fell.

principle', whereby autonomy from government influence was allied with a significant degree of autonomy from the ACGB.²⁶

There were some key differences between CEMA and the ACGB. Whereas the original brief for CEMA had been to encourage amateur music, drama and painting, particularly outside of London, funding soon began to be diverted towards professional organisations.²⁷ By the time ACGB was formed, commitment to a limited number of so-called 'centres of excellence' such as the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Royal Opera House was firmly entrenched. This preference for professional organisations was typical of the conservative ethos which dominated the Arts Council from its beginnings.²⁸ Although set up under a Labour government, there were many who felt the form the Arts Council took represented a missed opportunity to enlist the arts as a genuinely democratic and emancipatory force.²⁹ Instead, the ACGB was given a twin remit: to raise standards of artistic attainment and widen access to the high arts.³⁰ Although technically free to pursue its own policies, the Scottish Committee showed little deviation from these same principles.³¹

The value system upon which the ACGB and the SAC based most of their assumptions had a long history.³² At its core was the idea that art represented a

²⁶ Galloway and Jones, 'The Scottish Dimension'.

²⁷ Mulgan and Worpole, *Saturday Night*, p.19.

²⁸ Hewison, *Culture and Consensus*, p.48.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p.48.

³⁰ Mulgan and Worpole, *Saturday Night*, pp.19-20.

³¹ Galloway and Jones, 'The Scottish Dimension'.

³² On the history of the relationship between art and intellectual thought, see: Belfiore and Bennett, *The Social Impact of the Arts*.

separate and rarefied domain, one which sat apart from the vulgar concerns of everyday life - an idea which can be traced back to the Renaissance, via Kantian aesthetics, Romanticism and late nineteenth century Aestheticism.³³ The distinction commonly made in Western culture between what came to be known as the high arts and other 'lesser' forms of creative pursuit also dates back to the Renaissance, whilst the concept of the artist as the individual 'genius-creator' owes its genesis, in part, to a Romantic rejection of the strictures of conventional bourgeois culture.³⁴ These ideas served to reinforce the idea that art sat above the commercialisation of the market; but to conceive of the artist as one who possessed a singular and inspired talent also fed into the notion that art was concerned with greater things than 'mere' purpose or utility.³⁵

By the nineteenth century, the idea that the arts might function as 'the moral and spiritual treasury of the nation' had obtained common currency.³⁶ This line of thought was articulated most clearly in the writings of Victorian poet and critic Matthew Arnold, who believed that art ought to play a morally instructive and civilizing role in society.³⁷ This spiritually uplifting function could be performed only by what Arnold in *Culture and Anarchy* called 'the best which has been thought and said in the world' – further reinforcing the idea of a hierarchy of quality between and within art forms.³⁸ Similarly, art critic John Ruskin wrote extensively

³³ Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, p.25.

³⁴ Crehan, *Community Art*, p.14; Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, p.25.

³⁵ Crehan, *Community Art*, p.15.

³⁶ Mulgan and Worpole, *Saturday Night*, p.21.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p.19.

³⁸ Bartie, *The Edinburgh Festivals*, p.9.

on the social benefits of the arts and aesthetic understanding - something he saw as an integral part of a moral education.³⁹ In the context of rapid industrialisation and growing fears about the degeneration of morality amongst the working-classes, such ideas struck a chord with those urban philanthropists who believed that teaching the poor to appreciate beauty and culture would serve as a remedy to the spiritual ills of urban slums.⁴⁰ Victorian ideas about the role art ought to play in society continued to exert significant influence on twentieth century intellectual thought. They were particularly apparent, for example, in the writings of influential literary critics and writers T.S Eliot and F.R. Leavis.⁴¹

Despite the elitism these attitudes to culture sometimes implied, they were not necessarily at odds with views within the post-war Labour Party. Many British socialists saw the assumed moral benefits of artistic appreciation as integral to their wider post-war programme of reform.⁴² After the Second World War, the Labour party remained largely Fabian rather than radical in its approach to the realisation of socialism.⁴³ Like many other forms of socialism that emerged in the Victorian period, Fabianism inflected its approach to the arts with overtones of morality and self-improvement, and even as late as 1945, these ideas seem to have obscured other

³⁹ Diana Maltz, *British Aestheticism and the Urban Working Classes 1870-1900: Beauty for the People* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp.2-3.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, pp.1-4.

⁴¹ For an overview, see e.g.: Dennis Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain: History, the New Left, and the Origins of Cultural Studies* (London: Duke University Press, 1997), pp.80-82.

⁴² *Ibid*, p.13

⁴³ Hewison, *Culture and Consensus*, p.55.

ways of conceptualising the role of arts policy.⁴⁴ This much is apparent, for example, in the Labour Party's distaste for commercial television and other forms of 'mass culture'.⁴⁵ Ironically, given their willingness to distance themselves from the cultural agenda of the SAC and the intellectual legacies it embodied, many of the discourses of empowerment and self-determination later articulated by community artists unconsciously referenced similarly moralistic understandings of the transformative value of art.⁴⁶ And as we shall see, criticism of community art (justly or otherwise) often drew on the deep-seated association between art and the morally prescriptive inculcation of supposedly 'respectable' values.

Although the inception of the Arts Council signalled a new belief in the importance of state support for the arts, it was only during the 1960s that a real attitudinal shift took place at government level. The first Minister for the Arts, Labour's Jennie Lee, was appointed in 1964. Lee played an important role in moving arts policy up the political agenda during the years of the Wilson government. During her tenure, ACGB funding increased significantly - according to Clive Gray, by nearly 500% over the decade.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, funding directed to Scotland almost doubled during Lee's time in office, having fallen below the Goschen stipulated level of 12.08% to

⁴⁴ Hewison, *Culture and Consensus*, p.55; there were some exceptions – including J.B. Priestly, whose 1947 lecture to the Fabian Society 'Arts Under Socialism' called for the arts to become a central plank of socialist policy.

⁴⁵ Lawrence Black, "'Sheep may safety gaze': Socialist Television and the People in Britain 1949-64", in Lawrence Black et al. (eds.), *Consensus or Coercion? The State, the People and Social Cohesion in Post-war Britain* (Cheltenham: New Clarion Press, 2001), pp.28-48.

⁴⁶ Discussed in Chapter Three.

⁴⁷ Clive Gray, *The Politics of the Arts in Britain* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), p.48.

just 6.6% in 1962/3.⁴⁸ In 1965, Lee published the White Paper *A Policy for the Arts – The First Steps*, which signalled a commitment to widening access to the arts.⁴⁹ Lee was also a prominent supporter of leftist initiatives such as Joan Littlewood’s Theatre Workshop and playwright Arnold Wesker’s Centre 42 - the first, if short-lived, arts centre in Britain.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, Lawrence Black argues that Lee ‘demurred from delivering the Arts as radical agency, in favour of enabling access to established providers’.⁵¹ Although it positioned access to the arts as a right as foundational as access to free healthcare or education, Lee’s White Paper effectively reasserted the idea that what was needed was greater access to art which already existed, and culture continued to be viewed as a means through which to encourage a sense of shared national identity, uplift morale, and ward against the apparent dangers of mass culture. Nor was there any significant shift away from existing Arts Council funding regimes. According to Black, one third of ACPB spending in 1968-69 was disbursed to the National Theatre, the Royal Opera House, the Royal Shakespeare Company and Sadler’s Wells – all professional, London-based organisations.⁵²

2.2 Culture Contested

Hegemonic though the relatively conservative understandings of culture embodied by the Arts Council may have been, they did not go uncontested. One prominent

⁴⁸ Lawrence Black, ‘Making Britain a Gay and More Cultivated Country’: Wilson, Lee and the Creative Industries in the 1960s’, *Contemporary British History*, 20:3 (2006), pp.323-342; Galloway and Jones, ‘The Scottish Dimension’.

⁴⁹ *A Policy for the Arts – The First Steps* (London: HMSO, 1965).

⁵⁰ Black, ‘Wilson, Lee and the Creative Industries’.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

source of critique was the New Left, a broad movement which emerged during the 1950s as a new form of radical extra-parliamentary politics strongly associated with cultural Marxism, the CND and the student movement. For those on the New Left, politics and culture were not separate domains, because it was through culture that prevailing political conditions attained legitimacy and secured consensus. Consequently, they argued, new forms of resistance could not be articulated unless the field of struggle was widened to include cultural practices and the politics of everyday life.⁵³ In Britain, these ideas gave rise to the emerging academic field of Cultural Studies, which took an interdisciplinary approach to the critical study of everyday life and culture. In his 1957 book *The Uses of Literacy*, a partly autobiographical study of life in the inner-city area of Hunslet, Leeds, cultural critic Richard Hoggart offered a critique of mass cultural forms such as the popular press, radio, cinema and television.⁵⁴ Hoggart drew a clear distinction between ‘mass’ and ‘working-class’ culture, seeking to recuperate the latter, along with what he identified as its associated values of solidarity and commitment to home, neighbourhood and community.⁵⁵ Although Hoggart’s depiction of areas like Hunslet has been characterised as overly romanticised, his work was nevertheless deeply influential, encouraging scholars to take seriously the idea that working-class culture was as important an object of study as any other.⁵⁶

⁵³ Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism*, pp.3-4.

⁵⁴ Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working Class Life* (London: Penguin, 2009).

⁵⁵ Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism*, p.83.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p.93; Hewison, *Culture and Consensus*, p.101

Another significant theorist in the field of Cultural Studies was Raymond Williams. In *Culture and Society* (1958), Williams argued that culture had come to mean a ‘whole way of life’ – the totality of social and cultural practices and lived experience rather than just the so-called ‘great tradition’ of canonical works of art, literature and music.⁵⁷ Like Hoggart, Williams was wary of the mass media, arguing that it served as an instrument of capitalist domination rather than an authentic expression of working-class life.⁵⁸ This led him to take an interest in the way the communications industry produced meanings and shaped social values, and the politics of representation apparent in film, drama, television and literature were to form a key site of enquiry for Cultural Studies over the coming decades.⁵⁹ Cumulatively, such ideas ‘served to reinforce the general argument on the left that political oppression operated at and could be challenged at the level of the cultural’.⁶⁰ These ideals also found expression in the community arts movement, which was likewise concerned with the question of what might constitute authentic and genuinely liberating cultural forms.

Debates about the value of working-class, traditional and folk culture were also taking place in Scotland during the 1950s and 1960s, perhaps nowhere more visibly than at the annual Edinburgh International Festival and the Fringe. The first Edinburgh International Festival was held in 1947. Although, ostensibly, anyone

⁵⁷ Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780-1950* (London: Penguin, 1966).

⁵⁸ Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism*, p.92.

⁵⁹ Jim Crowther, ‘Popular Education and the Struggle for Democracy’, in Jim Crowther, Ian Martin and Mae Shaw (eds.), *Popular Education and Social Movements in Scotland Today* (Leicester: NIACE, 1999), pp.32-33.

⁶⁰ Hewison, *Culture and Consensus*, p.183.

could attend, as discussed in Chapter Three, there were many who felt excluded from what was perceived to be the Festival's rarefied atmosphere, an event that catered largely to middle-class audiences and middle-class notions of cultural value. As early as its inaugural year, the Festival faced criticism for failing to adequately represent Scottish culture in its programme.⁶¹ Unhappy with this oversight, a number of theatre groups began to set up alternative, semi-official events quite literally on the fringes of the official Festival.⁶² Spurred on by these developments, in 1951 representatives of the Communist Party, the Edinburgh Trades Union Congress, the National Union of Mineworkers and the Labour Party came together to form the Edinburgh Labour Festival Committee, with the specific aim of establishing a 'People's Festival'.⁶³ Unlike the official Festival, this event sought, through an inclusive atmosphere and affordable ticket prices, to make culture genuinely accessible to all.

The People's Festival was closely associated with the folk revival of the 1940s and 1950s, and key figures in the movement, including Ewan McColl and Hamish Henderson - both singers, songwriters, poets and political activists - were involved in its organisation.⁶⁴ Between 1948 and 1951, Henderson was absorbed in translating the *Prison Notebooks* of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, whose belief that culture was inherently political appealed to those involved in the folk

⁶¹ Bartie, *The Edinburgh Festivals*, p.43.

⁶² *Ibid*, p.45, p.53.

⁶³ *Ibid*, pp.60-61.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p.61.

scene.⁶⁵ According to Gramsci, to dictate cultural norms or notions of cultural value was to control what constituted social norms or legitimate behaviour.⁶⁶ Those who controlled culture were therefore in a position to impose their particular worldview on society, invalidating the values of less powerful social groups or classes in the process. However, because this hegemony was constantly being remade and required ongoing reinforcement, it was always susceptible to contest and change. Gramsci, an important influence on the field of Cultural Studies, also argued that culture was something much wider than the narrow band of activities to which the term ‘art’ was usually applied.⁶⁷ Both these threads of thought were later picked up by community artists, for whom these earlier forms of politicised folk or socialist culture were to prove important touchstones.⁶⁸

During the 1960s, this cultural challenge continued to gather momentum as Edinburgh became home to various alternative spaces where experimental ideas could flourish. In 1959, the American-born Jim Haynes opened the Paperback Bookshop in Charles Street. In addition to selling countercultural and banned books, the shop functioned as a gallery, theatre and general meeting place for Edinburgh’s emerging underground scene.⁶⁹ Haynes - along with publisher John

⁶⁵ On Henderson’s translation, see: ‘Gramsci’s Folklore’ in Corey Gibson, *The Voice of the People: Hamish Henderson and Scottish Cultural Politics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), pp.77-110.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*; Hewison has described the post-war notion of social and political ‘consensus’ as one such form of hegemony – see: Hewison, *Culture and Consensus*, p.12.

⁶⁷ Gibson, *Hamish Henderson*, pp.77-110.

⁶⁸ On the relationship between folk song and protest, see: Norman Buchan, ‘Folk and Protest’, in Edward Cowan (ed.), *The People’s Past: Scottish Folk, Scottish History* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1980), pp.165-190.

⁶⁹ Bartie, *The Edinburgh Festivals*, pp.93-99.

Calder and arts impresario Richard Demarco - was also involved in the Traverse Theatre Club, which opened its doors in 1963 and positioned itself as a 'complete cultural environment' open to all forms of artistic experimentation.⁷⁰ Such venues were part of a wider network of experimental theatres active across Britain at this time, and an early precursor of Jim Haynes' Arts Lab, set up in an old warehouse on Drury Lane, London in 1967. The Arts Lab hosted a wide range of experiments in film, drama and multi-media performance, often infused with an oppositional slant.⁷¹ It closed in 1969 but typified many of the innovative approaches to art and culture that had found footing in Edinburgh and beyond by the end of the sixties. Meanwhile, after the Theatres Act was passed in July 1968, effectively ending censorship by removing the stipulation that all drama scripts receive prior approval from the Lord Chamberlain's Office, it became easier to put on unscripted, improvisational work.⁷² In Edinburgh, as elsewhere, this resulted in the explosion of street theatre that several of those interviewed recall as a formative part of their initiation into community arts.⁷³

2.3 Towards Community Art

By the late 1960s, conditions were ripe for a movement concerned with embracing new and liberating forms of expression; celebrating popular, folk and working-class culture; and reconceptualising the role of art within society. As discussed above, justification for investment in the arts in the post-war period was based largely on

⁷⁰ Bartie, *The Edinburgh Festivals*, p.118-122.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p.193.

⁷² *Ibid*, p.192.

⁷³ *Ibid*; p.192; Wolverton, 'Old Bones'.

the vaguely expressed notion that art was civilizing, morally edifying, and in some sense spiritually uplifting. Whereas the Arts Council continued to defend the notion of ‘art for art’s sake’, community artists sought alternative aesthetic practices which took social change – on however small a scale – as their purview.⁷⁴ Turning now to the narratives of community artists themselves, this chapter argues that for community artists, art was not a timeless entity; instead, they believed that art should be intimately concerned with the social and historical context in which it was created. This idea was to have important implications for practice, for the standards by which community art was judged, and for the way in which community artists conceptualised their role in society.

For some of the movement’s earliest pioneers, involvement in community art grew out of their participation in the wider Edinburgh scene of performance art and street theatre. Moving out of the theatre or the gallery, artists and performers found themselves asking: ‘[w]ho were the people who gathered around them in the streets? The children whom they entertained, what kinds of interests and problems did they have, and what of their parents?’⁷⁵ The experience of Ken Wolverton, an American artist who grew up in Colorado, offers a case in point. Before moving to Scotland in 1973 at the age of 28, Wolverton had travelled across the States, entangled in the lifestyle of the late 1960s hippy counterculture and making a living as an artist. Although he had originally planned to stay in Scotland for only three months, Wolverton became involved in teaching children acrobatics through a

⁷⁴ Braden, *Artists and People*, p.xvii.

⁷⁵ Centre for Contemporary Arts (hereafter, CCA), TE1/6/14, Tom McGrath, *Notes on Community Arts*, (1975).

chance encounter with Neil Cameron and Reg Bolton of Theatre Workshop Edinburgh (TWE) (see pp.123-124):

I met one of the teachers who was teaching gym at Theatre Workshop. She found out I had been an acrobat, she said “Oh Ken, we’d love to have someone who could teach basic acrobatics”. So anyway, I did it, more than any reason I was just dead broke [laughs]. So, I went, and actually I enjoyed it, kids loved it, just basic stuff... anyway, one day I said “Ok, I’m gonna show you how a real acrobat does things and when you grow up you’ll be able to do this if you follow me”. So I did what is called a ‘forward flying somersault’, which means you spring off the floor with your feet, do a somersault in the air, and land back on your feet. Well these were all eight, nine-year-old kids so they were totally impressed [laughs]. But, it just so happened that Neil [Cameron] walked in the room just as I did it, and saw me land on my feet vertically, and as soon as I was through the session says “Ken! You gotta come with us on this tour of Fife, a troubadour show, doing your magic feat!”. Anyway, we spent nine days walking through Fife, going to nine different villages, with a donkey and a cart, and that was really my introduction to community art, doing art in the community, in the street, in a tradition of troubadours, or the Theatre Dell’Arte, or of Italian comedy, slapstick circus.⁷⁶

This meeting was the beginning of a six-year stint in Edinburgh, during which Wolverton ran theatre, sculpture and mural workshops across the city.

Although Wolverton relates street theatre back to its origins in the fairs of medieval Europe, street theatre in its contemporary form was largely a product of the 1960s. During this time artists began to experiment with the alternative set of social, political and aesthetic possibilities that the street – as opposed to the conventional theatre space – could offer.⁷⁷ By the time Wolverton arrived in Edinburgh, festival-goers were growing accustomed to the sight of groups incorporating dance, music

⁷⁶ Interview, Wolverton (2015).

⁷⁷ Susan Haedicke, *Contemporary Street Arts in Europe: Aesthetics and Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p.1.

and improvisation into their work on the streets around the city's Royal Mile. In April 1976, Wolverton himself organised a 'happening' at Haddon's Court 'where people were to paint walls, build sculptures, create stories, give performances and in short celebrate' (Figures 2.1 and 2.2, p.60, p.61).⁷⁸ The first happenings took place in America during the 1950s. Influenced by challenges to received notions of art posed by the Futurists and Dadaists, happenings rejected the distinction between art and life, performer and viewer, and sought active participation rather than passive observation of the performance - ideas which Wolverton utilised in his own art and drama workshops, which were based on the principles of interaction and co-authorship.⁷⁹ Importantly, however, Wolverton's activities were never limited to the streets of central Edinburgh, and he was involved in organising similar events in Edinburgh's peripheral housing schemes (Figure 2.3, p.61).⁸⁰ Although recognisably countercultural in their aims and their irreverent attitude towards authority, community art projects were always tempered by the realities of undertaking work in working-class areas and housing estates. Where the unconventional forms and dubious morals of experimental theatre often generated criticism in the press, away from the Festival, criticism was expressed more directly: Wolverton remembers how TWE's experiments with stilt walking and pyrotechnics 'sometimes were reciprocated by the ghetto children with retaliation of broken glass shard mud balls who the kids could hit you within 30 feet...It was

⁷⁸ Wolverton, 'Old Bones'.

⁷⁹ Famously, a happening which took place in Edinburgh – 'In Memory of Big Ed' – caused scandal when a naked model was wheeled across the McEwan Hall on the last day of the 1963 Edinburgh Drama Conference. See: Bartie, *The Edinburgh Festivals*, p.125; Interview, Wolverton (2015).

⁸⁰ Wolverton, 'Old Bones'.

a tough life in Scotland in those days'.⁸¹ What differentiated community artists from the performance artists who flocked to Edinburgh during the Festival was their willingness not only to take theatre (and other art forms) into the streets, but to take it into the streets of places usually ignored by the arts establishment – bringing debates about breaking down barriers between life and art to their logical conclusion.



Figure 2.1 Happening at Haddon's Court, Edinburgh 1976, organised by Ken Wolverton

[Courtesy of Ken Wolverton].

⁸¹ Wolverton, 'Old Bones'.



Figure 2.2 Happening at Haddon's Court, Edinburgh 1976 [Courtesy of Ken Wolverton].



Figure 2.3 Children painting a mural in Pilton under the guidance of Ken Wolverton, 1974 [Courtesy of Ken Wolverton].

Not all of those who worked as community artists in Scotland had attended art school. However, all shared a desire to facilitate the creation of art that reached beyond the usual audience of the gallery, the museum or the theatre and which met a wider set of contemporary needs than those which high culture usually addressed. Of those who did attend art school, the developing field of community art often represented both a rejection of the values they found to prevail there, and an opportunity to experiment with new and more inclusive forms of practice. Liz Kemp, a graduate of Fine Art and Sculpture at Edinburgh College of Art, grew up in Fife and began her career as a community artist working on a mural project in Craigmillar in 1977. Kemp was first introduced to the concept of community art through her then partner, Hugh Graham, who was at the time working in the New Town of Glenrothes as an assistant to the town's official artist, David Harding.⁸² These personal contacts opened Kemp's eyes to a number of alternative artistic projects such as the Chicago Mural Group, who painted large scale murals across Chicago in collaboration with local residents, in a bid to raise political consciousness and celebrate local identity.⁸³ Kemp notes that she was struck by the way the Chicago group were:

Taking art out into the community, where it was part of the social fabric. And the political fabric. For people. And artists were really actively engaged in issues...the energy behind that was really interesting. Because after doing three years of studying this really kinda ivory tower subject of art history and then sculpture, and thinking, where are the connections? Or looking for

⁸² On Harding's role as Town Artist, see e.g.: Harding, 'Another History', pp.28-39; for biographical details, see below pp.67-68.

⁸³ For an overview of the Chicago Mural Group, see: Eva Sperling Cockcroft et al., *Toward a People's Art: The Contemporary Mural Movement* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998).

connections and not seeing them. These things were really interesting for me.⁸⁴

Through her social circle, Kemp encountered ideas and practices which gave substance to her innate feeling that it was not enough for art to remain the preserve of the ‘ivory tower’ – it must connect in some way to people’s everyday lives. As Kemp added, she was interested in ‘this *much* more down to earth idea of what an artist could be in society...to bring art into the streets, have it there, people interact with it, be just part of the everyday world’.⁸⁵

Kemp was of a generation who had grown up during the 1960s. In David Harding’s view, the desire to move into the streets was very much a generational impulse, an extension of the post-war push towards greater educational access:

I think it’s the sixties. It definitely is...And the wonderful post-Second World War democratisation that had gone on. And the amount of working-class people like myself who had got to higher education. Which was...pre-war, impossible. This *huge* amount of working-class kids had gone to university or art school and were now practising, and thinking “well, is the gallery and the museum the *end*? Is that it? What else can we do?”⁸⁶

Young people who went on to become community artists during the early to mid-1970s might not necessarily have experienced the counterculture first hand, but they had benefited from the more egalitarian ethos of the post-war years. During the 1960s, the capacity of Scottish universities doubled, and there were no fees to pay.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Interview with Liz Kemp (5 May 2016).

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Interview, Harding (2015).

⁸⁷ Tom Devine, ‘The Sixties in Scotland: A Historical Context’, in Bell and Gunn (eds.), *The Scottish Sixties*, p.24; numbers in attendance, were, however, still relatively low. See: Callum Brown, Arthur McIvor and Neil Rafeek, *The University*

The drab years of post-war austerity and rationing had only recently come to an end, creating an appetite for new and more colourful fashions, music and consumer goods, whilst the post-war welfare state created a greater sense of security and promised better times to come.⁸⁸ This was a time when a potent sense of change was in the air, not just in terms of artistic change, but also in terms of a general sense of the opening up of society to new values and aspirations.

As Kemp and Harding's narratives suggest, 'taking art out into the community' was both a social and a spatial phenomenon. Creating the conditions for greater participation in artistic production was allied with an unwillingness to work within the confines of the gallery. Art, community artists maintained, should be made not simply for display, but with and by ordinary people. An early precursor of this idea was 'Pavilions in the Park', which ran from 1967-71. Working with designers and architects, the artists involved established a series of temporary structures in parks across England and Wales which hosted workshops and events for local people.⁸⁹ Another important touchstone was the Artist Placement Group (APG), founded by artists John Latham and Barbara Steveni in 1966.⁹⁰ The APG sought to reposition the role of the artist in society by negotiating placements for artists in non-art settings, usually commercial or industrial companies or government departments.⁹¹

Experience 1945-1975: An Oral History of the University of Strathclyde (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), p.1.

⁸⁸ Devine 'The Sixties in Scotland', p.24.

⁸⁹ Braden, *Artists and People*, p.4.

⁹⁰ Walker, *Left Shift*, pp.54-57.

⁹¹ The APG struck up a close association with David Harding after Steveni was invited to Glenrothes to see how the Town Artist scheme worked in 1974– see: Harding, 'Art and Context', p.37.

However, although an increasing number of artists were willing to take art into new social contexts, such projects rarely challenged traditional assumptions about the division between artists and non-artists.⁹² For community artists, concerns about cultural elitism were not just about where culture was consumed: they also touched on important questions about who had the right to *produce* art and what sort of art forms were valued.

Community artists were not alone in their belief that art must speak to its wider social context. Throughout the 1970s, there were many artists who ‘sought to change art, change society and challenge the relations of production in the art world institutions’ by rethinking the relationship between them.⁹³ Influenced by earlier 20th century movements such as Surrealism, Dada and the Situationist Internationale, these concerns could be expressed in the political content of the artwork, but also in the way the work was produced and the forms that it took. Gustav Metzger railed against what he perceived as the overabundance of art objects and institutions, and in 1970 founded the International Coalition for the Liquidation of Art.⁹⁴ As we have seen in the context of the Edinburgh Festivals, other artists experimented with new forms of non-object based art, such as happenings and performance art.⁹⁵ Meanwhile, art with a social purpose was celebrated in a variety of high profile art exhibitions.⁹⁶ In Scotland, for example,

⁹² Braden, *Artists and People*, p.5.

⁹³ Walker, *Left Shift*, p.3.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.29-30.

⁹⁵ On the ‘dematerialization’ of the art object, see: Lucy Lippard, *Get The Message? A Decade of Art for Social Change* (New York: E P Dutton, 1984).

⁹⁶ Walker, *Left Shift*, pp.53-57.

Richard Demarco curated *Strategy: Get Arts* (a palindrome). Held in 1970, the exhibition showcased new trends in artistic practice and was memorably dismissed by sceptical critics as ‘anti-art’, ‘outrageously obscene’ and even ‘psycho-pathological’.⁹⁷ Each of these projects was, like community art, driven by a shared belief in the need to overcome the fissures between art and life, artist and audience. However, not everyone was comfortable with the perceived excesses of the avant-garde mode in which many of these artists worked. Grant Kester positions the avant-garde as an approach to the aesthetic which uses shock value to undermine received truths and inspiring new perspectives.⁹⁸ By way of contrast, community artists embraced projects which used the collaborative process to raise critical consciousness, or question fixed identities and perceptions through ‘exchange and dialogue rather than a single, instantaneous shock of insight’.⁹⁹ For some community artists, the avant-garde was little better than more established high art traditions, which spoke only to those who were privy to certain knowledge and therefore served to alienate a wider audience.¹⁰⁰

Although community art rejected work that was difficult to understand largely for the sake of being difficult, this is not to say that there was no room for experimentation. Rosie Gibson grew up in Inverkeithing, Fife. After leaving university, she took up a role as a youth club and play-scheme worker in Craigmillar before being appointed Craigmillar’s first Community Arts Team Leader in 1976.

⁹⁷ Walker, *Left Shift*, pp.36-37.

⁹⁸ Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, pp.26-27.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p.12.

¹⁰⁰ Richard Cork, *Art for Whom?* (London: ACGB, 1978), p.5.

Gibson recalls, as an example, the film *Wullie*, made in Craigmillar in the mid-1970s by local children working with two students from Edinburgh College of Art:

They made this film that was quite avant-garde, and everybody loved it. So this idea that you've got to pander, y'know, that people who are not 'educated in the arts' or whatever won't get art that's breaking rules and stuff is a load of rubbish. People loved that film. They loved the energy, and the kind of madness of it...not the madness, just the intrigue of it and the beauty of it...¹⁰¹

As Gibson's example indicates, the difference between community art and avant-garde practice was often less about aesthetics, and more about how art was made and by whom. Community art was usually made collectively, and in this case, by children rather than professionals. Most importantly, it was up to participants, not artists, to decide what form a project took, and in what aesthetic tradition, if any, participants chose to work.

2.4 Practice

New attitudes towards art naturally led to new forms of practice, and this emphasis on encouraging self-expression among participants rather than imposing predetermined aesthetic agendas formed one of the key tenets of community arts practice. David Harding grew up in Leith, later attending Edinburgh College of Art.¹⁰² After graduating, he spent four years working in Nigeria, where he ran the art department in a teacher training college. Upon his return to Scotland in 1968 he took up residency in the New Town of Glenrothes, where he worked as Town Artist

¹⁰¹ Interview, Gibson (2015).

¹⁰² Interview, Harding (2015).

until 1978.¹⁰³ Although Harding was employed on the understanding that he would devise and integrate his own sculptural and decorative work into the townscape (see Figures 2.4 and 2.5, p.70, p.71), he quickly came to feel he had a duty to develop a practice that allowed residents to contribute in some way to their own environment. As Harding recalled, his work in Glenrothes was informed by lessons learned in Nigeria:

I had this *fantastic* four years in a Bush Teacher Training College. And I didn't import any European ideas. I didn't teach colour, perspective, composition...I just allowed art to happen. The main thing for me was Herbert Read's book *Education Through Art*, which was about free expression. And the development of confidence when you allow that freedom. And you're not narrowing and restrictive in what you can you do. And it was just fantastic. Wonderful results. So, that non-colonising of their culture, by me, a European, fed into the notion of [not] imposing one's own aesthetic values on other people.¹⁰⁴

As Harding indicates, his practice was deeply influenced by the educator, poet, anarchist and critic Herbert Read, whose many books on the subject posed the possibility of a liberating alternative to traditional pedagogical approaches.¹⁰⁵ Read's 1943 book *Education Through Art* argued that the aim of art education should be the creation of fully-rounded individuals, capable of contributing to

¹⁰³ Harding's work was unusual in that he was employed by the local development corporation as a member of staff, unlike most many later community artists, whose wages were often funded via temporary grants. He was also employed to work with architects and builders as parts of the town were being built; later community artists, on the other hand, found themselves working to improve local areas *after* they had been built.

¹⁰⁴ Interview, Harding (2015).

¹⁰⁵ On Read's anarchist thought, see: David Goodway, *Anarchist Seeds Beneath the Snow: Left-Libertarian Thought and British Writers from William Morris to Colin Ward* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006), pp.175-201.

collective life.¹⁰⁶ Read argued that everyone possessed within themselves some form of creative ability, however broadly defined, and that it was the role of education to free the spontaneous and creative impulses so often suppressed in modern society.¹⁰⁷ This insight struck a chord with Harding. Although not all his work in Glenrothes had a directly participatory element, it was always informed by the sense that it was important to respond to the context in which a work of art was made. This could mean responding to the physical and historical context of place, but might also mean incorporating local cultural traditions, needs, interests, and aesthetic values.

Another important principle of community arts practice – one which was in keeping with other experiments in durational and performance-based art current at the time – was that the *process* by which something was made was at least as important as the finished art work or performance. As Liz Kemp reflected, this was one of the hallmarks of community arts practice:

when you come into an art gallery and you see things in frame, and the white wall, and the hallowed atmosphere, you don't get any impression of the hard work that goes on behind the scenes. Community art, because of its insistence on process and its recognition of process...I really think that has to be one of the biggest markers of difference between so called establishment arts, and the burgeoning, the vanguard of community arts practice.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Goodway, *Anarchist Seeds*, pp.198-99.

¹⁰⁷ Ian Grosvenor and Gyöngyvér Pataki, 'Learning through culture: seeking "critical case studies of possibilities" in the history of education', *Paedagogica Historica*, 53:3 (2017), pp.246-267.

¹⁰⁸ Interview, Kemp (2016).

Process work was emphasised for several reasons. Firstly, many community artists rejected the commercialism of the art world, particularly the idea that the worth of a work of art rested in its financial or display value, favouring instead ephemeral or performance-based forms of artistic expression which did not result in saleable art *objects* produced by one single identifiable (and therefore marketable) author.¹⁰⁹ Secondly, as Kemp suggests, to interact with art in the hallowed space of the gallery gave no sense of how art was created, and process work was valued for the way in which it demystified the exploratory nature of creative work.



Figure 2.4 Children’s play sculpture, Glenrothes – on the right, Town Artist David Harding, 1978 [Courtesy of Fife Archives Centre].

¹⁰⁹ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, p.6.



Figure 2.5 Concrete 'Henge' Sculpture, Glenrothes [Courtesy of Fife Archives Centre].

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the emphasis on process recognised that it was in the act of making something, that education, consciousness raising, and other forms of transformation might take place. Many believed, for example, that participation in community arts projects could serve as an education in democratic principles and aspirations through the performance of egalitarian, democratic working practices within the group or project at hand. From workers co-ops to communes, the process of enacting political or social values through collective and participatory working practices was commonplace amongst activists at the time.¹¹⁰ Although the products of community arts workshops frequently conveyed a social or political message, values of equality and self-determination could also find expression in the way groups *produced* a mural, theatre production or film. In many respects, community arts projects functioned as a form of 'prefigurative politics',

¹¹⁰ Jess Baines, 'Experiments in Democratic Participation: Feminist Printshop Collectives', *Cultural Policy, Criticism and Management Research*, 6 (2012), pp.29-51.

whereby a group enacts the values or organisation of social relations it hopes eventually to see brought about in wider society.¹¹¹ Amongst community artists, it was expected that participants would develop new artistic and creative abilities, but in some cases, it was also hoped that this process of acquiring new knowledge and practical skills might also generate the confidence to take further social action.¹¹² As with many social movements of the 1970s and 1980s, the emphasis was often on *how* things were done as much as *what* was done.¹¹³

As these various reflections suggest, new and progressive ideas about education formed an important backdrop to the development of community art. Although the post-war education system promised education for all, there remained a clear correlation between social class and levels of academic attainment.¹¹⁴ The school system seemed designed simply to prepare children for the labour market, rather than offer a more humanistic approach to learning. By the early 1970s, it was clear that the system was failing many working-class children. For a generation of teachers, educators and artists who had grown up during the hopeful years of the 1960s, this was untenable, and some of the more ambitious or idealistic among them were moved to experiment with alternative forms of schooling.¹¹⁵ Notably, many

¹¹¹ On prefiguration, see: Carl Boggs, 'Marxism, Prefigurative Communism and the Problem of Workers' Control' *Radical America*, 6 (1977), pp.99-122.

¹¹² Kelly, *Storming the Citadels*, p.102.

¹¹³ Charles Landry et al., *What a Way to Run a Railroad: An Analysis of Radical Failure* (London: Comedia, 1985), p.9.

¹¹⁴ Matthew Thomson, *Lost Freedom: The Landscape of the Child and the British Post-war Settlement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p.192, p.200.

¹¹⁵ For an overview, see: *Ibid*, pp.191-209.

of the community arts workers interviewed for the purposes of this study trained as teachers before moving into less prescriptive educational settings.

Environmental education was one such experiment in progressive education. Its proponents took seriously the prospect that that everyday life in the urban environment was rich with educational possibilities. A key advocate of the movement was Colin Ward, who was appointed Education Officer at the Town and Country Planning Association's newly formed education department in 1970.¹¹⁶ Ward, an anarchist who wrote extensively on urban conditions and housing, held a strong faith in both the capacity of human beings for collective self-organisation, and the idea that human beings flourished under conditions of freedom.¹¹⁷ These sentiments found expression in *Streetwork: The Exploding School*, co-authored with Anthony Fyson and published in 1973.¹¹⁸ Taking as a starting point their faith in the knowledge and expertise of the child, Ward and Fyson (both former teachers), called for 'the explosion of school into the urban environment', recast the child as potential architect of their own education, and called for a recalibration of the relationship between pupil and teacher along non-hierarchical lines.¹¹⁹ They argued that the education system largely ignored the possibility that young people might play a positive role in contributing in critical and imaginative ways to life in their community.¹²⁰ Subverting contemporary fears about the relationship between the

¹¹⁶ Thomson, *Lost Freedom*, p.192; this organisation was UK-wide.

¹¹⁷ Catherine Burke, "Fleeting pockets of anarchy": *Streetwork. The Exploding School*, *Paedagogica Historica*, 50:4 (2014), pp.433-442.

¹¹⁸ Anthony Fyson and Colin Ward, *Streetwork: The Exploding School* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973).

¹¹⁹ Thomson, *Lost Freedom*, pp.193-194.

¹²⁰ Fyson and Ward, *Streetwork*, p.88.

appearance of young people on the streets and vandalism and delinquency, they also maintained that the city was as good a place as any to teach young people the values of social responsibility and environmental care.¹²¹ Such ideas naturally resonated with a wider desire to reclaim the streets and the community through political protest, street theatre, or other environmental interventions such as mural painting, sculpture building or festivals. However, although community art was strongly associated with young people, community artists saw self-expression and self-determination as universal rights, and sought to make the lessons of progressive education available to all, regardless of age.

2.5 Becoming an Artist

Given their unease with the prevailing values of the art world, it is perhaps unsurprising that some community artists were uncomfortable referring to themselves as an ‘artist’ at all. Many expressed discomfort at the idea of becoming a ‘professional’ artist or engaging with the exclusive world of art galleries, collectors and shows, choosing instead to find new ways to apply their expertise to the betterment of society.¹²² For Liz Kemp, the term ‘artist’ seemed to shore up the idea that the art world was somehow a separate and rarefied domain, a hierarchy she wished to dismantle:

...this idea of being an artist and having this kind of...*other* nature, somehow removed or separated from life, the world, what other people were doing. There was something about it that I really, I think, deeply rejected...and then there’s that quote...David [Harding] used it, which was

¹²¹ Fyson and Ward, *Streetwork*, p.3.

¹²² Braden, *Artists and People*, p.7.

that “artists are not a special kind of people, but everybody is a special kind of artist”. And *that* really appealed to me.¹²³

As well as distancing herself from the traditional conceptualisation of the artist as a uniquely qualified individual, Kemp also points to the way in which practitioners sought to reimagine expertise as something that anyone might potentially hold. Maxims such as ‘the artist is not a special kind of person but every person is a special kind of artist’ (ascribed variously to Ceylonese philosopher Ananda Coomaraswamy and English artist Eric Gill), and ‘everyone is an artist’, popularised by German conceptual artist Joseph Beuys, were used not to imply that everyone was an artist in the narrow sense of the word, but as a way of rejecting both the lines of distinction between artists and non-artists, and the idea that art was somehow separate from everyday creativity.¹²⁴

Beuys, whose work embraced painting, sculpture, and performance art, believed that art encompassed all aspects of human life, culture and the environment. Motivated by a utopian belief in the universality of human creativity, Beuys was adamant that everybody had the potential to contribute in some way to human society. Beuys spent much time in Scotland during the 1970s (and was involved, for example, in *Strategy: Get Arts*) and up until his death in 1986, frequently working with gallery-owner Richard Demarco.¹²⁵ Demarco was himself was a keen

¹²³ Interview, Kemp (2016).

¹²⁴ Harding, ‘Another History’, p.28; The phrase ‘everyone should be an artist’ was coined by Herbert Read, in his 1947 book, *The Grass Roots of Art*. See: Goodway, *Anarchist Seeds*, p.185.

¹²⁵ On Beuys in Scotland, see: Sean Rainbird, *Joseph Beuys and the Celtic World: Scotland, Ireland and England 1970-85* (London: Tate, 2005).

supporter of the community arts movement, and Beuys' ideas seem to have resonated with the way community artists working in and around Edinburgh at the time thought about their work. Ken Wolverton, for example, found community arts' willingness to see the potential for creative expression in everyday life particularly appealing. Wolverton referred to this as the act of doing something 'artfully':

My first project was out in Pilton...at that point, Neil [Cameron] introduced me really to the philosophy of alternative education through art, which was really the core drive of community arts, and that is all-inclusive of the arts, it didn't matter what kind of *art*, or what kind of *creation*, in the sense that you were doing...it was everything. From building of brick walls to...*whatever*. Anyone could do plumbing, y'know, artfully [laughs]. We would include it.¹²⁶

In so far as 'alternative education through arts' was a philosophy, it was one based on the principle that art need not constitute a separate, hermetically sealed field, but could be understood in a wider sense as the application of creativity to everyday concerns.

Of course, there were many in the art world who were more than willing to dismiss the idea that community artists were indeed 'artists' at all. Wolverton reflected on the poor light in which those working in community arts were sometimes seen, whilst also pointing out that many community artists were themselves more than willing to reject the art world terminology and the value system it implied:

the elite people in general, the galleries, the museums, and so on, looked at us as play-school workers, you know... 'community artists' equated the fact that you didn't have a brain [laughs]. That was the kind of attitude really,

¹²⁶ Interview, Wolverton (2015).

by and large. But many of the people within that refused to call themselves artists, because they thought it was so elitist.¹²⁷

On a personal level, Wolverton recounted that although by the time he arrived in Scotland, aged 28, he had been earning a living making art for over ten years, it was not until working with other people that he felt happy calling himself an artist:

in working with little kids out in Pilton, and accomplishing, oh, probably the ten or twenty murals that I did in the Edinburgh area, with under-privileged kids, kids at risk, all over the city, in several different ghettos, in more or less terrible situations, I managed to create art that I thought was beautiful...and for me, that was the first time in my life I truly felt, with pride, I could call myself an artist...because I was working very much in a pro-creative way [...] I was nearly 30 years old before if someone asked me what I did, I said I was an artist.¹²⁸

Turning the idea that community artists were not *real* artists on its head, Wolverton's own personal experience suggest he only felt he was truly worthy of the term when he had evolved a practice what allowed him to use his abilities towards a social end.

2.6 Political Motivations

For many community artists, the desire to establish an alternative relationship between art and society was motivated by their wider political beliefs. In some instances, this sentiment was driven by a pre-existing commitment to a more egalitarian politics; for others, their politics developed in tandem with their developing sense of themselves as an artist or arts worker. Concern with the values

¹²⁷ Interview, Wolverton (2015).

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

of *artistic* democratisation and participation naturally lent themselves to concern with how these values found expression in society more generally, and community artists often involved themselves in local community action and campaigns.

Over the years, there has been some debate about how radical the community arts movement was, and how far rhetoric and reality diverged.¹²⁹ Certainly, not all interviewees identified their practice as actively political, so much as social or educational. According to David Harding, the level of political commitment apparent in Scotland paled in comparison to America and England. Harding argued that the Scottish community arts scene was:

Very tame. Not radical, whatsoever. The radicalness came from Craigmillar and then Easterhouse, later. There were no artists showing an interest in radical politics and art. Not that I know of...I mean, one always thinks that Scotland is very left-wing and radical. But not on the scale that you got in London. [...] Much more radical political positions were being taken up in England. Which seems very strange when you think of the heritage of Scottish radicalism. So you've got *thinkers* you know like Colin Ward, and committed practitioners who had all been to art school.¹³⁰

As Harding acknowledges, there were community arts projects in Scotland which made direct links with the Labour Party or which celebrated their socialist heritage (see for example, Chapter Three, pp.114). However, the politics of groups like the Craigmillar and Easterhouse Festival Societies were largely the class politics of Old Labour, albeit that these groups sought to challenge the Labour Party's seeming indifference to culture as a field of political struggle. As discussed in Chapter One, community art is often associated with the events of 1968. However, the Marxism

¹²⁹ Matarasso, "All in this together".

¹³⁰ Interview, Harding (2015).

and radical student politics of artists trained in English art schools were less directly apparent in Scotland, where projects tended to be driven at least in part by residents and their political aspects rooted in the particularities of local conditions rather than wider structural concerns. Perhaps due to demographic differences – Scotland remained a predominantly white society, less affected by post-war immigration than England – there are also fewer examples of community arts projects in Scotland concerned directly with issues such as the promotion of multiculturalism.¹³¹

In Harding's view, lack of radicalism also encompassed a lack of interest in radical aesthetics or theory. In Scotland, where there was as much an emphasis on drama and music as the visual arts, not all community artists had been to art school. Many arrived at community arts practice via community development, teaching, or youth work. In such instances, as Harding hints, practitioners did not always take the rigorous aesthetic approach of trained artists. Nor did community artists necessarily seek to develop an intellectual rationale for their practice – unlike Harding, who cites the example of Colin Ward, an important influence on Harding's own work.¹³² For Harding, what was fundamentally missing was the sort of theoretical discussion found in the pages of publications such as *Another Standard*, a national community arts newsletter published bi-monthly by the Shelton Trust.¹³³ The Trust was formed in 1980 to provide information and education on behalf of the Association for

¹³¹ See Chapter Six.

¹³² For an overview of Ward's thought, see: 'Colin Ward' in Goodway, *Anarchist Seeds*, pp.309-325.

¹³³ See for example: *Another Standard*, May/June 1981, which discussed the implications of dependence on subsidy: *Another Standard*, May/June 1981, accessed 29 April 2018, [<https://arestlessart.files.wordpress.com/2017/01/1981-another-standard-may.pdf>].

Community Artists (ACA), which began life in 1972 as the Association of Community Artists, and functioned as a lobbying and information sharing group for community artists working in England.¹³⁴ *Another Standard* did indeed form a forum for lively debate about anti-capitalist politics, the relationship between community artists and funding bodies, and the politics of representation, for which there was no comparable platform in Scotland.¹³⁵ Scotland also lacked an organisation like the ACA which brought practitioners together as a network, and although practitioners frequently shared knowledge and advice in an informal way, there was little attempt to develop and adopt a shared political programme.¹³⁶ However, this is not to say individual projects lacked theoretical underpinnings, or that there were no attempts to make links with other political causes; it is also misleading to assume that all practitioners working in England shared the political agenda of the Shelton Trust.¹³⁷

In fact, community artists working in Scotland came from a wide range of backgrounds and espoused a wide range of political views. For some, their political stance was central to their identity as a community artist. Indeed, many were keen

¹³⁴ The ACA, which was regarded by the ACGB as overly political, disbanded in 1978 and was reformed as the Association for Community Artists. See: Robert Hewison and John Holden, *Experience and Experiment: The UK Branch of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation* (London: Calouste Gulbenkian, 2006), p.104.

¹³⁵ Representatives from Scotland did, however, make regular appearances at the ACA's annual conferences, forming their own panel in 1979. See: *Another Standard*, September 1981; Gayle Fisher (ed.), *Community Arts Conference Report* (Newcastle: Tyneside Free Press, 1979).

¹³⁶ As discussed in Chapter Four, some practitioners did attempt to set up a community arts resource in Scotland.

¹³⁷ Morgan, 'Looking Back', p.17; The Trust was renamed *Another Standard* in 1986 but was wound up later than year.

to position themselves as agitators and outsiders, even when working with funding bodies and Local Authorities. In a study of community development workers active in Strathclyde during the 1970s and 1980s, Alan Barr concluded that although there had been much radical theory circulating in the 1970s, very little of it found its way into practice. Similarly, although many community arts workers expressed what Barr calls ‘radical aspiration’, the work they performed on a day to day basis did not always fit this mould.¹³⁸ As discussed in later chapters, behind the term ‘community art’ lay a wide range of practices and attitudes towards the state – from those who saw it as relatively benign to those who saw it as a controlling institution which fostered dependency and ignored the needs of communities.¹³⁹ Although those interviewed approached the movement from a variety of political angles, collectively, they shared a commitment to a broadly left-wing or progressive agenda, one which sought to promote and protect what might be termed social democratic values. Even those who held themselves aloft from direct political engagement tended to characterise their work as driven by a commitment to equality, democracy, and the right of all to participate in the fullest sense in society and decision-making processes.

In many interviewees’ accounts, art and social concerns were intertwined. Neil Cameron grew up in Liberton, Edinburgh, and worked as Director of Arts Programmes for Craigmillar Festival Society before emigrating to Australia in 1984. Cameron recalls being conscious from an early age that his comfortable

¹³⁸ Alan Barr, *Practicing Community Development: The Experience in Strathclyde* (London: Community Development Foundation, 1991), p.4.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, p.14

childhood as the son of a vet was very different from that of children living in the nearby Craigmillar estate. This sense of disparity was only heightened by his experiences of public schooling, which Cameron described as a ‘highly privileged situation’ where the inequalities of the class system were either celebrated or ignored.¹⁴⁰ After leaving school, Cameron travelled for several years, before deciding aged 20 to return to college. During this time, a summer job took him back to Craigmillar, where the social conditions he encountered there encouraged the realisation that ‘something was desperately wrong with the system that I’d been brought up with. And I was shattered by this. Because I saw immediately that people [were] living in conditions that I had not even imagined’.¹⁴¹ Not long after, Cameron secured a job working in an adventure playground in Craigmillar, during which time he was encouraged by Reg Bolton of Theatre Workshop to set up a drama class with local children. Cameron’s first attempt met with little success:

I couldn’t even understand what the kids were saying, and it just failed completely. And in the end, in frustration, I said: “well, what would you like to do?”. And the kids said “oh, I like to tell a story about mah hoose”. And immediately this boy said: “it’s about Christmas Eve...my father went out and stole all our presents and brought them back for Christmas”. And on Christmas day the police arrived and arrested him and took all the presents out and... and [laughs] my face just dropped. Because [mimics middle class accent]...it hadn’t happened in the nice side of Morningside! So I found it extremely moving that these young people could actually start to articulate stories that reflected the deep social happenings within their group.¹⁴²

Cameron described his political development as three-fold – motivated by a rejection of his own background; a realisation of the conditions others lived in; and

¹⁴⁰ Interview, Cameron (2015).

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Ibid.*; on adventure playgrounds, see pp.139-140.

a growing sense that young people's opportunities were structured by the vagaries of class and circumstance. Moved by children's largely untapped ability to express themselves or identify the unfairness or absurdity of their situation, his narrative also points to a feeling that potential on these housing estates was being wasted, and that the arts might go some way to changing this.

Cameron did not necessarily believe that arts and drama need be political in the traditional sense. Although the arts might serve as a useful way of expressing specific material demands, the unique value of culture was its ability to function as a vehicle of collective self-expression, and provide symbolic moments which exemplified aspirational cultural values:

I think that to change society you have to change its culture. Now, there are obviously really good reasons to have political protests, and political movements. But there's no doubt in my mind that the most powerful social change in the world is a cultural change. The arts are a foundation stone of realising our inner creativity and our ability to change. And if you look at what happens in different parts of the world, one can see how powerful they are...I mean they've changed the Vietnam War in America. It was the arts that really started to express...Bob Dylan...he just sings John Lennon a few songs...songs people sing...and yet, those words can reverberate right through a culture and change it.¹⁴³

Invoking the relationship between the folk-song movement of early 1960s America, civil rights and nuclear disarmament campaigns, and - after the escalation of U.S. military intervention in 1965 – protest against the Vietnam War, Cameron alludes to the way in which music played a fundamental role in mobilising young people, encouraging them to join rallies across the country. Folk song, in this instance, was both a by-product *and* a driver of political change. However, in Cameron's view,

¹⁴³ Interview, Cameron (2015).

the real legacy of these protests was the effect they had on society more generally – redefining the relationship between young people and their elders, and between society and politicians – breaking down strict hierarchies and undermining the longstanding cultures of deference and trust which kept social change in check.

For Rosie Gibson, the relationship between art and social issues was bridged by the oft-repeated notion that ‘everyone is an artist’. As Gibson understood it, this saying contained within it the promise that everyone had potential to be the architect of their own life, and that in many instances it was the injustices of the class system which made it difficult for young working-class people to put their intellectual and creative capabilities to full use:

In the sense of people constructing their own lives, and having the agency in their own lives, or having the potential to have agency in their own lives - that’s the Joseph Beuys sense of it, because he’s quite clear about that. It’s not that everybody’s a professional artist, it’s that everybody’s creating their own lives, or should have the potential to...So when I’m working with those boys in Craigmillar [...] who are bright as buttons, and intelligent, but because of their circumstances are not getting a fair chance...then your impulse is to kind of create the conditions for them to create their own lives. Yeah, it’s just...that’s what you do.¹⁴⁴

When she started working in Craigmillar, Gibson was a young graduate from a modest background, not much older than the teenagers she was working with. Her reflection that ‘it’s just...that’s what you do’ suggests something of the inevitability that sympathy would build up between arts workers and participants, making it

¹⁴⁴ Interview, Gibson (2015).

almost impossible for artists to ignore the wider social inequalities affecting young people's lives.

Throughout these narratives, even when politics are not directly evoked, there is often a broad appeal to a set of humanist values centred on the importance of collective or individual human agency. These beliefs were not out of keeping with a general set of countercultural ideals based around vague aspirations such as 'freedom' and 'self-expression' – aspirations which could be - but were not necessarily - a guarantee of a commitment to *political* aspirations. However, there were plenty of community artists for whom leftist politics were a clear part of their identity. Between 1968 and 1990, different networks of community artists emerged across Scotland. These social circles were often firmly tied to place, and the shape they took was heavily influenced by the cultural and political milieu of the time and context out of which they arose. Those who began their working lives during the 1980s could not help but be aware that in many working-class communities, hard-hit by unemployment and new social problems such as drugs or the AIDS epidemic, social conditions were growing worse. Meanwhile, anti-Thatcherite sentiment generated a shared sense of political purpose amongst those on the left. Barbara Orton, for example, grew up in Tyneside. After studying English at university, she worked in an adventure playground in Washington New Town, before moving to Edinburgh in the late 1970s. Orton worked as an arts worker for a local resident's association in Pilton, Edinburgh, until 1988, when she took up a role organising the communities programme for Glasgow City of Culture in 1990. Expressing her motivations in terms of class antagonism, she states that:

the great and the good, or the powerful people don't think you're worthy of [equal resources]. Or, don't want you to have it. Or whatever their reason is. It was not equal. And I did not think it was fair that people were left in damp houses, without any facilities, and that that was somehow alright. Because it wasn't. Because it was a waste of human potential. And it was, especially for young kids, it's not their fault that they're born in that circumstance. So that's what motivated me. Big time.¹⁴⁵

Orton's interest in community arts was driven by a deep-seated sense of the unfairness of the class system, and the limitations it placed on people's aspirations and life chances.

Those who, like Orton, had grown up in a slightly later era were less likely to invoke the cultural shifts of the 1960s in any discussion of the beginnings of the movement. The way in which community artists active during this decade represented the origins of community art may reflect the geographical bias of the interview cohort. Many of those interviewed who became involved in community arts during the latter half of the 1970s had grown up in Glasgow. Unlike Edinburgh, where the annual Edinburgh Festivals made experimental strands of art, drama and music perceptible - if not necessarily accessible - to many, there had been never been quite as visible an outpouring of countercultural artistic activity in Glasgow.¹⁴⁶ For the most part, Glaswegian culture of the 1970s and 1980s made heavy reference to the city's working-class industrial heritage, and the most obvious antecedents of community art tended to be more strictly confined to older cultures of socialist or popular theatre and drama.

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Barbara Orton (15 October 2015).

¹⁴⁶ Although see: Angela Bartie, 'EXPLORER: Into the Sixties with Tom McGrath', in Bell and Gunn (eds.), *The Scottish Sixties*, pp.47-67.

Alastair McCallum, a graduate of Glasgow School of Art, helped set up Cranhill Arts Project in 1981. McCallum grew up in Glasgow in the 1970s, during which time the city was undergoing the painful process of deindustrialisation: it is perhaps in part for this reason that his leftist politics were more overt than those of the earlier generation. At the time, McCallum was part of a broad community of left-wing Glaswegians involved in the trade union movement and the CND (which received a new impetus in 1980 when the Thatcher government announced plans to introduce the Trident nuclear programme). This (informal) coalition saw culture as one way of fighting for a more democratic and pluralistic society:

the STUC (Scottish Trades Union Congress) at that point were starting a whole lot of things...I suppose it came out of the peace movement, and then, a big thing about civil society [...] So I'd been active doing banners and things to do with CND, that new impetus with CND with Cruise [missile] and everything. And my mother was a trade unionist, and my sisters, and...y'know, I come from an active political background like loads of other Glaswegians. I suppose being a Glaswegian I knew loads of people from my background that were involved in that.¹⁴⁷

For McCallum, growing up in a city with a rich socialist heritage, it seemed only natural to adopt a political mind-set: he presented his political views as an innate part of both his upbringing and his identity as a Glaswegian. McCallum quickly found that art school brought him into contact with other like-minded, politically-committed individuals:

You go to art school, you don't want to leave that behind - you want to actively be engaged in it. And I suppose there was loads of other people at art school at that time looking to be more socially [active]. Everybody knew each other and lots of the artists were from a working-class background,

¹⁴⁷ Interview with Alastair McCallum (27 January 2016).

so...there certainly was a cultural, discernible thing...I mean, there was a whole lot of things came together in the city at the time.¹⁴⁸

By the 1980s, the sense of alienation from centralised political structures had reached new heights in cities like Glasgow, which voted Labour but saw the Conservatives returned to power in general election after general election.¹⁴⁹ In this context, the need to fight for socialism on a cultural front was given a renewed imperative. Glasgow was also experiencing something of a cultural renaissance, and its contemporary arts and music scenes were fast gaining international recognition.¹⁵⁰ Left-wing politics were a key part of this scene. Building on the success of the Third Eye Centre, a number of new galleries and collectives were established in Glasgow during the 1980s, such as Transmission, which opened its doors in 1985 and retained a commitment to ‘the exhibition and promotion of contemporary art and the integration of art into community life’.¹⁵¹ This made Glasgow, in McCallum’s words ‘a pretty interesting place to be’, one where art and politics were difficult to separate.

2.7 Community Action and Community Development

As we have seen, many practitioners came to community arts via youth work or education, and it is notable how frequently their narratives revolve around young people. A number of recent studies have highlighted the way in which social democratic values and models of citizenship found their purest form of expression

¹⁴⁸ Interview, McCallum (2016)

¹⁴⁹ The Conservatives won general elections in 1979, 1983, 1987 and 1992.

¹⁵⁰ For an overview of the Glasgow art scene see: Lowndes, *Social Sculpture*.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, p.67, p.80.

through the discursive figure of the child.¹⁵² As these studies show, the Second World War encouraged a more protective and paternalistic attitude towards young people, but also a new willingness to understand the child as a subject in their own right, one whose opinions, experiences and feelings must be taken into account.¹⁵³ After the war, the child came to embody hopes for the future of the newly reconstructed social democratic society. From the Butler Education Act of 1944, which raised the school leaving age to 15, to the Children Act of 1948, which endowed children with such emotional rights as the right to a loving family environment, the period also witnessed what amounted to an extension of citizenship to the child.¹⁵⁴ For those community artists interviewed, the failure of state and society to provide for children or give them the equal start in life served as a litmus test for wider concerns about the perpetuation of poverty and social inequalities. Community artists understood themselves as playing a role in securing social democracy and making real the social and political rights of citizenship: as the post-war consensus began to break down towards the latter half of the 1970s, and older discourses of citizenship based on the notion of shared rights and responsibilities were reshaped along more individualistic, market-oriented lines, this agenda gained a new imperative.

¹⁵² Roy Kozlovsky, *The Architectures of Childhood: Children, Modern Architecture and Reconstruction in Postwar England* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2013), pp.1-2; Thomson, *Lost Freedom*; Louise Jackson with Angela Bartie, *Policing Youth: Britain, 1945–70* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014).

¹⁵³ Thomson, *Lost Freedom*, p.185.

¹⁵⁴ Kozlovsky, *The Architectures of Childhood*, p.2, p.57.

The history of welfare and social policy is often overlooked in discussions of community art.¹⁵⁵ Yet community art was bound up with urban policy from its very earliest days, drawing down money from urban funding streams (such as Urban Aid, Manpower Services and the Youth Opportunities Programme) as frequently as from bodies more narrowly concerned with the arts, such as the SAC.¹⁵⁶ From popular education to the playschool movement, throughout the 1970s and 1980s activists were deeply concerned with forging new, more participatory approaches to community life and decision-making. Like these various movements, community art emerged as both a reaction against prevailing urban social conditions, and a means by which to fight to improve them. However, activists were not the only ones who recognised that there remained significant defects within the welfare state settlement. Despite its oppositional veneer, community-based work (or community development, as certain strands of community work came to be known) was driven as much by the state as by grassroots activists.¹⁵⁷ By the late 1960s, it was clear that the welfare state had not necessarily secured a better life for all. Additionally, the expansion of state services after the war had ensured that local government had become increasingly large and bureaucratic. One upshot of this was that it appeared

¹⁵⁵ Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, p.137.

¹⁵⁶ Although subject to its own legislation, for the most part, urban policy in Scotland largely mirrored that of the wider British state. Individual programmes and schemes are discussed in later chapters.

¹⁵⁷ Shaw and Martin distinguish between community development (usually an instrument of state policy) and community work (more concerned with developing people's capacity to play an active and questioning role in politics). As we shall see, the line between the two was often blurred in terms of how community development workers/ community artists conceived of their work. See: Mae Shaw and Ian Martin, 'Community Work, Citizenship and Democracy: Re-making the Connections', *Community Development Journal*, 35: 4 (2000), pp.401–413.

to divert decision making away from localities, encouraging a sense of alienation from the policy-making process - to the extent that by the late 1960s, Britain was experiencing what Peter Hain has called 'a crisis of representative democracy'.¹⁵⁸ In Scotland, this problem was compounded by the reorganisation of the Scottish system of local government in 1975, which created a two-tier system of regional bodies and smaller district councils. Caught between the need to be 'democratic' (and therefore, in the eyes of voters, legitimate) and the need to be 'efficient', local authorities began to look to community work as a useful way of dealing with the alienating effects of political centralisation.¹⁵⁹ Community development, it was hoped, would help dissipate the possibility of social unrest by encouraging communities to seek out a more participatory role in planning and public policy - undermining the idea that demands for such influence always percolate from the grassroots up.¹⁶⁰ In this context community workers - including community artists - became a useful buffer, mediating between the neighbourhood and the state.¹⁶¹

From 1968 onwards, the number of community workers employed by state and voluntary agencies rose sharply.¹⁶² Papers such as the Gulbenkian and the Seebholm Reports (both published in 1968) were influential in this regard.¹⁶³ Whilst

¹⁵⁸ Peter Hain, 'The Nationalisation of Public Participation', *Community Development Journal*, 17:1 (1982), pp.36-40.

¹⁵⁹ Barr, *Practising Community Development*, p.118.

¹⁶⁰ Hain, 'Public Participation'; Barnes, 'Users as Citizens', pp.73-90; Cynthia Cockburn, *The Local State: Management of Cities and People* (London: Pluto, 1977), p.101, p.121.

¹⁶¹ Cockburn, *The Local State*, p.102.

¹⁶² Baldock, 'Why Community Action?'

¹⁶³ The Gulbenkian Foundation is a Portuguese charitable institution which has supported education, social welfare and arts initiatives in the UK since 1956: Hewison and Holden, *Experience and Experiment*, p.9.

the Gulbenkian Report promoted community work as a means of combating apathy and alienation, giving life to local democracy, the Seebholm Report, which initiated the overhaul of local authority social service provision, proposed a greater deployment of community development techniques within newly formed local authority social work departments. Although Seebholm was concerned only with England and Wales, the Social Work (Scotland) Act, passed a month later, was based on similar principles. By the 1970s, community development workers employed by local authorities could be found in poorer communities across Scotland, and in 1975, Strathclyde Regional Council adopted community development as a central plank of its anti-deprivation strategy.¹⁶⁴

Community development began to emerge as a recognisable profession during the 1950s, though its roots can be traced back to the philanthropic and charitable organisations of the Victorian period. The more immediate origins of the British community development movement lie overseas. After 1945, the British Empire was rapidly dismantled. As former colonies moved towards independence and self-government, community development workers were called upon to promote economic development and educate former colonial populations in the ways and means of democratic citizenship. Despite its progressive rhetoric, the practice was ‘as much a means of controlling local populations as liberating them’, ensuring that newly emancipated colonies remained willing and able to trade with their former rulers.¹⁶⁵ After the war, the implementation of the welfare state, the construction of

¹⁶⁴ See Chapters Four and Six.

¹⁶⁵ Craig and Mayo, *Community Development*, p.3.

New Towns and housing estates, and a renewed emphasis on the virtues of civic society provided community development workers with a new domestic context in which to work. By the late 1960s, it was clear that urban problems were growing more acute, giving community development a renewed purpose: managing the tensions that inevitably arose as the contradictions inherent in welfare capitalism began to be exposed.¹⁶⁶ Meanwhile, in the United States, the Johnson administration's Community Action Programme – introduced in 1964 in the wake of a more general push towards improving civil rights - was seeking to give poor and minority populations in American cities a greater say in how federal funds should be spent.¹⁶⁷ Although the success or otherwise of the programme remains a subject of debate, it served to encourage central government in Britain to initiate community development policies as part of its own urban renewal strategies.

Chief amongst these was the Community Development Programme (CDP), which was launched by Harold Wilson's Labour government in July 1969 and was to have a lasting impact on debates about community work. Following on the heels of the Urban Aid Programme, launched in May 1968 and which provided central government support for local authorities dealing with areas of what came to be known as 'urban deprivation', the CDP was sponsored by the Home Office and led to the establishment of twelve local projects, each based in an area of social deprivation and designed to promote democratic participation and aid local

¹⁶⁶ Shaw and Martin, 'Community Work'.

¹⁶⁷ Martin Loney, *Community Against Government: The British Community Development Project, 1968-78* (London: Heinemann, 1983), p.27.

community organisation.¹⁶⁸ Government concern with generating greater efficiency in welfare provision also made a programme such as this, which promised to encourage self-help, reduce pressure on statutory services, and make services more responsive to local needs, particularly appealing.¹⁶⁹ Effectively, by the late 1960s, government required new ways of shoring up the post-war consensus, and targeted community development initiatives which did not require any radical restructuring of the economy or the social order appealed to government as a cost-effective way to secure this aim.¹⁷⁰

What those who designed the programme did not anticipate was that the CDP would evolve into a radical structural critique of Britain's urban problems and which would assert the ongoing relevance of class analysis and class struggle. Those who had designed the CDP had premised the project on the idea that the poor were a residual group who existed only in some few remaining 'blackspots', trapped in a 'cycle of deprivation'.¹⁷¹ Through a series of reports published by the National CDP Information and Intelligence Unit, CDP workers rejected this behavioural or social pathological understanding of poverty, which effectively blamed the poor for the circumstances in which they found themselves, and argued instead that it was the wider economic system which was to blame.¹⁷² The authors of the CDP reports were not alone in their critique. During the 1970s, an influential body of work

¹⁶⁸ Loney, *Community Against Government*, p.2; only one of these projects, Ferguslie Park CDP, was based in Scotland.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p.3.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p.41.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid*, p.49.

¹⁷² *Ibid*, p.1; examples of the literature are discussed in Chapter One, p.28.

emerged which developed a structural analysis of urban poverty. Its authors argued that urban problems were the result of industrial disinvestment, high unemployment and a neglect of public services – not an unwillingness of working-class people to take responsibility for their own lives.¹⁷³ Typically, CDPs were based in areas where the industrial base had declined, leading to social problems that could never be resolved through community-based initiatives alone. The key, then, was to encourage alignment between communities, and between community organisations and organised labour.¹⁷⁴ In practice, of course, this was difficult to achieve, and many community workers were uneasy with a critique which seemed to undermine the entire rationale of community work and dismiss the small gains it had made for communities. This was because it implied a level of coercive intent in social policy making which may not have existed in reality, and which at times seemed to recast working-class people as passive victims of policy.¹⁷⁵ Others saw work at a community level as a positive stepping stone towards wider changes. Although the CDP was wound up in 1978, area-based approaches to urban policy continued, and ambivalent relations to state funding bodies, and their policy agendas, and their understandings of the roots of (and solutions to) localised problems remained a constant source of tension within all types of community-based work - including community art - throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

¹⁷³ Loney, *Community Against Government*, p.131.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p.133.

¹⁷⁵ Sarah Banks and Mick Carpenter, 'Researching the Local Politics and Practices of Radical Community Development Projects in 1970s Britain', *Community Development Journal*, 52:2 (2017), pp.226–246; Loney, *Community Against Government*, p.40; Shaw and Martin, 'Community Work'.

Like community artists, community development workers were concerned with helping or mobilising disadvantaged people at the community level, and it is not surprising to find that there was much overlap between the two fields. Indeed, some community arts workers trained as community development workers. As Barbara Orton, who undertook a postgraduate degree in community development at the Moray House School of Education, recalled:

I struggled joining the Labour Party, I was not party political, but I came from the position of radical community work, and you didn't do the council's job for them, your loyalty was to the community employing you, to help them represent their voice better, through any means possible. This is why I liked the arts, because it was fun, it was creative, you could have a laugh, and I just believe that that's the best way. Rather than whinging. Or shouting. You could speak in more powerful ways through the arts. But we did do our fair share of shouting as well [laughs].¹⁷⁶

As discussed in Chapter Six, there were many different approaches to community development, ranging from the largely a-theoretical to the socialist or Marxist. Framing her work within the radical tradition of the CDPs, Orton asserted that improving conditions in working-class communities was not simply a matter of teaching people how to access resources that were already available. Instead, she saw antagonism and conflict as necessary if communities were to obtain the resources to which she believed they had a right, but which would otherwise be withheld. Referring to herself as a 'community arts development worker', Orton saw community arts as a particularly effective and constructive *form* of community

¹⁷⁶ Interview, Orton (2015).

development, capable of circumventing the bureaucracy of party politics and energising people to engage in direct political action.¹⁷⁷

In a paper on community arts drawn up for the SAC in 1975, Tom McGrath made a similar case for the arts as a form of ‘social activation’.¹⁷⁸ According to McGrath, the ‘social activator’ ‘might be anyone – a church minister, a youth worker, an anarchist, even an artist’ - effectively, someone ‘committed to a particular community and to a method of approach – direct action at the ground level’.¹⁷⁹ For McGrath, the problems communities suffered from largely resulted from the fact that:

People, particularly working-class people, experience little control over the most important aspects of their immediate living conditions. Decisions are made in an impersonal way by local authorities and are then communicated to the people they affect with an air of anonymity.¹⁸⁰

In these circumstances, community arts were an important source of activation, because they brought people together; provided a way of presenting community problems both to the community and the relevant authorities; taught people the power of joint action; assuaged the problems of boredom and loneliness; and helped individuals ‘become articulate and recover their ability to act’.¹⁸¹ As both Orton and McGrath suggest, art or creativity formed one of a series of available methodologies

¹⁷⁷ Interview, Orton (2015).

¹⁷⁸ CCA, TE1/6/14, McGrath, *Notes on Community Arts*.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

which might constructively be deployed to effect social or political change at a local level.

Yet, working at the juncture between the community and the local state, it was not uncommon for community artists to find themselves in a contradictory position, trying to mediate the complex or sometimes conflicting interests they were expected to represent.¹⁸² Community development was always a broad church, its purpose ambiguous in nature, and its discourses of ‘democratisation’ and ‘participation’ open to interpretation by individual practitioners.¹⁸³ This allowed it to remain relevant despite shifts over time in social and economic conditions, political agendas, and the tenor of urban policy. Similarly, community arts developed in tandem with changes to the welfare state and attitudes towards it. Although community art was from its beginnings concerned with the struggle to extend democracy and promote more inclusive forms of citizenship, there were undoubtedly instances where it served the agendas of funders as much as neighbourhood or grassroots movements. How community artists have responded to changing policy contexts, in which the assumed role of the arts in society has been significantly reoriented and redefined, will be examined over the course of subsequent chapters.

¹⁸² Banks and Carpenter, ‘Radical Community Development Projects’.

¹⁸³ Craig and Mayo (eds.), *Community Development*, p.7; Shaw, ‘Gilding the Ghetto’.

Chapter Three: The Craigmillar Festival Society (1962-1979)

Since the late 1960s, urban policy has been deeply concerned with what would now be termed the ‘regeneration’ of urban areas. But current regeneration policy builds on a much longer process of urban renewal which began with the slum clearance programmes of the inter- and post-war period and which saw large numbers of predominantly working-class residents relocated to new public housing schemes. The process of urban change gained further impetus with the arrival of the welfare state, which initiated the construction of a wave of new buildings – schools and hospitals, high-rises, estates and new towns – representing state intervention in the built environment on an unprecedented scale.¹ In the immediate post-war period, building was not simply a material concern. The architects of the welfare state consciously used the process of post-war reconstruction to secure social as well as physical change, approaching the built environment as a mechanism through which the social democratic aims of collectivism, economic redistribution and universal welfare might be realised.² However, these visions, although conceived in the spirit of post-war optimism, were largely the product of a technocratic approach to urban planning which valued the expertise of architects, planners and economists over the lived experience of those who occupied council housing or used welfare services. Within only a few years of their construction, it was becoming clear that many

¹ Tom Avermaete, Mark Swenarton and Dirk van der Heuvel (eds.), *Architecture and the Welfare State* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2014), p.2.

² Alison Ravetz, *Council Housing and Culture: The History of a Social Experiment* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), p.4; Glen O’Hara, ‘Social Democratic Space: The Politics of Building in ‘Golden Age’ Britain, c.1950–1973’, *Architectural Research Quarterly*, 10:3-4 (2006), pp.285-290.

housing estates were proving less than ideal places to live. By the late 1960s, dissatisfaction with urban conditions began to give rise to new forms of community-based activism concerned with confronting the issues residents faced in direct and creative ways.

Despite the centrality of the housing estate to a great deal of twentieth-century working-class history and culture, it is a subject which has been unduly neglected by historians.³ Although the modernist architecture of the time has recently undergone something of a critical reappraisal, there has been little attempt to examine the role played by the built environment in shaping peoples' everyday lives and experiences.⁴ This oversight is all the more curious given that in Scotland there were points where more than half of the population lived in public housing.⁵ As Ravetz reminds us: 'Council housing...was arguably more significant for many lives than employment or trade unionism which have mainly monopolised attention. It was particularly crucial for the history of working-class women, in their domestic role, and so by extension to children'.⁶ A lack of nuanced studies capturing the

³ See, for a partial account, chapters in: Lynn Abrams and Callum Brown (eds.), *A History of Everyday Life in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010).

⁴ Sarah Glynn (ed.), *Where the Other Half Lives: Lower Income Housing in Neoliberal World* (London: Pluto Press, 2009), p.27; on what Hatherley calls 'socialist Modernism', see: Owen Hatherley, *Militant Modernism* (London: Zero, 2009); researchers at the University of Glasgow have recently completed a Leverhulme funded research project – 'Housing, everyday life and wellbeing over the long term in Glasgow c.1950–1975' – which examines the personal views of social housing residents.

⁵ In the late 1960s, around 53% of housing in Scotland was publicly owned, compared with 30% for the UK as a whole: Michael Keating, *The City that Refused to Die: Glasgow - The Politics of Urban Regeneration* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988), p.115.

⁶ Ravetz, *Council Housing*, p.6.

varied experiences, complexities and contradictions of estate life has ensured that public perceptions of council housing have been heavily shaped by media representations. These (often unfavourable) accounts have tended to focus on environmental markers of social atomisation or deprivation, such as vandalism, litter, or boarded-up windows.⁷ If, by the late 1960s, these had (in some areas at least) become prominent features of the urban environment, the attention they have received has tended to over-shadow the many positive and constructive ways in which people responded to the spaces in which they lived.

Community art was one such response. At a time when the welfare state is being rapidly dismantled, it is easy to look back to the post-war era with nostalgia. However, such nostalgia tends to overlook the extent to which the welfare state, as a political project, was the outcome of a complex and ongoing set of negotiations between government and local communities.⁸ In addition to offering people strategies for reshaping, personalising and humanising their environment, art, music and drama could also serve as an explicit criticism of local government's failure to deliver on the promises and unmet expectations of the post-war welfare state settlement. These strategies encompassed everything from the addition of murals or sculptures to public places, to attempts to reclaim public space for festivals, drama and music, through to battles over promised amenities which failed to materialise. In areas where housing and other services were owned almost exclusively by the council, these responses can be read as a form of spatial

⁷ Brent, *Searching for Community*, pp.76-77.

⁸ Avermaete et al., *Architecture and the Welfare State*, p.1.

negotiation or confrontation, however small or commonplace, between people and power.

This chapter examines the activities of Scotland's earliest community arts group - the Craigmillar Festival Society - between 1962 and 1979, as a way of exploring how the dynamics of welfare provision and urban renewal played out at a local level. It approaches the activities of the Festival Society as a form of community action, highlighting the roles played by local people, community artists, and sympathetic professionals. Paying attention to the ways people used public spaces as a location for art, festivity and creative interventions, it looks in turn at how the struggle to obtain artistic provision for young people developed into a wider political struggle and programme for action; the relationship between creativity, community planning, and attempts to 'renew' the area; and the alternative visions of community and welfare, based on notions of care, social bonds and local expertise, that the arts allowed Craigmillar residents to articulate. Effectively, the Festival Society represented a desire on behalf of Craigmillar residents to enact the ideals of social democratic citizenship. In theory at least, the post-war welfare state was built on the principles of universalism and egalitarianism: as this chapter concludes, however, poorer communities were always under pressure to demonstrate that they were as 'worthy' as their better-off neighbours of sharing in the dividends of post-war society. In this context, community arts played a contradictory role, facilitating emancipatory politics, but also bolstering those forms of active citizenship and public participation deemed appropriately 'constructive' by local government and policy makers.

3.1 The Craigmillar Festival Society

Craigmillar is an area of inter and post-war public housing established on the south-eastern outskirts of Edinburgh in the 1930s. It was built following the Wheatley Housing Act of 1924, which made subsidies available to local authorities to re-house families displaced by inner-city slum clearance programmes, with further houses added after the Second World War. Despite its grand setting at the foot of the historic Craigmillar Castle, the estate lacked essential amenities and its houses were not looked after sufficiently by the authorities.⁹ In 1968, one local newspaper went so far as to state that ‘if ever there was an area in Edinburgh so seemingly ill-suited to the artistic clime it is this grey, much maligned conglomerate of box-like buildings at the eastern end of the city’, whilst a profile appearing in *The Scotsman* in 1969 declared that ‘[i]f an area’s problems...were the criteria for the provision of local amenities, then Craigmillar would have topped the list long ago’.¹⁰ Although the area had once boasted seven breweries, a mining pit and a margarine factory, most of these had closed by the late 1960s - by which point the area housed around 25,000 people and was considered one of the worst areas of ‘multiple-deprivation’ in the city.¹¹

In 1962, the Peffermill Mothers Group, led by a local resident, Helen Crummy (see Figure 3.2, p.110), set up the Craigmillar Festival Committee, and on the 29th of

⁹ Crummy, *Let the People Sing!*, p.21; Cliff Hague, ‘Housing Problems and Policies in Edinburgh’, Unpublished Course Notes (Edinburgh: The Open University, 1977) – the 1971 Census revealed that nearly 24% of Craigmillar residents were living in overcrowded conditions.

¹⁰ Edinburgh Central Library (hereafter ECL), Helen Crummy Archive (hereafter HCA), Newspaper Cutting, 7 June 1968; *The Scotsman*, 9 May 1969.

¹¹ Crummy, *Let the People Sing!*, p.67; Hague, ‘Housing Problems’.

October 1964, the first Craigmillar Festival of Music, Art and Drama was opened by local Labour Party councillor Jack Kane. The festival ran for two days and featured, amongst other things, a production of the musical *Oklahoma*, the Peffermill Ladies Choir, dancing, gymnastics, an art exhibition and even a pensioner's percussion band.¹² The festival quickly became an annual event, and by 1970, the group had gained charitable status and renamed itself the Craigmillar Festival Society.¹³ Unlike many later community arts projects, the organisation was very much a grassroots initiative, run by local activists rather than professional artists.

The idea for the first festival arose out of Crummy's frustration that her son's school was unwilling to give him the chance to learn the violin, despite a long tradition of working-class musical culture in the area. Crummy was angered that in the very city that hosted the annual Edinburgh International Festival, working-class children had almost no access to cultural amenities and were told that such access would only raise their hopes and aspirations beyond that which society was able to provide for them. As Crummy later recalled: '[a] great surge of anger welled up inside me...not only was my own father a fiddler, many friends and neighbours were accomplished musicians and singers, while scores more appreciated good music'.¹⁴

¹² Crummy, *Let the People Sing!*, p.46.

¹³ The Festival was active until 2002, although Helen Crummy retired in 1986. This chapter looks at the activities of the Festival Society up to and including the year 1979, the year the European Economic Community grant (discussed below pp.107-108) ended.

¹⁴ Crummy, *Let the People Sing*, p.40.

Determined to prove that working-class people were as ‘cultured’ as anyone else, Crummy decided an annual people’s festival:

would not only provide a shop window for the talents within the area, it could give the children a sense of their own history, traditions and culture, a sense of belonging and pride in their own environment. It could also help combat what was regarded as an unfair bad image given by the Press to Craigmillar as an area.¹⁵

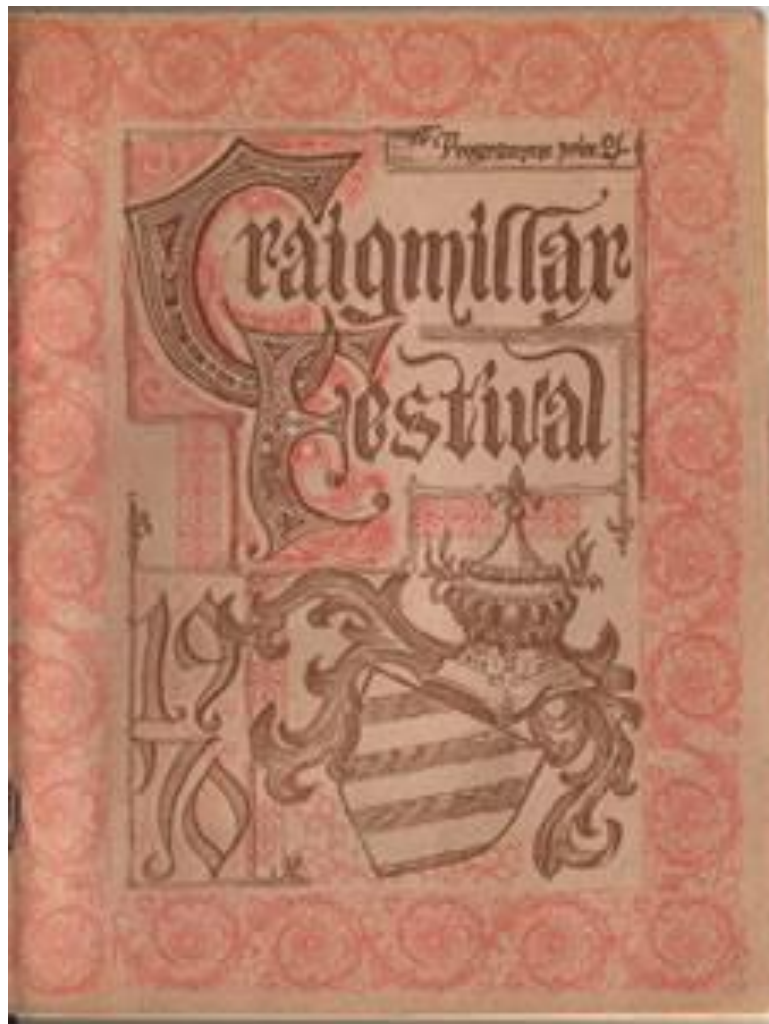


Figure 3.1 Craigmillar Festival Programme, 1970 [Courtesy of Andrew Crummy].

¹⁵ Craigmillar Festival Society (hereafter CFS), *The Gentle Giant Who Shares and Cares: Craigmillar’s Comprehensive Plan for Action* (Edinburgh: Craigmillar Festival Society, 1978).

Although it began as a cultural project, the Festival Society soon recognised that collective action had the potential to impact on a wide range of problems facing the area. Over time, the Festival Society managed to exert considerable control over the provision of local social and cultural services. By 1976, it was running 57 neighbourhood projects and employing 200 full-time and 500 part-time staff.¹⁶ Projects encompassed art, filmmaking and drama, but also play schemes, housing rehabilitation, environmental improvements, youth work, employment schemes and social work. Over the years, the Festival Society obtained small pots of funding from various sources, including the SAC and the Gulbenkian Foundation.¹⁷ However, most of the Festival Society's funds came from sources not strictly concerned with the arts. In 1970, the organisation was awarded an Urban Aid Grant of £3000 to fund a five-year experiment in 'community self-help'. The money was used to fund a neighbourhood workers scheme, the first of its kind in the UK.¹⁸ The five appointed workers, all local residents, dealt with referrals for everything from housing transfers, maintenance, rent arrears and evictions, to delinquency, court appearances, pregnancies, alcoholism and attempted suicide. In 1972, Edinburgh's newly elected Labour council announced that a 'Pilot Scheme' was to be set up in Craigmillar to 'improve amenities, restore community life and encourage self-help

¹⁶ David Harding, 'Cultural Democracy Craigmillar Style' in *Arts: The Catalyst Craigmillar* (Edinburgh: Craigmillar Communiversity Press, 2004), p.30.

¹⁷ In 1971, for example, the SAC's music committee awarded a guarantee against loss of £400 for the annual festival: NAS, ED 61/93, *25th Meeting of the Music Committee*, (25 March 1971); by 1978/79 this had risen to a grant of £2,800 per annum: NAS, ED61/51, *Comments on Accounts for the Year to 31 March 1978*.

¹⁸ Crummy, *Let the People Sing!*, p.80.

projects'.¹⁹ After the Festival Society put forward their own proposals, demanding that the scheme be run from the grassroots, a grant of £5000 was awarded to extend the life of the neighbourhood workers scheme, with a further £20,000 made available to cover staffing costs and provide a funding pot for projects initiated by residents.²⁰ One product of the Pilot Scheme was a series of monthly planning workshops, set up to 'allow Craigmillar residents to discuss the physical and social developments in the area' and debate local authority proposals.²¹ Aware that many people were ignorant of their rights or the resources available to them, the organisation was also determined to share information about its work. In 1970, it began to publish a monthly news sheet, the *Craigmillar Festival News*, which was posted through every letterbox in the ward.²² In 1974, the Festival Society produced a pocket-sized *Guide to Craigmillar* listing all social and community work services available locally.²³ And in the mid-1970s, an Information and Advice Centre was established for residents and was soon dealing with over 300 enquires a month.²⁴

With the reorganisation of Scottish local government in 1975, the Festival Society discovered that the money for the Pilot Scheme would not be renewed. Taking matters into its own hands, in 1976, it bypassed the newly-formed Lothian Regional Council completely to secure a poverty research grant of £750,000 directly from the European Economic Community (EEC) – a major coup for a grassroots

¹⁹ ECL, HCA, *People in Partnership: The Report of the Craigmillar Festival Society 1973/4*, (1974).

²⁰ Crummy, *Let the People Sing!*, p.122.

²¹ ECL, HCA, *People in Partnership*.

²² Crummy, *Let the People Sing!*, p.16.

²³ *Ibid*, p.89.

²⁴ *Ibid*, p.87.

organisation.²⁵ The EEC money was awarded on the basis that it would be used to fund what was known at the time as ‘action research’, offering the Festival Society an unusual degree of freedom to experiment with novel tactics and solutions. The grant also put the organisation in the position to employ professionals to help implement its arts and planning agendas. Crucially, these professionals served in an advisory and organisational role, with local people retaining full control over the direction of the programme. In 1978, on the basis of its research, the Festival Society drafted a *Comprehensive Plan for Action* which laid down 400 recommendations on how to improve life in the local area. The document was later submitted to the Edinburgh District Council (EDC) Planning Committee, although, as we shall see, not all its proposals were taken forward.

3.2 Community Action

Craigmillar was not the only area to witness an upsurge of community action during the 1960s. Although much had improved since the war, it was increasingly apparent that the welfare state had not achieved all that it set out to in terms of social wellbeing.²⁶ Meanwhile, the bureaucratic nature of the welfare system made it difficult for many to access resources to which they were entitled.²⁷ By the late 1960s, it was clear that significant changes to the ways in which the welfare state

²⁵ The EEC launched the pilot scheme of studies to combat poverty in 1975, known colloquially as the ‘Poverty Programmes’: Kenneth A. Armstrong, *Governing Social Inclusion: Europeanization Through Policy Coordination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p.17.

²⁶ Baldock, ‘Why Community Action?’.

²⁷ The period saw an upsurge in claimants’ unions, designed to help people access their rights – see: Hilary Rose, ‘Up Against The Welfare State: The Claimant Unions’, *The Socialist Register*, 10 (1973), pp.179-203.

was managed and implemented were required.²⁸ Helen Crummy herself underlined the disparity between the rhetoric of the ‘affluent society’ and many people’s lived reality when she suggested that ‘[i]t might have been the “swinging sixties” and the “Never Had It So Good” years for some, but in Craigmillar unemployment was fast becoming a major problem’.²⁹ In contrast to the optimistic mood of the immediate post-war period, the sixties were marked by the so-called ‘rediscovery of poverty’. Studies such as Richard Titmuss’ *Income Distribution and Social Change* (1962) highlighted on-going disparities in income distribution and undermined the complacent assumption that the solutions to the problem of poverty had been found, whilst Abel-Smith and Townsend’s *The Poor and the Poorest* (1965) estimated that as many as 7.5 million people were still living in poverty in Britain in the mid-1960s.³⁰ Those living in areas like Craigmillar did not have to be familiar with the work of Townsend or Titmuss to know that technocratic planning had failed to fully eradicate the inequalities in society. For Crummy, this was never more apparent than during the annual Edinburgh International Festival:

[b]y the 1970s, many [local houses] were boarded up and empty, with children sitting in the streets or sitting in the gutters among the broken glass and litter. During the three weeks when the city feasts and makes merry, out

²⁸ Baldock, ‘Why Community Action?’.

²⁹ Crummy, *Let the People Sing!*, p.58.

³⁰ Richard Titmuss, *Income Distribution and Social Change: A Study in Criticism* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1962); Brian Abel-Smith and Peter Townsend, *The Poor and the Poorest: A New Analysis of the Ministry of Labour’s Family Expenditure Surveys of 1953-54 and 1960* (London: Bell and Sons, 1975), p.59 - many organisations established to raise awareness of poverty were set up in these years, including Shelter (1965) and the Child Poverty Action Group (1965).

in the housing estates litter would pile up as manpower was diverted to keep the city streets clean for visitors.³¹



Figure 3.2 Helen Crummy, pictured at Craigmillar Castle, 1974 [© The Scotsman Publications Ltd. Licensor www.scran.ac.uk].

Despite ‘years of promises’, by the 1960s, Craigmillar, now the size of a small town, still lacked a library, a sixth-year school, a community centre, nursery provision and meaningful new employment opportunities.³² Invoking the idea that access to welfare services and amenities should not be a mere ideal, but a right, by 1967 the

³¹ Crummy, *Let the People Sing!*, p.20.

³² *Ibid*, p.49.

Festival Society 'had decided the time had come to take up the cudgels and fight to get our just deserts. We wanted no more. Just our fair share of the city cake our rates helped provide'.³³

Despite this emphasis on material rights, throughout the literature produced by the Festival Society poverty was clearly understood as something more than a lack of resources or adequate income; it was also to be 'classed as of little or no value to society, and as such, [to have] one's own capacity for self-fulfilment crippled from birth'.³⁴ This scenario was one with which Crummy was herself familiar. Born in 1920 in inner-city Edinburgh, her family moved to Craigmillar soon after the estate opened. After serving as in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) during the war, Crummy returned to Craigmillar, where she lived with her husband and three sons. As we have seen, Crummy was first motivated to start a festival after her son was denied music lessons, an incident which epitomised for her the way working-class residents continued to be disdained, despite the apparently egalitarian ethos of the post-war era. That there had been so much talk of change as the war came to an end made this discovery all the more galling. Recalling her days in the WAAF, Crummy captured some of the hope once invested in the prospect of universal welfare:

All we lived for and talked about was the day the war would be over and we would go home. Late into the night we would talk politics, dreaming of the day we would build the new Jerusalem and give our children the things we never had – access to a good education, good health and a nice house.³⁵

³³ Crummy, *Let the People Sing!*, p.49.

³⁴ *Ibid*, p.10.

³⁵ *Ibid*, p.37.

The Festival Society also grew out of a personal dissatisfaction felt by Crummy and other working-class women in the area that their capabilities were not being put to effective use. As Rosie Gibson, reflecting on why community art and community campaigning flourished in the late 1960s and 1970s in Craigmillar, suggested:

What's *thinkable* might have come from the war and post-war optimism...And then the anger. Because Helen's brother had been a fiddler as well, so it was...the anger at the loss? Or the assumption that things'll always get better. So there's Helen with her brother and she's 19 and...they're just thinking the world...they're kind of alive with possibility, and agency. And then she wakens up with three kids, and she's been through the war and there's all that optimism and she wakens up and a teacher says it's hard enough for her kid to learn the three 'R's, [let alone] waste their time on music. And just that *rage* of...how did we end up here?!³⁶

As Gibson touches upon here, where a personal lack of self-fulfilment or sense of agency met with a wider frustration that came with seeing the possibility of a better society closed down after the war, it created the impetus for forms of social action which strove to make good on the promises of the post-war period and challenge the idea that working-class communities were in some way less active, capable or deserving than their middle-class counterparts.

The rebirth of community-based protest in the late 1960s was also motivated by a belief that traditional channels of political representation were unwilling or unable to take on the issues with which community groups were concerned.³⁷ As the quality of local services declined, residents of 'deprived' areas increasingly questioned the extent to which the Labour Party – which had been in power since

³⁶ Interview, Gibson (2015).

³⁷ Su Braden, *Committing Photography* (London: Pluto Press, 1983), p.66.

1964 – truly represented their interests.³⁸ A one-time secretary of the local ward Labour Party, Crummy noted that many in the party ‘did not hide the fact they thought the festival a frivolous diversion from the serious campaigns being waged to improve the quality of life in Craigmillar’, an attitude which exemplified a longstanding, somewhat puritanical belief that art and culture should take a back seat to the ‘real’ business of politics.³⁹ Sensing that party politics would not fully deliver, many turned to more direct, anti-hierarchical and participatory methods of community action.



Figure 3.3 The Emancipation of Women, Craigmillar Festival 1968 [© The Scotsman Publications Ltd. Licensor www.scran.ac.uk]

³⁸ Loney, *Community Against Government*, p.21; Rose, ‘Claimant Unions’.

³⁹ Crummy, *Let the People Sing!*, p.47.

Despite its Labour Party connections – Crummy remained a close family friend of Jack Kane, who became Edinburgh’s first Labour Lord Provost in 1972, and the organisation also benefited from the support and political leverage offered by sympathetic Labour councillors - the Festival Society stressed that it was not affiliated with any political party. Instead, it existed to promote the voice of Craigmillar people and instigate a new way of doing politics:

All the time during those early days, little by little we were making links towards a partnership between politics (with a small “p”) and local culture. And in so doing we were challenging the way in which Politics (with a capital “P”) seemed to be the province of the men.⁴⁰

As Crummy acknowledges here, groups like the Festival Society – although open to and supported by many men in the community - were particularly successful in showing women the relationship between their everyday struggles and political action. In so far as urban struggles were struggles over the politics of consumption and reproduction, they were often dominated by women.⁴¹ In Craigmillar, there were plenty of women who came to find their political voice through attempts to improve circumstances for their children, their families and themselves via the broader work of the Festival Society.⁴² Indeed, in the view of Helen Crummy’s son Andrew, in its heyday it was ‘women who really drove [the Festival Society]

⁴⁰ Crummy, *Let the People Sing!*, p.46, p.48.

⁴¹ Castells, *The City*, p.68; p.296.

⁴² Crummy, *Let the People Sing!*, p.53; in a wider context, many women were politicised in the process of attempting to organise childcare provision in their communities – see e.g.: Jane Lewis, ‘The Failure to Expand Childcare Provision and to Develop a Comprehensive Childcare Policy in Britain during the 1960s and 1970s’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 24:2 (2013), pp.249-274.

forward. It was always about women really'.⁴³ Crucially, the organisation offered women novel ways in which to engage with what some saw as the unwelcoming sphere of traditional politics. In Andrew Crummy's view: 'it wasn't testosterone-fuelled, it wasn't rabble-rousing, y'know? It wasn't shouting at people. It was a different approach'.⁴⁴ Helen Crummy herself felt that cultural expression offered those who might otherwise have been uncomfortable taking part in direct action a way to express their political concerns or embrace their socialist heritage.⁴⁵ In 1968, for example, the annual festival marked fifty years of women's suffrage with a sketch entitled 'The Emancipation of Women', which celebrated the contributions of ordinary women to Scottish history (Figure 3.3, p.113). Other women were happy to use their political awareness in more overt ways. During the 1968 Rent Strikes, over two and half thousand people from every public housing scheme in Edinburgh marched through the city in demonstration against rent rises, with many Craigmillar women amongst them. As Crummy recalled:

In the forefront, lifting their skirts and kicking at the door of freedom and justice...Women, whose eyes once opened, were now questioning their environment and the soulless surroundings in which they were bringing up their children. Many of these mothers, who themselves had never had the educational or social opportunity to develop to their full potential, were now taking on responsibility, becoming leaders and performing hitherto undreamed of tasks.⁴⁶

The Festival Society also welcomed young people, pensioners, disabled residents and many others whose daily experiences and political concerns encompassed

⁴³ Interview with Andrew Crummy (16 July 2015).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Crummy, *Let the People Sing!*, p.64.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.57-58.

education, housing, and social amenities more than issues directly pertaining to employment and wages. Through art and culture, the Festival Society pioneered new, irreverent ways of involving a whole cross-section of the community in the political process.

3.3 Politics and Culture

Inherent in everything the Festival Society did was the idea that politics, history and culture were linked. For many of those involved, lack of cultural opportunities implied a wider democratic deficit. Meanwhile, Crummy was clear from the beginning that the working-class history of the area legitimated and provided a blueprint for many of the Festival's actions. The hardships and activism of the 1930s were a particular reference point – Craigmillar had, after all, been '[b]aptised with the tears of the hungry 30s'.⁴⁷ Crummy often cited the resistance put up by the local Tenants' Defence League, set up in the 1930s to fight evictions, as an inspiration.⁴⁸ The history of the area's mining community was also instructive – Crummy saw clear parallels between the subjection of the colliers who had worked on the land where the Craigmillar estate now stood and who had been denied common legal rights, and the way in which her working-class community was ignored or demonised by the powers that be.⁴⁹ Poems such as local resident George Montgomery's 'The Arled Bairn', composed for the 1973 Festival and which recounted the story of children born into indentured mining communities,

⁴⁷ Crummy, *Let the People Sing!*, p.21.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p.32.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p.20.

reinforced this idea.⁵⁰ Awareness of historical resistance was made manifest in many of the Festival Society's productions. In 1967, the group organised a 'people's pageant', which highlighted the contribution the working-classes had made to the social, economic and cultural life of Scotland. Held in the grounds of Craigmillar castle, the pageant was a knowing inversion of a pageant staged at the same spot in the presence of George V in 1927. Whereas the 1927 pageant had celebrated the Scottish nobility and its ancestral contribution to Scottish history, the 1967 pageant celebrated local miners, suffragettes and trade unionists, played by a cast of over 400 Craigmillar residents.⁵¹ An accompanying booklet, printed on a community press, contained local histories and photographs of local people, including an account of community protests over housing and the means test of the 1930s.⁵²

In Craigmillar, 'community' was clearly understood as a synonym for 'working-class'. In its performances, the Festival Society drew not only on the area's activist history, but the artistic *forms* through which working-class culture had traditionally been expressed. As it recognised: 'The Community Arts movement is not a new idea. Community arts have been practiced for centuries, but it is only recently that official credence has been given to the idea that the creative expressions of a

⁵⁰ Douglas Galbraith (ed.), *Craigmillar Gold: Songs from the Community Musicals Volume One 1973-77* (Edinburgh: Craigmillar Communiversity Press, 2004), pp.16-17.

⁵¹ Crummy, *Let the People Sing!*, p.78.

⁵² John Wilson and Colin Mackay (eds.), *Craigmillar Sixty-seven: A book of Craigmillar - Past and Present on the Occasion of the Third Craigmillar Castle Historical Pageant of June, 1967* (Edinburgh, 1967).

community at grass roots level have validity'.⁵³ Such art forms – music hall, worker's theatre, ceilidh, ballads and protest songs – had traditionally received little attention from elite cultural bodies. Even after the SAC began to provide a grant to the Festival Society in 1967, it agreed to do so only on the provision that funding would be used to employ professional actors – a stipulation that those involved circumvented by involving professionals in amateur productions, and by deploying them to teach local people acting and directing skills.⁵⁴ Regardless of the views of funding bodies, cultural activities in Craigmillar were marked by what Steve Burgess, an American sociologist based at Edinburgh University who worked as an activist on behalf of the Craigmillar community, called 'a convergence, a contact, a conflict between the heritage of deprivation and the traditions of celebration'.⁵⁵ According to Burgess, this 'convergence' occurred when long-running civic events - such as the annual summer gala days held in many working-class Scottish communities - developed a new and more critical impetus within the context of post-war society.⁵⁶ As folk singer Norman Buchan has argued, '[i]n a class society, any expression of a submerged group...has elements of protest', and many of the traditional art forms repurposed by the Festival Society were themselves strongly associated with a long legacy of social dissent.⁵⁷ The political radicalism of the weavers of Renfrewshire and the miners of Fife and the Lothians had frequently found their expression in folk song, whilst the decorated floats, speeches and brass

⁵³ CFS, *Craigmillar's Comprehensive Plan*, p.1.

⁵⁴ Crummy, *Let the People Sing!*, p.143.

⁵⁵ ECL, HCA, Stephen Burgess, *A Monocular View of Craigmillar*, (1972).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Norman Buchan, 'Folk and Protest', p.181.

bands of gala days often marked the anniversary of successful struggles over workers' rights or sought to raise spirits and demonstrate class solidarity in times of hardship.⁵⁸ As Burgess pointed out, if residents were aware of a 'heritage of deprivation' they also had a rich cultural heritage to draw on which could be used to protest *against* such economic poverty.⁵⁹ Thus Burgess determined that in Craigmillar, 'instead of just protesting against conditions, instead of only the way of negation, there was also the way of affirmation, the celebration of local life and growth and development of cultural action'.⁶⁰

There are strong parallels here with contemporary socialist theatre productions popularised by touring groups such as 7:84 Scotland, who developed close ties with Craigmillar (and, as discussed in the following chapter, the Easterhouse Festival Society).⁶¹ Led by John McGrath, a Liverpoolian playwright who gave up writing for television to commit himself to an avowedly socialist form of agitprop theatre, 7:84 Scotland took its name from a statistic, published in the *Economist* in 1966, that indicated that 7% of Britain's population owned 84% of the country's wealth.⁶² Throughout his work, McGrath maintained that 'working-class forms of entertainment....are not inferior' to conventional theatre, and 7:84 Scotland consciously used popular forms such as ceilidh and Gaelic folk singing to attract

⁵⁸ Buchan, 'Folk and Protest', p.169; Alan McLaren, *The History of Midlothian's Local Festivals* (Loanhead: Self-published, 2012).

⁵⁹ ECL, HCA, Burgess, *A Monocular View*.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Interview, Crummy (2015).

⁶² For an overview, see: Maria DiCenzo, *The Politics of Alternative Theatre in Britain 1968-1990: The Case of 7:84* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

new audiences and raise political awareness.⁶³ Plays such as *The Cheviot, The Stag and The Black, Black Oil* (1973), which dramatized struggles around land ownership and economic exploitation in the Scottish Highlands, were performed in community venues (including in Craigmillar) across Scotland on a regular basis during the 1970s and 1980s.

Like McGrath, the Festival Society understood the role that accessible, participatory and collective cultural forms might play in encouraging people to take ownership of both their cultural heritage and their community's current political situation.⁶⁴ Each year, the Festival Society staged a community musical based around a pressing social issue, such as housing shortages, unemployment, or child poverty, utilising traditional forms (such as variety theatre, physical action and satire) to draw in participants and audiences. The 1973 musical *Willie Wynn* was inspired by the National Children's Bureau's report *Born to Fail* (published that same year), which drew attention to 'striking differences' in the lives of children from different socio-economic backgrounds.⁶⁵ Meanwhile, 1974's 'Castle, Council and Curse' made use of music hall, satire, and the local landmark, Craigmillar Castle – re-imagined as an 'empty home' – to protest about the area's 600 empty houses in a city facing an acute housing shortage.⁶⁶ Local councillors and housing

⁶³ DiCenzo, *Alternative Theatre* p.140, John McGrath, *A Good Night Out: Popular Theatre, Audience, Class and Form* (London: Nick Hern, 1996), p.4.

⁶⁴ DiCenzo, *Alternative Theatre*, p.41.

⁶⁵ Crummy, *Let the People Sing!*, p.157-58; Peter Wedge and Hilary Prosser, *Born to Fail?: The National Children's Bureau Reports on Striking Differences in the Lives of British Children*, (London: Arrow Books, 1973).

⁶⁶ EFS, *Craigmillar's Comprehensive Plan*.

department officials were invited along – some of whom gamely attended.⁶⁷ The *Times Educational Supplement Scotland* reviewed the production, noting that: ‘[c]omedy, pathos, serious-mindedness and a sense of the ridiculous, all had their place in this wittily written, well produced entertainment with a message’.⁶⁸ Each production was accompanied by a range of humorous but always politically-minded songs, penned by local people.

This particularly Scottish working-class culture sat alongside new approaches to the arts developing out of the counterculture of the 1960s. Whereas the annual festival frequently celebrated figures such as Robert Burns and Walter Scott, day-to-day community arts activities, often run by artists rather than those who had grown up in the community, evidence a different set of influences. By the early 1970s, the Festival Society had attracted the attention of those working in arts and drama across the city, particularly the group of young people associated with Theatre Workshop Edinburgh. TWE was set up in 1965 as a drama resource for children, based in Edinburgh’s New Town. By the early 1970s, TWE was operating under the direction of clown, director and actor Reg Bolton.⁶⁹ Bolton quickly became interested in taking theatre to areas of the city into which theatre groups did not normally venture, and in 1975, he set up Suitcase Circus, which taught circus skills to children in poorer areas.⁷⁰ Soon, TWE had forged links with the network of summer play schemes operating across Edinburgh, and artists and drama workers

⁶⁷ Crummy, *Let the People Sing!*, p.152-153.

⁶⁸ ECL, HCA, *People in Partnership*.

⁶⁹ *The Guardian*, 26 July 2006.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*; Reg Bolton, *Circus in a Suitcase* (Newton Abbot: Butterfingers, 1985).

such as Neil Cameron, Ken Wolverton and many others found themselves providing art and theatre for children who would not otherwise have been able to access the classes Theatre Workshop ran from its city centre base. A child himself at the time, Andrew Crummy recalled how these young people ‘brought colour, they brought laughter, it was different, y’know we’d never experienced anything like [it] [...] And it was just so different. I mean they were only 19, 20, 21 themselves’.⁷¹

Although drawing on different lineages, to the extent that both popular and countercultural art forms were open to improvisation, encouraged participation and stood outside of the elite art world, they quickly found common ground in a shared democratic and emancipatory impulse. As Peter Marcuse argues, it was only after the events of 1968 that the aspirations of those – such as young artists and students - who felt alienated from the political and cultural values of the post-war society - began to coalesce with the demands of the materially exploited – the working-class.⁷² According to Marcuse, 1968 ‘was not necessarily a reaction against a moment of economic crisis per se’, so much as a reaction against a society which seemed increasingly *spiritually* bereft, or which stifled those forms of creativity that were not economically productive. Art became one of the key areas where demands for material resources and legal rights sat side-by-side with the demand for a better future – one in which peoples’ full potential could be realised.⁷³ This much is

⁷¹ Interview, Crummy (2015).

⁷² Peter Marcuse, ‘From Critical Urban Theory to the Right to the City’, *City*, 3:13 (2009), pp.185-197.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

apparent in the way working-class and countercultural currents melded in Craigmillar. As Rosie Gibson reflected:

Loads of things started in '68, it was amazing. So it was a kind of...maybe from the sixties, and a shift away...oh, I don't know, because there's the whole thing of Helen's generation... Just, probably a bit of a freeing up, [a sense of] there's more to life than work, and money, and maybe changing priorities a wee bit.⁷⁴

As Gibson notes, local activists like Helen Crummy, who were of an older generation, were inspired by a longer tradition of distinctly left-wing, working-class cultural forms such as folk song, poetry and politically-committed drama. What Gibson also points towards here, however, are some of the more prosaic ways in which the 1960s affected life in Craigmillar. For most people in Scotland, the decade did not herald dramatic or revolutionary change, but rather what Gibson characterises as a subtle 'freeing up' or 'changing of priorities'. As Bell reminds us, the 'swinging sixties' are in part a historiographical construct; at the very least, people's experiences of the 1960s were varied and partially contingent on class, gender and geographical location.⁷⁵ Although Scotland still had a fairly Presbyterian attitude to culture and societal norms, the practice of community arts pointed to a belief that there might be 'more to life', and encouraged the idea that art and creativity might (and indeed should) be a part of daily life.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Interview, Gibson (2015).

⁷⁵ Bell, 'Introduction', in Bell and Gunn (eds.), *The Scottish Sixties*, p.14.

⁷⁶ Towards the end of the 1960s, more emphasis began to be placed on the arts and drama in the school curriculum: See: Bartie, *The Edinburgh Festivals*, p.204.

3.4 Participatory Planning

In 1978, working in consultation with residents, the Festival Society drafted a Comprehensive Plan for Action which laid down 400 recommendations designed to improve life in the local area (See Figure 3.4, p.128).⁷⁷ In 1976, the Edinburgh District Planning Policy sub-committee had accepted that Craigmillar ranked as an area of 'high priority' requiring a local action plan, and the community had stepped forward to provide it themselves - arguing that if Craigmillar was to be subject to a programme of 'urban rehabilitation' or 'renewal', it would be on its own terms.⁷⁸ Covering everything from the arts to housing, education, transport, social work and employment, the Plan constituted 'a kind of green paper' containing 'a vision of life in the years ahead'.⁷⁹ For Craigmillar residents, the Plan was something more than a protest against poor living conditions: it represented an attempt on behalf of the community to provide viable solutions to the area's problems.

Social democratic understandings of urban life were premised on the idea that it was possible to plan for a better society in a scientific and technical way.⁸⁰ By the 1960s, in light of the perceived failings of post-war planning, the practice was coming under increasing criticism both from within the profession and from local communities. Works such as Robert Goodman's *After the Planners* (1971) argued that planning did little to redistribute resources and gave ordinary people very little

⁷⁷ CFS, *Craigmillar's Comprehensive Plan*.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid*

⁸⁰ O'Hara, 'Social Democratic Space'.

control over their environment, contravening a basic human need and right.⁸¹ Meanwhile, in her influential study *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), urban sociologist Jane Jacobs criticised the destructive nature of slum clearance programmes (which she believed had destroyed urban sociability and community self-help networks) and advocated a return to a more organic, unplanned street culture where work, leisure and living might overlap.⁸²

Although rarely acknowledged as such by politicians, planning was a highly politicised matter. For planner and activist Adah Kay, planning was never just about the physical environment itself; it also encompassed larger questions about the kind of community or society people wished to live in, the way resources should be allocated, and the extent to which ordinary people had a say in the decision making process.⁸³ This much is true of the Comprehensive Plan, with its desire to democratise the structures governing everyday life and promote the value and legitimacy of experiential knowledge in order to ‘yield a more fulfilling society’.⁸⁴ There were many in Craigmillar who felt that residents had experienced the rules and conformity of the planned society, but not its promised dividends of increased wellbeing and enhanced community life. In these circumstances, Craigmillar, like

⁸¹ Written for an American audience, Goodman’s book was published in Britain in 1972 with an introductory essay which alerted British planners to the book’s domestic relevance - Robert Goodman, *After the Planners* (London: Penguin, 1972), p.49.

⁸² Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (London: Pimlico, 2000).

⁸³ Adah Kay, ‘Planning, Participation and Planners’, in David Jones and Marjorie Mayo (eds.), *Community Work One* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), p.210.

⁸⁴ CFS, *Craigmillar’s Comprehensive Plan*.

many communities in the 1970s, turned to the more democratic practice of community planning as a way out of this impasse.

The drive toward community planning was not simply the outcome of pressure from below. By the late 1960s, backlash against the post-war slum clearance programmes and comprehensive redevelopment was well underway, with planners and politicians alike looking for alternative solutions. The 1969 Housing (Scotland) Act favoured the redevelopment of existing housing stock over demolition, signalling a change in government policy.⁸⁵ At government level, there was even some acknowledgement that decision-making should be devolved away from professionals. The Town and Country Planning Act and The Skeffington Report (both 1968) highlighted the need for greater community involvement in planning. However, whereas the Skeffington Report presented tensions over planning issues as merely an issue of miscommunication between policy makers and communities, many believed that the problems communities faced were in fact the product of a wider conflict of class interests. In 1974, Kay wrote: '[t]o discuss participation in planning, one needs to view it as an aspect of class struggle in which vast sections of the population are excluded from any control over decisions affecting themselves', to the extent that '[p]articipation in planning...calls into question the representative nature of social democracy'.⁸⁶ The authors of the Comprehensive Plan were aware of the fact that the issues Craigmillar faced might extend beyond their locality when they asked: 'can some new government/community partnership

⁸⁵ Hague, 'Housing Problems'.

⁸⁶ Kay, 'Planning, Participation and Planners', p.200

make real inroads into the problem? Or are there structural economic constraints that determine the fate of these areas?'.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, in an area where residents had come up against local government intransigence time and time again, the Festival Society clearly felt that community planning offered people their best chance of intervening in the decision-making process.

In this, the Festival Society was aided by the assistance of sympathetic professionals. Not all planners were happy to accept the status quo and a significant cohort of young radicals opted out of what they perceived to be an overly-bureaucratic and retrograde system, working in their spare time for local community groups.⁸⁸ One such professional was Cliff Hague, a lecturer at Heriot-Watt University who later became President of the Royal Town Planning Institute and worked in a voluntary capacity in Craigmillar throughout the 1970s. Although Hague was not directly involved in the Comprehensive Plan, his expertise, and that of many other professionals, is apparent in the way its arguments are put across. Indeed, the Plan constitutes something of a hybrid document. The extensive use of roughly photocopied and collaged photographs gave it a DIY appeal, but such aesthetics were in part deliberate - making the document legible and accessible to members of the community. In fact, the Plan contained a great deal of statistical information and drew on survey work conducted in a more formal manner by professionals such as Steve Burgess. This reliance on statistical information was

⁸⁷ CFS, *Craigmillar's Comprehensive Plan*.

⁸⁸ These sentiments also found expression in the community architecture movement – see: Nick Wates and Charles Knevitt, *Community Architecture: How People Are Creating Their Own Environment* (Oxford: Routledge Revivals, 2013).

clearly intended to confer legitimacy; even the term ‘Comprehensive Plan’ is one borrowed from the planning profession.



Figure 3.4 Environmental improvements from The Craigmillar Comprehensive Plan, 1978.

However, the vision for Craigmillar that the community presented differed significantly from the sorts of plans which usually resulted from top-down initiatives. Such plans tended to deal only with physical or spatial aspects, to the detriment of the social.⁸⁹ For Crummy, the Plan was an attempt to mitigate earlier planning mistakes. She was deeply critical of the original Edinburgh planners who had seen fit to throw up ‘three storied blocks of flats, devoid of character, idealism

⁸⁹ Cliff Hague and Arthur McCourt, ‘Comprehensive Planning, Public Participation and the Public Interest’, *Urban Studies*, 11 (1974), pp.143-155.

or feeling’, forgetting an ‘important thing – the masses were people’.⁹⁰ Crummy believed that this represented a missed opportunity to create integrated communities where ‘[w]ork, learning, leisure, nature and heritage could have merged to give, not only sustenance for the body, but succour for the mind and a sense of belonging’.⁹¹ Much of this rhetoric reflects the ideas of figures such as Patrick Geddes, the Scottish sociologist and urban theorist who argued that every neighbourhood should be ‘a place of effective health and well-being, even of glorious and, and in its way unprecedented beauty’.⁹² Geddes, writing in the early 20th century, believed that rapid industrialisation had undermined urban social life, necessitating forms of urban reconstruction which would facilitate a renewed sense of human fellowship and environmental consciousness.⁹³ The Garden City movement was another reference point. Particularly associated with Ebenezer Howard, whose book *Garden Cities of To-morrow* was published in 1902, the Garden City was an antidote to the crowded and unhealthy modern city, a mode of urban planning which called for self-contained communities which provided all the necessary amenities for work and leisure, as well as plenty of greenspace.⁹⁴ Early British examples include Letchworth and Welwyn Garden City. By the time Craigmillar was built, these utopian aspirations had largely faded from view. In reference to the ring of housing estates which surrounded Edinburgh, Crummy felt that:

⁹⁰ Crummy, *Let the People Sing!*, p.23

⁹¹ *Ibid*, p.23

⁹² Cited in: Indra Munshi, ‘Patrick Geddes: Sociologist, Environmentalist and Town Planner’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 35:6 (2000), pp. 485-491.

⁹³ *Ibid*.

⁹⁴ Dennis Hardy, *From Garden Cities to New Towns: Campaigning for Town and Country Planning, 1899-1946* (London and New York: E & FN Spon, 1991).

what in fact these early city fathers did, was to lay the foundation of a modern concrete city wall. A wall, designed not to keep the invaders at bay, but to keep their own workers out, while they retained within its confines the capital's rich heritage of wealth and power, to be enjoyed almost exclusively by its upper and middle classes.⁹⁵

Little had changed by the 1960s. As Hague notes, the EDC Planning Department had little interest in Craigmillar because unlike other areas, it had not originally been programmed for redevelopment.⁹⁶ That the Festival Society was able to convince planners to take an interest in the area at all was something of a coup. In Hague's opinion: 'what was happening in Craigmillar was quite groundbreaking...they were leading the game in Edinburgh, it wasn't the officials that were leading it - the officials were following'.⁹⁷

Unlike earlier planners, who made no attempt to consider either the history of the area or the needs or desires of its residents, the Festival Society approached planning in a holistic vein. The physical renewal of housing and the wider environment and the provision of physical amenities and improved welfare infrastructure was to be complemented by - and to reinforce - a renewed sense of comradeship and mutuality between residents. This would ensure that the most vulnerable in the community would receive sufficient care, as well as improving life for individuals and the community as a whole. This wholesale transformation was to be underpinned throughout by the redemptive power of art. As the Comprehensive Plan stated, 'The Arts are not a fringe benefit. They are as vital to

⁹⁵ Crummy, *Let the People Sing!*, p.24.

⁹⁶ Interview with Cliff Hague (29 June 2015).

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

our society as housing and hospitals’: in Craigmillar, culture was understood as a key pillar of welfare and the catalyst for a better future.⁹⁸

3.5 Physical Renewal

Perhaps the most overt way in which the Festival Society used art to ‘renew’ the local area was through the physical changes it initiated within the area. Using their EEC grant, the organisation formally employed three professionals responsible for overseeing planning, communications and arts activities. Neil Cameron was appointed Director of the Arts Programme in 1976, and was responsible for setting up Craigmillar’s first Community Arts Team, under the leadership of Rosie Gibson, with assistance from Mike Greenlaw, a recent graduate of Edinburgh College of Art. The CAT, as it was known, was a job creation programme funded by the Manpower Services Commission (MSC, discussed in Chapter Four, p.197) and designed to bring employment to the local area: the original team included six unemployed school leavers, as well as several out of work tradesmen, including a joiner, electrician and a photographer.

The group’s first task was to convert a disused church into an arts resource centre – a resource the community had been unable to win from local government. Together, the CAT moved out the pews, sanded the floors, painted the walls, installed plumbing and added carpentry. Once opened, the church operated as a venue for arts projects and theatre shows, and offered a recording studio, video

⁹⁸ CFS, *Craigmillar’s Comprehensive Plan*.



Figure 3.5 Mermaid Sculpture, Pedro Silva and Craigmillar Residents, 1978 [Courtesy of Andrew Crummy].

equipment, a darkroom, and silk screen facilities.⁹⁹ The CAT also worked closely with the Neighbourhood Improvements Team, who by 1978 had painted 12 decorative murals across Craigmillar, including one outside the public library and one in a notorious ‘blackspot’ known locally as ‘the tunnel’.¹⁰⁰ Interventions could also take the form of protest against unwanted planning. In 1978, Gibson invited the New York artist Pedro Silva to design and construct, with local people, a 60ft long, 20ft high mosaic-tiled mermaid sculpture, effectively obstructing the line along which a proposed and much contested motorway was to have been built

⁹⁹ Interview, Gibson (2015)

¹⁰⁰ CFS, *Craigmillar’s Comprehensive Plan*.

(Figure 3.5, p.132). Members of the community had previously written a musical – *The Time Machine* – about their protest, performed at the 1973 annual festival.¹⁰¹ These interventions served as a mode of small-scale protest for a community which felt its needs were too often ignored by local government, spatializing dissent and making it publicly visible.

In 1974, the Festival Society invited convicted murderer Jimmy Boyle to design a concrete play sculpture for Craigmillar (Figure 3.6, p.135). The sculpture, which took the form of a 100ft Gulliver figure known as ‘The Gentle Giant’, was constructed by a team of local people and was officially unveiled by Billy Connolly in 1976. At the time, Boyle, who was serving a life sentence, was a resident of the pioneering Special Unit in Glasgow’s Barlinnie Prison. Opened in 1973, the Special Unit operated as a ‘therapeutic community’ where prisoners, under the guidance of art therapist Joyce Laing, were encouraged to paint and sculpt as part of a wider programme of offender rehabilitation.¹⁰² The Unit quickly attracted controversy. For some, it was an unnecessary and dangerous experiment; for others, it represented both a radical new departure in penal reform and a moving testimony to the redemptive power of art.¹⁰³ The Unit naturally attracted those who were interested in social justice issues, and soon began to receive regular visits from

¹⁰¹ Crummy, *Let the People Sing!*, p.141; the so-called ‘Niddrie-Bingham Relief Road’ was never built.

¹⁰² Christopher Carrell and Joyce Laing (eds.), *The Special Unit, Barlinnie Prison: its evolution through its art* (Glasgow: Third Eye Centre, 1982); Mike Nellis, ‘Creative Arts and the Cultural Politics of Penal Reform; the early years of the Barlinnie Special Unit 1973-1981’, *The Scottish Journal of Criminal Justice Studies*, 16 (2010), pp.47-73; A small exhibition about the Barlinnie Special Unit was held at the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum in 2017.

¹⁰³ Nellis, ‘Creative Arts’.

those working in the arts, including members of the Festival Society. As Neil Cameron recalls:

we arranged for Jimmy to design the Gulliver sculpture. I worked with him, and we got the plans, and we built it outside in Craigmillar, this huge concrete play structure that everyone played on. And then when his day release came we took him to Craigmillar. He came down and worked with us there on a day release from prison. But his personal story in some ways reflected the Craigmillar story: that could working-class people, who were ‘criminals’ and all this kind of thing, could they recover, could they repent and turn from this life to another? And Jimmy was the personification of this.¹⁰⁴

Much of the controversy the Unit attracted had focused on the figure of Boyle. Born in the Gorbals in 1944, Boyle soon showed an aptitude for painting and sculpture - so much so that Richard Demarco, keen to champion Boyle’s cause, organised an exhibition of Special Unit work at The Demarco gallery in 1974. Boyle’s profile was further raised when *The Hardman*, a play he co-wrote with Tom McGrath, was performed at the Traverse Theatre in 1977 (while Boyle was still in prison); his autobiography, *A Sense of Freedom* was published in the same year.¹⁰⁵ These endeavours inevitably received raised questions about the fate of men like Boyle who had grown up in a society where violence was the norm and where other outlets or means of deriving status or self-worth were almost non-existent. Boyle’s apparent rehabilitation through art also spoke eloquently of the idea that even those living in the harshest of circumstances might have creative potential, and of the way in which people might be denied the realisation of this potential through the arbitrary mechanisms of class or upbringing. As Cameron suggests, Boyle’s

¹⁰⁴ Interview, Cameron (2015).

¹⁰⁵ Nellis, ‘Creative Arts’; Boyle was released in 1981.

journey was a mirror in some ways of the ‘rehabilitation’ of the much stigmatised Craigmillar community itself – an idea which, as discussed below, played into the assumed (and not entirely unproblematic) relationship between art and ‘redemption’. The Festival Society itself drew this comparison: the sub-title of the Comprehensive Plan – ‘The Gentle Giant who Shares and Cares’ - referenced the Gulliver sculpture, ‘a symbol of the Craigmillar Festival Society’.¹⁰⁶



Figure 3.6 The Gulliver Sculpture, designed by Jimmy Boyle and constructed by Craigmillar residents [Courtesy of Andrew Crummy].

Not all arts activities in Craigmillar took the form of large-scale, high profile projects. Although arts resources were rarely readily available, artists such as Ken Wolverton, who worked in Craigmillar and other Edinburgh housing schemes throughout the 1970s, approached the whole estate as a potential site for arts activity

¹⁰⁶ ECL, HCA, *Craigmillar Festival Society – 21 Years of Community Action*, (1983).

and a source of inspiration and materials. Working with children in Pilton (an estate in north Edinburgh) in 1974, for example, Wolverton used the burnt out remains of the local playground to create a ‘dragon’ sculpture 30ft long, 8ft high and 12ft wide (Figure 3.7 and 3.8, p.137 and p.139). Other materials were salvaged by children from amongst the debris scattered by the nearby railway tracks:

burnt mattresses, refrigerators, broken chairs, baby carriages, lamps, tables, worn out tires, dead cars, dead dogs, string, wire, tin cans, bottles and everything you would find in a dump [...] Anything that was burnable had been set on fire at least once, most of all, mattresses, which left a cornucopia of coiled springs and rectangle frames. In short the whole area was a warehouse for mixed metal pieces and unusual objects.¹⁰⁷

Using a ‘cement fondue’ method learned from fellow artist David Harding (who regularly visited Craigmillar and was friends with many of the artists working there), the children then spent several months plastering and painting their sculpture. Wolverton saw clear analogies between the sculpture children created and the sorts of surrealist or experimental art finding its way into galleries during the 1950s and 1960s. He cited as inspiration the Swiss artist Jean Tinguely, who, working in the Dadaist tradition, used discarded objects to create his (sometimes self-destructing) kinetic machine sculptures or ‘assemblages’.¹⁰⁸ Tinguely’s sculptures celebrated the nonsensical, the ephemeral, and the everyday, and poked fun at traditional aesthetic categories: Tinguely noted that his art was ‘the opposite of the cathedrals, the opposite of the skyscrapers around us, the opposite of the

¹⁰⁷ Wolverton, ‘Old Bones’.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

museum idea, the opposite of the petrification in a fixed work of art'.¹⁰⁹

Nevertheless, the dragon had a longer life span than some of Tinguely's work.



Figure 3.7 The Pilton Dragon under construction [Courtesy of Ken Wolverton].

As Wolverton recalled:

10 years later I came back to Pilton and there was a new playground with safe equipment that couldn't be burned down or easily stolen. In fact it was very well manicured and the [...] Playground Dragon was still there.

I talked to the playground manager who said, "Yeah, when they started to build this new playground, the city was going to tear the Dragon down. One day they brought out a bulldozer. The man was going to push the Dragon over and put it into a dump truck. But the children all started throwing rocks at the driver. Then they tried to set the bulldozer on fire and the man gave

¹⁰⁹ Cited in: Michael Landy, 'Homage to Destruction', *Tate Etc.*, 17 (2009), accessed 19 December 2017, [<http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/tate-etc-issue-17>].

up and put it back on the truck. The city had a meeting and decided to just reinforce the Dragon and make it safe and it's still here".¹¹⁰

After the war, a new emphasis on the relationship between childhood, health, play and citizenship led planners and architects to incorporate designated playgrounds into their designs for new estates.¹¹¹ However, these spaces were not necessarily a priority in cities like Glasgow and Edinburgh, where the pressing post-war housing shortage took precedence over the provision of other amenities.¹¹² Nor were those that were built always treated with deference by the children who used them. Rasmussen has distinguished between those 'places for children' – those designed by adults - and 'children's places' - those which go unnoticed by adults where children are free to breakout of the institutionalised 'designed' spaces of home, school, and leisure.¹¹³ Similarly, Wolverton contrasted the ownership children felt over the sculpture they had helped create with the fate of more official interventions:

The "cultural workers" before me built a large wooden swing for the children. When the swing was finished the children swung on it and the cultural workers photographed them. They drove away very happy accomplishing the day's work. The children came back and burned the swing down.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Wolverton, 'Old Bones'.

¹¹¹ Kozlovsky, *Childhood*, pp.2-3, p.7

¹¹² Valerie Wright, Ade Kearns, Lynn Abrams and Barry Hazley 'Planning for Play: Seventy Years of Ineffective Public Policy? The Example of Glasgow, Scotland', *Planning Perspectives*, (2017), pp.1-21 – many playgrounds were established by voluntary agencies such as university settlement houses or Save the Children.

¹¹³ Kim Rasmussen, 'Places for Children – Children's Places', *Childhood*, 11:2 (2016), pp.155 – 173.

¹¹⁴ Wolverton, 'Old Bones'.



Figure 3.8 The Pilton Dragon [Courtesy of Ken Wolverton]

There are parallels here with the sentiments which motivated the post-war adventure playground movement. As discussed in Chapter Two, many community artists had initially worked as playleaders in such playgrounds. The first adventure playgrounds appeared in Britain after the war, often in inner-city bomb sites. The idea - imported from Denmark and promoted in Britain by figures such as landscape designer and child welfare advocate Lady Allen of Hurtwood – was to provide makeshift spaces for children to play which had little readymade equipment, only tools, wooden structures and scrap materials which children could build into whatever they liked, and break down again as they saw fit.¹¹⁵ Although some saw the adventure playground as an educationally valuable ‘parable of anarchy’, these

¹¹⁵ Kozlovsky, *Childhood*, pp.47-92; An adventure playground, formally the Niddrie Adventure Playground (but known locally as ‘The Venchie’), was established in Craigmillar in 1961 by Edinburgh University Settlement.

spaces soon came to be valued for the ways in which the ‘freedom’ they offered could be channelled towards productive (and sometimes prescriptive) ends - such as reducing delinquency, or teaching children the social democratic values of responsible freedom and constructive co-operation.¹¹⁶ Distancing his own work from that of ‘cultural workers’, Wolverton’s practice harked back to the original values of the movement, encouraging forms of creativity and play that did not confine children to specially demarcated playground spaces.

In his 1980 book *The Practice of Everyday Life*, French sociologist Michel de Certeau discussed the notion of ‘bricolage’, a form of ‘micro-politics’ wherein people used available tools and materials, as well as their everyday knowledge and experiences, to subvert the world around them.¹¹⁷ Typically these forms of ‘vernacular creativity’ privilege ‘the non-economic values and outcomes produced by alternative, marginal and quotidian creative practices’ which ‘enable individuals to reclaim some autonomy or control over dislocated power’.¹¹⁸ Thus from the small, commonplace ways they sought to leave their mark on the places where they lived (whether through acts of vandalism or attempts to improve the surrounding environment), it is possible to discern something of the sense of alienation, however constructively channelled, young people living in areas like Craigmillar or Pilton felt in the face of institutional neglect. This neglect encompassed not only their

¹¹⁶ Colin Ward, ‘Adventure Playground: A Parable of Anarchy’, *Anarchy*, 7 (1961), pp.193-201; Kozlovsky, *Childhood*, pp.70-75.

¹¹⁷ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011).

¹¹⁸ Tim Edensor et al., *Spaces of Vernacular Creativity: Rethinking the Cultural Economy* (Oxford: Routledge, 2010), p.1; p.10.

immediate material needs, but a wider desire for colour, enjoyment and space for creative expression. Wolverton's narrative implies a stark difference in attitude on behalf of the children involved towards the sculpture they helped create and which gave them a sense of agency within their environment, and the bleak housing estate landscape bestowed upon them by outsiders over which they felt no ownership or duty of care, and to which they had reacted by vandalising everything in sight. It was partially from the remains of the burnt-out playground swing that the dragon sculpture was constructed.

3.6 Play and Prefigurative Renewal

That community arts focused so readily on activities for children is often presented as evidence of its juvenility, its harmlessness, or its irrelevance to political struggles.¹¹⁹ Yet the idea of the child was central to the construction of the post-war welfare state and notions of citizenship.¹²⁰ As discussed in the previous chapter, after the war, new legislation effectively extended rights of citizenship to children for the first time. With these legal changes came a new emphasis on the environments in which children lived, learned and played, reconceived as arenas for shaping a healthy and emotionally fulfilling childhood.¹²¹ Much of the architecture of the post-war welfare state was designed to cater to the needs of families and children. It is therefore unsurprising that the (sometimes unpromising) conditions in which children were raised should form one of the key issues around which community activism coalesced. In Craigmillar, where there were more than

¹¹⁹ Kelly, *Storming the Citadels*, p.1.

¹²⁰ Kozlovsky, *Childhood*, p.2.

¹²¹ Thomson, *Lost Freedom*, p.186.

8,000 children under 15 by 1971, debates surrounding the failure to provide a sixth-year school, delays over the construction of a community centre, poor housing conditions and the construction of new roads were all framed around their effect on children.¹²²

Whereas the sociologists, criminologists and psychiatrists of the 1930s had emphasised the correlation between living in chaotic, unregulated slums and poor quality of life, those of the late 1960s and 1970s took the opposite tack, now warning of the dangers of the over-planned environment and its ill effects – including social isolation and poor mental health – on children.¹²³ One such study was sociologist Pearl Jephcott's *Homes in High Flats* (1971), a survey of life in Glasgow's Red Road multi-storey tower blocks, which explored 'some of the human problems involved in multi-storey housing'.¹²⁴ Jephcott took a particular interest in the experiences of children living in the flats, and her research indicated that both the design of the flats and the lack of amenities they offered sometimes made them an unwelcoming environment for children. Colin Ward's *The Child in the City*, published in 1978, also considered the fate of children growing up in an environment radically different from that of their parent's generation.¹²⁵ Ward was far from pessimistic, however, and his book, which documented many examples of the ingenuity shown by children in their explorations of the city, was also a

¹²² See, e.g.: ECL, HCA, *People in Partnership*.

¹²³ Thomson, *Lost Freedom*, p.186.

¹²⁴ Pearl Jephcott and Hilary Robinson, *Homes in High Flats: Some of the Human Problems Involved in Multi-storey Housing* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd 1971), pp.80-100.

¹²⁵ Colin Ward, *The Child in the City* (London: Architectural Press, 1978).

testament to the way in which children were capable of overcoming the limitations of such an environment. Ward suggested that play could be understood as a form of resistance, whereby children took the landscape presented to them by planners and actively refashioned it to their own purposes.¹²⁶ To Ward, children were the experts of their environment, not its victims. Community artists, too, were quick to discover that children tended to be inherently oppositional, and that childhood and children's play offered one of the most obvious fields in which to bring the sixties dreams of freedom and creative expression to fruition. Where these ambitions met with the very real circumstances of ongoing childhood and environmental deprivation, the issue of play became a political one.¹²⁷ For many activists, the fight to secure the rights of children to outside play was symbolic of a wider struggle for people to regain control over their local communities, whilst a willingness to look at the city from the perspective of the child was in keeping with the sentiment that planners had not considered the perspectives of those who used the city. This made more democratic forms of planning imperative.¹²⁸

Play and creativity were not limited to children's activities. In fact, they underpinned the whole ethos of the Festival Society. In the Comprehensive Plan, the Festival Society explained their reasons for keeping the word 'festival' in their name:

The Festival remains the touchstone of the Society and is still the generative force that keeps the organisation alive, open to new ideas and forward-looking. It is the impetus of the Festival which originally sparked off the

¹²⁶ Ward, *The Child in the City*, p.210.

¹²⁷ Thomson, *Lost Freedom*, p.208.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, pp.190-191.

community action and has kept it going through the fifteen years of development.¹²⁹

The playful, even carnivalesque aspect of organisations like the Festival Society is often overlooked in analyses of political activism. Shepard attributes this oversight to a particularly Western ambivalence towards play, which contrasts its supposedly frivolous nature with the productivity of the Protestant work-ethic.¹³⁰ This dichotomy ensures that ‘playful protest’ – encompassing everything from street theatre to DIY and punk culture – is frequently dismissed as an insignificant aspect of social movement activity.¹³¹ Yet in addition to the fact that the element of fun attracted people who might not otherwise have engaged in politics, the Festival Society quickly came to understand that art - from community musicals to protest sculptures - could be used to make serious political points.

Play and festivity have a long heritage in the history of 20th century art movements. Dada, Surrealism, and the Situationist International all rejected the strictures and rationality of modern capitalist society. These movements also influenced urban theorists such as Henri Lefebvre, who rejected the idea that everyday life should be dominated by the rhythms of capital and work. Lefebvre’s notion of the ‘Right to the City’, whereby citizens would be empowered to create alternative forms of urban life, articulated a right to carnival, theatre, protest, and other novel, heterodox and open-ended encounters and uses of space that might encourage new social

¹²⁹ CFS, *Craigmillar’s Comprehensive Plan*.

¹³⁰ Benjamin Shepard, *Play, Creativity, and Social Movements: If I Can’t Dance, It’s Not My Revolution* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p.3.

¹³¹ *Ibid*, pp.3-4.

relations and ways of living.¹³² The festive approach apparent in Craigmillar mirrored these politically-inflected aesthetic movements. Whereas the Festival's campaigns and funding applications tended to reference material welfare needs – decent housing, or spaces for children to play – there was an understanding, implicit in all the Festival Society's activities, that 'need' might constitute something more: the need for community, creativity, beauty or fun.¹³³

Far from understanding celebration as a distraction from the struggles of everyday life, the Festival Society sought to harness the constructive and generative possibilities thrown up by spontaneous artistic expression. According to Steve Burgess, festivity was a natural outcome of living under stress:

if we understand that the chief characteristic of crisis is an instability...in terms of the instability or fluidity and perhaps the acceleration of the component events [a crisis] may not be an unhappy one; we may in fact have a happy crisis – a happening – a festival.¹³⁴

As discussed in the previous chapter, the 'happening' was a form of countercultural performance art defined by its transience, its sense of shared creativity, and the space it opened up for unanticipated outcomes. For Burgess, festivity was something more than a release valve: its irreverent and unpredictable nature was also the source of ideas and possibilities.

¹³² David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (London: Verso, 2012), p.x.

¹³³ Lefebvre was similarly critical of the functionality of discourses of urban life which privileged 'objectively' determined needs over desires: Avermaete et al., *Architecture and the Welfare State*, p.121.

¹³⁴ ECL, HCA, Burgess, *A Monocular View*.

For the cultural historian John Huizinga, play could be both affective and instructive, offering the opportunity for social interaction, cultural exchange and joy. His 1950 work *Homo Ludens* approached play as an activity capable of transforming cultures and society.¹³⁵ Following Huizinga, Shepard's work draws attention towards 'campaigns which make use of play as a pre-figurative model of the world', allowing people to imagine and try out new subject positions or modes of relating to others.¹³⁶ A similar sentiment was evident in Burgess' belief that festivity 'may result in [the] rearrangement or in the establishment of new boundaries, new forms of existence'.¹³⁷ As a form of cultural resistance, Burgess believed that creative expression contained within it a generalised embodiment of hope:

The Craigmillar Festival is a celebration of experience and an enjoyment of its ongoing [...] it is a marvellous opening up and recognition of people's creative resources and human stature in all sorts of ways. As such it is a life substance, a life elixir which people want more of – it embodies a fact and a hope of personal and social achievement and meaning.¹³⁸

Festivity, in this formulation, was part of the struggle to articulate better ways of living together that acknowledged that everyone has the potential to contribute in constructive ways to community life, and which gave validation to knowledge and expertise drawn from lived experience. Here, Burgess also reaffirmed the idea that social change could be a joyful as well as a productive process.

¹³⁵ John Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A study of the play-element in culture* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980).

¹³⁶ Shepard, *Social Movements*, p.6.

¹³⁷ ECL, HCA, Burgess, *A Monocular View*.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

For many urban theorists, the city is a social product, the meaning of which is subject to conflict between competing interest groups.¹³⁹ Through what we might call the ‘pre-figurative’ renewal inherent in collective artistic endeavour, Craigmillar residents strove to redefine the meaning of working-class spaces and the sorts of relationships which prevailed within them. In her work on street performance, Susan Haedicke discusses the ways in which participation in such activities can serve as a ‘rehearsal’ of citizen activism – raising consciousness and opening up new possibilities and subjectivities in the process.¹⁴⁰ In a similar vein, Neil Cameron described his belief that theatre offered Craigmillar residents the opportunity to practice new ways of working together in which participants performed not only their parts, but the ideal of a ‘positive future’, where the actions of working-class participants would be celebrated, not erased from history:

[residents] started to do shows which they wrote themselves, with these plots where the people would rise up, and in a peaceful way change their society. I call this visions of the future - that what theatre can give people is...in a dramatic form...is a positive future. So the songs, the acting, was actually showing them what was possible. And once you see it, once you see your target, you can aim for it.¹⁴¹

There are echoes in Cameron’s account of the work of August Boal, the Brazilian playwright and radical educator whose ‘theatre of the oppressed’ rejected traditional, passive modes of spectatorship in favour of a self-empowering theatre which fostered democratic and cooperative forms of interaction among participants - with the specific aim of allowing participants to rehearse ways in which they might

¹³⁹ Castells, *The City*, p. xviii

¹⁴⁰ Haedicke, *Contemporary Street Arts in Europe*, p.1

¹⁴¹ Interview, Cameron (2015).

change their circumstances or fight oppression in their daily lives.¹⁴² There are also compelling comparisons to be drawn between the Craigmillar women who organised political theatre in their communities and the self-same women who marched through the streets of Edinburgh during the Rent Strikes of the late 1960s, or lobbied the local government for better houses, schools and health services for their children and their community throughout the 1970s.¹⁴³

3.7 Affective Renewal

The prefigurative hope for a better society was manifest throughout the Festival's Comprehensive Plan. The Plan was clear: Craigmillar residents had the right to determine what sort of community they wished to live in. From the Community Development Programme to more recent social inclusion and urban regeneration initiatives, programmes of urban renewal have consistently sought to make areas like Craigmillar more productive – with productivity typically understood either in economic terms, or, particularly in areas of social housing, in terms of shaping behaviour deemed 'appropriate' (usually, that is, socially 'responsible' and financially self-sufficient).¹⁴⁴ In contrast, the Comprehensive Plan called for a 'caring, sharing' society and argued that the community ought instead to be renewed by reclaiming what Castells has called its *use value*, asserting a right to

¹⁴² Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (London: Pluto, 1979).

¹⁴³ Crummy, *Let the People Sing!*, p.63-66.

¹⁴⁴ This process has accelerated markedly from the late 1970s onwards. See e.g. Kirsteen Paton, *Gentrification: A Working-Class Perspective* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014); John Flint, 'Housing and Ethopolitics: Constructing Identities of Active Consumption and Responsible Community', *Economy and Society*, 32:4 (2003), pp.611-629.

collective consumption and control of space, amenities and welfare services.¹⁴⁵ As Marcuse writes, the 'right to the city' was not simply a legal entitlement; it was a fundamentally moral demand for a better system in which the material and spiritual needs of all might be met.¹⁴⁶ The working-class history which the Festival Society reclaimed for itself through its cultural activities was one (nostalgically remembered, at least) to have been based on social relations of mutuality, co-operation and care.¹⁴⁷ The demands made by residents of Craigmillar, then, were never simply about obtaining more resources; they articulated an alternative moral economy, held together by emotional ties and an autonomous local culture. In this regard, the Comprehensive Plan offered the possibility of constructing alternative meanings of urban space based on a form of what might similarly be termed a form of 'affective' renewal.¹⁴⁸

As Quintin Bradley has argued, community activists frequently widen the sphere of agency allotted to them by imagining the community as an extension of the home, where an idealised form of domestic relations of care and mutual support are said

¹⁴⁵ Castells, *The City*, p.255

¹⁴⁶ Marcuse, 'Right to the City'

¹⁴⁷ On the relationship between nostalgia and notions of community, see: Doreen Massey, 'Places and Their Pasts', *History Workshop Journal*, 39:1 (1995), pp.182-192.

¹⁴⁸ In a similar vein, Stephenson and Wray draw attention to what they term 'emotional regeneration' via festivity in ex-mining towns suffering the aftershocks of deindustrialisation - Carol Stephenson and David Wray, 'Emotional Regeneration Through Community Action in Post-Industrial Mining Communities: The New Herrington Miners' Banner Partnership', *Capital and Class*, 29:3 (2005), pp.175-199.

to obtain.¹⁴⁹ Activities in Craigmillar were an attempt to create a space in which the logic of economic profit, the atomisation of community, the neglect of the vulnerable and the subservience of the working-class did not define the meaning of urban space. Yet this affective understanding of renewal via care is not entirely unproblematic. As Kirsteen Paton argues, discourses of urban renewal frequently define areas like Craigmillar by their apparent ‘lacks’ - lack of decent housing or employment opportunities, but also lack of ‘responsible’ or ‘respectable’ behaviour on the part of residents.¹⁵⁰ Paton has also touched upon the relationship between the ‘cultivation of the caring self’, usually figured as a gendered pursuit, and respectable femininity.¹⁵¹ The extension of an ethics of care to the wider community can also be read as a strategy (conscious or otherwise) for presenting the community itself as ‘respectable’ and therefore deserving, in order to counter the negative ways in which the community was usually discussed.¹⁵² Steve Burgess acknowledged as much when stating that it was ‘more or less explicit policy on the part of Craigmillar activists to demonstrate both the worthiness and the need of local residents’, though this need for intervention was always seen to be ‘due to the neglect or selfishness on the part of the larger society authorities’.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ Bradley, *The Tenants’ Movement*, p.116; see also: Nancy Naples, *Grassroots Warriors: Activist Mothering, Community Work, and the War on Poverty* (New York: Routledge, 1998), p.12.

¹⁵⁰ Paton, *Gentrification*, p.1.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, p.76.

¹⁵² *Ibid*, p.76.

¹⁵³ ECL, HCA, Stephen Burgess, *An exercise in the consideration and application of “A Framework of Analysis for Projects in Community Work”*, (1972).

As the Festival Society recognised, it was impossible for Craigmillar to secure more resources within the prevailing political landscape without first engaging with its image problem. Craigmillar was frequently presented in the press as one of the worst areas in Edinburgh, blighted by deprivation, crime and juvenile delinquency. Even well-meaning commentators reinforced this narrative: in 1972, for example, a piece appeared in *The New Statesman* which suggested that '[t]he slums have been transferred bodily to the city's fringes, where West Pilton and Craigmillar in particular have been used as drains down which the city's untreated social wastes have been poured'.¹⁵⁴ Burgess, in no uncompromising terms, called this 'the labelling and imaging of Craigmillar by the mass media as a local leper colony'.¹⁵⁵ Negative or patronising representations were understood by the Festival Society as forms of oppression in their own right. Crummy took issue, for example, with the way in which statistics were used to portray Craigmillar as the archetypal 'problem estate'.¹⁵⁶ She was deeply angered at the way Craigmillar residents had become 'fodder' for institutional surveys which dehumanised and objectified residents, denying their agency as social actors and treating them as little more than a useful source of sensationalist data.¹⁵⁷ Perhaps the key representational battle with which the Festival Society was concerned was the need to demonstrate that whatever problems Craigmillar faced, it was not the tenants who were at fault. Despite the fact that social housing had been built in the belief that better environments would

¹⁵⁴ *The New Statesman*, 18 Aug 1972.

¹⁵⁵ ECL, HCA, Burgess, *A Monocular View*.

¹⁵⁶ Crummy, *Let the People Sing!*, p.108; this discourse is discussed in greater depth in the following chapter.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p.109; Brent, *Searching for Community*, pp.43-44, p.85, p.90.

somehow 'improve' working-class residents, once problems began to arise, it was the residents, not those responsible for the poor management and lack of investment in estates, who bore the brunt of the blame.¹⁵⁸

That residents should feel the pressure to demonstrate their 'worthiness' via the performance of 'respectable' or 'responsible' behaviour was in part a function of the particular contours of post-war citizenship. In many ways, the values and behaviours enacted in Craigmillar chimed closely with the set of values and behaviours British citizens of the post-war period were expected or encouraged to cultivate.¹⁵⁹ Perhaps the most influential account of social democratic citizenship was that of British sociologist T.H. Marshall. In his 1949 lecture 'Citizenship and Social Class', Marshall argued that in addition to civil citizenship (which guaranteed equality before the law), and political citizenship (guaranteeing universal suffrage), the welfare state provided British citizens with what he called 'social citizenship' – the right to a basic level of socio-economic status and wellbeing.¹⁶⁰ With this right to universal welfare – and the freedom to pursue a full and fulfilling life that protection from the worst material inequalities (in theory at least) made possible – came a corresponding set of responsibilities. Within the post-war polity, the ideal citizen was an active one, and people were expected to use their

¹⁵⁸ Ravetz, *Council Housing*, p.189; for a critique of environmental determinism in relation to social housing, see: Paul Spicker, 'Poverty and Depressed Estates: A Critique of Utopia On Trial', *Housing Studies*, 2:4 (1987), pp.283-292.

¹⁵⁹ As White and Hunt note, the ways in which citizenship is constructed are always historically situated - Melanie White and Alan Hunt, 'Citizenship: Care of the Self, Character and Personality', *Citizenship Studies*, 4:2 (2000), pp.93-116.

¹⁶⁰ Ben Revi, 'T.H. Marshall and his Critics: Reappraising 'Social Citizenship' in the Twenty-first Century', *Citizenship Studies*, 18:3-4 (2014), pp.452-464.

freedom in constructive ways, contributing towards the welfare of the wider community.¹⁶¹

What Craigmillar residents sought was not just the opportunity to secure the resources that the post-war welfare state purported to offer, but the opportunity to conform to the ideals of active and responsible post-war citizenship. However, to the extent that the *rights* of social democratic citizenship - employment opportunities, decent homes, or places for community association – had never been made fully available to Craigmillar residents, many found it difficult to fulfil the roles expected of them.¹⁶² In some sense, the Festival was caught in a bind: the only way it could counter the idea that residents were somehow to blame for social anomie or environmental degradation was to demonstrate that the community was willing to engage in some form of ‘moral’ reform or renewal. Although for residents of areas such as Craigmillar, who had little control over the way they were represented in the media, access to artistic resources had the potential to become a powerful political tool, allowing them to resist what Brent calls ‘the superior, objectifying gaze of people as problems’, the way the Festival represented itself was always necessarily, if partially, shaped by the outside representations with which it had to contend.¹⁶³ In this regard, artistic endeavour could never simply be a form of ‘pure expression’.¹⁶⁴ The Craigmillar annual festival owed its origins, after all, to a desire to refute the idea that a working-class community had no interest

¹⁶¹ Revi, ‘T.H. Marshall’

¹⁶² Barnes, ‘Users as Citizens’.

¹⁶³ Brent, *Searching for Community*, p.8.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p.122.

in or need for culture. Another ‘lack’ identified by Burgess as something perceived to be missing in estates like Craigmillar was a visible sense of ‘community’.¹⁶⁵ What a lack of community implies is rarely stated overtly; usually that residents fail to live or behave in what the better-off consider an appropriate manner.¹⁶⁶ In this context, the very act of meeting in public – to perform street theatre, or to paint a mural or build a sculpture – sent out a powerful message, challenging the perception that Craigmillar did not possess adequate ‘community spirit’.¹⁶⁷

To some extent, representing the community as caring and community-minded can be read as a reconfiguration of older discourses of the ‘deserving poor’ (discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four), which, despite the apparent universality of welfare provision, continued to regulate the claims the poor were able to make upon the state.¹⁶⁸ It also raises the spectre of a longer legacy of entrenched paternalism whereby art is utilised for its didactic or moralising functions (see pp.50-52). In these circumstances, it is perhaps unsurprising, as Neil Cameron recalled, that those who worked for the Festival occasionally had to defend the organisation against the accusation that it was in some way trying to change peoples’ behaviour or disavow the culture and traditions of a working-class community:

Often when Craigmillar was talked about in those days, it was seen that Helen was trying to get Craigmillar into a ‘middle-class’ situation. The arts would become, you know, ballet and concerts and stuff. Helen fought this. She said “I don’t want Craigmillar to be middle-class. I want Craigmillar to

¹⁶⁵ Brent, *Searching for Community*, p.22.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p.21; p.86.

¹⁶⁷ Castells, *The City*, p.272.

¹⁶⁸ John Dearlove, ‘The Control of Change and the Regulation of Community Action’, in Jones and Mayo (eds.), *Community Work One*, pp.23-24.

be a healthy working-class area. We don't want to live like the people in Morningside".¹⁶⁹

As Cameron suggests here, the Festival Society sought to demonstrate that community-spirited or neighbourly behaviour were as much the hallmarks of a 'healthy working-class area' as a middle-class one. The complex relationship between art as something politically emancipatory, and art as something more paternalistic was very much apparent in Craigmillar as it tried to navigate a course between pure self-expression and political gain. Thus, in the Festival Society's bid to reclaim working-class agency via cultural expression, we see in Craigmillar a curious mix of a radical rejection of traditional art world values on the one hand; the partial resurgence of older discourses that link art, morality and 'civilized' tastes or behaviour on the other - albeit reshaped towards collectivist ends.

3.8 Participation and Conclusions

Threaded throughout these different understandings of community renewal is the ever-present issue of 'participation' and its assumed relationship to community empowerment. Although in its art, music and theatrical productions the Festival Society positioned itself as an adversarial group, the stance it took towards local government was not as uncompromising as its rhetoric sometimes suggested. Although attitudes towards the 'powers that be' could be far from deferential, the Festival Society determined to work constructively with local government, an

¹⁶⁹ Interview, Cameron (2015); Morningside is a middle-class suburb of Edinburgh.

approach they referred to as ‘liaison government’.¹⁷⁰ A willingness to work in dialogue with statutory authorities was particularly marked after 1972, when the Edinburgh Corporation was won by the Labour Party for the first time, raising hopes that, as Helen Crummy put it, ‘old wrongs might be righted’.¹⁷¹ Crummy recalled how she believed that ‘[i]n order to bring about change we first had to understand how our lifestyle was decided and who controlled it’, a point Andrew Crummy reiterated:

there was an onus on the community to learn how government worked. And also for the government, and local politics, all levels of government, to engage with communities like Craigmillar because even to this day that doesn’t really happen [...] you’ve got to learn what the system is, and you’ve got to learn how to manipulate that system.¹⁷²

The use of the word ‘manipulate’ is telling: engaging with local government was very much a deliberate tactic, the most effective way of securing perceived rights. Yet its attempts to make itself legible to government – by producing reports, collating statistics, and generally presenting itself as a respectable and constructive organisation – also indicates that the Festival Society had little choice but to work on local government’s terms. There is also a suggestion here that the main obstacle to change is a lack of communication between the governors and the governed. Even at the time, many activists were critical of the somewhat idealistic belief that if policy makers were only made better aware of the needs of communities, change would follow.¹⁷³ Indeed, Crummy’s acknowledgement that there remains a lack of

¹⁷⁰ Interview, Crummy (2015).

¹⁷¹ Crummy, *Let the People Sing!*, p.121

¹⁷² *Ibid*, p.98, Interview, Crummy (2015).

¹⁷³ Dearlove, ‘The Control of Change’, p.29.

engagement with communities seems to hold within it the admission that the ideal of liaison government was only ever partially met, or was not sustained over time.

As touched upon in Chapter Two, greater participation did not always equate to a genuine devolution of power.¹⁷⁴ According to Arnstein, participation in its ideal form was ‘the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens [...] to be deliberately included in the future’ and ‘the means by which they can induce significant social reform’, enabling them ‘to share in the benefits of the affluent society’.¹⁷⁵ In reality, ‘participation’ as politicians envisaged it was usually little more than a superficially pluralist technology of governance, designed to make local services more responsive and reduce pressure on statutory services.¹⁷⁶ Reflections on community activism in the 1970s are inevitably clouded by the consequent utilisation of participation and other discourses of community involvement as a strategy for securing consent for top-down government policies. Compare, for example, Cliff Hague’s description of how the Festival Society felt about winning its EEC grant in 1976 - particularly their sense of having demonstrated a robust case for greater involvement in political decision making - with his analysis of subsequent developments:

There was excitement, there was a sense of achievement, there was a slight sense of sort of thumbing your nose at people because, you know, this had all been done bottom up and famously the council didn’t hear about it until they heard from the Scottish government. But more importantly, the hope...there was a sense of recognition as well...when you’re told you’re the kind of people it’s not worth putting money into your education, to then find that people across Europe are hearing about what you’re doing, is pretty

¹⁷⁴ Castells, *The City*, p.57.

¹⁷⁵ Sherry Arnstein, ‘A Ladder of Citizen Participation’, *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 35:4 (1969), pp.216-224.

¹⁷⁶ Loney, *Community Against Government*, p.3.

good in terms of self-esteem and morale. But most of all there was the hope that you get together a plan that would be agreed with the council that was an integrated strategy for local development, they would look at jobs, they would look at facilities, and would then be implemented and would be a kind of catalyst in taking forward what had already been done to a new level. And that's what really didn't happen.¹⁷⁷

Ultimately, for residents of Craigmillar, the articulation of a collective set of rights led to only limited forms of short-term local control over social services.¹⁷⁸ Similarly, employment opportunities generated by job creation schemes could not be sustained over time. In the end, The Comprehensive Plan for Action remained little more than a plan.

Hague attributes this shortfall between expectations and reality to shifting local authority spending priorities which occurred in the wake of the oil crisis of 1974, an event which effectively brought the years of the post-war economic boom to a close. As employment rates began to fall and 'stagflation' set in, even the new Labour government found itself implementing cuts which further damaged an already overburdened welfare system – creating new conditions of austerity against which community activists were increasingly compelled to defend the very principle of universal social welfare itself.¹⁷⁹ These cuts were symptomatic of something deeper than temporary economic expediency: with the rise of the New Right, the tide was beginning to turn against the social democratic model of governance. By 1978, the year the Comprehensive Plan was published, the notion

¹⁷⁷ Interview, Hague (2015).

¹⁷⁸ Rose, 'Up Against The Welfare State'.

¹⁷⁹ Nicholas Timmins, *The Five Giants: A Biography of the Welfare State* (London: HarperCollins, 2001), p.307.

of the ‘planned society’ was falling firmly out of favour.¹⁸⁰ Within only a few years, the Thatcher government would institute its Enterprise Zone policy, exempting economically depressed areas (such as London Docklands, Salford and Clydebank) from the strictures of controlled planning and certain tax regulations in the hopes of attracting private investment.¹⁸¹ As Wetherall writes, it was during the 1970s that ‘the opposition between state planning and personal autonomy’ apparent in the community planning initiatives of the sort seen in Craigmillar ‘was re-codified as an opposition between the free market and the social democratic consensus’.¹⁸² The vision Craigmillar’s Comprehensive Plan presented (and the relationship between politics and space it represented) was firmly tied to older ideals of social democratic citizenship which were to be increasingly eroded in the years that followed.

This is not to suggest that ‘liaison government’ represented a straightforward accommodation or that community planning was always liable to be overwritten by more powerful interests. As Bradley has shown, there is still considerable space even within ‘domesticated’ movements acclimatised to the traditional political process for participants to develop collective oppositional identities, express dissent, and secure change.¹⁸³ Cultural activity voiced and enacted very different understandings of participation, community, and its potential for renewal from those representations and discourses imposed from above by local government. The activities initiated in Craigmillar also suggest a significant degree of ambivalence

¹⁸⁰ Keating, *The City that Refused to Die*, p.93.

¹⁸¹ Sam Wetherell, ‘Freedom Planned: Enterprise Zones and Urban Non-Planning in Post-War Britain’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 27:2 (2016), pp.266–289.

¹⁸² Wetherell, ‘Freedom Planned’.

¹⁸³ Bradley, *The Tenant's Movement*, p.49.

towards the local authorities, making visible radical or forgotten histories, mocking authority and blocking unwelcome urban developments at the same time as utilising the long-held association between cultural activity and respectability to win resources that would not otherwise have been forthcoming. Moreover, the significance of organisations like the Craigmillar Festival lies not only in the material demands they made upon the urban system, but the possibility of an alternative way of living together their activities propose. Retrospectively, events in Craigmillar can be seen as part of a wider left-wing movement to reinvigorate social democracy and the welfare state settlement from the grassroots. As Castells writes of other neighbourhood movements, '[t]heir lasting effects are present in the breaches produced in the dominant logic, in the compromises reached within the institutions, in the changing cultural forms of the city, and, ultimately, in the continuing social debate about what the city should be'.¹⁸⁴ If, as Castells argues, it is through peoples' everyday actions that the rules of society are produced and reproduced, then to infuse daily life with a potentially destabilising sense of festivity can be read as a statement of intent. In Craigmillar, art became the nexus through which the everyday could come to privilege an expanded conception of needs beyond those which the welfare state traditionally provided.¹⁸⁵ It is precisely these sorts of regenerative possibilities in which the contemporary neoliberal 'creative city' model sees no value.

¹⁸⁴ Castells, *The City*, p.72.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p.xvi.

Chapter Four: The Easterhouse Festival Society (1978-1986)

In November 1979, Easterhouse, one of Glasgow's largest post-war housing estates, hosted 'The Gathering', a two-day conference which brought together over 400 people working in community arts from across Britain.¹ The conference was held in the local community centre and was opened by local Labour MEP and keen supporter of the arts, Janey Buchan.² Buchan's opening address was followed by performances from local groups, highlights of which included an operatic chorus sung by a choir of 90 primary school children from Garthamlock and a display of 'death-defying acts' by members of Reg Bolton's Children's Circus.³ According to Helen Crummy, The Gathering was 'a conference with a difference or two. One was that there were very few professionals there. Another was that it was not so much a talking conference; there was action all the way'.⁴ In place of talks and lectures, groups were invited to give demonstrations of their work - whether drama, music, photography or print-making.⁵ The conference also eschewed a traditional set up: as reported in Easterhouse community paper *The Voice*, 'instead of coffee and chat', delegates socialised over 'a fire-work spectacular, followed by a dance and midnight bread and broth'.⁶

The Gathering was organised by Neil Cameron and the Easterhouse Festival Society, a group based in Easterhouse and which modelled itself, initially, on the

¹ *The Voice*, December 1979/January 1980.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Crummy, *Let The People Sing!*, p.196.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.196.

⁶ *The Voice*, November 1979.

Craigmillar Festival Society. Over the course of the previous year, Cameron had worked alongside David Harding and others to encourage the SAC to fund a Scottish Arts Resource Centre. Such a resource, it was envisaged, would publish a regular newsletter, encourage community artists to document and share their work, and generally give coherence to a movement which lacked the central focal point that the equivalent Association of Community Artists gave practitioners in England.⁷ As a preliminary, in the summer of 1978, the SAC commissioned community artists Liz Kemp and Hugh Graham to travel across Scotland, meeting individuals involved in community arts to compile a directory of active groups (Figure 4.1, p.164).⁸ The proposed arts resource, like *The Gathering* itself, offered a means of reflecting on what had been achieved over the previous decade, and served as an indication that Scottish community arts groups anticipated that the years to come would bring greater success and recognition. Crummy captured this broad sense of optimism when she wrote that she was ‘not the only one to leave [The Gathering] with a feeling of well-being and comradeship, knowing we were part of a community arts movement which was fast gathering momentum as it moved through urban and rural Scotland’.⁹

This optimism was in some ways to prove premature. Although the SAC was willing to fund a directory, no money was forthcoming for a more permanent resource. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter Two, unlike the ACGB, the SAC

⁷ On the ACA, see pp.81-82; These plans were discussed at the 1979 ACA conference - see: Fisher, *Community Arts Conference Report*.

⁸ NAS, ED61/51, *Minutes of the 68th Meeting*, (18 May 1978); Interview, Kemp (2016).

⁹ Crummy, *Let The People Sing!*, p.196.

remained unwilling to provide community arts with its own Council sub-committee and funding allocation. For many of those involved, The Gathering therefore came - retrospectively at least - to symbolise the end of an era, rather than the beginning of a new and even more dynamic phase in the movement's history. David Harding, who moved to Devon in 1978 to teach at Dartington College, contrasted the enthusiasm he felt at the time with the later recognition, furnished by hindsight, that the conference represented the end of the movement as he had known it. Although Harding 'came away from Easterhouse that day with a strong sense that active people in communities and city housing estates were going to continue to demand that the arts be an integral part of their lives', he also noted that many of those who had been influential in the early days later left Scotland in the 1980s, disillusioned with the lack of support available to them:

that really is sort of the turning point, the shredding of the, the breaking up, the failure of the whole community arts thing in Scotland. It ends, really, *I* think with the great conference at Easterhouse where two, three, four hundred people turned up. And some invited from England who came, and it was a great weekend. But then...nothing. It ended. I think because there was no support. So people simply left. Because there was no recognition in the Scottish Arts Council for the work. And, well, if there's no funding, then you can't do anything [...] the whole thing just broke up... And it was a watershed moment. Just whoosh...like that.¹⁰

Not everyone remembered The Gathering this way. For some, it was the event that first sparked their interest in community arts. In 1979, Barbara Orton was studying for a postgraduate qualification in community development at Moray House, the

¹⁰ David Harding, 'Glenrothes Town Artist', accessed 10 October 2016, [<http://www.davidharding.net/article12/index.php>]; Interview, Harding (2015).

University of Edinburgh's School of Education. Orton first heard about The Gathering through contacts in the Edinburgh community theatre scene:

It was *amazing*. The Easterhouse Festival Society [...] you know it was the who's who of who was involved in arts in Scotland at the time [...] And I asked them if, did they ever have any students, and they just said "that would be fantastic! You can come here". And so I persuaded Moray House people to let me go there on a placement. And it was life changing [...] I was their first student. I met everybody who was everybody.¹¹



Figure 4.1 The Directory of Community Arts [Courtesy of Liz Kemp; Photograph, Author's Own].

These new insights and contacts were invaluable for Orton. After graduating, she worked as an arts development worker in Pilton, Edinburgh, before taking up post

¹¹ Interview, Orton (2015).

as Community Events Programmer for Glasgow City of Culture 1990. Both Harding and Orton agree that The Gathering was a landmark event, bringing people together and generating a sense of momentum and camaraderie. However, whereas for Harding, the conference marked the end of the countercultural era, for Orton, it was the start of a process which eventually built up to the events of Glasgow 1990. Either way, 1979 was a turning point in British society – the year of the ‘Winter of Discontent’, the failed Scottish Devolution referendum, and the election of Margaret Thatcher. As the energies which had inspired the first generation of community artists began to dissipate, a new generation, most of whom had grown up during the 1970s, began to emerge – and found themselves operating in a changing and deeply challenging context.

4.1 A New Urban Context

In many respects, the Easterhouse Festival Society – active from 1978 to 1986 - bridged two political contexts: the dying days of the post-war consensus (such as it could be said to have existed), and the ascendancy of the New Right. With the advent of Thatcherism, the processes of deindustrialisation which had been underway in Scotland since the 1960s rapidly accelerated, giving way to a new emphasis on privatisation and the free-market. The loss of industrial employment hit Glasgow particularly hard.¹² Between 1971 and 1983 the city lost more than

¹² Michael Pacione, *Glasgow: The Socio-spatial Development of the City* (Chichester: Wiley, 1995), pp.217-218; Chik Collins and Ian Levitt, ‘The ‘modernisation’ of Scotland and its impact on Glasgow, 1955-1979: ‘unwanted side effects’ and vulnerabilities’, *Scottish Affairs*, 25:3 (2016), pp.294-316.

77,500 manufacturing jobs, leading to soaring levels of unemployment.¹³ As the spectres of rising unemployment and cuts to public services began to take their toll on communities – not least of all the peripheral housing schemes of Scotland’s major cities – the expression of working-class identity and exercise of social and political agency took on a new urgency.

Encroaching neoliberalism had profound effects on urban policy. The Conservative government presided over significant cuts to local authority budgets.¹⁴ With Labour in control of so many of Britain’s large urban authorities, punitive budgetary constraints became a means of limiting the potential for local democracy to take a path contrary to that of national government.¹⁵ A key battleground in the struggle between central and local government was that of housing policy. In 1980, the Housing Act – and its Scottish counterpart, the Tenants’ Rights (Scotland) Act - heralded the introduction of ‘right to buy’ – which facilitated the sale of council houses to tenants and, later, on the private market. Council house sales progressed at a slower rate in Scotland than in England. Nevertheless, as better stock was sold off, leading to the residualisation of the remaining council properties, the idea (never fully realised) that state-owned housing might be used to secure better living standards for all gave way to a new understanding of tenancy and estate life as a socially inferior aberration from the ‘norm’ of private property ownership.¹⁶

¹³ Mark Boyle and George Hughes, ‘The Politics of the Representation of ‘the Real’: Discourses from the Left on Glasgow’s Role as European City of Culture, 1990’, *Area*, 23:3 (1991), pp.217-228.

¹⁴ Keating, *The City that Refused to Die*, p.73; Public sector cuts had been underway since 1974 but continued under Thatcher.

¹⁵ Pacione, *Glasgow*, p.204.

¹⁶ Ravetz, *Council Housing*, p.215.

Effectively, the election of the Conservative government signalled an end to the universalism of the post-war welfare system, a development which predated Thatcher but became more overt during her premiership. Both the Urban Programme and the Community Development Programme had been experiments in targeted intervention (see pp.93-95).¹⁷ In Scotland, a similarly targeted approach was adopted at local authority level, most notably by the Labour-run Strathclyde Regional Council (SRC). The SRC was established in 1975 following the Reorganisation of Local Government (Scotland) Act of 1973, which created a two-tier system of regional and district councils. Incorporating almost half the Scottish population, including Glasgow, the Region contained some of the highest ranking areas of multiple deprivation of any local authority area in Britain.¹⁸ In 1976, the Region initiated a comprehensive anti-deprivation strategy (later known as the ‘Social Strategy’) based on a philosophy of positive discrimination, designed to divert resource towards 45 ‘Areas of Priority Treatment’ or APTs, of which Easterhouse was one, as well as towards priority groups such as the elderly, the unemployed and the under-fives.¹⁹ At the heart of this strategy was a commitment to the practice and principles of community development. Although the SRC positioned its policies as a counterweight to those of central government, a means of off-setting the worst excesses of neoliberalism in a time of straitened budgets, the demise of the universalist, egalitarian ideal in favour of an area-based approach

¹⁷ Loney, *Community Against Government*, p.63.

¹⁸ Pacione, *Glasgow*, p.217.

¹⁹ Barr, *Practicing Community Development*, p.vi; Keating, *The City that Refused to Die*, pp.26-27.

was to have consequences for those communities increasingly seen to be ‘dependant’ on welfare.²⁰

The arts were not exempt from the ideological shifts affecting British society. Both the ACGB and the SAC were under growing pressure from national government to justify and measure the impact of arts spending in terms of economic benefits.²¹ The Conservative government also presided over significant cuts to the Arts Council budget, with knock-on effects for arts governance in Scotland.²² Meanwhile, at local government level, cultural policy was quickly becoming a mechanism through which wider urban policies might be implemented. Under the Local Government (Scotland) Act, Regional councils were obliged to ensure the ‘adequate provision’ of cultural amenities. Although interpretations of this stipulation varied, local authority spending on the arts gradually rose during the 1970s.²³ Although the Region had no specific community arts policy (unlike some other local authorities across Britain, most notably the Greater London Council or GLC), ad hoc support for community arts activities was not entirely lacking.²⁴ Whereas the SAC tended to support the arts for what it perceived as its aesthetic or intrinsic values, local authorities did not shy away from making the case for arts

²⁰ Strathclyde Regional Council, *Social Strategy for The Eighties* (Glasgow: Strathclyde Regional Council, 1983); Pacione, *Glasgow*, pp.218-219.

²¹ Antony Beck, ‘The Impact of Thatcherism on the Arts Council’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, 42:3 (1989), pp.362-379; see for example: NAS, ED61/109, *A Scottish Success Story*, (Edinburgh, 1985).

²² Galloway and Jones, ‘The Scottish Dimension’.

²³ NAS, ED61/11, *Regional Development Report*, (1981).

²⁴ On the GLC’s cultural policies, see: Mulgan and Worpole, *Saturday Night*.

investment in more instrumental terms.²⁵ This is reflected in the funding streams through which community arts projects were usually financed – particularly the Urban Programme, which the Region oversaw and through which it disbursed grants to local projects which advanced the objectives of its Social Strategy.²⁶ It was also in this climate that the idea of what is now known as the ‘creative economy’ first began to take hold. During the 1980s, investment in the arts began to be recast as an entrepreneurial strategy for economic growth and urban regeneration, and, as discussed in Chapters Five and Six, few local authorities adopted arts-led regeneration strategies with as much enthusiasm as Glasgow District Council (GDC).

The role of the community artist did not diminish in this period. The Easterhouse Festival Society attracted hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of grants during its eight-year existence, making it the largest community arts organisation in Scotland: clearly, the Regional and District councils saw some value in funding community arts projects. And yet, although the various forms of instrumentalisation of the arts discussed above suggest a new emphasis on broadening cultural access, the ways in which policy makers understood the nature and utility of such ‘democratisation’ did not always neatly align with the ways in which community

²⁵ Hewison, *Cultural Capital*, pp.14-18; Local authority spending on the arts during this period is difficult to calculate, because funding was never the preserve of a single department or tier of local government. From 1975 onwards, the SAC expressed regular concern about the lack of financial support Local Authorities provided towards national arts bodies; however, the SAC’s figures do not take into account sums dispersed through community development programmes or Urban Aid. See for example: NAS, ED61/116, *Press Release*, (27 October 1978).

²⁶ Urban Aid applications from APTs areas were usually prioritised - Keating, *The City that Refused to Die*, p.143.

artists understood the purpose of their work. Easterhouse was an area with significant social and economic disadvantages: it was also one of Glasgow's most 'notorious' estates. This was not a situation where the provision of 'art for art's sake' was likely to prevail. However, as this chapter will demonstrate, Easterhouse Festival Society workers often positioned their work as an *antidote* to local and central government policies, rather than a way of implementing them.

This chapter traces the history of the Easterhouse Festival Society and shows that those involved in the organisation understood the utility of community arts in a variety of ways. The Festival Society was determined to demonstrate that Glasgow's peripheral estates had a culture worth celebrating; that they boasted significant artistic talent; and that a working-class community was just as capable of producing high quality, meaningful art or drama as any other. The importance of the community's self-identity and ability to organise and fight back in the face of ongoing demonisation were also emphasised. As in Craigmillar, the way Easterhouse was perceived and treated by outsiders was always heavily mediated by the stigma that had come to be attached to the area by the mid-1960s.

A common thread throughout both interviews with Festival Society workers, and Festival Society literature produced at the time, is the language of radicalism and resistance. Yet despite this oppositional emphasis, the organisation was always constrained by its reliance on funding bodies. This reliance inevitably shaped the role the arts were encouraged to play in estates such as Easterhouse – namely, ameliorating the worst excesses of urban poverty and the lack of an integrated social and economic policy for the area by generating 'self-help' initiatives, particularly

in relation to unemployment. The organisation also found that in challenging the stigma faced by the area, the radicalism of the art and drama it produced often had to be tempered with compliance with behavioural norms associated with middle-class areas. This compliance, in turn, brought the Festival Society into tension with local radicals, who believed the organisation was trading off the area's poor reputation to attract financial support and who expressed anger over money being spent on arts activities in an area where public funds were already thinly spread. For some in Easterhouse, community arts had no discernible value at all.

4.2 The Easterhouse Summer Festival

In 1976, Easterhouse residents Grace Grant and her husband Kieran began visiting Craigmillar to gain an insight into how the Craigmillar Festival Society operated.²⁷ Alongside local community activist Jim McCrossan and Church of Scotland minister Ron Ferguson, they determined to find out if a similar model could be applied in Easterhouse. By October 1977, plans were underway for an Easterhouse Summer Festival, to be held the following year.²⁸ Costs were covered by a GDC job creation scheme, and by February 1978 a team of six had been appointed. This group included local author Freddy Anderson, residents Grace Grant and Helen McCormack, and Bill Marshall and Morgan Henderson, both members of the Strathclyde Theatre Group.²⁹ The team was based in a classroom at Westwood Secondary School. The first festival ran from May until September, opening with a

²⁷ Interview, Cameron (2015)

²⁸ *The Voice*, October 1977.

²⁹ *The Voice*, February 1978; Strathclyde Theatre Group was founded in 1971 by Hugo Gifford. Based at the University of Strathclyde, the group was known for its experimental theatre productions.

series of May Day celebrations. Drama productions included satirical reflections on estate life such as *Jack and the Means Test* and *Stair Wars*, whilst in March, as a precursor to the main festival, 7:84 Scotland were invited to perform their new production *His Master's Voice*.³⁰ Later that summer, a painting competition entitled 'our community' was judged by Glaswegian author Alasdair Gray, whilst a poetry competition on the same theme was judged by Adam McNaughton, famed for his Glaswegian street song, 'Skyscraper Wean'.³¹ In August, the Festival Society hosted a folk and poetry evening that included readings by established writers such as Liz Lohead and Tom McGrath, as well as local poets. As one article in the *Evening Times* enthused: 'Move over, Edinburgh. Easterhouse is where it's at!'.³²

In November 1979, it was reported in *The Voice* that the Easterhouse Summer Festival would run for a second year, with Kieran Grant taking over as arts co-ordinator and Glasgow University graduate Robert Robson as drama co-ordinator.³³ The project was soon operating on a year-round basis. In addition to the annual festival, the Festival Society instituted a programme of activities that included drama, music, print, photography and video workshops. The Festival Society also organised sporting events – such as an 'Easterhouse World Cup' and play schemes for children who rarely got to leave the scheme, let alone go on holiday - including an elaborate artificial seaside set up in a shopping centre carpark in the summer of 1981. In 1981, the Festival's May Day Gala, held in Auchinlea Park, was attended

³⁰ *The Voice*, March 1978.

³¹ *The Voice*, April 1978.

³² *The Evening Times*, 17 August 1978.

³³ *The Voice*, February 1979.

by over 10,000 people, and in August 1982, the Festival Society celebrated their fifth anniversary with a large-scale outdoor music festival. By 1983, plans were underway for a community darkroom, a print shop, a writers group, and a bookshop.³⁴ Although the initial aims of the Festival Society were to encourage artistic endeavour and celebrate local talent, as in Craigmillar, the organisation also realised the arts could play a role in tackling some of the wider social, cultural and economic problems confronting the estate.³⁵ By 1982, the Festival Society had instituted a Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP) funded community arts team which provided twenty annual placements for school leavers, was busy overseeing environmental improvement schemes, and had instituted various community-owned businesses and co-ops.³⁶

By 1983, the Festival Society had moved to new premises on Tronda Place, and was employing fifteen members of staff, with many more helping on a voluntary basis. By 1982, the Festival Society was generating an income of nearly £200,000 per annum, the majority of which came through Manpower Services Commission (£107,000) and the SRC's Urban Aid and Community Education budgets (£50,000). Other sources of funding included the SAC (£13,000) and the GDC (£30,000).³⁷ This inflow of money was not without controversy: it was eventually to cause considerable tension within the community, as would the perceived 'outsider' status of those paid to run the Festival Society.

³⁴ Easterhouse Festival Society (hereafter, EFS), *Five Years On* (Easterhouse: Easterhouse Festival Society, 1982).

³⁵ EFS, *Five Years On*.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

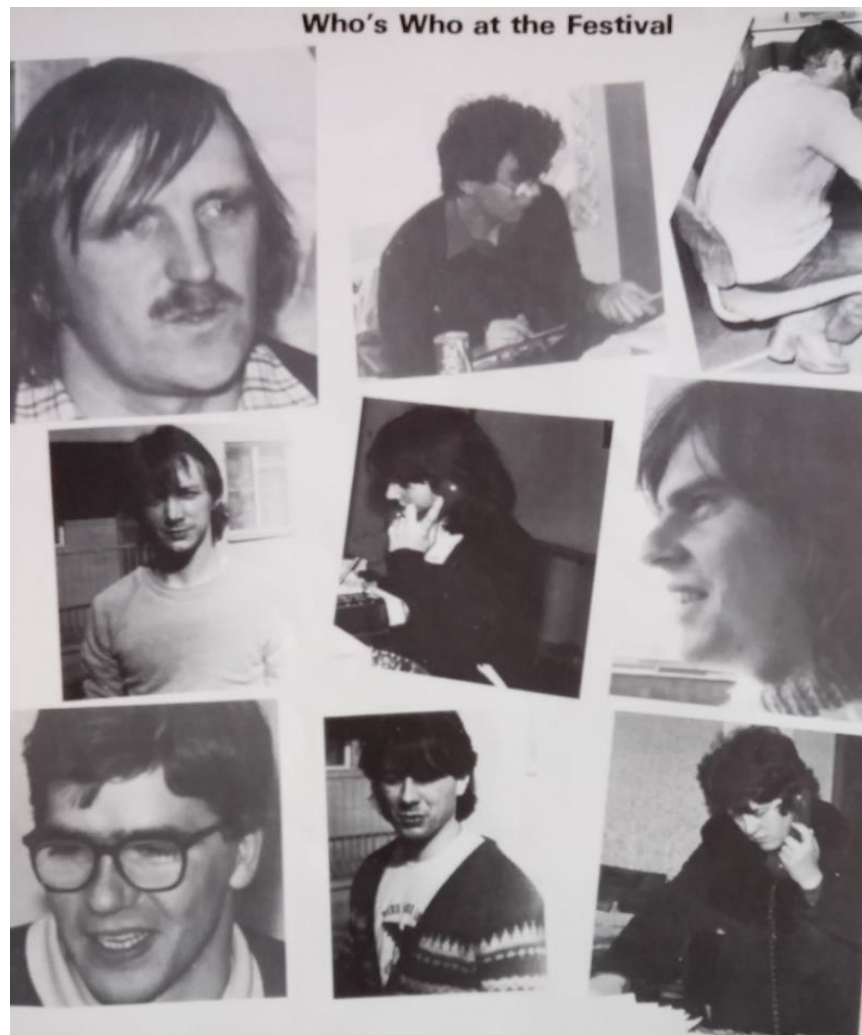


Figure 4.2 Who's Who at the Easterhouse Festival Society 1982 – Chris Elphick, top left; Bill Marshall, centre row, right [From Easterhouse Festival Society, *Five Years On*]

4.3 Fighting an Image Problem

Easterhouse, located on the far north-eastern periphery of Glasgow, was one of four large estates built on the city outskirts during the 1950s to rehome the largely working-class population displaced by Glasgow Corporation's extensive post-war slum clearance programmes. Although undertaken as a solution to the severe housing crisis the city faced after the war, Easterhouse was soon beset with severe

social, economic and environmental problems of its own.³⁸ The sheer number of people requiring new homes ensured that the new schemes were built at speed, to much higher densities than originally envisaged. From the beginning, Easterhouse was a single-tenure, one-class estate where 95% of the housing was owned by the Corporation.³⁹ By 1981, the estate was home to over 46,000 people and a higher than average percentage of young people.⁴⁰ As many as 29.5% of the houses in the area were classed as overcrowded, and dampness was a recurring problem.⁴¹ Although larger than many Scottish towns, Easterhouse was almost totally lacking the amenities necessary to support a population of its size. A proposed Township Centre, first mooted in 1963, was held up for more than a decade. A community centre and swimming pool were opened in 1971, but there were few shops, a lack of school buildings, and almost no entertainment facilities.⁴² Employment opportunities were also limited, in part due to poor transport links to the city. By 1986, male unemployment had reached over 40%, more than double the city average, whilst youth unemployment sat at 47.8%.⁴³

Although many were initially impressed by their new, modern homes, not all city-dwellers were happy to find themselves rehoused far from their old city-centre or East End communities. However, this alone cannot account for the poor reputation

³⁸ Keating, *The City that Refused to Die*, p.24.

³⁹ Michael Keating and James Mitchell, 'Easterhouse: An Urban Crisis', *Strathclyde Papers on Government and Politics*, 47 (1986).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

Easterhouse was subsequently to gain.⁴⁴ By the mid-1960s, the area had become the focal point of a series of ‘moral panics’ about youth gangs and juvenile delinquency.⁴⁵ As sociologists Armstrong and Wilson have demonstrated, the Easterhouse ‘gang problem’ – which received considerable (and in their view, disproportionate) press attention – was in no small part a media construction. Conducted in the late 1960s and early 1970s, their research suggested the whole notion of the Easterhouse ‘gangster’ to be ‘highly questionable’.⁴⁶ However, once this reputation was accepted as fact by the police and other authorities, it had the effect of exacerbating the very problem of juvenile delinquency upon which it purported merely to report.⁴⁷

Whether or not it was justified, the growing association between Easterhouse and violent or disorderly behaviour was to have significant repercussions for the estate in the decades that followed. As Armstrong and Wilson themselves observed, media representations of places do not simply reflect reality: by shaping the attitudes and perceptions of politicians, policy makers, public officials and residents alike, they help constitute it.⁴⁸ More recently, Brent has examined some of the ways in which certain housing estates are represented with ‘false objectivity’ by officials as places

⁴⁴ Glasgow itself suffered from a reputation from violence and poverty throughout the twentieth century. On the construction of this discourse, see: Sean Damer, *Glasgow: Going for a Song*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), pp.5-19.

⁴⁵ Angela Bartie, ‘Moral Panics and Glasgow Gangs: Exploring ‘the New Wave of Glasgow Hooliganism’ 1965–1970’, *Contemporary British History*, 24:3 (2010), pp.385-408.

⁴⁶ Gail Armstrong and Mary Wilson, ‘City Politics and Deviancy Amplification’, in Ian Taylor and Laurie Taylor (eds.), *Politics and Deviance* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p.62.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p.61, p.88; see also: Bartie, ‘Moral Panics’.

⁴⁸ Armstrong and Wilson, ‘City Politics’, p.70.

where social pathologies abound.⁴⁹ Such orthodoxies ignore moments of positive collective action, and undermine any pride or sense of belonging residents might experience.⁵⁰ French sociologist Loïc Wacquant makes a similar argument in his work on the ‘territorial stigmatisation’ of housing estates and those who live there. Wacquant demonstrates the profound material effects of the defamation of place: for Wacquant, this misrepresentation and the prejudices it supports is tantamount to a ‘symbolic’ violence, a means of representing certain people as somehow ‘illegitimate’ based not only on their class position, but also their residence in certain neighbourhoods.⁵¹

Easterhouse offers an instructive example of how urban policy, and the assumptions which underpinned it, sometimes exacerbated the social problems it endeavoured to solve. In 1969, Easterhouse was officially ‘downgraded’, a prelude to using the estate as a place to house tenants deemed less socially desirable.⁵² In the early 1970s, the Glasgow Corporation published a series of reports in which the estate was repeatedly referred to as a ‘hard to let’ area, compounding the notion of Easterhouse as a ‘problem estate’.⁵³ This had the effect of discouraging new tenants and moving those already living in the area to seek alternative accommodation. By 1969, a mere thirteen years after the estate had formally opened, a third of residents

⁴⁹ Brent, *Searching for Community*, p.4.

⁵⁰ Loïc Wacquant, *Urban Outcasts: A Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), p.7.

⁵¹ Wacquant, *Urban Outcasts*, p.25.

⁵² Armstrong and Wilson, ‘City Politics’, p.63.

⁵³ Charles Johnstone, *The Tenants’ Movement and Housing Struggles in Glasgow 1945 – 1990*, Unpublished PhD Thesis (University of Glasgow, 1992), pp.116-117; On the discourse of the ‘problem estate’ see: Sean Damer, *From Moorepark to ‘Wine Alley’: Rise and Fall of a Glasgow Housing Scheme* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1989), p.18.

had outstanding requests to be transferred elsewhere.⁵⁴ As Sean Damer has demonstrated, stigmatisation often has the effect of generating an unwillingness on behalf of political and social authorities to invest in any significant way in an area.⁵⁵ It can also negatively affect personal opportunities in school and the job market.⁵⁶ Armstrong and Wilson, for example, found that teenagers living in Easterhouse in the early 1970s felt themselves to be less employable than young people in other parts of the city.⁵⁷

The stigmatization of certain sections of the working-class population has a long history. Through the narrative of the problem estate, older, morally-inflected ideas about the ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ poor were reworked and rearticulated. John Welshman has traced these anxieties about social breakdown, juvenile delinquency and worklessness back to the Victorian period and argues that notions of a socially and culturally distinct ‘underclass’ have periodically recurred throughout the twentieth century (in Britain as elsewhere).⁵⁸ In the post-war period alone, the ‘problem family’ of the 1950s, the ‘culture of poverty’ of the 1960s, and the ‘cycle of deprivation’ of the 1970s each made their mark on urban policy debates.⁵⁹ Typically, these discourses presented poverty as a personal, psychological or behavioural failing, not one rooted in the unequal distribution of social and economic resources.⁶⁰ As the post-war ‘democratic safety state’ was superseded by

⁵⁴ Keating and Mitchell, ‘Easterhouse’.

⁵⁵ Damer, ‘*Wine Alley*’, p.19; Wacquant, *Urban Outcasts*, p.91, pp.29-30.

⁵⁶ Wacquant, *Urban Outcasts*, p.29.

⁵⁷ Armstrong and Wilson, ‘City Politics’, p.63.

⁵⁸ John Welshman, *Underclass: A History of The Excluded Since 1880* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007), p.4, p.xviii.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p.xiv.

⁶⁰ Damer, ‘*Wine Alley*’, p.1.

the 'liberal competition state', these discourses gained new potency.⁶¹ Political rhetoric which pitted 'enterprise culture' against 'dependency culture' only redoubled the need for working-class communities to assert themselves against the idea that those who were unemployed or on a low income were simply welfare dependants responsible for their own circumstances and struggles. The decline of council house tenancy in particular had the effect of allowing estate life to be reinterpreted as a wilful aberration from the assumed norms of self-sufficient and productive work and family life.⁶²

In these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that the Festival Society saw bringing about change in Easterhouse and altering the way the area was regarded by outsiders as key priorities. The Festival Society was by no means the first initiative undertaken to tackle the estate's image problem. In July 1968, Liverpoolian popular entertainer Frankie Vaughan generated much publicity when he met with the (self-declared) leaders of four Easterhouse gangs in a bid to 'reform' the behaviour of the boys involved. During the meeting, Vaughan negotiated a 'weapons amnesty' whereby, in return for the promise of a youth centre, the various gangs agreed to lay down their weapons on neutral ground. Despite police asking the public to stay away, the event attracted an audience of over 200 members of the public.⁶³ The outcome of this amnesty was the Easterhouse Project, a youth project run by artist Graham Noble and the author Archie Hind between 1969 and 1971 and

⁶¹ Martin, 'Introduction', in Crowther, Martin and Shaw, *Popular Education*, p.3.

⁶² Welshman, *Underclass*, p.xxi; John Flint, 'Housing and Ethopolitics'; Annette Hastings, 'Stigma and Social Housing Estates: Beyond Pathological Explanations', *Housing and the Built Environment*, 29 (2004), pp.233–254.

⁶³ Armstrong and Wilson, 'City Politics', pp.61-62.

partially funded by private donations, including Vaughan's Glasgow concert proceedings.⁶⁴ The project was inspired by a growing sense that young people had suffered at the hands of Glasgow Corporation's housing policies, and took a pioneering approach to youth involvement, allowing the boys to play a key role in decision making processes.⁶⁵ However, the project failed to receive the full support of local officials and was taken over by Glasgow Corporation in 1971.⁶⁶

In March 1969, residents launched 'Easterhouse Fights Back', a campaign devoted to countering adverse publicity. The campaign, which garnered much local support, highlighted sensationalism in the press, and complaints were even made to the press commission that residents were frequently made to feel like 'slum dwellers' and 'objects of curiosity'.⁶⁷ Although Easterhouse Fights Back was largely ignored by the media it sought to influence, residents continued to look for ways to improve the reputation of the area.⁶⁸ The first edition of award-winning community newspaper *The Voice* was published in 1972, set up to report on local campaigns and positive developments in the area. Until his departure in 1979, the paper was edited by Ron Ferguson, and for many years *The Voice* worked in close partnership with the Festival Society, providing publicity but also training opportunities for young people in the area. In effect, then, the launch of the Festival Society marked

⁶⁴ Keating and Mitchell, 'Easterhouse'.

⁶⁵ Angela Bartie and Alastair Fraser, 'The Easterhouse Project: Youth, Social Justice and the Arts in Glasgow, 1968-1970', *Scottish Justice Matters*, 2:1 (2014), pp.38-39.

⁶⁶ Keating and Mitchell, 'Easterhouse'.

⁶⁷ Armstrong and Wilson, 'City Politics', p.63.

⁶⁸ Keating and Mitchell, 'Easterhouse'.

the culmination of a decade of struggle to redefine what it meant to be from Easterhouse.

Confronting Easterhouse's reputation was part of a wider desire to improve material conditions for residents. By the early 1980s, deepening welfare cuts and the steep rise in unemployment had given rise to an acute sense of frustration amongst those who had helped set up the Festival Society. In 1982, they asserted that: '[i]t is a fundamental belief of the Festival that we can no longer rely on other people to make things better for us. Few people care about places like Easterhouse, apart, that is, from the people that live there'.⁶⁹ Anger was directed not just at the Thatcher government, but at Glasgow's Labour-run local authorities, who effectively formed the 'establishment' in the west of Scotland and who were held responsible for failing to invest in the area. Bill Marshall characterised the attitude of Festival workers as follows:

we all had an instinct for politics from the ground up. That actually the way you change things is from the ground level, not by imposing from the top. And we were in conflict from the way in which Easterhouse had developed. Which was a top-down development. Y'know, with good intentions in many respects, to do away with slum housing in Glasgow and make better housing conditions for folk. But ultimately it was wrong [...] You changed things at the ground level.⁷⁰

Marshall grew up in Glasgow and trained initially as an English teacher before gravitating towards ways of teaching theatre that were not circumscribed by the strictures of the education system.⁷¹ To his mind, the problems Easterhouse faced

⁶⁹ EFS, *Five Years On*.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Interview with Bill Marshall (22 June 2016).

were deeply embedded in the way the estate had been designed and built - that is, without consultation with its future residents.⁷² Like many in Glasgow at the time, members of the Festival Society were united in their rejection of Thatcherism, but the ‘shared politics’ Marshall alludes to were as much about an attitude towards state bureaucracy – shared by many on the libertarian left during the 1970s and 1980s – which rejected municipal paternalism, sought to reclaim working-class agency, and emphasised the need for collective organisation and self-help.⁷³

Of course, Easterhouse was not entirely ignored by local authorities. As we have seen, the area was designated an Area of Priority Treatment by the Regional Council in 1976. It was not, however, subject to any concerted effort to resolve the longstanding economic issues the area faced.⁷⁴ Unlike Scotland’s New Towns, which were governed by development corporations responsible for attracting new industry, little energy had been spent on providing the peripheral estates with a sound economic base.⁷⁵ Meanwhile, by the late 1970s, urban policy in Scotland (as elsewhere in Britain) had shifted its focus from the construction of new towns and overspill estates to the rehabilitation of older inner-city and industrial areas. In Glasgow, significant resources were transferred to the Greater Eastern Area Renewal (GEAR) initiative, set up in 1976 and designed to turn around the fortunes of Glasgow’s East End.⁷⁶ Although urban policy was beginning to acknowledge the so-called ‘plight of the periphery’ (all four of Glasgow’s post-war estates were

⁷² For a similar analysis, see Damer, *Going for a Song*, p.189.

⁷³ Interview, Marshall (2016); see also, Interview, Elphick (2016).

⁷⁴ Keating and Mitchell, ‘Easterhouse’.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*; EFS, *Five Years On*.

⁷⁶ Keating and Mitchell, ‘Easterhouse’.

granted APT status), capital spending for the years 1979 to 1984 indicated a significant bias against the estates. Whilst spending in the GEAR area amounted to an average of £2,415 per head per annum, in Easterhouse it was a far less substantial £586.⁷⁷

Easterhouse residents were well aware of these disparities. Interviews with Festival Society workers, Festival Society publications, and other outlets for community opinion such as *The Voice* all attest to a widely shared belief that Easterhouse residents had been dealt a poor hand. Over the course of 1979, for example, regular articles appeared in *The Voice* decrying the District Housing Department's neglect of Garthamlock, an area within Greater Easterhouse, after it was announced that the working budget for much-needed improvements to this 'once pleasant housing scheme' had been cut from £15 million to £695,000.⁷⁸ By the late 1970s, the perception that the estate had for too long been subject to municipal neglect had given rise to a belief amongst certain sections of the community that if circumstances in Easterhouse were to change in any material way, residents would have to take control over their own lives, and the resources needed to make life on the estate flourish. In the report *Five Years On*, produced by the Festival in 1982, the Festival Society indicated that: 'Our goal is for people to have control – control over their lives, resources and skills, the environment. If we lack control, especially self-control, we also lose self-esteem and respect'.⁷⁹ Although Festival Society workers realised that their efforts alone could not reverse the fortunes of

⁷⁷ Keating and Mitchell, 'Easterhouse'.

⁷⁸ *The Voice*, November 1979.

⁷⁹ EFS, *Five Years On*.

Easterhouse, nevertheless they saw the organisation as ‘an important contribution of the right sort because it encourages and supports people’s desire to do things for themselves, and unless that desire can be tapped and encouraged, there can be no solutions...The answer must come, in the end, from within’.⁸⁰

4.4 Drama in Easterhouse

It was against this background that the Easterhouse Summer Festival Drama Company was set up. The company’s first major production was *The Ghost of Provanhall*, performed in the summer of 1978 by local residents, none of whom had appeared on stage before. The play was written by Easterhouse resident Freddy Anderson, an Irish poet, playwright and author who settled in Scotland in 1946. An active socialist, Anderson joined Glasgow’s Unity Theatre and soon became an influential figure in Glasgow’s left-wing and literary scenes: he was as well-known for his many impromptu poems and songs as for his full-length plays, novel and poetry collections.⁸¹ The play centred around Provanhall, a complex of 15th century buildings located in nearby Auchinlea Park and was billed as an ‘historic open air pageant’ blending music, comedy and political satire.⁸²

⁸⁰ EFS, *Five Years On*.

⁸¹ Freddy Anderson, *Krassivy: A Play about the Great Socialist John Maclean* (Glasgow: Clydeside Press, 2005), p.vii-viii; Adrienne Scullion, ‘Glasgow Unity Theatre: The Necessary Contradictions of Scottish Political Theatre’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 13:3 (2002), pp.215-252.

⁸² EFS, *Five Years On*.

Archie Hind's *The Sugarolly Story* (1981) took a similarly satirical tact.⁸³ Hind, the Glaswegian author of prize-winning novel *Dear Green Place* (1966), had been involved in the original Easterhouse Project.⁸⁴ According to *The Scotsman*, his play told the story 'of Easterhouse itself; when, why, and how it was built, or rather, misbuilt' and presented 'an intelligent and witty appraisal of local government incompetence, bungled planning and national betrayal'.⁸⁵ The play, which traced the social history of Glasgow since the First World War before turning to the construction and latter-day history of Easterhouse, presented the fate of the area as both the result of 'the bankruptcy of the Labour party' and 'a symbol of the failure of the working-class movement to assert itself vigorously over the past 60 years'.⁸⁶ It also featured musical numbers such as 'The Big 'E' Song', with its sardonic lament that:

*There isn't a hall for rehearsing a play,
And the nearest Bingo is ten miles away,
Friday comes round and it makes you feel blue,
You've to go on safari just to sign on the buroo...*⁸⁷

Although *The Sugarolly Story* focused on Easterhouse, its message clearly appealed to those living in similar housing estates across Glasgow: it was performed thirteen times in community centres across the city, as well as at more established venues

⁸³ The word 'sugarolly' is Scottish slang for liquorice. The play took its name from the so-called 'Sugarolly Mountains', mounds of dumped chemical waste by the Monklands canal where local children played.

⁸⁴ Bartie and Fraser, 'The Easterhouse Project'.

⁸⁵ *The Scotsman*, 29 August 1981.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Cited in EFS, *Five Years On* – The script is now lost.

such as the Mitchell Theatre.⁸⁸ As the *Scotsman* concluded ‘[t]he show is extremely funny in some parts and the enthusiasm of the cast energises the audience throughout...this is a show that everyone should see, and especially if you happen to work for the Planning Dept. or the Housing Dept.’⁸⁹

Although plays like *The Ghost of Provanhall* or *The Sugarolly Story* were richly entertaining, they were not without a more serious message about life on a peripheral estate. In a scheme consisting of rows of standardised housing and populated with families who had been relocated from established communities in the city centre, it was easy to feel that Easterhouse suffered from a sense of geographical and historical dislocation. As geographer Doreen Massey notes, the meaning of place (and consequently, the social identity of those who live there) is not fixed, but constantly remade and rearticulated. For Massey, ‘[t]he identity of places is very much bound up with the histories which are told of them, how those histories are told, and which history turns out to be dominant’.⁹⁰ If contemporary public discourse which emphasised poverty or unemployment as an individual or moral failing did little to encourage people to understand the historical roots of their social and hence geographical position within the modern city, plays such as these, both celebratory of working-class life and critical of top-down decision-making processes, helped to counter the idea that the local area lacked its own distinct history or culture. According to Bill Marshall: ‘Freddy Anderson thought that was important. He thought it was important to create a sense of history. In the place.

⁸⁸ EFS, *Five Years On*.

⁸⁹ *The Scotsman*, 29 August 1981.

⁹⁰ Massey, ‘Places and their Pasts’.

And he tried... *The Ghost of Provanhall* was about the area, it was about the history of the area that folk had found themselves in'.⁹¹ In her discussion of the heritage industry, Laura Jane Smith argues that local histories can have left-wing or critical value, allowing people to find ways of making sense of the past and challenging prevailing narratives about places and the people who live there.⁹² Similarly, Ben Jones, in his discussion of the relationship between community publishing during the 1970s and 1980s and discourses of working-class nostalgia, argues that writing which focused on or celebrated life in older urban areas can be read as a way of critiquing and contesting 'dominant stigmatizing representations' of the council estates which replaced them.⁹³ The Festival Society hoped that for those engaged with its drama productions, either as audience or performers, reclaiming and re-enacting their working-class heritage would serve as an assertive statement of identity, whilst also demonstrating that the contours of urban space and the conditions that prevailed within them were historically and politically determined.⁹⁴

Perhaps the drama company's biggest success came with its production of Freddy Anderson's *Krassivy*, a play about the Clydeside revolutionary socialist, teacher

⁹¹ Massey, 'Places and their Pasts'.

⁹² Laura Jane Smith, *The Uses of Heritage* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), p.41 – Smith contrasts this with what she calls 'Authorised Heritage Discourse', the dominant mode of constructing heritage based on national and elite readings of the past.

⁹³ Ben Jones, 'The Uses of Nostalgia: Autobiography, Community Publishing and Working Class Neighbourhoods in Post-war England', *Cultural and Social History*, 7:3 (2010), pp.355-374.

⁹⁴ Smith, *The Uses of Heritage*, p.5; Wacquant, *Urban Outcasts*, pp.6-7; Lynn Hancock and Gerry Mooney, "'Welfare Ghettos" and the "Broken Society": Territorial Stigmatization in the Contemporary UK', *Housing Theory and Society*, 30:1 (2013), pp.46–64.

and anti-war activist John Maclean.⁹⁵ The title of the play - a Russian word meaning both 'beautiful' and 'red' – was inspired by the 1943 Hugh MacDiarmid poem of the same name. Written during the 1960s, *Krassivy* was revived in 1979 to celebrate the centenary of Maclean's birth.⁹⁶ The play featured a broad cast of characters from Maclean's life and made ample fun of the establishment past and present. Fifteen performances saw its young actors tour venues which included the Third Eye Centre, Barlinnie Prison and the Edinburgh Fringe, where the group performed to a packed house and won a Scotsman Fringe First.⁹⁷ Reviews were overwhelmingly positive. Whilst the *Evening Times* reported that '[t]he angry young men and women of Easterhouse have found a new way to channel their anger...and win awards in the process', the *Festival Times* declared it a triumph for leftist theatre, affirming that the fact '[t]hat the blood of Glasgow should thus run, in all its redness, through the Festival time orgy of English and European culture is important and heartening'.⁹⁸ Such success was a huge coup for a community drama group, and soon became part of the Festival Society's 'lore'. According to Rita Winters, a graduate of Glasgow School of Art who worked as an art teacher before joining the Festival as its arts co-ordinator in 1982, the group:

went through to Edinburgh with it and [laughs] and they're going "we've got a Fringe First, what's a Fringe First?!" and they were the first community group to win a Fringe First, and they hadn't a clue what they'd

⁹⁵ Maclean was a popular subject of Scottish drama - 7:84 Scotland's *Little Red Hen* (1975), for example, related revolutionary Clydeside to the politics of 1970s Scotland.

⁹⁶ Anderson, *Krassivy*, p.vii.

⁹⁷ *The Scotsman*, 24 August 1979.

⁹⁸ Cited in: EFS, *Five Years On*.

gotten. Or what it meant to...which is fine. Y'know...and what did it matter?⁹⁹

Maclean was an important figure for many of those working for the Festival Society, one around whom their various strands of leftist politics could coalesce.

As Bill Marshall recalled:

we all had an interest in the politics of Red Clydeside, John Maclean. We'd come at it from different angles. Kieran [Grant] from his Irish Republican background...my grandfather had been involved with Maclean, my grandmother as well to some extent. Freddy Anderson through his settling in Glasgow had found the sort of politics that he liked. And people were attracted to us that had similar views. So we had that ground-up approach that Maclean had. We didnae have the up-tightness, and Presbyterianism that Maclean had...¹⁰⁰

For those involved in the Festival, reinvigorating the memory of Maclean offered a way of reengaging residents not only with their geographical roots in inner-city Glasgow, but also with the legacy of socialist grassroots politics associated with these areas, albeit through more colourful and irreverent means than those Maclean might have employed. Of course, many of the young people involved in *Krassivy* had never lived or worked on Clydeside – or indeed worked at all. It is striking how frequently, at a time when the loss of industrial labour and the sale of council housing were complicating class identity, the drama performances of groups like the Easterhouse Festival Society sought to celebrate Scotland's industrial heritage, working life, and the class politics with which it was associated. For Chris Elphick,

⁹⁹ Interview with Rita Winters (29 April 2016).

¹⁰⁰ Interview, Marshall (2016).

who replaced Grace Grant as Organising Secretary of the Festival in 1982, drama productions had an important educative as well as entertainment value:

I think younger people particularly were more interested in...it was just more enjoyable. I mean older people who had experienced work would have experienced organised labour through the trade union movement. But you've gotta remember that lots and lots of young people in Easterhouse had no idea what that was about because they'd never had a job. So whilst there would have been solidarity in being part of organised labour, for a lot of young people, they didn't know what that meant....¹⁰¹

Elphick was born in London and worked as a youth worker in Liverpool after leaving school. He became involved in community arts whilst helping set up the Granby Street Festival in the Toxteth area of the city in the late 1970s.¹⁰² In his view, plays like *Krassivy* encouraged a sense of solidarity and helped give young people ways of making sense of the unemployment many of them faced. In Easterhouse, where the bonds of shared occupational or trade union membership had never existed to the same extent as they had done in the older, inner-city communities, political theatre sought to fulfil some of the functions other forms of associational life might once have fulfilled.

Drama of the sort showcased in Easterhouse was part of a wider renaissance of Scottish theatre which took place during the 1970s and 1980s.¹⁰³ Randall Stevenson has highlighted the air of anti-establishment defiance which ran through much Scottish drama during this period, and community theatre sat comfortably within

¹⁰¹ Interview, Elphick (2016).

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ Randall Stevenson, 'Snakes and Ladders, Snakes and Owls: Charting Scottish Theatre', in Stevenson and Wallace, *Scottish Theatre*, p.4.

this emerging milieu.¹⁰⁴ Easterhouse audiences were no strangers to the work of 7:84 Scotland, Wildcat, Borderline, Theatre Around Glasgow (TAG), Theatre Workshop and others, all of whom frequently performed in the area.¹⁰⁵ As Scullion argues, Scottish drama has tended to be one of groups and of communities, one which shows a marked ‘tendency towards narratives not of heroic individuals but anti-heroic groups’.¹⁰⁶ The socialist ethos of much of the work these groups produced and its willingness to engage with audiences in their own communities naturally appealed to many who worked in community arts.¹⁰⁷

Under the guidance of Robert Robson, and later, Bill Marshall, the Easterhouse drama company shared with these groups a conscious desire to build on older cultures of Glaswegian working-class popular and political theatre. One of the most influential groups in this regard was Glasgow Unity Theatre, active during the 1940s and early 1950s. The groups’ many productions (which included one of Freddy Anderson’s earliest plays) tended to focus on leftist politics and urban working-class life.¹⁰⁸ Works such as Robert McLeish’s *The Gorbals Story* (1946) depicted some of the hardships of tenement life, whilst Ena Lamont Stewart’s *Men Should Weep* (1947) dealt with women’s experiences of urban poverty. Other important reference points included the Glasgow Worker’s Theatre Group (founded

¹⁰⁴ Stevenson, ‘Snakes and Ladders’, p.11; On the experimental theatre of the 1960s and 1970s more generally, see: Itzin, *Stages in the Revolution*; Baz Kershaw, *The Politics of Performance: Radical Theatre as Cultural Intervention* (London: Routledge, 1992).

¹⁰⁵ EFS, *Five Years On*.

¹⁰⁶ Scullion, ‘Glasgow Unity’.

¹⁰⁷ Interview, Marshall (2016).

¹⁰⁸ Scullion, ‘Glasgow Unity’.

in 1928), which endeavoured to create a ‘theatre of the people’; and other left-leaning groups such as the Glasgow Clarion Players, the Transport Players, the St George’s Players, and the Jewish Institute Players, all active during the 1930s and themselves later associated with Glasgow Unity.¹⁰⁹ Many of these groups and plays were brought to the attention of new audiences during 7:84 Scotland’s *Clydebuilt* season of 1981-2, which revived popular theatre of the inter-war and immediate post-war years.¹¹⁰

Another important lineage was the Scottish tradition of variety, music hall and pantomime. These characteristically popular forms, which date back to the Victorian period, have in recent years come to be regarded as the missing link between older (urban and rural) vernacular cultures of popular entertainment and the vibrant dramatic revival of the 1970s.¹¹¹ The conventions of these genres – which included songs, comic sketches and broad humour – typically featured characters and scenes of everyday urban life familiar to its audience, relied heavily on audience participation, and fostered a keen atmosphere of audience camaraderie and solidarity between audience and performer - thereby reinforcing a sense of shared social values.¹¹² Many playwrights and drama companies of the 1970s and 1980s were inspired by the irreverent and interactive combination of music and comedy these traditions offered, deploying them to make theatre that was both

¹⁰⁹ Scullion, ‘Glasgow Unity’.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Paul Maloney, ‘Twentieth-Century Popular Theatre’, in Ian Brown (ed.), *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Drama* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), pp.60-72.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

entertaining and politically challenging. In his 1981 manifesto on popular theatre, *A Good Night Out*, John McGrath consciously drew a link between 7:84 Scotland's characteristic blend of song, music, comedy and the music hall tradition; whilst Wildcat, founded in 1978, updated this approach for modern audiences by engaging with issues covering everything from homelessness and NHS strikes to nuclear arms through a deft combination of rock and agitprop.¹¹³



Figure 4.3 Pantomime in Easterhouse, 1982 [From Easterhouse Festival Society, *Five Years On*].

¹¹³ McGrath, *A Good Night Out*, pp.27-28; Tom Maguire, 'Still Cool for Cats? The Life and Times of Wildcat Stage Productions', *International Journal of Scottish Theatre*, 1:1 (2000), pp.3-11.

The Easterhouse Drama Company also made effective use of these traditions. Alongside serious works of political theatre, the company regularly staged more light-hearted pantomimes, musicals and Christmas shows (Figure 4.3, p.193). Although not every production tackled political issues head on, nevertheless, Festival Society workers insisted that all the company's work had political and educational elements. According to Marshall:

A whole range of folk got involved in it...it made a difference to them, gave them an outlet. And it made them politically more aware. All of our plays I would argue were political with a small 'p'. Some of them with a big 'P' but *all* of them with a small 'p'. People changed their view of themselves. From having been involved in what was high quality theatre. And stuff that they *realised* was high quality.¹¹⁴

In Marshall's view, drama was political not only when it bore a political message, but when it dealt with issues relevant to working-class life and allowed Easterhouse residents themselves to choose how and where their lives should be culturally represented. With regard to the wider field of Scottish theatre, Stevenson argues that there was a growing sense that Scotland needed to develop its own specifically Scottish artistic and cultural life, particularly in the run up to the Devolution Referendum of 1979 and with the advent of Thatcherism.¹¹⁵ Whereas many professional theatre groups dealt with issues relating to Scotland's position within the Union, community theatre dealt with a different type of centre/periphery dynamic, one which engaged with the particularities of living on the geographical and cultural 'outskirts' of the city. As Stevenson suggests '[t]he kind of powerful

¹¹⁴ Interview, Marshall (2016).

¹¹⁵ Scullion, 'Glasgow Unity'.

hold exercised over spectators by a language familiar to them can also be established by accurate depiction of the lives they lead, the streets they walk in, the places they work, the homes where they live'.¹¹⁶ In Scotland's housing estates, drama written in local accents, featuring local landmarks and familiar scenarios, gave the issues discussed a powerful sense of familiarity and immediacy, undermining the idea that what was politically important or culturally significant was happening elsewhere.

In areas like Easterhouse, more associated in the public imagination with poverty and violence than art and culture, the notion of 'quality' was also an inherently political one.¹¹⁷ For Marshall, the quality of Easterhouse productions rested on two pillars: the skill and complexity of the group's chosen theatrical forms (particularly the rich but often maligned genres of pantomime and music hall), and the efforts and talents of Easterhouse residents themselves. Indeed, the drama group quickly discovered that the estate offered a huge repository of untapped talent: 'in Easterhouse [...] we were only ever scratching the surface. But the depths of talent were astonishing. It's just part of the failing of our society, the ignoring of non-middle-class tradition, people'.¹¹⁸ For Marshall, the fact that this talent had largely gone unnoticed (at least by those outside the area) was symptomatic of both the failure of cultural arbiters such as the SAC to value and support popular culture, and a more general unwillingness to treat residents of estates like Easterhouse as

¹¹⁶ Stevenson, 'Snakes and Ladders', p.7.

¹¹⁷ This issue is discussed in greater depth in Chapter Five.

¹¹⁸ Interview, Marshall (2016).

anything more than passive recipients – whether of culture or welfare.¹¹⁹ Festival workers believed that enabling people to develop confidence in their own talents or capacities, and to recognise that their own culture was as of high a quality as anyone else's, was an important precursor to recognising that they had the right and the ability to assert themselves in other ways and would help, in time, to replace associations of 'decay and deprivation' with those of 'dignity and achievement'.¹²⁰

4.5 The Easterhouse Mosaic

One of the most visible signs of cultural endeavour in Easterhouse was the Easterhouse Mosaic. Completed in June 1984 and covering some 1500 sq. ft. of wall in the Lochend area of the estate, it was, at the time, the largest handmade mosaic in Britain and one of the biggest in Europe.¹²¹ According to the *Evening Times*, which hailed it a 'masterpiece', the mosaic was met with 'gasps of delight' when it was unveiled to the crowd of several thousand who had gathered to see it during a launch event which included a carnival, circus, and an evening of cabaret and dancing.¹²² Those who attended the event – including the Lord Provost and an array of local dignitaries and celebrities - were 'not disappointed'.¹²³ As writer and academic Kay Carmichael reported in *New Society*, '[t]he beauty and the quality of the work sets a standard for all who see it'.¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ Interview, Marshall (2016).

¹²⁰ EFS, *Five Years On*.

¹²¹ *The Architects Journal*, 180 (1984), p.34

¹²² *The Evening Times*, 21 June 1984.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *New Society*, 2 August 1984.

The Easterhouse mosaic has not survived in situ. It was removed by Glasgow City Council in 2004, citing irreparable water damage.¹²⁵ In common with many twentieth century murals, the mosaic does not seem to have been valued by those in a position to preserve it.¹²⁶ Yet the Easterhouse mosaic was a huge undertaking, one which cost £93,000, took three years to complete, and was envisaged as a catalyst for a host of further developments throughout the area.¹²⁷ According to one promotional pamphlet produced by the Festival Society: '[The mosaic] is sited in Easterhouse, one of Glasgow's most socially deprived housing estates, and will vastly improve the physical environment as well as acting as a critique upon the social system that has created these social conditions'.¹²⁸ The bulk of the funding for the project was provided by the Manpower Services Commission, a national body set up in 1974 to co-ordinate vocational training initiatives, including the Youth Opportunities Programme.¹²⁹ In 1981-82, for example, the MSC issued a grant of £27,000 towards the project; the grant from the SAC made the following year was worth a less substantial £4,000.¹³⁰ As the provenance of funding suggests, justification for a project such as this was most successful when it was made in terms of instrumental rather than purely artistic value. Though murals are often dismissed as 'merely' decorative, the mosaic, its message, and the process of its

¹²⁵ Fragments of the mosaic are stored on site in Easterhouse. It has subsequently been replaced by a new mosaic, designed by artist Alex Frost.

¹²⁶ Powers, *British Murals*, p.9; Interview, Winters (2016).

¹²⁷ Deanna Petherbridge, *Art for Architecture: A Handbook on Commissioning* (London: HSMO, 1987), p.28.

¹²⁸ Easterhouse Festival Society, *The Mosaic In Easterhouse* (Glasgow, 1984).

¹²⁹ *The Architects Journal*, 180 (1984), p.34.

¹³⁰ EFS, *Five Years On*; NAS, ED61/213, *Minutes of the Art Committee*, (3 June 1983) - the GDC also provided funding of £4,000.

construction exemplifies some of the ways in which art, in an estate such as Easterhouse, was understood to have value or purpose.

The mosaic started life in 1980 as a YOP Scheme led by Glaswegian artist Alan Kane. Based in a classroom in a nearby school, ten young school leavers spent six months gathering the tools and materials necessary for the project. Under Kane's guidance, the team created a 45-ft. long landscape scene of animals, insects and foliage made from a colourful array of glass tiles, which were laid out flat, cut into sections, and piled up ready to be cemented onto the wall.¹³¹ The chosen site was a crumbling brick wall enclosing a patch of derelict land on Lochend Road. Once the original YOP scheme ended, the programme was extended into a broader environmental improvement plan funded by the MSC, the GDC Housing Department, and local business sponsorship. Four additional artists were employed: William Hamilton, Brian Kelly, Tommy Lydon and George Massey, all graduates of Glasgow School of Art. At this point, the young people ceased work on the project, although some were later re-employed to help install the completed mosaic and landscape the surrounding site. Community involvement was sustained through a series of public meetings, where residents were invited to share suggestions for the area, which included plans to set up a small park on land next to the mosaic and convert a disused doctor's surgery into an arts centre.¹³² The Festival Society also set about renovating a nearby row of six dilapidated shops, turning them into a

¹³¹ Interview with George Massey (4 March 2016).

¹³² Petherbridge, *Art for Architecture*, p.28.

series of community-owned businesses, including a hairdressers, a laundrette and a cobblers (Figure 4.7, p.201).



Figure 4.4 The Easterhouse Mosaic – West Wall (Detail), [From Easterhouse Festival Society, *The Mosaic In Easterhouse*]

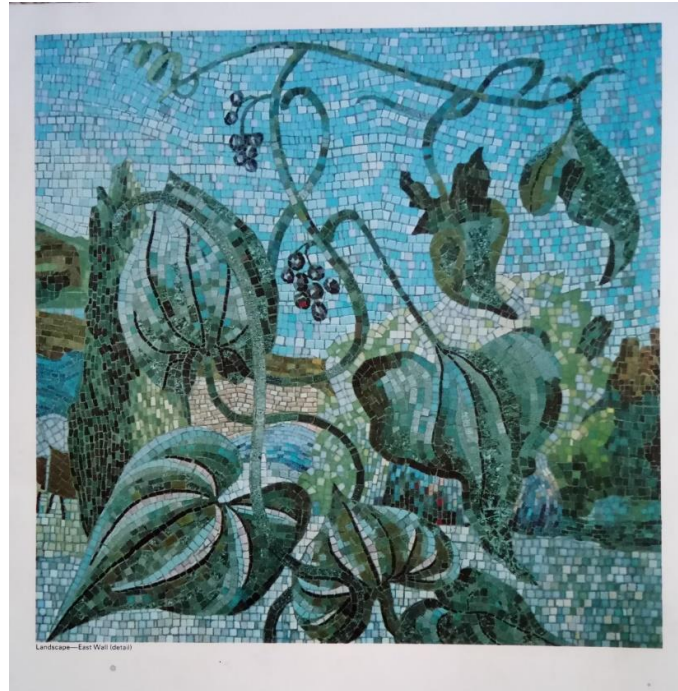


Figure 4.5 Easterhouse Mosaic – East Wall (Detail), [From Easterhouse Festival Society, *The Mosaic In Easterhouse*]



Figure 4.6 Easterhouse Mosaic – West Wall (Detail), [From Easterhouse Festival Society, *The Mosaic In Easterhouse*]



Figure 4.7 Lochend Road Shops, [Courtesy of Rita Winters].

In the hands of the five artists, the mosaic quickly developed a more political slant. Whereas the earliest panels designed by the YOP trainees had been conceived in a decorative manner (Figure 4.5, p.200), the artists adapted the landscape theme to make statements about the capacity of residents to shape the world around them. New panels took up the theme of the role of chance and outside forces in dictating the course of people's lives (Figures 4.4 and 4.6, p.199 and p.200). This section of the mosaic was conceived as 'an imaginary three-act play which stages a polemic about our social/political landscape' and depicted chess pieces, playing cards, and a hand holding an unemployment benefit card, interspersed with images of a geopolitical map, bombs and a dove of peace.¹³³ George Massey, who, along with several of the artists involved had previously worked as part of a Glasgow-based

¹³³ EFS, *The Mosaic in Easterhouse*.

mural group Public Image, suggested that that artists saw the mosaic as a response to contemporary social and political events:

The first design [shows]...the liberation figure from the French Revolution...really sets the tone in a sense. And it's against a chequer-board background, and basically it's to do with chance, y'know? And that's developed further on the second panel, where people's feelings about their life chances are dependent on other factors outside their control really. And then the third panel...sort of represents Easterhouse, it's about more individual things which were happening to individual lives at the time. You've gotta remember this time was...Thatcher was in power, and people were getting a really rough time. And also the onset of 1984 [The Miners' Strike] was in my thoughts as well...¹³⁴

As Massey describes it, the artists intended that the mosaic be read as an instructive piece.¹³⁵ For Massey, the 'message' of the mosaic was both a statement about political control and the need for working-class agency, and an affirmation of faith in people's ability to be moved and inspired by a complex piece of art. Again, the reference to trade unionism appears to imply both solidarity with wider working-class political struggle, and a concern on behalf of community organisations – in this case, the Festival Society – to find new ways of organising people in communities where work, and hence trade union activity, could no longer be taken for granted.

Soon after the project was handed over to the artists, Rita Winters started work at the Festival Society. As she recalls, the potential of the project had gone largely unheeded by others in the group:

[I] met the artists, who were working at St Leonard's school. And y'know because they talked 'art' which was sort of elliptical conversations, nobody could understand [laughs]. And I went up and went "bloody hell, this is

¹³⁴ Interview, Massey (2016).

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

great”. They were doing wonderful work. They were doing amazing work, y’know? So I came back [to the Festival Society] and I said “are you aware what’s going on up there?” and they said “naw, we keep away from it as much as possible, they do our heads in!” [laughs]. But you know it was sort of...so that became my remit, and I was doing all sorts of things, and it just seemed to me that this...once it was put up there...it was a work of art...it was *amazing*...and it would leverage...and it was the size of it.¹³⁶

As Winters alludes to here, there was a distinction between the way the artists approached their work, and the way others involved in the Festival Society approached theirs. Whereas the artists were focused on the message the mosaic projected and the quality of its production, other Festival Society employees were more concerned with the practical, day-to-day running of the organisation. If the mosaic made a statement about the role of chance and social class in governing people’s lives, Festival Society workers were busy working to tackle the issues the estate faced head-on. Winters believed that the mosaic had the potential to bridge these two dynamics.

As discussed, the initial impetus for the mosaic was to create job opportunities for young people. The YOP, a six-month paid traineeship, was launched in 1978 to stem the rising tide of youth unemployment. Over its lifespan, nearly a quarter of a million Scottish school leavers entered the programme.¹³⁷ Like many such schemes, it soon came to be regarded as a palliative measure, one which did little to challenge

¹³⁶ Interview, Winters (2016).

¹³⁷ John Fairley, ‘An Overview of the Development and Growth of the Manpower Services Commission in Scotland’, in Alice Brown and John Fairley (eds.), *The Manpower Services Commission in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1989), p.49 – the YOP was replaced with the Youth Training Scheme in 1983.

the macro-economic policies underlying structural unemployment.¹³⁸ Critics believed that the scheme imparted few valuable skills and operated as a pool of cheap labour.¹³⁹ The government was also accused of using the scheme to massage unemployment figures.¹⁴⁰ Although it utilised the scheme, the Festival recognised that the purpose of the YOP was largely to prepare young people for the world of work, rather than to create sustainable, long-term employment.¹⁴¹ If they were aware of the programme's limitations, Festival Society workers nevertheless felt that they could not afford to ignore the opportunities it presented. According to Rita Winters, the situation in Easterhouse had grown so pressing that when the Festival Society advertised for local tradesmen to help install the mosaic, the organisation was inundated with applicants:

there was people *desperate* to work. And these were grown men with families. And I said "but it's only part time...and it's hardly any money". But they were so desperate to work. They were willing to take it...and it wasn't anything to do with the mosaic, or any artistic, y'know...didn't want to be involved in anything like that, it was just cos they were desperate to work. [...] They were willing to work for next to *nothing*.¹⁴²

Whether or not the artistic elements of the mosaic meant something to those seeking work, Winters believed that one of the most important functions of the Easterhouse

¹³⁸ David Stewart Edwards, *The History and Politics of the Youth Opportunities Programme 1978-1983*, Unpublished PhD Thesis (Institute of Education, University of London, 1985), pp.8-9.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, p.50

¹⁴⁰ Keating, *The City that Refused to Die*, p.52.

¹⁴¹ The Bridge Library (hereafter, TBL), Easterhouse Festival Society Archive, *Organising Secretary's Report April 1982*.

¹⁴² Interview, Winters (2016).

mosaic was the employment it provided, on however short-term or poorly paid a basis.

Driven by the belief that '[t]he lack of real employment opportunities in Easterhouse is at once the biggest tragedy and challenge facing the area', the Festival Society's job creation activities had quickly taken a more ambitious turn.¹⁴³

In 1980, the organisation established Provanhall Holdings, a community company owned in trust by fifty people from across the estate.¹⁴⁴ The company was formed with three main aims: to create permanent jobs for local people, encourage small businesses to set up shops and services in the area, and to provide missing facilities.

Provanhall Holdings was inspired by the worker-owned industrial co-operatives of Mondragon, a small town in the Basque Country, which were established in 1956 when five young graduates set up a small business producing kerosene stoves. By the 1980s, the co-ops were manufacturing a wide range of products and had generated over eighteen thousand jobs.¹⁴⁵ Back in Easterhouse, the Festival Society was responsible for converting a disused school annex into a series of community workshops, and plans were soon in place to create a community betting shop and even a bank, the profits from which were to be reinvested in the area. The Lochend community shops were conceived as part of this agenda.

¹⁴³ EFS, *Five Years On*.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*; For an overview of the Mondragon co-operatives, see: William Foote Whyte and Kathleen King Whyte, *Making Mondragon: The Growth and Dynamics of The Worker Cooperative Complex* (Ithaca and London: IRL Press, 1988).

In the face of perceived neglect, it was not difficult to present both the mosaic and the wider Lochend scheme as a rebellious act. As one Festival Society publication argued:

The Inverlochry Street shops project is an important example of local people, angry about the effects of unemployment, the lack of services and the wastage of skills and talent, expressing that anger by taking direct action. What could be a more important statement of defiance and strength than to create our own company, open our own shops, create our own jobs, provide our own services and aim to provide resources for similar action in the future?¹⁴⁶

However, such rhetoric glosses over the fact that many (although, as we shall see, not all) of the Festival's undertakings sat well within the parameters of what the MSC and the District and Regional councils were willing to fund. In 1979, the SRC agreed to fund an employment officer role within the Festival structure (a role lobbied for by the Festival Society and taken up by Kieran Grant); and Provanhall Holdings was set up in collaboration with the various council departments working in the area.¹⁴⁷ Nor were community businesses unique to Easterhouse. In 1984, the SRC launched its Community Business initiative. In theory, this programme would help link public sector finance and advice with community initiatives across Strathclyde, creating targeted employment and allowing profits to be ploughed back into the locality.¹⁴⁸ As Keating and Mitchell point out, however, community-based

¹⁴⁶ EFS, *Five Years On*.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ Strathclyde Community Business Limited, *Community Economic Development in Strathclyde: A Review of Strathclyde Community Business, 1984-1987 and Proposals for 1988-1993* (Glasgow: Strathclyde Community Business Limited, 1987).

employment initiatives failed to find ways of integrating Easterhouse into the wider local economy.¹⁴⁹

The mosaic scheme also dovetailed neatly with many of the objectives of the SRC's Social Strategy. Despite a rhetorical emphasis on the structural determinants of deprivation, Regional policy tended to focus on small, self-contained self-help initiatives.¹⁵⁰ Generally speaking, the Region showed a marked preference for projects which focused on building consensus, giving people the self-respect and sense of identity that work may once have offered them, or encouraged fairly limited and uncontroversial forms of public participation, rather than actively changing people's material circumstances.¹⁵¹ Community involvement in the Lochend scheme demonstrates how such policies worked in practice. As Rita Winters details here, the scheme served an instructive function, namely educating residents in the art of articulating their needs to the council:

we had several meetings and I invited all the heads of all the various...the parks, the council, the police, the various people that were there. So I said these are the people that are going to help you, and you ask your questions to...so they came after and said "don't you do that to us again!!" ...and I go "why not?!" ...people have got to learn, they've got to learn, if they're not used to, y'know, otherwise all you'll get... [...] People can do things for themselves. Once they're shown how, and once they practice a bit.¹⁵²

As this excerpt reveals, residents were not necessarily comfortable with dealing with authority figures with whom relations were sometimes antagonistic. For

¹⁴⁹ Keating and Mitchell, 'Easterhouse'.

¹⁵⁰ Keating, *The City That Refused to Die*, p.151.

¹⁵¹ SRC, *Social Strategy*, pp.3-8; Charlie McConnell, (ed.), *Community Education: The Making of an Empowering Profession* (Edinburgh: Scottish Community Education Council, 1996), p.8.

¹⁵² Interview, Winters (2016).

Winters, the construction of the mosaic represented an opportunity for people to learn negotiation skills and develop the confidence to voice their demands. From her perspective, this was in keeping with the message of the mosaic – that people had the right to assume control over their own lives. Equally, however, the Festival stressed the need to work constructively with ‘those who control resources and profess an interest in the area’.¹⁵³ As discussed in Chapter Three, the normative assumption that the forms of participation ‘liaison government’ of this type offered were intrinsically empowering was one that met with criticism from those on the left, who argued that state-sponsored community development initiatives were often concerned with improving service delivery and diffusing tensions arising at the community level, rather than fostering genuine (and potentially critical) grassroots democracy. From this perspective, the mosaic scheme was less a means of voicing anger or defiance, so much as giving people’s anger an outlet that local authorities would recognise as appropriately constructive.

In Easterhouse, differing views on what a community art project could or should endeavour to achieve were always interwoven with the seemingly simple desire to provide the estate with a work of art that was considered beautiful. However, even the provision of ‘art for art’s sake’ proved to be a charged statement in an area where residents were often treated as if they were underserving of such a ‘luxury’. When pressed on the symbolism of the mural, Winters diverts the question away from its visual content towards the idea that the presence of an object of artistic merit in a community like Easterhouse was symbolic in and of itself:

¹⁵³ Interview, Winters (2016).

I think the symbolism of the whole thing was to create something that was beautiful...large enough to have an impact on an area...great as a lever to develop the area round about it... [...] cos I was told when I used to go round the businesses and showed them it, or invited them up to see what was being done, then they would say “It’s beautiful – but why’re you doing it here?”... I’d say “well, where do you think we should do it?” – “och, do it in Bearsden”. Y’know? “Or do it out in the West End. Or maybe down in the posh places, down in Shawlands. In Clarkston, places like that”. I’m going...“well, why not in Easterhouse? Don’t they deserve something beautiful and decent?”. Rather than having scrappy old rubbish being thrown up for them, or “anything’s good enough for them”. I said “isn’t that a tremendous insult to humanity, never mind Easterhouse? Do something beautiful and see how it gets on. It may get destroyed or it may not”. And it didn’t.¹⁵⁴

In this interpretation, the very existence of a work of art of this calibre in Easterhouse spoke to the idea that the community deserved (and could appreciate) what other, better off areas could take for granted.

In this excerpt, Winters also touches on the prevalence of graffiti and vandalism, or lack thereof, as an indication that residents valued and felt ownership of the mosaic. In 1965, Easterhouse had been singled out by the Glasgow Corporation (forerunner of the GDC) as being in need of special measures to curb vandalism, and the idea that graffiti in particular was becoming an increasingly prevalent feature of the urban landscape (in Easterhouse and elsewhere) continued to attract media attention during the 1970s.¹⁵⁵ Many drew an association between apparently mindless vandalism and social and moral decline, and this association also played into anxieties about the relationship between juvenile delinquency and the psychological effects of living in the so-called ‘concrete jungle’.¹⁵⁶ Elsewhere, it was used as

¹⁵⁴ Interview, Winters (2016).

¹⁵⁵ Armstrong and Wilson, ‘City Politics’, p.71; Thomson, *Lost Freedom*, p.209.

¹⁵⁶ Thomson, *Lost Freedom*, p.209.

evidence of the apparent failure of post-war planning, particularly by those who supported the sale of council housing.¹⁵⁷

Others took a more open-minded view. In 1973, Colin Ward published *Vandalism*, an edited collection of essays which characterised graffiti as a relatively harmless form of play or self-expression.¹⁵⁸ Rejecting the environmental determinism of the Chicago School of sociology on which so much contemporary thought on post-war planning was based, one chapter by sociologist Laurie Taylor proposed that children reacted not against the planned environment per se, but their sense that the places where they lived belonged to someone else – in this instance, the local state.¹⁵⁹ To counter this, Ward suggested that tenants should be allowed to complete or alter their estates, since, in his view: ‘[p]eople care about what is *theirs*, what they can modify, alter, improve and take pride in. They must have a hand in their environment to make it truly their own’.¹⁶⁰ Although radical approaches of this type largely went unheeded, responses amongst architects and officials indicate a growing acceptance of the idea that some degree of vandalism was an inevitable feature of the urban landscape. As Thomson suggests, this more permissive approach was motivated in part by new, more liberal attitudes towards young people.¹⁶¹ Nevertheless, it tended to come hand in hand with less authoritarian but perhaps more pervasive and subtle forms of spatial governance, which included the

¹⁵⁷ See, for example: Alice Coleman, *Utopia on Trial* (London: Hilary Shipman, 1985).

¹⁵⁸ Stanley Cohen, ‘Property Destruction: Motives and Meanings’, in Colin Ward (ed.), *Vandalism* (London: The Architectural Press, 1973), p.47.

¹⁵⁹ Laurie Taylor, ‘The Meaning of the Environment’, in Ward, *Vandalism*, p.55, p.62.

¹⁶⁰ Colin Ward, ‘Notes on the Future of Vandalism’, in Ward, *Vandalism*, p.289.

¹⁶¹ Thomson, *Lost Freedom*, p.213.

introduction of surveillance cameras, flood lighting, street furniture and educational campaigns.¹⁶² Some of these approaches were adopted in Easterhouse. In the year leading up to the unveiling of the mural, Winters visited schools and community groups in the area, acclimatising people to the idea that the work belonged to them. Despite the efforts of those on the job creation schemes, the completed mosaic was only ever partially the work and vision of those living in the community. If Festival Society workers understood that people would be more likely to look after their environment if they felt they had some stake in its development, they also recognised that this feeling of ownership was one that would have to be carefully incubated, betraying, to some extent, the idea that the mosaic was truly the unmediated expression of Easterhouse residents themselves.

This concern with vandalism reflected a wider concern with the poor reputation Easterhouse held in the eyes of those outside the estate. Press attention was not uniformly negative. In 1979, BBC 2 invited the Festival Society to create a programme about Easterhouse for its half-hour community show *Open Door*; in the same year, STV turned its daily news show *Scotland Today* over to the Easterhouse and Craigmillar Festival Societies.¹⁶³ However, as with Craigmillar, it was not uncommon for articles about Easterhouse to reinforce unhelpful stereotypes: one profile published in the *Evening Times* in June 1985 - under the headline 'Worst Housing, Health, Social and Unemployment in Britain' - noted, with some degree of surprise, that the mosaic had survived for 18 months without damage.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Thomson, *Lost Freedom*, p.213

¹⁶³ EFS, *Five Years On*.

¹⁶⁴ *The Evening Times*, 12 June 1985.

According to Elphick, the press, ever on the hunt for a sensationalist story, actively sought to use the unveiling of the mosaic to reaffirm the estate's association with delinquency and environmental decay:

Easterhouse was always seen as trouble...I remember when we opened the mosaic, the BBC, so it must have been BBC Scotland I would imagine, sent along a camera crew...and all they were interested in was...when it was gonna get graffitied?¹⁶⁵

It was precisely because of this expectation that Winters recognised the importance of generating positive publicity from outside the estate for the unveiling of the mosaic. Despite Winters' insistence that Easterhouse residents deserved the highest quality of artistic provision, this concern with publicity suggest that the use the Festival Society made of art could not help but be shaped by the estates' social and economic position vis a vis wider society. Festival Society workers positioned the mosaic and the message it portrayed to the world as an act of defiance. However, as in Craigmillar, the fact that the community had to present itself as deserving of amenities or investment through its 'correct' response to a work of art at all suggests that moralistic ideas about the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor were still at work. The welfare system that emerged in the post-war period was not necessarily a neutral purveyor of state munificence. Communities like Easterhouse were required to respond to a welfare system which paid out dividends only in so far as its recipients appeared to adopt the behaviours of self-disciplined and constructive citizens, particularly as the universalism of the post-war welfare state was eroded

¹⁶⁵ Interview, Elphick (2016).

and the trope of the ‘welfare scrounger’ gained deeper traction.¹⁶⁶ As stated in its *First Annual Report*, one of the Festival Society’s key objectives was to ‘show the authorities that we as a community are prepared to organise things for ourselves’, a statement which suggests that, in its bid to improve Easterhouse’s image, being *seen* to take action or to act responsibly was almost as important as action itself. Unlike in more affluent areas of the city, art, in Easterhouse, could never exist simply for the sake of enjoyment by residents: it was always caught up in wider urban policy agendas relating to employment and governance.

4.6 The End of the Festival Society

On the 15th of May 1986, it was reported in *The Herald* that police had been called to intervene in a ‘fracas’ that had broken out the previous evening at the Festival Society’s Tronda Place premises. The incident occurred during a heated public meeting held to discuss the future of the organisation.¹⁶⁷ The Festival Society had found itself in crisis earlier in the year after its main funder, the SRC, launched an investigation into its finances and warned that funding would cease unless the organisation accepted recommendations designed to make it more accountable to the public.¹⁶⁸ On the 20th of May, at a further public meeting attended by over 300 people, a faction within the executive committee suggested that the organisation should elect to become a private limited company. This proposal was rejected by

¹⁶⁶ Flint, ‘Housing and Ethopolitics’; Blokland, “‘You’ve got to remember you live in public housing’’: Place-making in an American Housing Project’, *Housing, Theory and Society*, 25:1 (2008), pp.31–46.

¹⁶⁷ *The Herald*, 15 May 1986.

¹⁶⁸ By 1986, two-thirds of the Festival Society’s funding came via Urban Aid.

the community (and also by some members of the executive committee).¹⁶⁹ Despite attempts to continue, the Festival Society was forced to close its doors to the public the following month due to ongoing internal disputes.¹⁷⁰

The campaign against the Festival Society's restructuring plans was spearheaded by *The Voice*, which had undergone several incarnations itself since it was established in 1972. Under Ron Ferguson, the paper had been supportive of the Festival Society's initiatives. Later, the position of editor was assumed by Easterhouse resident Jamie Burns, under whose watch publicity remained largely favourable. By early 1986, however, the paper was in the hands of a group of young radicals, some of whom had previously been involved with the Festival Society and were unhappy with the way the organisation was run. Comparing their tactics to those of Militant within the Labour Party, one profile in *The Herald* reported that:

[*The Voice*] is now run by a group of young men and women who describe themselves as a "loose collective". They are united, they say, by a resentment of the way in which the Easterhouse Festival Society...has allegedly become autocratic and non-accountable to the people.¹⁷¹

In April 1986, the collective published an issue of *The Voice* which contained damning allegations of financial mismanagement and accused certain members of the Festival Society of profiting from public funds.¹⁷² Soon after, 11 members of the collective were served writs from the Festival Society's lawyers, claiming

¹⁶⁹ *The Herald*, 21 May 1986.

¹⁷⁰ *The Herald*, 19 June 1986.

¹⁷¹ *The Herald*, 23 May 1986.

¹⁷² *The Voice*, March/April 1986.

damages for defamation amounting to £110,000.¹⁷³ Although the veracity of these allegations and counter-allegations remains unclear, *The Herald* asserted that the campaign waged by *The Voice* clearly represented ‘a new mood of disillusionment and resentment in Easterhouse’.¹⁷⁴

This was not the first time that the Festival Society had raised the ire of some sections of the community. In 1981, the Festival had attracted unfavourable attention when two of its development officers, Jim Brady and Malcolm Knight, were sacked for making allegations in the press that the organisation had been infiltrated by supporters of the Chicago-based Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA).¹⁷⁵ According to left-wing critics, the ICA was funded by large corporations and intervened in deprived communities ‘to take the edge off genuine political protest’.¹⁷⁶ Other critics were angered by the belief that paid staff members were trading off Easterhouse’s reputation as a ‘troubled’ community. One member of *The Voice* told reporters: ‘we were being sold to financial supporters as poor, ignorant and deprived and the society was receiving large sums of money with which some of the central figures created a career structure for themselves’.¹⁷⁷ The notion that the Festival Society was run by ‘outsiders’ was a longstanding one.¹⁷⁸ Although the organisation had always been a mix of residents and outsiders, by 1986, most of those involved from the beginning had moved on. By late 1982,

¹⁷³ *The Herald*, 23 May 1986.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ *New Society*, 25 April 1986.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ *The Herald*, 23 May 1986.

¹⁷⁸ *The Voice*, March/April 1986.

Grace Grant had left to work for Mayfest (discussed in Chapter 6), before emigrating to Australia with her husband, Kieran. Other members of the original group also left in the early eighties – including administrator Helen McCormack and drama co-ordinator Robert Robson, who went on to pursue a successful career in professional theatre. Ron Ferguson also left Easterhouse in 1979; Bill Marshall in 1985. New members of the executive committee tended to come from a professional arts background. For example, Charles Hart, who was appointed Chief Administrator in 1985, had previously worked for the Scottish Society of Playwrights.¹⁷⁹ Allegations of careerism abounded, with some members of the executive committee who lived in Easterhouse accusing other Festival Society workers of using the organisation as a stepping-stone to more prestigious roles. This insider/outsider dynamic was summed up by one resident and Festival Society volunteer, Ruby Hamilton, as follows: ‘At the end of the day it’s our home, our community, and we won’t be swanning off after having built a reputation bringing culture to the poor, deprived natives in Easterhouse’.¹⁸⁰

As Hamilton’s comment suggests, there were many who resented the way in which the presence of professional arts workers seemed to imply that a working-class community like Easterhouse somehow lacked a worthwhile culture of its own. Hamilton’s tone also points to a further irony inherent in the very existence of an organisation like the Festival Society – namely that, to attract funding, it often had to lean on the very reputation for poverty or lack of ‘community spirit’ that its art

¹⁷⁹ *The Herald*, 22 May 1986.

¹⁸⁰ *The Herald*, 15 May 1986.

and drama productions simultaneously sought to dispel. As Wacquant argues, even those policies – such as the provision of Urban Aid monies - designed to help ‘rehabilitate’ estates can have the unanticipated effect of reinforcing stigma by contributing to the idea that life on the estate is somehow beyond the norm, leading to further marginalisation of residents.¹⁸¹ For some residents, the presence of a community arts organisation was the badge of a deprived community, not a defiant one.

Hamilton’s statement also raises questions about who has the right to represent or ‘speak’ on behalf of the community – and indeed, the very existence of a coherent ‘community’ at all. According to Bourdieu, the relationship between the community and the ‘delegate’ – the person (or group) chosen (or who chooses) to represent the community to outsiders is often a problematic one: the delegate can all too often perform an act of ‘embezzlement’, claiming the right to speak for the community in order to further themselves professionally – something interviewees were understandably keen to deny.¹⁸² Bourdieu also warns of the danger that the delegate may conflate their ability to speak for a specific group or project with an assumed ability to speak for the community as a whole.¹⁸³ Festival Society workers frequently spoke of using community art as a means by which to give Easterhouse residents a ‘voice’, an act of rhetorical elision which often downplayed their facilitating and mediating role. According to Elphick, for example: ‘the values behind the Festival Society were [...] about people helping each other and actually

¹⁸¹ Loic Wacquant, ‘Territorial Stigmatization in the Age of Advanced Marginality’, *Thesis Eleven*, 91 (2007), pp.66-77.

¹⁸² Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, p.148.

¹⁸³ *Ibid*, p.148.

finding a voice. And using that voice to let everyone else to know that they were here, they had a lot of strengths and skills, and that they shouldn't be ignored'.¹⁸⁴

As Flint argues, professional groups (such as housing officials or social workers) form an 'intermediary class' who function as:

transmitters of knowledge to their working-class 'clients' whose conduct they seek to shape in relation to a set of constructed codes of normalized and responsible behaviour, influenced by, but certainly not wholly convergent with, directives and discourse from central government.¹⁸⁵

Given that it did not require a specific qualification or offer a clear career structure, the role of 'community artist' was not a profession in the strict sense of the word, and Festival Society staff, who included a mix of residents and non-residents, certainly did not see themselves as 'community professionals' enmeshed in the technologies of urban governance. Indeed, attempts to turn the Festival into a limited company were premised on the idea that the organisation could do more to help the area if it was not constrained by dependence on ever-vulnerable public funds.¹⁸⁶ Nevertheless, as discussed above, Festival Society workers did at times see their role as a pedagogical one. This did not always sit well with other members of the community: as early as 1981, the organisation found itself having to counter claims made by some residents that they operated as an 'Urban Aid Propaganda Machine', working to encourage people to behave as responsible (or from another perspective, compliant) citizens.¹⁸⁷ Such tensions and accusations were not unique

¹⁸⁴ Interview, Elphick (2016).

¹⁸⁵ Flint, 'Housing and Ethopolitics'.

¹⁸⁶ Interview, Elphick (2016).

¹⁸⁷ TBL, EFS, *Organising Secretary's Report*.

to Easterhouse. As Keating points out, small-scale interventions of the type encouraged by community development programmes were often ‘just enough to raise expectations’ whilst resources remained inadequate, leading to ‘a constant questioning of representativeness and legitimacy of community spokesmen’.¹⁸⁸

As Ravetz notes, in the process of trying to validate estate life to outsiders, cultural projects (regardless of their substance or political message) often find it difficult to escape the ‘taint of cultural evangelism’ of the sort associated with Victorian moralists keen to use the arts to encourage ‘respectable’ middle-class taste and values amongst the ‘masses’.¹⁸⁹ Elphick characterised this residual mistrust as a “‘getting all middle class on us’ sort of attitude’.¹⁹⁰ Reflecting on the eventual implosion of the Festival Society, Elphick acknowledged that, in an area of high unemployment and considerable social stress, it was not surprising that some people would consider spending money on the arts as an extravagance that the area could ill afford:

You had whole streets of people where there was no one in work...so I think to come along and talk about singing and music was seen as very odd. Both outside and inside. I mean there were people within Easterhouse who didn’t like what we did either, who considered that it was a waste of time and money [...] there were certainly people who could see...who wouldn’t understand why the Festival were doing things like theatre. Y’know, “what’s that got to do with community action?”¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ Keating, *The City that Refused to Die*, p.161.

¹⁸⁹ Ravetz, p.228.; see also: Mold, ‘The Welfare Branch of the Alternative Society?’.

¹⁹⁰ Interview, Elphick (2016).

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

However, whereas the collective Manning *The Voice* positioned the Festival as a mechanism through which state policies could be implemented, Festival workers presented the withdrawal of funding as a reaction to the radicalism of the Festival's agenda. Elphick, and Marshall both expressed a belief that the organisation had – in the eyes of the Region, at least – proven too ambitious. In Elphick's opinion:

I think one of the problems with the Labour attitude in Glasgow was that it was incredibly paternalistic. And there was a very clear value within Easterhouse and Craigmillar that it was about helping people develop their own strengths and skills. So not telling people what they had to do all the time.¹⁹²

For Marshall, much of the antagonism from the Region rested on divergent attitudes towards people's need and capacity for self-determination. Although prepared to fund an arts group, the SRC was, he believed, less willing to support an organisation that was attempting to free itself from the vagaries of urban funding regimes by building up its own economic base. Moreover, if the arts provided individuals with self-esteem and self-respect - necessary preconditions of community empowerment – they might spark a wider process of social and political action across the community, something which Marshall felt, for all their emphasis on 'participation', the Region was wary of:

all you had to do was give people the opportunities. Give people the opportunities, they'll take them. That's the real politics of it. And that's the difference. Do you control, or do you risk not having control? And we thought that...we *knew* that the right way to do it was to allow people to discover themselves.¹⁹³

¹⁹² Interview, Elphick (2016).

¹⁹³ Interview, Marshall (2016).

It is perhaps inevitable that Festival Society workers, reflecting on the bitter way in which the organisation ended, would seek to present their work in a positive light and highlight its radicalism rather than accept that its implosion might rest on other, more prosaic reasons. Whether the official justification the Region gave for withdrawing funding – lack of financial and democratic accountability – was motivated by other considerations is difficult to discern. Certainly, the paternalistic nature of Glaswegian municipal socialism (and aspects of the post-war welfare state more generally) has been widely acknowledged. As Keating notes, despite the myths of Red Clydeside, Glasgow's Labour politicians largely practised 'a type of politics which put little emphasis on active participation'.¹⁹⁴

To some extent, Festival Society workers were right to pin-point their emphasis on self-help as one of the factors that contributed to the organisation's eventual demise, albeit not necessarily for the reasons they suggested. The notion of self-help has a contradictory provenance: although now closely associated with the 'Victorian values' or moralistic ideas of self-sufficiency promoted by Thatcher, it also has a long left-wing or working-class legacy centred around friendly societies, penny libraries, community education, trade unions and co-ops, as well as more informal networks of neighbourly assistance.¹⁹⁵ As Welshman argues, post-war social policy shied away from the subject of personal agency, preferring to promote policies

¹⁹⁴ Keating, *The City That Refused to Die*, pp.10-11

¹⁹⁵ Raphael Samuels, 'Mrs. Thatcher's Return to Victorian Values', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 78 (1992), pp.9-29; Welshman, *Underclass*, p.163; David Goodway and Colin Ward, *Talking Anarchy* (Nottingham: Five Leaves, 2003), p.17-18

which were universal and non-judgemental.¹⁹⁶ However, over time critics on the libertarian left as well as the New Right came to believe that the welfare state had eroded these older cultures of self-help and community organisation. Whereas the right understood agency in individualistic terms, the Festival Society sought to rekindle collective traditions by encouraging people to create their own employment opportunities or establish collectively run services and amenities. Yet in doing so, the Festival Society relied on government funding, bringing it into dialogue with urban policies designed to serve ameliorative and sometimes morally prescriptive ends – as activists coalescing around *The Voice* who did not accept the ‘radicalism’ of this agenda were quick to point out.

4.7 Conclusions

By the late 1970s, community art had begun to gain a foothold at local government level. The provision of funding for community arts projects – whilst rarely amounting to any great sum of money – was in keeping with a broader realisation that art and culture might be employed to serve social and economic ends; it was also a function of the wider growth of community development work in Scotland, particularly in Strathclyde. As we have seen, the Easterhouse Festival Society sometimes sat in uneasy relation to local authority community development agendas, and in its many artistic productions, the organisation asserted a more emphatically left-wing message about working-class agency and collective strength than anything the Regional or District Council was ever likely to voice itself. If it has become a historiographical commonplace that working-class culture was

¹⁹⁶ Welshman, *Underclass*, p.xxvii.

heavily eroded during the 1980s, leading to a break-down in class solidarity and communal identity, the fact that many of the Festival Society's drama productions utilised and reworked older forms of popular culture suggests an ongoing desire in some communities at least to reclaim and reinvigorate the culture of working-class defiance and collectivity with which these forms were closely associated.¹⁹⁷ And yet, the fact that the Festival Society depended heavily on local authority funding made it difficult not to see council officials as one of the key 'audiences' for its work and the activities and behaviour of Easterhouse residents more generally.

Meanwhile, at a city-wide level, another form of instrumentalisation was at work: during the 1980s the arts were fast becoming a cornerstone of Glasgow District Council's new post-industrial economic strategy. Whereas the arts were embraced at a city-wide level to project an image of a 'new Glasgow' which would attract tourism and inward investment (unlikely to improve the lot of those living in peripheral housing schemes), the Festival Society recognised that publicity, for Easterhouse, was first and foremost about improving the everyday lives of residents. Whether this was achieved in practice remains a matter of debate. Certainly, the art and drama produced by the Festival Society was met with much critical acclaim. As David Harding recalls of the Easterhouse mosaic:

I went on a lecture tour of America in...I think it was '84. And when I got to Chicago, artists were saying to me [animated voice] "have you any images of the Easterhouse mosaic?!". They had heard about it, and wanted to see it. Now, who could believe that Easterhouse at that time, with its reputation for crime and poverty and everything like that, and these

¹⁹⁷ Wacquant, *Urban Outcasts*, p.6; Wacquant suggests a 'new regime of urban poverty' began to emerge in the late 1970s, one typified not only by a growing gulf between rich and poor, but also by divisions within the working-class.

community artists, in America...they had heard about this great mosaic. The Great Wall of Easterhouse, y'know?¹⁹⁸

However, as we have seen, there were groups in the community who felt that, despite the radical message conveyed by its art and drama productions, community art served the needs of professionals, outsiders, and local authorities more than the needs of Easterhouse residents themselves. As discussed in Chapter Six, these debates about the radicalism or reformism of community arts projects are in many ways typical of wider debates ongoing during the 1970s and 1980s about the role of community development – and community development workers – in the wider sphere of urban governance.

¹⁹⁸ Interview, Harding (2015).

Chapter Five: Film and Video Workshops (1981-1990)

By the time the Easterhouse Festival Society shut its doors in June 1986, a number of new community arts projects had sprung up across Scotland. These projects were typically run on a small budget and lacked the bureaucratic infrastructure the Festival Societies commanded, employing only a few members of staff at any one time. Meanwhile, urban life in Scotland continued to undergo significant changes. Few of those working in peripheral housing estates could fail to notice the steady advance of physical decline as housing was sold off by the Conservative government; nor were they unmoved by new social problems such as long-term unemployment, the growing prevalence of drug abuse and the AIDS epidemic. Perhaps unsurprisingly given these circumstances, many community arts projects assumed an openly political stance during this period, often seeking ways to align artistic practice with local and national political campaigns. The ways in which groups chose to express their politics were also changing, aided by the increasing availability of equipment such as portable video recorders and relatively cheap film cameras. Some were also inspired by the aesthetics and democratising impulses of youth movements such as punk and DIY. It was this spirit of experimentation and openness to new media technologies that guided the emergence of the first Scottish film and video workshops.

Although a vibrant network of alternative media workshops had been active in England from the late 1960s onwards, it was not until 1977, the year in which the Edinburgh Film Workshop Trust (EFWT) was established, that Scotland gained its first comprehensive resource dedicated to using film and video to address social

issues and community concerns.¹ By the early 1980s, Scotland boasted around a dozen such groups. The politics and practices of these groups were by no means identical. Nevertheless, they shared a broadly left-wing agenda which found expression not only in the content of the media produced, but also in the ways it was produced, and by whom.² Groups were usually organised in a non-hierarchical fashion and were committed to a conception of production that aimed to widen participation and break down the barriers between professional and non-professional. It was often through these alternative media projects that the ideals of cultural democratisation were most explicitly stated or came closest to being realised. This reflects both the pressing political and social concerns of the late 1970s and early 1980s and the availability and popularity of certain types of technology particularly conducive to participatory ways of working.

The relationship between process and product was one of the key debates at the heart of the community arts movement, and for many practitioners it was largely through process work that social, political or educational goals were attained. These included attempts to overcome the marginalisation of working-class culture by making it visible; ongoing struggles over housing and social amenities; and engagement with wider political struggles. There was also an emphasis on visual literacy, and film and video-based process work encouraged those involved to think critically about issues such as the politics of representation and media bias. Above

¹ For an overview of oppositional filmmaking largely focusing on the English context, see: Margaret Dickenson, *Rogue Reels: Oppositional Film in Britain 1945-90* (London: BFI, 1999).

² Bob Nowland and Zach Finch (eds.), *Directory of World Cinema: Scotland* (Bristol and Chicago: Intellect Books, 2015), p.39.

all, whether creating campaign tapes, producing drama or simply recording scenes of everyday life, film and video practitioners approached the process of making moving images as a space where social or political solidarity might be forged.

This chapter places these developments within a longer trajectory of Scottish filmmaking and considers some of the theoretical currents which informed leftist attitudes to the media in the post-war period and beyond. Using the examples of Edinburgh-based Video in Pilton and Glasgow-based Cranhill Arts, it goes on to explore the working practices and the aesthetic outputs of two film and video projects.³ Bringing interviews with participants and practitioners into dialogue with archival footage allows us to examine how the interplay between process and product played out in practice; it also allows us to consider how the particular context of urban life in 1980s Scotland shaped the uses to which the medium was put. Finally, this chapter touches on the ever-fraught relationship between community arts and notions of artistic ‘excellence’. Whilst the SAC continued to deliberate over how community arts projects should be assessed and, indeed, whether they should be funded at all, community arts and video workers set out to demonstrate that, for all their emphasis on process work, a commitment to high aesthetic standards remained an important aspect of their work and constituted an integral part of the politics of community-based practice.

³ The Cranhill Arts Project was not limited to film. For a discussion of the project’s photography work, see pp.314-317.

5.1 Alternative Filmmaking in Scotland

Alternative filmmaking practices in Scotland, from amateur or avant-garde filmmaking to local broadcasting, remain relatively under-researched in comparison with their English counterparts.⁴ Due to Scotland's culturally and politically subordinate position within the UK media, there has been an unhelpful tendency to view *all* Scottish moving image production as somehow 'alternative' to the largely London-based mainstream, even when produced for mass audiences through conventional production systems.⁵ As Chris Atton suggests, the term 'alternative media' is better reserved for media forms or practices which encourage wider social participation, with greater scope for unconventional working practices and local control than is usually offered by the mass media.⁶

With this definition in mind, it is worth sketching a brief outline of the history of alternative moving image production in Scotland. The potential for the moving image to serve as a platform for political messages, provoke debate or galvanise viewers into action was apparent from the earliest days of film projection.⁷ As early as 1917, suffragists were screening a film of Scottish women's field hospitals in war-time France to promote the cause of votes for women, whilst in 1922, recognising cinema's educational potential, John Maclean and others associated

⁴ On this point, see: Robin Macpherson, 'Peripheral Visions? Alternative Film in a Stateless Nation', in Chris Atton (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Alternative and Community Media* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), p.268 – key exceptions are referenced in the footnotes that follow.

⁵ Chris Atton, 'Alternative Media in Scotland: Problems, Positions and 'Product'', *Critical Quarterly*, 42:4 (2000), pp.40-46.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Nowland and Finch, *Directory*, p.31.

with Red Clydeside made the case for municipal cinemas.⁸ The 1930s saw the rise of documentary photography and filmmaking, and again, the impetus was often didactic. Pioneers such as Perthshire-born John Grierson, who worked for the Empire Marketing Board and was later appointed head of the General Post Office Film Unit, argued that for as long as ordinary people were not kept apprised of political and economic events – whether this referred to the economic crisis of the 1930s or the rise of European dictatorships – true democracy could never be possible.⁹ Writing in 1980, media activists Heinz Nigg and Graham Wade asserted that this faith in the relationship between access to media and informed citizenship was ‘powerfully echoed in many of the attitudes of alternative media workers who hope to overcome social disadvantage by introducing cameras and recorders into their communities’ – with the added caveat that the camera should be held in the hands of ‘ordinary people’ rather than in the hands of the professional documentary maker.¹⁰

The 1930s also witnessed the birth of the workers’ film movement, one strand of a thriving and sociable culture of left-wing experiments in workers’ theatre, photography, literature and radio that emerged across America, Britain and Europe in the inter-war years.¹¹ Inspired by organisations such as the Federation of

⁸ Macpherson, ‘Peripheral Visions?’, p.270.

⁹ John Tagg, *The Disciplinary Frame: Photographic Truths and the Capture of Meaning* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), p.69.

¹⁰ Heinz Nigg and Graham Wade, *Community Media: Community Communication in the UK* (Zurich: Regenborg-Verlag, 1980), p.18.

¹¹ Don Macpherson (ed.), *Traditions of Independence: British Cinema in the Thirties* (London: BFI, 1980); Bert Hogenkamp, *Deadly Parallels: Film and the Left in Britain, 1929-1939* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1986).

Workers' Film Societies (the first branch of which was founded in London in 1929) and the Workers' Film and Photo League (founded in America in 1930), across Britain, societies were set up to produce, distribute and screen films or alternative newsreels which captured both scenes of everyday working life and footage of trade union activity, strikes and marches.¹² According to Trevor Ryan, '[a] particular attraction of film for these film groups was its supposed capacity for reproducing 'reality'. The presentation of the 'real' on screen was a conscious aim, in direct opposition to the 'artificiality' of the commercial cinema'.¹³ Again, this perceived need to counter the glamorous or escapist images of mainstream filmmaking (as well as the media's willingness to downplay the full extent of harsh social conditions in depression-era Britain) has clear parallels with the attitudes of those who accessed film and video workshops in the 1970s and 1980s, and who saw similar fissures opening up between everyday reality and the narratives about their lives told on screen.

Typically, film societies evaded the strictures of censorship by operating out of trade union, Communist, Independent Labour Party or Labour Party branches. In Scotland, film societies could soon be found in Glasgow, Edinburgh and other cities.¹⁴ Screenings of films from the Soviet Union were particularly popular. As

¹² Terry Dennett, 'England: the (Workers') Film & Photo League', in *Photography/Politics: One* (London: Photography Workshop, 1979), pp.100-117.

¹³ Trevor Ryan, cited in Julian Petley, 'The Struggle Continues: The Miners' Campaign Video Tapes', in Ian W. Macdonald and Simon Popple (eds.), *Digging the Seam: Popular Cultures of the 1984/5 Miners' Strike* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), p.89.

¹⁴ These included the Film Society of Glasgow (established 1929) and the Edinburgh Workers Progressive Film Society (established 1930).

works such as Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) and Pudovkin's *Mother* (1926) and *The End of St Petersburg* (1927) were distributed through the network of film societies, a growing number of would-be filmmakers were inspired to use film to advance their own political causes.¹⁵ The Glasgow Kino Group, for example, a group founded in 1935 and centred round the Glasgow School of Art, made a number of anti-arms trade shorts, including Helen Biggar and Norman McLaren's *Hell Unlimited* (1936), which utilised an unusual combination of animation, archival footage and agitprop.¹⁶

By the 1930s, Scotland could claim some of the highest rates of cinema attendance in Europe. Yet a culture of Scottish filmmaking was less pronounced than might have been expected in a country which by the 1950s boasted more cinemas per head of population than Britain as a whole, and levels of domestic film output remained lower in Scotland than in other nations of a comparable size.¹⁷ Scotland's developing culture of experimentation in radical, oppositional or avant-garde filmmaking largely fell into abeyance with the advent of the Second World War, lying dormant until the 1970s.¹⁸ In the post-war years, far more energy was poured into the practice of politically engaged theatre. Indeed, some of Scottish filmmaking's most promising talents chose to work in theatre rather than film after

¹⁵ Nowland and Finch, *Directory*, p.33.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.33.

¹⁷ Trevor Griffiths, *The Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland, 1896–1950* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), p.1; Macpherson, 'Peripheral Visions?', p.268.

¹⁸ This is not to say that there were no attempts to forge a leftist film culture in post-war Britain; for an overview, see Bert Hogenkamp, *Film, Television and the Left in Britain, 1950 to 1970* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2000).

the war, such as Helen Biggar, who worked extensively with Glasgow Unity Theatre. Of the politically-inflected film work that was made during this era, much of it drew on Scottish drama and theatre culture. *The Gorbals Story* (1950), directed by David MacKane, was adapted from Robert McLeish's 1946 play of the same name, whilst the 1952 film *The Brave Don't Cry*, based on the story of the Knockshinnoch Castle Colliery disaster, used actors from Glasgow's Citizens Theatre. Both films offered a critical perspective on class politics, but they were rare examples. Although a production of 7:84 Scotland's *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black Black Oil* was aired on the BBC in 1974, Scottish productions rarely commanded the means to reach wide audiences.¹⁹ Elsewhere, a small but active group of (often left-leaning) film societies made forays into the production of their own films, perhaps the most celebrated example of which was Dawn Cine, founded in 1953 as the production wing of The Clydeside Film Society and discussed in greater detail below (pp.274-275). Scotland was also home to a small number of experimental filmmakers operating beyond the margins of the mainstream. Pioneering figures included Margaret Tait, who made over 30 largely self-funded films between 1951 and 1981 and whose work combined the international avant-garde with more traditional strands of Scottish culture; and Enrico Coccozza, who often employed amateur casts and crews from Wishaw, his home town, in his surrealist films.²⁰

¹⁹ Nowland and Finch, *Directory*, p.38.

²⁰ Malcolm Dickson and Chris Byrne, 'Moving History', *Variant*, 6 (1998), pp.19-20; on Coccozza, and cultures of 'amateur' filmmaking in Scotland more generally, see: Ryan Shand, *Amateur Cinema: History, Theory and Genre (1930-80)*, Unpublished PhD Thesis (Glasgow: Glasgow University, 2007).

With little locally-based filmmaking infrastructure for mainstream cinema, let alone more experimental strands, it is hardly surprising that Scotland evidenced little to parallel to the growing film co-operative sector which developed in England from the late 1960s onwards. Nor did it boast a body such as the Independent Filmmakers Association, founded in 1974 to support socially-engaged filmmaking.²¹ Resources were so limited in Scotland that it frequently fell to non-Scottish film co-ops to create work on Scottish issues. The Upper Clyde Shipyard workers, for example, invited London collective Cinema Action to document their historic ‘work in’ of 1971, resulting in the films *USCI* (1971) and *Class Struggle – Film From The Clyde* (1977).

By the mid-1970s, however, changes were afoot, largely prompted by the advent of new video technologies. Video tape was first developed after the Second World War, but it was not until 1969 that Sony launched the AV-3400 Portapak, the first readily available portable video camera. The Portapak was easy to use and allowed for instant playback: it could be slung over the shoulder or held in the hand, and came with an inbuilt microphone. Unlike film, which could be expensive - and time-consuming to process - the advent of (relatively) cheap and easy to use video technology allowed a far broader constituency of people to make or capture moving images, making it an obvious medium for those interested in issues of democratisation. Tapes were also easy to distribute, given that they could be played at any time and that anyone with two VCRs could reproduce them. The use of video had been pioneered in late 1960s Britain by countercultural figures such as John

²¹ Macpherson, ‘Peripheral Visions?’, p.271.

‘Hoppy’ Hopkins, who in 1969 co-founded video and communication workshop TVX. In 1974, Hopkins and his partner Sue Hall set up the video resource Fantasy Factory (1974) to bring low-tech video editing within the reach of community activists and artists.²² In 1974, the Association of Video Workers was formed; and in 1977 the London Community Video Worker’s Collective was established.²³ Although Scottish workshops did not always come under the purview of these umbrella organisations, many Scottish practitioners kept themselves apprised of their activities.²⁴ Another important antecedent for the sort of politically-inflected video work practised in Scotland, as in Britain more widely, was the Canadian Challenge for Change Programme, which was set up in 1966 with support from the National Film Board of Canada and which encouraged the use of video in communities hitherto under-represented in mainstream media.²⁵

By the 1970s, the first video art had begun to appear in Scottish art galleries. In 1973, the SAC’s gallery in Charlotte Square, Edinburgh, hosted *Open Circuit*, an exhibition of video, photography and film.²⁶ This was followed by the 1976 exhibition *Open Cinema*, which focused on avant-garde video. In the same year, the exhibition *Video: towards defining an aesthetic* opened in Glasgow at the Third Eye Centre. It was held in tandem with a symposium at the Glasgow Film Theatre

²² Nigg and Wade, *Community Media*, p.22.

²³ Graham Wade, *Street Video: An Account of Five Video Groups* (Leicester: Blackthorn Press, 1980), p.9.

²⁴ Interview with Joel Venet (19 January 2016).

²⁵ Thomas Waugh, Michael Brendan Baker and Ezra Winton (eds.), *Challenge for Change: Activist Documentary at the National Film Board of Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010).

²⁶ Dickson and Byrne, ‘Moving History’.

which gave video artists and community video workers an opportunity to discuss and debate their practice.²⁷ Nor was the use of video confined to the art gallery. In 1971, artist David Hall made a series of television ‘interruptions’ filmed in and around Edinburgh, which were broadcast on Scottish television – unannounced and uncredited - in place of adverts during the Edinburgh Festival.²⁸ Experimental video work was given a further boost in 1983 when Glasgow’s Transmission Gallery, the first artist-run gallery in Scotland, was set up by a group of Glasgow School of Art graduates. Regular exhibitions of multi-media work included EventSpace1 (1986), the first major exhibition of video work held in Scotland since the 1970s; and in 1992, former Transmission committee members Anne Vance and Paula Larkin established the New Visions Film and Video Festival, which ran on a bi-annual basis until 1996.²⁹

Alongside this growing interest in experimental or avant-garde video art, community artists soon began to grasp the social and political potential of this new medium. The Third Eye Centre was particularly keen to encourage use of video. Its director Tom McGrath was himself the owner of a Sony PortaPak – still a rare acquisition in the mid-1970s – which was made available to the public to record and document footage of exhibitions, events and everyday life in and around the centre.³⁰ There was also growing recognition that video could operate as a useful community development tool. In 1976, the six-week Vale of Leven Community

²⁷ Richardson, *Scottish Art*, p.77.

²⁸ Dickson and Byrne, ‘Moving History’.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Copies of some of these videos are archived at the Third Eye Centre Archive, held by the Centre for Contemporary Art, Glasgow.

Cablevision project was set up under the auspices of the local and central government-funded Quality of Life Experiment (designed to encourage community involvement in arts and leisure activities). For a period beginning in May that year, a small production group armed with two cameras and basic video editing equipment facilitated the production of community programming about the local area, with over 1,000 people tuning in to the first broadcast.³¹ Forward-thinking social work departments also showed themselves willing to support community development workers using the medium in their work. In 1977, Strathclyde Regional Council were persuaded by community workers based in Castlemilk to invest Urban Aid money in a PortaPak.³² The camera was put to good use by the local Claimants' Union, whose members used it to record confrontations between claimants and the Department of Health and Social Security.³³

Projects committed to alternative working practices were given a significant boost in the early 1980s by the Channel Four Workshop Declaration, which set aside funds for community-oriented film and video workshops. Channel Four began broadcasting on 2 November 1982. Following the Broadcasting Act of 1980, the new channel was granted its licence on the understanding that it would provide broadcasting for more diverse audiences.³⁴ This made it possible for the Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians (ACTT), the main

³¹ Oliver Bennet, 'Memories, Dreams, Reflections: Community Arts as Cultural Policy', in Jeffers and Moriarty (eds.), *The Right to Make Art*, p.164.

³² Wade, *Street Video*, p.37.

³³ *Ibid*, p.41.

³⁴ 'Channel 4 begins broadcasting with a remit to support innovative work', accessed 6 March 2017, [http://www.luxonline.org.uk/histories/1980-1989/channel_four.html].

broadcasting union, to lobby for financial support for the independent film and video sector. The resulting Declaration set out a model whereby funded workshops were required to make equipment widely available and incorporate educational practices into their work. Workshops were also expected to focus where possible on working with under-represented groups and exploring local issues.³⁵ Although the only organisations to receive funding in Scotland via Channel Four were the EFWT, and, in a more limited fashion, Video in Pilton, for a brief period during the 1980s (before Channel Four began to withdraw funding in 1989), community-based groups benefited from a culture in which their democratic ethos and political and participatory aims were reflected in the priorities of one of the country's main broadcasters.³⁶

5.2 The Politics of Representation

A key touchstone for many practitioners of alternative moving image was Hans Enzensberger's 1970 essay *Constituents of a Theory of the Media*, which made the case for the radical potential of new media forms such as radio and television.³⁷ Heinz and Nigg's 1980 overview of film, video and photography workshops in Britain, for example, opens with a discussion of Enzensberger's work, citing in particular his critique of the Left's attitude towards the mass media (namely, that it was a manipulative, low-brow or otherwise malign influence).³⁸ According to

³⁵ 'The ACTT Workshop Declaration provides financial security and new audiences for independent film and video workshops', accessed 6 March 2017, [http://www.luxonline.org.uk/histories/1980-1989/actt_declaration.html].

³⁶ 'Channel 4 begins broadcasting'

³⁷ Hans Magnus Enzensberger, 'Constituents of a Theory of the Media', *New Left Review*, 64 (1970), pp.13-36.

³⁸ Nigg and Wade, *Community Media*, p.6

Enzensberger, this attitude not only spoke of cultural elitism, it also ensured that the left were in danger of overlooking the emancipatory potential new technologies might offer:

The open secret of electronic media, the decisive political factor...is their mobilising power. For the first time in history, the media are making possible mass participation in a social and socialised productive process, the practical means of which are in the hands of the masses themselves.³⁹

Making the case for a socialist media strategy, Enzensberger pointed out that if, as those on the left argued, all media worked through manipulation, then the real issue at hand was who *controlled* this manipulation (according to Enzensberger, the bourgeois class). Echoing Walter Benjamin, Enzensberger called for a participatory model of communication and information exchange. As he put it, '[a] revolutionary plan should not require the manipulators to disappear; on the contrary; it must make everyone a manipulator', a statement which bears striking similarity to the idea that 'everyone is an artist'.⁴⁰ The left should seek to exploit media which allowed people to make incursions into the discursive realm, repurposing it for their own ends. Reciprocity was also important. In order to achieve a genuinely reciprocal mode of information exchange, the production of media would have to be radically reorganised in such a way that passive consumers became active participants; the social division of labour between producer and consumer, expert and non-expert was broken down; access to the means of production decentralised; and the possibility of collective, socialised working practices fully exploited.⁴¹ Notably,

³⁹ Enzensberger, 'Constituents of a Theory of the Media'.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Enzensberger approached media production and distribution as a holistic process in which neither process nor product could be considered more important than the other. Whilst we cannot know how widely Enzensberger's essay was read, many of his ideas found expression in the practices or professed aims of those working in community arts settings, particularly those working with new media.

For many on the left, the need to utilise film, video and other forms of visual imagery on behalf of new and ongoing political and social struggles gained renewed imperative during the Thatcherite 1980s. As cultural theorist Stuart Hall argued in his 1978 essay *The Great Moving Right Show*, Thatcher and the New Right strove to position their authoritarian, anti-collectivist values as the new 'common sense'.⁴² Using Gramsci's concept of hegemony, Hall showed that this war against socialist and social democratic values was largely waged on a cultural front. In the face of Thatcherite discourses critical of many aspects of working-class life (discussed in the previous chapter), many politically committed arts workers saw it as crucial that disenfranchised groups recognise that visual images – whether photographs, film or video - were not neutral reflections of reality but tools 'through which the dominant culture transmits its philosophies'.⁴³

Struggles such as the Miners' Strike of 1984-5 and later, the anti-Poll Tax demonstrations were flashpoints for media activism, but arts workers were also

⁴² Stuart Hall, 'The Great Moving Right Show', *Marxism Today*, January 1979, pp. 14-20.

⁴³ Braden, *Committing Photography*, p.1; for a discussion of visual literacy in relation to community photography in this period, see: Ian Grosvenor and Natasha McNab, 'Photography as an Agent of Transformation: Education, Community and Documentary Photography in Post-war Britain', *Paedagogica Historica*, 51:1-2 (2015), pp.117-135.

interested in the many prosaic or less overt ways in which the lives of the working-class (or other communities of interest) were structured or misrepresented through the visual. As Fink and Lomax remind us, there is always an interplay between visual representation and ‘the way social identities are imagined, constituted and reinforced’.⁴⁴ In particular, they draw attention to the ways images can reinforce inequalities by reproducing the ‘essentializing and stereotyping discourses by which welfare subjects are constituted’.⁴⁵ Similarly, Law and Mooney have discussed the relationship between media representations and the meanings attached to working-class life and culture. These representations, they argue, have undergone significant changes over the past few decades:

From the late 1950s until fairly recently it is at least arguable that the working class was represented in diverse, if not always flattering ways, reflecting a range of characters, situations, practices and attitudes. It might be an exaggeration to say that the working class wrestled self-representation away from the middle class in British cinema for a time. But at least the social realism films and documentary tradition showed an understanding of some of the predicaments confronting working class lives and their active responses.⁴⁶

Such representations, (generally positive, although not always unproblematic in terms of gender, race or sexuality), were by the 1980s giving way to a ‘pattern of ideological venom’ whereby to be working-class was ‘no longer a badge of

⁴⁴ Janet Fink and Helen Lomax, ‘Inequalities, Images and Insights for Policy and Research’, *Critical Social Policy*, 32:1 (2011), pp.3-10.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Alex Law and Gerry Mooney, ‘‘Poverty Porn’ and The Scheme: Questioning Documentary Realism’, *Media Education Journal*, 50 (2011), pp.9-12.

authenticity, solidity and respectability’ but ‘a cultural marker of personal failure’ invoked – explicitly or otherwise - to justify social inequality.⁴⁷

The pathologisation of certain groups through modes of visual representation has a long history. John Tagg has explored some of the ways in which the state, from the late 19th century onwards, used photography as a technology of surveillance and documentation of the populace, particularly the urban poor.⁴⁸ Tagg argues that photographs, purporting to be transparent and objective reflections of urban social conditions, were frequently offered up as neutral, techno-scientific documents.⁴⁹ Sometimes these images were collected and printed in book form: Grosvenor cites the example of Thomas Annan’s *The Old Closes and Streets of Glasgow* (1900), commissioned by City of Glasgow Improvements Trust (set up to oversee the demolition of slum tenements in the city) and often cited as one of the earliest collections of ‘social documentary’ photography.⁵⁰ Although the function of these images seems to be to reveal the hidden realities of street life, even apparently sympathetic depictions such as Annan’s were not immune from criticism. Taking a later example, community photographer Su Braden was critical of much of the photo-reportage published in Sunday supplements, magazines, and books from the 1930s onwards.⁵¹ As Braden contended, photo-reportage of the documentary realist

⁴⁷ Law and Mooney, ‘Questioning Documentary Realism’.

⁴⁸ John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photography and Histories* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988).

⁴⁹ Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, p.11

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p.66

⁵¹ Braden, *Committing Photography*, p.68; Ian Grosvenor and Alison Hall, ‘Back to school from a holiday in the slums!: Images, words and inequalities’, *Critical Social Policy*, 32:1 (2012), pp.11-30.

type tended to portray the poor as victims of circumstance and worthy objects of compassion, whilst failing to fully acknowledge the reasons for the inequalities or sub-standard living conditions depicted.⁵²

This realist mode of representation continued to be deployed by charitable bodies in the post-war period as a means of influencing social policy.⁵³ Grosvenor has highlighted the example of the housing campaign group Shelter, founded in 1966, which used images by photographer Nick Hedges of children living in slum housing in its campaign work.⁵⁴ Grosvenor argues that the rhetorical and visual strategies Shelter employed presented children as victims, destined to repeat the ‘social ills’ of their parents.⁵⁵ In this instance, photographic evidence was used to solicit help, rather than stand as an act of protest against slum housing or child poverty. Though well intended, the way such images were positioned often failed to show people with agency and were rarely produced via collective discussion about the aims or point of view expressed.⁵⁶ Many community arts workers working with visual and moving images during the 1970s and 1980s were aware of such issues and sought to confront them by asking how people might identify and negotiate problematic visual discourses, and make their own incursions into visual media. In her 1983 book *Committing Photography*, for example, Su Braden called for a process of collective education, collaboration and authorship which respected the ability of

⁵² Braden, *Committing Photography*, p.68.

⁵³ Grosvenor and Hall, ‘Back to school’.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ In 1968, Shelter commissioned Hedges to take another series of photographs designed to illustrate the social toll of poor housing conditions, this time in Scotland.

working-class people to campaign on their own behalf and represent themselves as they saw fit.⁵⁷

5.3 Video in Pilton

Many of these concerns were taken up by Scotland's earliest community-based film and video workshops. Perhaps the best-known group was the Edinburgh Film Workshop Trust, set up in 1977 by David Halliday, who had previously worked on video and photography projects in Craigmillar and Pilton. After signing up to the Workshop Declaration, the EFWT was able to use Channel Four as a platform, and several of its productions aired on television during the 1980s. These included *Northern Front* (1986), which looked at defence issues, and *Leithers* (1988), which celebrated the identity of the working-class port community of Leith, just outside Edinburgh. The EFWT Women's Unit also supported women to make documentary films, such as Sarah Nobel's *Site One: Holy Loch* (1985) about the Trident missile base, and Cassandra McGrogan's *Your Health's Your Wealth* (1990), on the politics of women's health.⁵⁸ Other groups active in Scotland around this time included Bonhill Video Workshop (1977), Red Star Cinema (1980), Cranhill Arts (1981) and Glasgow Film and Video Workshop (1982), as well as Edinburgh Video Access, Alva (operating in Central Scotland) and Fradharc Ur (on the Isle of Lewis).

One of the most prolific of these groups was Video in Pilton, established by Joel Venet in 1981.⁵⁹ It was based in a disused flat on Ferry Road, Pilton, a housing

⁵⁷ Braden, *Committing Photography*, p.17-18.

⁵⁸ Nowland and Finch, *Directory*, p.39.

⁵⁹ Video in Pilton was renamed Screen Education Edinburgh in 2012 and now operates city-wide.

estate in North Edinburgh developed by the City Corporation during the inter- and post-war years. Pilton had proven fertile ground for community artists during the 1970s, with many of those active in Craigmillar also working in Pilton, including members of Theatre Workshop Edinburgh. By the 1980s, the area had its own dedicated arts worker, Barbara Orton, who was also based in the Ferry Road ‘arts flat’. The area also boasted a strong culture of community activism. During the 1970s and 1980s, the area was home to several groups concerned with housing issues, including various Tenants’ Associations, the West Pilton Dampness Action Group, Flats Fight Back, and the Muirhouse Dampness Campaign. Other local campaign groups included Pilton Action Committee, Pilton Peace Campaign, Save Our Nurseries, Concrete Action, and the Pilton and Muirhouse Anti-Poll Tax Union.⁶⁰

Venet, who grew up in Manchester, first became involved in community arts whilst studying at the University of Lancaster. There, he joined the Lancaster-based New Planet Street Theatre Company and quickly developed a sense for the role that the arts might play in encouraging what he identified as ‘the idea of exploring world views, the idea of creativity and its relationship to people living in social housing, the idea of the disenfranchised, the idea of giving people a voice’.⁶¹ After graduating, Venet obtained a teaching qualification and moved to Edinburgh. His interest in the social and political uses of video - which had begun during his time

⁶⁰ North Edinburgh Social History Group, *Never Give Up: A Community’s Fight for Social Justice* (Edinburgh: Community Development Journal and North Edinburgh Social History Group, 2011).

⁶¹ Interview, Venet (2016).

in Lancaster - developed a new impetus when he became involved with the Edinburgh Citizens Rights Office, making reel-to-reel videos to assist claimants with their social security claims. After a stint working for Liberation Films, a London-based community video group, Venet returned to Edinburgh and determined to set up his own video workshop:

I went to meet the community activists in Pilton...it was about the Conservative Edinburgh Council, selling off huge swathes of council housing in the area. And I thought “fucking great! This is it...this is the job!” And so I actually talked to them about how we can create our own film unit, and that I can train local people in camera and sound skills, and we can make a film about selling off of the housing. [...] we interview local people, organise public screenings, and we drive the campaign using video.⁶²

North Edinburgh had a strong tradition of housing activism.⁶³ During the 1970s, tenants across Pilton had begun to set up or join existing Tenants’ Associations, pressing Edinburgh District Council (EDC) to address the serious dampness problems affecting many council managed properties.⁶⁴ In 1976, the District agreed to finance a modernisation programme for West Pilton, but the programme was limited and failed to address wider problems of environmental disrepair.⁶⁵ By the 1980s, housing conditions in the area had reached a crisis point. In 1976, the Housing Committee’s budget had been cut in a bid to conform to central government demands that housing spending be brought within a centrally controlled limit. Unable to provide much needed investment in local housing stock,

⁶² Interview, Venet (2016).

⁶³ On the tenants’ movement in Britain, see e.g.: Bradley, *The Tenants’ Movement*; Shapely, ‘Tenants arise!’.

⁶⁴ North Edinburgh Social History Group, *Never Give Up*.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*; Hague, ‘Housing Problems’.

EDC turned to the private sector, selling off nearly 800 houses to a consortium of builders under the new 'Right to Buy' legislation, introduced in 1981.⁶⁶ Once renovated, it was anticipated that the houses would be sold back to tenants (at inflated prices), something not financially viable for most Pilton tenants.⁶⁷ The tape to which Venet alludes, *Pilton: It's Now or Never* (1981) was part of a broader campaign organised by the Pilton Action Committee to encourage the council to reverse its decision.⁶⁸ Although unsuccessful, the housing campaign alerted local activists to the potentials of video as a campaign tool. On the strength of this foray, the local Tenants' Association made the case for a communication skills worker to support community action groups already operating in the local area. Funding was secured from the van Leer Foundation and Venet was appointed, marking the beginnings of Video in Pilton.⁶⁹

The two fundamental principles structuring the way Video in Pilton was run were those of access and participation.⁷⁰ In common with other video activists, Venet recognised that access to technology was never neutral: the more complex a technology, the more expensive it was likely to be, and the more expertise would

⁶⁶ Discussed in Chapter Four.

⁶⁷ Hague, 'Housing Problems'.

⁶⁸ Video in Pilton Archive (hereafter, VIP), Tape A25, *Pilton: It's Now or Never* (1981); The videos discussed here were selected from an audit of 322 tapes (now largely converted to DVD) archived at Scottish Screen Edinburgh. This discussion is based on a representative sample of 20 tapes from the 1980s selected to include both drama and documentary, and a variety of themes (such as housing) which recur in the archive.

⁶⁹ The Bernard van Leer Foundation is a Dutch charitable body concerned with programmes relating to young people and education.

⁷⁰ Arts in Pilton, *Annual Report* (Edinburgh, 1985).

likely be required to operate it.⁷¹ He was therefore keen to make equipment and the skills required to use it available to the broadest possible constituency of people, whether they chose to use video to bolster a campaign, engage in forms of collective self-representation, or simply as a leisure activity. From the beginning, Venet was alert to the pedagogical possibilities of process-based video work. However, having grown out of a campaign concerned with real and pressing political issues, Venet saw it as important that Video in Pilton was built on an approach which acknowledged the importance of a project's tangible outputs, and which recognised the importance and interdependence of the two aspects: 'some of the process things were great at giving people confidence, skills, but they didn't take people very far. Some of the products were great for telling stories, but they weren't very good for giving people the chance to get hands on'. As he added: 'I think that's what I saw my work at Video in Pilton as, was trying to create this balance that worked between process and product'.⁷²

Initially, Venet found himself using video simply to record local people, helping them become comfortable with appearing on tape. Some of the earliest footage captured was that of the area's annual Gala Day. Orton described the eagerness with which local people would gather to watch themselves on television:

Joel would go and film the gala with a team... [...] The whole three hours' worth. And he'd go make a ten-minute version, edited, but put them in the local library...the ten-minute and the three hours. And people used to get the three-hour one out. And have it for a whole evening, and have people round. And y'know make tea. And it would just be on. And every so often somebody would just go "ahhh look, there's me!" or "oh look, there's so

⁷¹ For a discussion of these issues in relation to photography, see Braden, *Committing Photography*, p.19.

⁷² Interview, Venet (2016).

and so!” And so people would just love to do the whole three hours, because they liked to see themselves.⁷³

Both the ten-minute film and the longer body of material from which it is edited down have no voiceover, and the narrative structure simply follows the events of the day.⁷⁴ Although seemingly prosaic, for those whose lives were rarely reflected on screen, viewing footage which simply and unquestioningly presented their everyday activities in a celebratory manner was in itself an important step. From this starting point, Venet hoped to encourage people to move from in front of the camera to holding the camera themselves. As Venet saw it, his role was not to dictate how the final product looked, but rather to teach people practical skills – such as how to operate a camera or audio tools, or how to edit material – and give editorial guidance (Figure 5.2, p.251). Often, learning began with what might be strictly defined as ‘process work’, recordings never intended for broadcast or subject to intricate editing techniques. Pensioner’s groups, teenagers at the local school, and myriad other community groups gained familiarity with equipment by recording local events or meetings, or creating magazine-style programmes spliced together from short clips (Figure 5.3, p251). From this basis, participants could then move on to more complex and targeted work.

⁷³ Interview, Orton (2015).

⁷⁴ VIP, Tape 403, *Muirhouse and Pilton Galas* (1982).



Figure 5.1 Pilton Video Workshop, early 1980s [© North Edinburgh Social History Group. Licensor www.scran.ac.uk].

Video in Pilton's outputs were wide ranging, with local activists regularly making use of the resource to make 'action tapes' for their campaigns. In addition to *Pilton: It's Now or Never*, tapes in this genre included *Council Budget Travesty: Time to Cut the Council back to size!!* (1985), a short documentary about the EDC's housing budget; *Muirhouse Dampness Group* (1985), which captured the activities of Muirhouse residents fighting for better housing; and *Fighting Back* (1987), a film about Flats Fight Back, which campaigned against poor housing conditions in the city's high-rise flats.⁷⁵ Although most of these tapes were produced in a straightforward documentary style, *Jingle Bells Dampness Smells* (1985) took a more

⁷⁵ VIP, Tape A11, *Council Budget Travesty: Time to Cut the Council back to size!!* (1985); Tape A16, *Muirhouse Dampness Group* (1985); Tape A10, *Fighting Back* (1987).

irreverent stance, using drama, live action and agitprop to bring its message home.⁷⁶ The 20-minute tape captures tenants, dressed as carol singers, descending on the City Chambers on a busy Saturday morning before Christmas, using song, costume and dance to regale passers-by with their plight, before presenting bemused council members with oversized Christmas cards and ‘presents’ of damp clothing. Other tapes captured footage of wider campaigns. The introduction of the controversial Poll Tax (known formally as the ‘Community Charge’) in 1989 led to anti-Poll Tax campaigns across Scotland, and local activists used the video resource to record demos and speeches in Edinburgh’s Parliament Square, as well as interviews with trade unionists and other campaigners.⁷⁷ Some tapes suggest a growing interest in identity politics. *Women’s Support Group* (1984) captures footage of a meeting of the group; *Modesty Leave it at the Door* (1983), a 24-minute drama piece about the realities of pregnancy and women’s experiences of the health system, was made by local women’s drama group ‘Razzle Dazzle’.⁷⁸ Meanwhile, tapes like *Prejudice* (1986) or *Let Us be Heard* (1990) dealt with issues faced by people with hearing impairments and learning difficulties, whilst *Muirhouse to Macon* (1990) which was broadcast on Channel Four, showcased the work of the Video in Pilton 50+ group.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ VIP, Tape 705, *Jingle Bells Dampness Smells* (1985).

⁷⁷ VIP, Tape A6, *Anti-Poll Tax Demonstration*, (1989).

⁷⁸ VIP, Tape A30, *Women’s Support Group* (1984); Tape 402, *Modesty Leave it at the Door* (1983).

⁷⁹ VIP, Tape A12, *Prejudice* (1986); Tape 801, *Let Us be Heard* (1990); Tape 201, *Muirhouse to Macon* (1990).



Figure 5.2 Children learning to use video equipment, Pilton, early 1980s [© North Edinburgh Social History Group. Licensor www.scran.ac.uk]



Figure 5.3 Teenagers interviewing residents at the local shopping centre, early 1980s [© North Edinburgh Social History Group. Licensor www.scran.ac.uk].

Whether documentary or drama, each of these tapes represented a local group taking control of the way their cause or constituency was represented on screen. The politics of making working-class lives visible was core to the work Video in Pilton undertook:

I think we knew that these people from these communities would never appear, y'know...when you went to look in the Scottish Screen Archives, there was no equivalent footage from the 1940s or the 1950s onwards, 1960s. It wasn't there. Because no-one bothered to do it because why would you bother? Because in a sense, the 'underclass' doesn't need representation. So I think what it was about was the idea that somehow, film itself is a liberating factor. But to be able to appear on screen is to give you and what you represent a legitimacy that you didn't have before.⁸⁰

Venet's assertion that 'film itself is a liberating factor' speaks of a belief in the idea that the (apparently) simple act of self-representation on screen was a political act, because it encouraged people to feel that their own lives and voices were worthy of being recorded. Of course, accessing the means of self-representation was not always straight forward. Even when resources were available, not everyone felt comfortable using them. The Scottish Screen Archive (as it was then known) was established in 1976 by the Scottish Film Council.⁸¹ Although the archive contained a great deal of footage of Scottish twentieth century life, very little of this was recorded by working-class communities themselves. In Venet's opinion, this contributed to a broader feeling that working-class lives lacked representational

⁸⁰ Interview, Venet (2016).

⁸¹ The Scottish Screen Archive was incorporated into the National Library of Scotland in 2007 and is now known as the Moving Image Archive.

‘legitimacy’, which in turn left people uncertain about how they wanted to be seen and represented on screen:

in the early days, people in Scotland didn’t wanna speak. There was a sort of...a Presbyterian fear of opening your mouth. [...] Mainly because the media is controlled by the ruling classes. And it’s the voices of the ruling classes that we expect to see there. And that’s our project. We’re always about challenging that, and allowing people to be themselves the centre of their own stories, or at the centre of stories about people like them who are doing things which challenge the authority. So it was always totally political.⁸²

As Venet touches on here, at the time Video in Pilton was formed, opportunities for ordinary people to influence or play a hand in creating radio or television programmes remained limited. Consequently, people rarely heard voices like theirs on the airwaves or saw their lives reflected on screen.⁸³ If this was true of the working-class in general, it was perhaps doubly true of working-class Scots: although BBC Scotland had offices in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen, in the 1970s, only an average of 10 of the 130 hours of airtime a week was given over to programming originating in Scotland.⁸⁴ And although the BBC had begun to expand its repertoire of regional accents during the 1960s, news reporters, hosts and voice-overs continued to conform to the standardised diction of ‘BBC English’. During the 1970s, the BBC made some efforts to democratise access to television,

⁸² Interview, Venet (2016).

⁸³ There were, of course, notable exceptions, such as *Cathy Come Home* (1966), directed by Ken Loach, and Alan Bleasdale’s *Boys From the Blackstuff* (1982). On media representations of the working-class on British television, see: Huw Beynon and Shelia Rowbotham (eds.), *Looking at Class: Film, Television and the Working Class in Britain* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 2001).

⁸⁴ Willy Maley, ‘Cultural Devolution? Representing Scotland in the 1970s’, in Moore-Gilbert (ed.), *Cultural Closure*, p.86

particularly via the Community Programming Unit, which was set up in 1972 and oversaw programmes such as *Open Door*, which served as a platform for community groups to share their work and gave those involved some degree of editorial control.⁸⁵ However, only a handful of Scottish community groups ever made it on to the programme.⁸⁶ It was not until the introduction of Channel Four that work made by non-professionals was broadcast with any regularity on national television via programmes such as *The Eleventh Hour*. Projects such as Video in Pilton therefore sought to destabilise the authority of the ostensibly neutral well-educated London voice and decentre the notion that everything of importance happened ‘somewhere else’ or to other people.

Venet was far from alone in drawing attention to the iniquities that resulted from access to the media resting on such a narrow class basis. The growing field of cultural studies encouraged a new generation of artists and media activists to think critically about what cultural theorist Stuart Hall called the ‘politics of representation’ – the need to critically interrogate the media representations which structure what it is possible to think and limit our possibilities for social action.⁸⁷ Many embraced process work – with its emphasis on discussion and the freedom it gave people to make their own editorial decisions – as an important educational tool, one which encouraged understanding of the ways in which mainstream film,

⁸⁵ Alistair Scott, ‘Representing Scottish Communities on Screen’, in Sarita Malik, Caroline Chapain and Roberta Comunian (eds.), *Community Filmmaking: Diversity, Practices and Places* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2017), p.64.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p.64.

⁸⁷ Stuart Hall, (ed.), *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage, 1997).

newspapers or television shaped people's understanding of political, social and cultural developments and class, race or sexual identities.

The gap between official reportage of the 1984-85 Miners' Strike and the reality on the ground was instructive in this regard. During the strike, many film and video collectives created work which contested official narratives perpetuated by the BBC and ITV.⁸⁸ The Miners' Campaign Video Tapes project (1984), for example, saw a group of ten film and video workshops from across Britain join forces with sympathetic film technicians and journalists from the ACTT to create a series of six tapes designed to provide an alternative narrative and expose the way in which mainstream news broadcasters manipulated the story through the editing process.⁸⁹ Each tape covered a separate theme such as the perceived cause of the strikes, treatment of the striking miners by police and the courts, the role of women, or media bias itself. Workshops across the country (including the EFWT) collated footage gathered locally, sending it to London-based group Platform Films to be edited. At least 4,000 copies of the tapes circulated during the strike. They were made available free of charge to miners and miners' support groups and were screened at union meetings or fundraisers and helped raise awareness and funds.⁹⁰ Back in Edinburgh, Video in Pilton sought to make their own contribution to the campaign by gathering an extensive body of footage that included interviews with

⁸⁸ David E. James, 'For a Working-Class Television: The Miners' Campaign Tape Project', in *Power Misses: Essays Across (Un)Popular Culture* (Verso, London, 1996), pp.248-265.

⁸⁹ Petley, 'The Struggle Continues', p.93; The tapes have since been remastered by the BFI and released on DVD as *The Miners' Campaign Tapes* (London: BFI, 2009).

⁹⁰ Petley, 'The Struggle Continues', p.94.

striking miners, benefit concerts, marches and meetings. Films by Video in Pilton about the strike included *Bilston Glen* (1984), a documentary about the community centred around the Bilston Glen colliery in Midlothian, and *After the Strike* (1984), a 15-minute piece reflecting on the aftermath of the campaign.⁹¹ The fact that both the Miners' Campaign Tapes and the footage recorded by Video in Pilton was produced from the geographical and cultural 'margins' was inherent to their function as an act of protest. As David E. James writes, Thatcher's 'regional offensive against peripheral industries' was one dimension of a more general 'invasion of autonomous, working-class *places* and their reterritorialization as centralised, core-controlled, free-market *space*'.⁹² Just as striking communities sought to resist incorporation into the Thatcherite economic agenda, videos which gave space to regional voices reiterated the cultural autonomy of communities who felt their entire way of life under attack, particularly as council housing was sold off and unemployment began to rise.⁹³ In this context, the *process* of video work functioned as an exercise in media education, whilst the *product*, though it could not necessarily hope to make any significant incursion into the discursive spaces dominated by the mainstream media, nevertheless stood as a testimony to the community's identity as a site of resistance, solidarity and cultural specificity.

In reality, the extent to which the quality or aesthetics of the final product mattered varied from project to project. However, Venet generally took the approach that both process and product were two sides of one coin, neither of which could be

⁹¹ VIP, Tape A27, *Bilston Glen* (1984); Tape A30, *After the Strike* (1984).

⁹² James, 'Working-Class Television', p.260

⁹³ *Ibid*, p.262

wholly neglected. As he noted: ‘the process thing is fantastically important, but it is incomplete, in my opinion. Incomplete until there’s something which tells an audience that this process took place’.⁹⁴ Given the limitations posed by equipment and budgets, the final video could not always be as sophisticated as participants might have wished; however, insofar as a tape existed to persuade viewers, promote a campaign, or otherwise make a record of social, cultural and political activity in the community, the form the final product took was never entirely irrelevant. Firstly, the success of an action tape depended on its ability to convey its message in a clear and authoritative manner. Looking back on the project, Venet felt that the poor quality of some of the footage captured undermined some of its persuasive effect: ‘there was a lot of participation. But I had a very strong feeling that unless we shaped it in some way that made it work, then we were gonna come unstuck. We had to make it work aesthetically. [...] And sometimes we got it right, sometimes we got it wrong’.⁹⁵ However, although aesthetics were undoubtedly important, the apparently unmediated quality of a tape often strengthened rather than lessened the potency of the message conveyed. Many of the action tapes produced in Pilton utilised the documentary mode, presenting the footage collated as a ‘truthful’ representation of reality. As James writes, the perceived relationship between documentary and reality frequently invoked by video groups were at times naïve.⁹⁶ However, as James adds, these tapes must be seen as products of their own time, shaped by the formats (such as news reportage or documentary) that people

⁹⁴ Interview, Venet (2016).

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ James, ‘Working-Class Television’, p.260.

had been exposed to or understood, and the naivety of the aesthetics did not necessary preclude the production of useful work.⁹⁷

Pilton: It's Now or Never offers a case in point. Filmed over six months during 1981, it was produced collaboratively and showed the poor housing conditions many tenants had to contend with. The tape begins with a series of unscripted interviews with tenants, filmed in their own homes. Uncompromising footage of damp and run-down interiors – normally concealed from view - forces viewers to confront the reality of living in such conditions. Interviews are followed by footage of the tenants' group discussing tactics and debating a plan of action. We then see tenants journeying to the City Chambers to debate with officials and present the Pilton Action Committees' *Alternative Plan*, which suggested ways the council might invest money to improve housing in the area.⁹⁸ Similarly, *Fighting Back* documents the attempts of residents of Edinburgh high-rises to galvanise support for their cause and to take on the council.⁹⁹ The tape features footage of campaigners launching the 'Edinburgh Tenant's Information Bus' in the city centre (with the tag line – 'you've seen the festival city, now come and see the festering city'); organising discussion groups; and visiting tenants groups in Glasgow and Sheffield to learn about other housing campaigns. As Cliff Hague noted in 1977, '[t]he picture of Edinburgh as a city of unmet housing needs contrasts sharply with its romanticised tourist image', and the tape ends with footage of the grand Edinburgh skyline of promotional postcards, panning out to reveal the considerably

⁹⁷ James, 'Working-Class Television', p.261.

⁹⁸ VIP, Tape A25, *Pilton: It's Now or Never* (1981).

⁹⁹ VIP, Tape A10, *Fighting Back* (1987).

less picturesque realities of North Edinburgh's housing schemes.¹⁰⁰ Although footage is grainy and editing techniques fairly unsophisticated, the unmediated quality serves to reinforce the idea that tenants have a firmer grasp of the realities of the situation on the ground than the distant and disinterested council. It is the sense of immediacy and the seeming *lack* of mediation or polish which gives footage such as this much of its air of authenticity and hence much of its persuasive power. What might be seen as aesthetic or narrative deficiencies are thus revealed as necessary to the practical function of these tapes.

Secondly, the final product was a testimony to the group's working practices. Tapes were never just *about* the campaign, they were in themselves a form of campaigning activity designed to foster solidarity in the making as well as in the viewing.¹⁰¹ Rather than elide the processes of their own production, tapes often bore traces of the co-operative process by which they were made. Typically, a video would include footage of activists working together or discussing campaign tactics. The contrast with the way in which working-class political activity was usually presented on television is readily apparent. News programmes, for example, depend on a hierarchical power dynamic wherein the questions asked of an interviewee are edited out and their answers edited down; often, the working-class voice is presented as the least authoritative, used merely to illustrate an argument or narrative imposed from outside and always framed by the apparently neutral voice of the reporter.¹⁰² In the tapes produced by Video in Pilton, on the other hand, the

¹⁰⁰ Hague, 'Housing Problems'.

¹⁰¹ James, 'Working-Class Television', p.251

¹⁰² *Ibid*, p.262

relationship between the person behind the camera and the person in front of it is far more reciprocal. Where interviews are conducted, we hear the question which has been asked, and respondents talk for extensive periods of time, allowing the nuances of their responses to be captured on tape. By making the *process* transparent in the artefact produced, these tapes suggest what Braden calls an aesthetic ‘which includes the participation of the subject’, one in which participants retain greater control over how they are represented.¹⁰³ Insofar as these tapes documented the modes of their own production, they served as a challenge to the stereotypical images and discourses which so often shaped the lives of those living in council housing, allowing participants to reframe themselves not as ‘passive, stuck and disconnected’ but active, articulate and engaged citizens.¹⁰⁴

A further factor - often neglected in discussions pitting process and product work against each other - was that of dissemination. For Braden, cultural democracy entailed not simply having the ability or resources to make a tape, a film, or a series of photographs, but something more holistic: ‘a continuum which begins with collective political and social consciousness-raising and ends with the distribution of their images through publication and exhibitions’.¹⁰⁵ Venet himself acknowledged that screenings were an important aspect of the transformative promise that video work offered:

one of the things that we did all the time was organise community screenings...at the end, we would do all our screenings at the Filmhouse [...] with people from Pilton. It was like...deliberate strategy [...] giving them an experience of what it’s like when you’ve created something that

¹⁰³ Braden, *Committing Photography*, p.89.

¹⁰⁴ Lynsey Hanley, cited in Fink and Lomax, ‘Inequalities, Images and Insights’.

¹⁰⁵ Braden, *Committing Photography*, p.30.

makes sense, or you feels represents you. And with the process argument, you never reach that point. And I always felt...for people to see what they've done, and see that it makes sense, that it has an impact on other people.¹⁰⁶

Venet's discussion touches upon several issues – and difficulties – inherent to disseminating such work. That films would be screened locally could usually be taken as a given. However, although it was possible to orchestrate screenings beyond the boundaries of the community, such events required far more deliberation and planning. Indeed, the extent to which community video tapes were able to reach a wide audience was limited, due to lack of access to media platforms willing to screen work deemed to be of local interest only. Events such as the Fringe Film Festival, started in 1984 as an alternative to the Edinburgh Film Festival, gave some community projects and other low-budget films a platform. Community video organisations were also sometimes able to find audiences for their work via local television networks, but even then, the numbers reached were small. During the 1970s, a handful of cable companies in places including Greenwich, Swindon and Milton Keynes were granted licences to provide community programming, but these were commercial operations and their Scottish equivalents (usually not-for-profit community development initiatives, such as Vale TV, discussed above) tended to be short-lived.¹⁰⁷

Of course, not all videos were made with a wider audience in mind. In many instances tapes allowed people within the community to communicate with each

¹⁰⁶ Interview, Venet (2016); The Edinburgh Filmhouse is an art house cinema which opened in 1979.

¹⁰⁷ Scott, 'Representing Scottish Communities', pp.63-64; On cable television, see: Nigg and Wade, *Community Media*, pp.24-26

other, both to share information or generate a sense of solidarity between viewers. There were several factors which made video particularly effective for this purpose. The *Video Report* of Notting Hill Community Action Centre (published in 1976), for example, argued that:

the viewing experience of television is radically different to a cinematic experience. The size of the television image is such that it presents people and situations usually at less than life size. This means that the person viewing is much more in charge of what he/she is seeing, the television invites reaction rather than forces reaction.¹⁰⁸

Viewing a tape in an informal setting – whether the home or a community centre - made it possible to discuss what was seen on screen as the tape progressed in a way that was discouraged in the formal rows of the cinema, and tapes could be rewound, shared, and generally allowed for participatory consumption and ‘talking back’ in a way hegemonic media forms did not.¹⁰⁹ Tapes could be used by participants not only to show other groups what they had achieved, but also to foster discussion within communities, with tapes functioning as a call to action. In many ways, dissemination was just the beginning of dialogue, not the end point. What the working practices of Video in Pilton suggest, then, is an approach which recognised that each stage of the process – product – dissemination nexus represented a site at which debate was provoked, learning obtained, and bonds forged.

¹⁰⁸ Quoted in: Nigg and Wade, *Community Media*, p.35.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p.35.

5.4 Cranhill Arts Project

In 1985, seven young unemployed people from Cranhill Arts Project travelled to Moscow for the international premiere of their 32-minute *Clyde Film* at the 12th World Festival of Youth and Students.¹¹⁰ The festival, first held in 1947, was organised by the World Federation of Democratic Youth and the International Union of Students; in 1985, it was attended by over 26,000 people. By the time it was screened in Moscow, *Clyde Film* had already received the award for best documentary at the Scottish International Amateur Film Festival, and had been shown at community venues across Scotland, as well as Glasgow museum the People's Palace, the Glasgow Film Theatre, and the city's Kelvin Hall.¹¹¹ Praised for its 'stark photography and strong images' and its 'clever editing and interesting camera angles and ideas', the film was warmly received by the local press.¹¹² After screening at the Edinburgh Fringe Film Festival, it was described by one reviewer as 'one of the programme highlights', amply demonstrating 'that professionalism is obtainable early'.¹¹³

Cranhill is a housing estate on the outskirts of Glasgow, built in the 1950s to the north-east of the city. By the 1980s, the estate housed some 9,000 residents but boasted few cultural amenities. Cranhill Arts Project, a joint initiative between the Scottish Arts Council and Glasgow District Council's Housing Department, was set

¹¹⁰ National Library of Scotland [NLS], Moving Image Archive [MIA], 3789, *Clyde Film* (1985).

¹¹¹ *Evening Times*, 16 May 1985.

¹¹² Taylor Edgar, 'Let Glasgow Flourish', clipping courtesy of Cranhill Arts Project archive.

¹¹³ *Times Educational Supplement*, 8 November 1985.

up in 1981 to remedy this oversight. Based in a studio on the ground floor of 33 Lamlash Crescent, from the beginning, the appointed artist, Alastair McCallum – a young graduate of Glasgow School of Art – was clear that he saw his role and the purpose of cultural provision in the area in a very different light from that which the funders had initially anticipated:

I think they thought they were gonnae get...paint a brick each murals, and making maracas out of light-bulbs, and, y'know, a kind of festival or...mainly a public art thing. And I told them that I wouldn't do that. But they gave me the job anyway.¹¹⁴

As McCallum alludes to here, the emphasis many community arts projects placed on participation sometimes lead it to be characterised as worthy or patronising, producing work of little aesthetic worth.¹¹⁵ In other cases, the artists involved left very little room for local people to participate in any meaningful way in the work at hand. Under McCallum's direction, Cranhill Arts took a different tack, establishing textile and poster printing workshops, photography classes and filmmaking projects, all of which took local people seriously as cultural agents.

The impetus behind this approach was two-fold. Firstly, activities in Cranhill were driven by a push towards a 'demographic' and 'democratic' widening of artistic provision:

[we] thought that it was unfair and undemocratic that most arts provision went to people who were [already] involved in the arts... And so we were part of this demographic widening [...] I wanted to democratise involvement

¹¹⁴ Interview, McCallum (2016).

¹¹⁵ For a discussion of contemporary debates surrounding standards, see: Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, pp.187-191.

in visual arts. So that had to be wide as what we would call ‘media’ at the time, and graphics and t-shirt printing and photography.¹¹⁶

In the early 1980s the majority of the SAC funds were still spent on professional arts. In 1984, for example, six national organisations, including Scottish Opera and Scottish Ballet, absorbed 45% of the annual budget.¹¹⁷ For those living on low incomes on the periphery of the city, access to such institutions was limited, and there were few places Cranhill residents could go to develop their own artistic skills. Secondly, as McCallum emphasised, Cranhill Arts was premised on a very broad idea of what constituted ‘culture’ – one which differed from both the lofty ideals of ‘high art’ perpetuated by the SAC and received notions of what constituted ‘Glaswegian’ working-class culture:

the decade that I did it in was pretty mental in terms of change, in terms of people’s perception of culture, what’s popular culture, what’s working-class culture, the notion of Glasgow’s culture...I suppose in the decade before it was Billy Connolly, he would be y’know, shipyard worker, it’s all about patter and that kind of witty thing. And, 1984, 1985, the notion of culture in Glasgow had changed.¹¹⁸

By the mid-1980s Glasgow had begun to develop an international reputation for its contemporary art and music scenes.¹¹⁹ Meanwhile, new media forms such as graphic design or music videos, and new equipment, such as video cameras and computers, had begun to leave their mark on popular culture. Not everyone was

¹¹⁶ Interview, McCallum (2016).

¹¹⁷ *The Next Five Years: A Programme for Change and Development* (Edinburgh: Scottish Arts Council, 1984).

¹¹⁸ Interview, McCallum (2016).

¹¹⁹ See: Lowndes, *Social Sculpture*, pp.79-109.

quick to adapt to these new cultural influences. The SAC, like the ACGB, had always been slow to accept technological art forms into the ‘canon’.¹²⁰ The SAC did not establish its own Film Committee until 1980, and video work received only minimal funding until the Visual Artists Video Bursary was introduced in 1987.¹²¹ As we have seen, some on the left, too, retained a residual suspicion of those media forms too closely associated with ‘mass’ media.¹²² Although an expanded notion of culture which included new media and digital technologies later came to underpin the (distinctly market-focused) ‘creative economy’ of the Blair era, throughout the 1980s, groups like Cranhill Arts took a different approach, actively seeking to integrate activities such as graphic design and poster printing into a socialist cultural programme.¹²³

Cranhill Arts therefore had a political agenda, albeit one waged on a cultural front. McCallum, himself involved in Glasgow’s wider left-wing political and cultural scenes, positioned the project’s work within the context of both a political situation which was making life harder for working-class people, and the development of the punk movement which developed in reaction to it:

you’ve also got unemployment going from 300,000 to 3 million in the 18 months or two years before the project was...in the UK. And you’ve got a background, a cultural background of kinda punk, and do-it-yourself stuff.

¹²⁰ Mulgan and Worpole, *Saturday Night*, p.22.

¹²¹ Dickson and Byrne, ‘Moving History’.

¹²² *Ibid*; for an early discussion of media education which sought to counteract this dismissive tendency, see: Hall and Whannel, *The Popular Arts*.

¹²³ On the creative economy, see: Hewison, *Cultural Capital*; On the arts policies of the GLC, which embrace new media technology as part of a wider socialist strategy, see: Mulgan and Worpole, *Saturday Night*.

[...] there was a kind of thing about that working-class people, from a class perspective...post punk could *do* things.¹²⁴

Punk, with its emphasis on participation, skill-sharing and DIY, as well as its association with youth culture, political subversion and its rejection of ‘professionalism’, offered an ideal aesthetic through which to articulate the ideals of cultural democratisation.¹²⁵ Punk sensibilities found expression in much of the art created – political posters, or t-shirts emblazoned with slogans - as well as in attitudes towards equipment – often borrowed or hand-made. The DIY ethos also informed the recognition that although people in the community might be unemployed, they were still a rich source of valuable skills which could be shared with others.¹²⁶

These ideas influenced both the making and the message of one of Cranhill Arts biggest projects – *Clyde Film*. Filmed on a 16mm camera, *Clyde Film* offers a montage of images of Glasgow set to a series of traditional folk and worker’s songs (Figures 5.4 – 5.7, pp.270-271).¹²⁷ The film, which has no dialogue, is structured visually and symbolically around the River Clyde, here used to represent the film’s three intertwined themes: the city’s industrial past and the work it provided, the geographical movement of Glasgow’s workers from the inner city to the periphery, and the ways work, housing and culture relate to Glaswegian working-class

¹²⁴ Interview, McCallum (2016).

¹²⁵ On the development of the punk movement, see e.g.: Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).

¹²⁶ Interview, McCallum (2016).

¹²⁷ NLS, MIA, 3789, *Clyde Film* (1985). *Clyde Film* built on an earlier, shorter work produced by Cranhill Arts, *Glasgow 1984*. See – NLS, MIA, 3790, *Glasgow 1984* (1984).

identity. In the opening scenes, the camera pans across the cityscape, dominated by multi-storey flats, before cutting to footage of old tenements and industrial areas being demolished. We see docks – representing the shipyards, the backbone of Glaswegian industry – being filled in. These scenes are set to an ironical adaption of *I Belong to Glasgow*, sung by folk singer Gordina McCulloch:

*There's something the matter wi' Glesga,
For they're pullin' the whole place doon,
'Let Glasgow Flourish' oor emblem says,
It disnae seem right tae me,
For it's hard to see what can flourish when,
They're clearin' it a' away.*

Scenes of high-rises, broken-windowed tenements and streets of boarded up council houses soon cut to a montage of old maps, plans and images offering a condensed history of urban development, work and social conditions in the city. Images of the Industrial Revolution blend into footage of 20th century industry via photographs of Red Clydeside and the Depression of the 1930s. The film then makes use of archive film made for the Glasgow Corporation – including the municipal films *Progress Report* (1946) and *Our Homes* (1949) - to promote its post-war housing and redevelopment schemes.¹²⁸

In the post-war period, the Corporation, attempting to address the problems of slum housing and overcrowding, was caught between two radical new visions of what

¹²⁸ NLS, MIA, 0268, *Progress Report* (1946); NLS, MIA, 0317, *Our Homes* (1949).

Glasgow's built environment might look like. The first, the Bruce Plan (1945), proposed to demolish and rebuild central Glasgow and rehouse the inner-city population in high density overspill estates on the outskirts of the city. The rival Clyde Valley Regional Plan (1946) proposed that much of the population be rehoused in New Towns outside of the city – something the Corporation, keen to hold onto its tax and electoral base, was wary of.¹²⁹ In the end, a compromise – incorporating new towns, overspill estates, and multi-storey flats – was adopted. Although many of the buildings marked for demolition in the Bruce Plan survived, by 1957 the Corporation had identified 29 Comprehensive Development Areas (beginning with the Gorbals) scheduled for demolition and redevelopment, and it was largely from these areas that the residents of peripheral housing estates like Cranhill came.¹³⁰ Although these developments may have been well-intentioned, the cheerfully optimistic tone of the Corporation films with their promise of new homes offering 'lots of space, light and air' is brutally undermined in *Clyde Film*, where the clean new houses are shown as they were by the 1980s: damp, boarded up and covered in graffiti. Finally, scenes capturing the monotony of unemployment – cigarette after cigarette smoked in front of the TV – cut to more hopeful images which unfold to a recording of the *Bandiera Rossa*, sung by Tony Patton. We see images of Cranhill Arts project itself, where young people design and print posters bearing the city motto 'Let Glasgow Flourish'; children studying diligently in school; young people absorbed in their industrial and office jobs; and finally, people

¹²⁹ Keating, *The City that Refused to Die*, p.18-25; Pacione, *Glasgow*, pp.161-172.

¹³⁰ By 1974, urban policy had begun to shift its attention towards the rehabilitation of inner city areas. Consequently, not all the proposed CDAs were instituted – see: Pacione, *Glasgow*, pp.172-173.

marching through the streets under trade union banners to congregate in George Square, where a public demonstration is held.



Figure 5.4 Still from *Clyde Film* [Courtesy of the National Library of Scotland Moving Image Archive].



Figure 5.5 Still from *Clyde Film*, depicting Glasgow high rises [Courtesy of the National Library of Scotland Moving Image Archive].



Figure 5.6 Still from *Clyde Film*, depicting children marching under trade union banners

[Courtesy of the National Library of Scotland Moving Image Archive].



Figure 5.7 Still from *Clyde Film*, depicting 'Let Glasgow Flourish' posters, screen printed

by Cranhill Arts [Courtesy of the National Library of Scotland Moving Image Archive].

Clyde Film positioned itself as a reaction to a number of different, and in the eyes of those who made it, disingenuous narratives about life in Glasgow. Not only does the film take down the utopian ambitions of the post-war planners, it also serves as a corrective to the image of the ‘New Glasgow’ the city’s politicians and policy makers were pushing during the 1980s.¹³¹ In 1983, Lord Provost Michael Kelly launched ‘Glasgow Smiles Better’, a civic marketing campaign designed to overhaul the city’s image and reposition Glasgow as a tourist destination and an attractive location for business investment.¹³² As discussed in Chapter Six, large-scale cultural events – including Glasgow 1990 – formed a central plank of this rebranding exercise. Significant resources were also invested in rehabilitating run down but potentially profitable areas, such as the newly-branded ‘Merchant City’, the former residence of the city’s tobacco lords. Of course, not all Glaswegians benefited equally from such investment.¹³³ Just as the ‘trickle down’ economics of neoliberalism failed to raise the living standards of all but a privileged few, a ‘trickle down’ approach to culture did not necessarily impact in any meaningful way on those living outside of the city’s more affluent areas.¹³⁴ As Sean Damer argued: ‘[t]he problem with the rosy image is that it constitutes a façade which conceals a complex and harsh reality...Glasgow is, quite simply, not miles better for many of its people’.¹³⁵ Seen through the eyes of unemployed teenagers, images of Cranhill

¹³¹ For a critique of the ‘New Glasgow’ image, see: Damer, *Going for a Song*, p.6.

¹³² The relationship between arts, culture and urban regeneration in Glasgow has been discussed extensively – see Chapter Six.

¹³³ Keating, *The City that Refused to Die*, p.137.

¹³⁴ Pacione, *Glasgow*, p.251.

¹³⁵ Damer, *Going for a Song*, p.206.

in the 1980s capture the way in which the regeneration of Glasgow was experienced ambivalently, depending very much on social class and geographical location.

The film was not, McCallum insisted, an exercise in nostalgia for a lost industrial, inner-city past. Instead, *Clyde Film* was a way of posing the question: how did Glasgow, a once wealthy industrial city, find itself in the position where its people lived in poor housing on the outskirts of the city, with little access to meaningful employment? As McCallum put it: ‘we made a documentary about the history of Glasgow...it was to connect everything together, to connect...being a working-class person, in a working-class community, in a city that had its own culture and was going through rapid change. To work out why we were where we were at’.¹³⁶ If anything, it was the more intangible aspects of culture – such as music or political solidarity - that the film celebrated and sought to reconnect with. One way in which McCallum fostered this cultural reconnection was by seeking out those who had been around during Glasgow’s 1960s folk revival, several of whom, including Gordina McCulloch, Tony Patton, and Arthur Johnstone, sang on the film:

they’d been through the whole folk song movement and they knew millions of stuff. And I knew them just from being involved in all sorts of other cultural activities. And in talking to them, we sort of said, “oh that’d be brilliant”, we could tell the story of how we got here. And Cranhill, 1980s, by looking at Glasgow...and they could sing, and we wouldn’t need a narrative...voiceover, we could just do it with songs.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Interview, McCallum (2016).

¹³⁷ *Ibid*; On the folk song revival see Adam McNaughtan, ‘The Folksong Revival in Scotland’, in Cowan (ed.), *The People’s Past*, pp.191-205.

The hopeful and confident tone of the songs used, which celebrate working life and convey assertive messages about the future of the working-class, when played over scenes of unemployment and industrial decline, offer a clear criticism of the failures of Glasgow Corporation and the social and economic system more widely. At the same time, they seem to suggest that through reclaiming this culture, Glasgow may once again flourish.

The message *Clyde Film* sought to convey is further reinforced when its aesthetic practices are placed within the context of the cinematic traditions on which it drew. As with the folk movement, McCallum saw *Clyde Film* as a continuation and reclamation of earlier cultural practices. The film drew heavily on the history of organised amateur filmmaking once so prevalent in the city, particularly the work of the socialist film group Dawn Cine, who were active during the 1950s. Founded in 1954, the Dawn Cine Film Group was the production wing of Clydeside Film Society. As well as regular screenings of politically and aesthetically provocative films from the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and South America, the group made a series of films engaging politically with matters of public interest, such as Glasgow's housing crisis.¹³⁸ Although never officially affiliated with the Communist Party, their political views were firmly tied to a far-left agenda.¹³⁹ Dawn Cine's best known film, *Let Glasgow Flourish* (1956) offered a critique of the municipal propaganda films produced by the Corporation in the 1940s, which

¹³⁸ Melissa Stewart, Biography of 'Dawn Cine Group', NLS Moving Image Archive, accessed 14 January 2017, [<http://movingimage.nls.uk/biography/10035>].

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

set up a clear and unproblematic contrast between slums and beautiful, clean new houses provided by the City Fathers.¹⁴⁰ As Ryan Shand argues, these are films on which ‘[t]he emphasis...is not on remembering, but forgetting and moving on’.¹⁴¹ Apparent progress is presented as unproblematic and uncontested, and political protest is erased. For the makers of *Clyde Film*, by way of contrast, memory was an important political tool, a way of understanding present day conditions, celebrating past struggles, and invigorating people for the struggles ahead. Like *Clyde Film*, Dawn Cine’s *Let Glasgow Flourish* ends with scenes which celebrate the power of political protest and trade union activity.

As McCallum recalls, it was not just the films made by Dawn Cine that served as an inspiration, but the idea of a politically aligned, self-organised and self-taught cine group itself. By chance, the Cranhill group were able to meet with some former members of Dawn Cine to discuss their filmmaking ethos and practices with them. The group also received help from other Glaswegian cinematographers and photographers, most notably Oscar Marzaroli, perhaps best remembered for his iconic images of 1960s Glasgow, which capture a city in flux as old areas such as the Gorbals underwent demolition. He was also a founding member of Ogam Films, founded in 1967, which produced over seventy documentaries before it was

¹⁴⁰ NLS, MIA, 1721, *Let Glasgow Flourish* (1956).

¹⁴¹ Ryan Shand, ‘Visions of Community: The Postwar Housing Problem in Sponsored and Amateur Films’, in Richard Koeck and Les Roberts (eds.), *The City and the Moving Image: Urban Projections* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p.55.

disbanded in the 1980s.¹⁴² As McCallum recalled: '[Marzaroli] was introduced to us through someone else because he had a Steenbeck [...] It's a flatbed editor...and you view your film on a small screen, and you wind it through by hand or electronically. And he had an edit suite that wasn't being used, and he worked there for six months editing *Clyde Film*'.¹⁴³

Marzaroli influenced the film in other ways. Just as his photographs focused on people rather than the buildings which surrounded them, the frames of *Clyde Film* are rarely devoid of people: young people stand by piles of burning rubble, watching the diggers move in; an elderly man gazes from the window of a near-derelict tenement block; a teenager walks through an empty industrial site, enters the dole office, and returns home to spend his day watching television; footage of heavy industry shows men and women at work; people march together through the streets in protest. Unlike the ubiquitous postcard-friendly images by photographers such as Colin Baxter, which began to appear in the 1980s and which focused on decontextualized architectural details of Glasgow's freshly painted or cleaned up built environment, or later images of post-industrial cities like Glasgow which seem to celebrate or aestheticise industrial decline and decay by showing only ruins, the focus on the human figures in *Clyde Film* implies that it is impossible to divorce the physical fabric of Glasgow from its social and cultural fabric.¹⁴⁴ Indeed, social

¹⁴² Melissa Stewart, Biography of 'Ogam Films/Oscar Marzaroli', NLS Moving Image Archive, accessed 14 January 2017, [<http://movingimage.nls.uk/biography/10041>].

¹⁴³ Interview, McCallum (2016).

¹⁴⁴ Sarah Arnold highlights the prevalence of 'urban decay photography' which seems to celebrate urban ruination in cities such as Detroit, arguing that it represents 'a mode of documentary which fetishizes scenes of abandonment and

relations formed an important backdrop to the production of the film. Reconnecting with an older generation of musicians, filmmakers and photographers was not simply a nod to aesthetic influences; it provided young people the opportunity to develop skills, access equipment and learn about the political impetus behind older cultural practices.

That the film featured several scenes depicting the day to day reality of youth unemployment was no accident. Many of those featured in the film were the self-same unemployed teenagers who were responsible for making it. Jamie Tracey was one such young person:

When we made *Clyde Film* I was unemployed. I was at college doing my O-Levels I think [...] And the last shoot for *Clyde Film* was the wan of me walking into the buroo, because I wisnae actually walking in tae sign on, I was walking in tae sign aff, right, but they, it was me going in tae sign on as far as they were concerned [laughs]. [...] they had to get that last shoot. Of me walking doon intae the buroo. So we done that, and then I started work on the Monday in a quilt factory.¹⁴⁵

Growing up in Cranhill, Tracey first became involved in Cranhill Arts when he was in his late teens, because it offered him somewhere to print t-shirts. Soon he was attending regularly, even sitting on the Project committee with several others from Cranhill. He was around twenty-two when the film was made. Tracey himself was later to train as a youth worker, a career he was drawn to in part due to his experiences at Cranhill Arts. Tracey's experiences of unemployment were

urban decline': Sarah Arnold, 'Urban Decay Photography and Film: Fetishism and the Apocalyptic Imagination', *The Journal of Urban History*, 41:2 (2015), pp.326-339.

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Jamie Tracey (28 October 2016).

commonplace. As discussed in the previous chapter, by the 1980s, structural unemployment had become an entrenched feature of the economy, with young people disproportionately affected.¹⁴⁶ By 1988, adult male unemployment in Cranhill stood at 30%, with a youth unemployment rate of 40%.¹⁴⁷ Ironically for a film so critical of the contemporary legacy of deindustrialisation, Cranhill Arts were able to fund some of the young people involved in the making of the film by drawing on the Enterprise Allowance Scheme, launched in 1983 to allow unemployed people to set up their own businesses. Using this money – which could never effectively have stemmed the growing tide of unemployment - the group were able to launch a communally produced cinematographic attack on the conditions which led them to be unemployed in the first place, turning Thatcher’s vision of ‘private enterprise’ on its head in the process.

At a time of rising youth unemployment, McCallum believed it was imperative that projects like *Clyde Film* should seek to equip young people with genuinely useful creative and technical skills. Cranhill Arts was built on an ethos of skill sharing and education which drew in a whole cross-section of (largely unemployed) people from across the community, from painters and decorators to joiners, builders and people involved in the tailoring industry. Tracey reiterated this emphasis on collective skill sharing in no uncertain terms:

Well it wisnae about art. It was about people. Art was the medium we used to help people educate their selves, express their selves. [...] That was the agenda, it was about, get people’s skill base up, we’re going into mass fucking unemployment, we’ve got loads of young ones growing up with nae skill base whatsoever. Give them something they can learn and use to make

¹⁴⁶ Edwards, *The Youth Opportunities Programme*, p.7.

¹⁴⁷ *Morning Star*, 2 July 1988.

a living. And so we used photography and textile printing and filmmaking. [...] But *Clyde Film* was never really about the issue, it was about the skills we used to make the film [...] The film could have been fucking anything. It just happened to be that group of people wanted to say something political.¹⁴⁸

Despite Tracey's insistence that the final product – and the issues with which it dealt – were 'irrelevant', the political message of *Clyde Film*, with its emphasis on the value of meaningful work, shared culture, and political solidarity, is difficult to disentangle from the collective process by which it was made. Indeed, as McCallum stressed, the benefits of taking part were not necessarily limited to the development of a narrow set of employability skills. For some of the young people involved at least, taking part could also be a politicising experience: 'some people would've definitely been politicised by it, other people would have turned up because they were political, other people turned up because they were unemployed...other people turned up because they were punks and they wanted to do t-shirts...'.¹⁴⁹ Certainly, Tracey remembered his involvement with Cranhill Arts as a politically formative time:

Well, my politics were just forming, right? I was like, 18, 19, The Jam and The Clash and stuff like that was making me think about the world. Made me realise that there was a bigger world than oor wee scheme. [...] We built our knowledge through our conversations with each other. And the wider people we engaged wae when we were daeing what we were daeing out in the project, like going to show the film different places and having conversations with people about it. About their experience being similar tae ours. In Edinburgh and places like that. People were shown it in tenant's halls and people were engaging in the conversation about what was happening.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Interview, Tracey (2016).

¹⁴⁹ Interview, McCallum (2016).

¹⁵⁰ Interview, Tracey (2016).

As Tracey suggests here, his growing political awareness developed in tandem with, and in large part through, the social aspects of working collectively. Moreover, although many community arts projects, concerned as they often were with local issues, stopped short of seeking solidarity with other communities, a project like *Clyde Film* - which was screened at venues across Scotland and, as we have seen, in Moscow - had the potential to bring young people like Tracey into contact with a wealth of new people, perspectives and ideas. In the process of filming and editing, continuities between past and present-day struggles were forged and new friendships and alliances built, allowing bridges to be built between different generations of politically active Glaswegians; in the process of *disseminating* the film, bridges were built between different communities.

Again, despite Tracey's initial insistence to the contrary, this emphasis on developing high-level skills and reaching a wide audience through public screenings ensured that the quality of the film itself was far from unimportant. From the earliest days of the movement, the relationship between community art and the issue of artistic quality was a vexed one. As discussed in Chapter Two, many community artists saw participatory creative practices as an antidote to elite cultural hierarchies which emphasised virtuosity and professionalism or made unnecessary distinctions between 'high' and 'low' artistic forms. If art served a wider set of purposes, then this also raised the question of whether or not it should be judged by a separate set of criteria from those applied to 'conventional' forms of cultural production. Certainly, as we have seen, for many years both the ACGB and the SAC questioned whether community arts fell within their funding remit, and if so,

how it should be assessed. Following the Baldry Report (see p.45), both the ACGB and the SAC recognised that community arts should be funded, but struggled to draw up a set of workable assessment criteria.¹⁵¹ In Scotland, the issue was still being discussed in the early 1980s. Cranhill Arts sidestepped these issues by insuring that the project and its outputs were always, as McCallum put it, ‘synonymous with good art’.¹⁵² As he recalled:

we were called Cranhill Arts Project and it got notoriety based on the worth of what we did. So it was measured from its worth, and not from “oh, it’s a peripheral housing scheme”, so that was really important to us [laughs]. And it was very important to me, politically that that was to the fore, y’know?¹⁵³

For McCallum, artistic quality reinforced the idea that working-class culture had validity, deserved to be celebrated, and was by no means inferior to (or indeed, separable from) that produced by professional artists. Those involved in Cranhill Arts were wary of the label ‘community arts’, believing it too often brought with it associations of poor quality and patronising outside intervention by artists seeking to impose their own culture and standards. The term also, McCallum believed, served to further marginalise working-class communities by implying that there was something unusual or exceptional about working-class cultural activity.¹⁵⁴ It was partially for this reason that McCallum made a point of ensuring that funding

¹⁵¹ See, e.g.: NAS, ED61/4, *SAC and Community Arts: A Policy Paper by the Mixed Programmes Committee*, (1981) - in 1979, a list of proposed assessment criteria was drawn up to guide assessment by the mixed programmes committee, but it was not uniformly applied.

¹⁵² Interview, McCallum (2016).

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ For a similar point, see: Meade and Shaw, ‘Community Development and the Arts’.

came through the SAC's Visual Arts committee, rather than the Mixed Arts Committee (usually, if not formally, responsible for overseeing community arts applications).¹⁵⁵ McCallum was clear that the SAC should expand its notions of culture to include new (and collaboratively produced) media, rather than instate separate criteria for art produced by those who did not normally benefit from SAC patronage. According to Tracey:

we never called wirselves 'community arts'. We called ourselves a cultural organisation. We were there to help people express their culture. Right. We werenae there to express it for them. [...] again it was about skills. Giving people the skills and tools to express themselves. [...] Express themselves, or make a living, or no express themselves! Aye they don't need tae express their selves. But at least they've got the tools tae dae it [...] Giving people the experience and the understanding...and the knowledge base to be able tae dae it and no looking like a clown, right? [laughs].¹⁵⁶

For Tracey, the emphasis on developing skills through process work, then, was never just about making young people employable: it was also about making sure they were able to express or represent themselves on an equal footing with those who typically had greater access outlets for cultural expression. In Tracey's view, there was a clear correlation between the quality of *Clyde Film* and people's willingness to take young people from schemes like Cranhill seriously as cultural agents at a time when unemployment left many with little social or economic clout:

The process is the most important bit, but we had, we had a strict policy of...because we're working-class, and we're fae a scheme, and people don't think we're educated, don't really have an opinion...that when we do something, it's gonna be better than what people do professionally. It was like, it's not gonnae be just a community arts thing. It's gonnae be bang on,

¹⁵⁵ In 1985/6, for example, Cranhill Arts received a grant of £10,000: NAS, ED61/109, *Minutes of the Visual Art Committee*, (3 June 1985).

¹⁵⁶ Interview, Tracey (2016).

it's gonnae be...d'you know what I mean? People have to go "fucking hell!"[...] *Clyde Film* was different from...we were really proud of it.¹⁵⁷

As both McCallum and Tracey made clear, *Clyde Film* was not a 'community art' - it was simply 'art'.

5.5 Conclusions

As Shand suggests, amateur cinema - particularly the work of community groups and cine clubs - remains one of the least theorised aspects of film history.¹⁵⁸ In order to make sense of practices which aspire to different ends and aesthetics from what Richard Chalfen has called the 'home mode' of amateur filmmaking (films which capture scenes of everyday family and domestic life), Shand productively suggests that we think in terms of a 'community mode', a formulation 'which addresses and acknowledges the limited public exhibition context enjoyed by these filmmakers, without implying that they are simply home moviemakers, or attempting entry into the mass mode'.¹⁵⁹ As Shand argues, groups working in the 'community mode' tend to span the public and domestic realms in sometimes ambiguous ways. Their films are not made simply for their own use, but nor are they necessarily designed for widespread dissemination. Their outputs might be entered into film festivals or screened in civic spaces (such as community centres), but they rarely aspire to be shown in commercial venues.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ Interview, Tracey (2016).

¹⁵⁸ Ryan Shand, 'Theorizing Amateur Cinema: Limitations and Possibilities', *The Moving Image*, 8:2 (2008), pp. 36-60.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

Because the imperatives behind work made in the ‘community mode’ differ from those of both the home and commercial filmmaking modes, Shand argues that films in this category should be subject to forms of evaluation that take these differing intentions into account.¹⁶¹ In terms of the quality or effect of a film or work of art, analysis usually rests on analysis of the finished product, not the method by which it is made. The projects discussed in this chapter, on the other hand, recognised the value of process work. Central to all projects undertaken by Video in Pilton and Cranhill Arts was a commitment to education, usually understood to mean something broader than (or additional to) learning how to use equipment or develop an eye for good production values – although these were also acknowledged to be important and useful skills to obtain. The production of *Clyde Film*, for example, suggests that although working on a film might furnish young people with a specific set of practical skills, solidarity, political awareness, the tools of cultural expression and the confidence to use them were always understood to be some of the projects most significant outcomes. The film captures scenes of loss and desolation in the wake of deindustrialisation, but its message is a fundamentally hopeful one. Videos made by groups like Video in Pilton covered a wide range of issues pertinent to life in Scotland during the 1980s. Not only do they stand as testimony to the ways in which social change, unemployment and housing issues were experienced, depicted and challenged, they also offer a vivid record of community celebration, from annual Gala Days to colourful drama productions. What is clear from many of the tapes Video in Pilton produced is that the act of making and editing a video was an

¹⁶¹ Shand, ‘Theorizing Amateur Cinema’.

important part of any campaign or interest group's work, a process through which collectives might reinforce a sense of solidarity or gain greater awareness of how the media operated.

This did not mean that issues such as the form, aesthetics, quality or message of the final product were incidental, or that the ways in which it was disseminated did not matter. Rather, as this chapter has sought to demonstrate, projects strove towards what Braden has called an 'aesthetics of social change', one which did not: 'reside in the formal or content analysis alone...but in a spectrum of values, the initial selection of the project by the group involved, the appropriation of production technology, the form of the ultimate publication and the use of the images; their reachability within a chosen context'.¹⁶² In some instances, the media produced was deliberately marginal – its purpose was never to be shown as a work of art. Other films set their sights on awards. Although it has become a commonplace that community arts was, as a practice, defined 'less [by] an artistic agenda than a behavioural attitude or moral position', and the standards by which it was judged 'more ethical than artistic', this was not always the case.¹⁶³ Both Cranhill Arts and Video in Pilton considered the quality of the final product paramount, not only because it was the mechanism through which self-representation was achieved, under-represented communities made visible, or successful campaigns waged, but because it spoke to the idea that working-class culture and cultural production was

¹⁶² Braden, *Committing Photography*, p.102.

¹⁶³ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, p.188.

not inferior to the sort of work funding bodies like the SAC had traditionally been more comfortable supporting.

Chapter Six: Glasgow European City of Culture 1990

In January 1990, Glasgow launched a year-long programme of arts events, exhibitions and festivities to celebrate its year as European City of Culture. Keen to make an impression on the international stage, the organisers of Glasgow 1990 spent three years constructing a packed programme of over 3,500 events.¹ Amongst the more high-profile performances were concerts by Luciano Pavarotti and Frank Sinatra, the Bolshoi Opera and the Berlin Philharmonic. Giving a more local tone were *Jock Tamson's Bairns*, a theatre piece by Communicado Theatre Company staged at the newly opened Tramway venue; *John Brown's Body*, a play by 7:84's John McGrath about Scotland's industrial working-class, also shown at Tramway; and *The Ship*, Bill Bryden's 'theatrical tribute to the greatness of the shipbuilding industry in the west of Scotland' which took place in an abandoned Harland and Wolff workshop.² In a more populist vein, more than a quarter of a million people crowded around stages set up in George Square and Glasgow Green to see some of Scotland's biggest bands perform during Glasgow's 'Big Day', a free concert televised on Channel Four and billed as 'the largest street party the world has ever seen'.³

¹ Gerry Mooney, 'Cultural Policy as Urban Transformation? Critical Reflections on Glasgow, European City of Culture 1990', *Local Economy*, 19:4 (2004), pp.327-340.

² *Glasgow 1990 The Book: The Authorised Tour of the Culture Capital of Europe* (Glasgow: Collins, 1990), p.95.

³ *Ibid*, p.65.

Nor were the celebrations limited to professionals working in the city's high profile new theatres, galleries and concert halls.⁴ Across Glasgow and the wider Strathclyde Region, a programme of community-based projects brought colour and noise to the 'streets, schemes and stages' of areas Glasgow 1990 might otherwise have passed by.⁵ In Ruchazie, a housing estate to the north-east of the city, community arts company Fablevision organised *Ruchazie Ruchazie*, a drama project involving around 400 local residents which used the 'housing scheme and its inhabitants as the script, backcloth and cast' to a production about the post-war history of the area.⁶ Joyce Laing, the artist and psychotherapist who had worked at the Barlinnie Special Unit, oversaw *A View from the Inside*, an exhibition of more than 130 works of art created by Scottish prisoners, which was held at the Glasgow School of Art.⁷ Spilling out into the streets, Cumbria-based street theatre group Welfare State International worked with over 250 community and educational groups across Strathclyde to produce a series of 8,000 lanterns for the project *All Lit Up*. In early October, lantern processions marched from four cardinal points in the city to meet and celebrate at Glasgow Green. Meanwhile, *Keeping Glasgow in Stitches*, a year-long community sewing project organised by the sewing and banner-making group Needleworks (co-ordinated by Claire Higney) allowed over 600 visitors to Kelvingrove Museum and Art Gallery to take part in the creation of

⁴ These included: the Burrell Collection, opened in 1983; the SECC, opened in 1985; Tramway (1988); and the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall (1990). The McLellan Galleries, ravaged by fire in 1986, were also reopened in 1990.

⁵ Mary McCabe and Ewan McVicar, *Streets, Schemes and Stages: Social Work's Year of the Arts* (Glasgow: Glasgow City Council, 1991).

⁶ *Ibid*, p.9

⁷ *Glasgow 1990 The Book*, pp.58-59

twelve 15ft high fabric banners celebrating different aspects of Glaswegian life, one for each month of the year.⁸

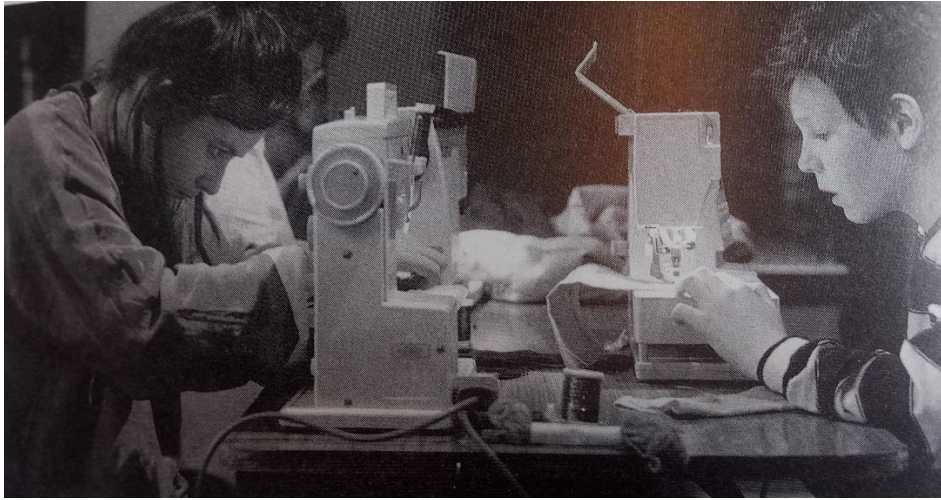


Figure 6.1 Young people sewing banners at Kelvingrove Museum for ‘Keeping Glasgow in Stitches’ [from Liz Arthur and Clare Higney, *Keeping Glasgow in Stitches*]

Looking back on Glasgow 1990 the following year, Robert Palmer, the director of Glasgow District Council’s Festivals Office, acknowledged that the event had ‘meant different things to different people’.⁹ This was something of an understatement: whilst in some quarters expectations had been high, others had been deeply cynical about the whole affair. This much was reflected in the ‘myriad of opinions, views and pronouncements’ regarding the success or otherwise of the year.¹⁰ These differing perspectives are revealing, pointing as they do to ongoing

⁸ *1990 The Book*, p.90-91; Liz Arthur and Clare Higney, *Keeping Glasgow in Stitches*, (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1991), p.9.

⁹ Tessa Jackson and Andrew Guest (eds.), *A Platform for Partnership: Visual Arts in Glasgow, Cultural Capital of Europe, 1990* (Glasgow: Glasgow City Council, 1991), p.5.

¹⁰ Robert Palmer, ‘On Being a Cultural Capital’, in Jackson and Guest, *Platform for Partnership*, p.5.

struggles in a city undergoing rapid social and economic change to define the nature of culture and determine who and what it was for. Glasgow 1990 was to prove an important flashpoint around which many of these tensions would coalesce.



Figure 6.2 Keeping Glasgow in Stitches – detail from July panel ('The Glasgow Fair')

[Liz Arthur and Clare Higney, *Keeping Glasgow in Stitches*]

In many respects, Glasgow 1990 exemplifies the growing trend in Western urban policy to view the value of cultural investment in terms of economic rather than social utility. As Bianchini writes, '[i]n terms of the strategic objectives of cultural policy, the most important historical trend [has been] the shift from the social and political concerns prevailing during the 1970s to the economic development and urban regeneration priorities of the 1980s'.¹¹ This shift was particularly marked in Glasgow, where the Festival was approached first and foremost as a tool for

¹¹ Franco Bianchini, 'Remaking European Cities: The Role of Cultural Policies', in Bianchini and Parkinson (eds.), *Cultural Policy and Urban Regeneration*, p.2.

promoting urban regeneration. However, as Bianchini adds, although cultural policy may have been co-opted as a strategy for economic development, older arguments for investment in cultural provision were not necessarily abandoned; nor did change go uncontested.¹² Rather, ‘old and new, social and economic, community and elite-oriented arguments’ continued to ‘co-exist, often uneasily, within the agenda of city governments’.¹³ This often gave rise to contradictions and tensions within cultural policy. This much is apparent throughout the Glasgow 1990 programme and the discourses of success and criticism surrounding it.

Most discussions of Glasgow 1990 have focused on the economic agendas underpinning the way the event was approached. Far less attention has been paid to the diverse communities programme which formed a significant dimension of the Culture City offering. There were some who felt that this aspect of the programme was not publicised widely enough, or that it constituted only a tokenistic gesture. Nevertheless, that organisers felt it necessary or desirable to allocate funding to community-based arts initiatives complicates the picture of 1990 as a year of imported culture which did not touch the lives of ordinary Glaswegians. It also complicates the idea that 1990 was *only* ever about money. This mixing of economic and social priorities inevitably gave rise to feelings of ambivalence which are rarely given space in accounts which pit the celebratory discourse of the organisers against the critique sustained by groups like Workers City (discussed

¹² Bianchini, ‘Remaking European Cities’, p.2.

¹³ *Ibid*, p.3.

below).¹⁴ Instead, this chapter uses oral history interviews to ask how community artists who took part in the event felt about Glasgow 1990, and reveals that although some were fairly uncritical, others took a more detached attitude - whilst nevertheless utilising the resources the event made available to them. As these interviews suggest, many saw themselves as exploiting the gap between rhetoric and the reality of projects as they unfolded 'on the ground' to divert resources towards those who needed them most.

The communities programme was frequently held up as proof of the inclusivity of Glasgow 1990, evidence that 'everyday' Glaswegian culture had not simply been swept aside to make way for high profile international performances and blockbuster exhibitions. But the communities programme also complicates narratives which pit 'real' Glaswegian culture against 'imported' cultural offerings. One of the criticisms of 1990 was that it did not speak for ordinary Glaswegians: but 'ordinary' Glaswegians were not one single entity. Indeed, the programme was testimony to the sheer variety of ways in which the term 'community' could be interpreted. Once a word used, in urban policy terms at least, to refer primarily to the residents of a specific (and usually working-class) geographical area, 'community' was increasingly used to refer to communities of interest - from women to disabled people to ethnic minorities. Each of these groups had a distinct perspective on what it meant to be Glaswegian and what Glaswegian culture might be.

¹⁴ For a key exception which takes some of the views of arts workers into consideration, see: Beatriz García, 'Urban Regeneration, Arts Programming and Major Events', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 10:1 (2004), pp.103-118.

The impetus for the community programme came largely from Strathclyde Regional Council. For the Region, Glasgow 1990 represented an opportunity to further the objectives of its ‘Social Strategy’ – as discussed in Chapter Two, a programme of positive discrimination initiatives which sought to divert local authority funds to those groups and areas deemed most in need of additional resources, largely dispersed through the Region’s social work and community education departments.¹⁵ Although it is tempting to see the Region’s involvement as a resurgence of an older, socially-concerned approach to the arts, the Social Strategy also contained within it the seeds of what would under New Labour come to be known as ‘social inclusion’ policies. The rhetoric of social inclusion has been widely critiqued for the way in which, whilst purporting to deliver social justice, it emphasises individual responsibility and diverts attention from the structural issues underpinning social issues. In this behavioural understanding of the inclusion/exclusion nexus, class, and consequently, class politics, have little place or are at least rarely openly acknowledged.¹⁶ This chapter seeks to understand how this agenda was beginning to shape the ways community artists thought about their work, whilst also looking at the extent to which it was resisted or only partly assimilated.

¹⁵ SRC, *Social Strategy*.

¹⁶ For a critique of New Labour urban policy, see e.g.: Rob Imrie and Mike Raco (eds.), *Urban Renaissance? New Labour, Community and Urban Policy* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2003); Ruth Levitas, *The Inclusive Society? Social Exclusion and New Labour* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998).

6.1 The City of Culture

The European City of Culture programme was launched in 1985, with Athens holding the honour in the first year. The concept originated with the Greek Minister for Culture, Melina Mercouri, and her French counterpart, Jack Lang. The original objective was to foster a sense of shared European heritage and identity between European Community member states.¹⁷ The Glasgow bid was put together by Glasgow District Council and in October 1986 the Conservative Arts Minister Richard Luce announced that the bid had been successful.¹⁸ A Festivals Office was set up in June 1987 under the direction of Robert Palmer, who had previously worked for the Scottish Arts Council and Theatre Workshop Edinburgh, and the budget for the project set at around £35 million. A further £20 million was provided by Strathclyde Regional Council.¹⁹

Glasgow's approach differed from that of its predecessors in several respects. Whereas the first five nominees – Athens, Florence, Amsterdam, West Berlin and Paris – already possessed an international reputation for high culture, Glasgow was a less obvious choice. For the previous incumbents, the title was a recognition of pre-existing status, whilst for Glasgow, the title *conferred* status and offered a

¹⁷ The project was renamed 'European Capital of Culture' in 2000: Kiran Klaus Patel (ed.), *The Cultural Politics of Europe: European Capitals of Culture and European Union since the 1980s* (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2013), pp.2-3.

¹⁸ Glasgow City Archive (hereafter, GCA), GDC/127, *Press Release*, (20 October 1986).

¹⁹ Peter Booth and Robin Boyle, 'See Glasgow, See Culture', in Bianchini and Parkinson, *Cultural Policy*, p.32; GCA, SRC 1/2/161, *A Post 1990 Cultural Policy for the Regional Council*, (13 May 1991).

chance to raise the city's cultural profile.²⁰ Unlike previous Culture Cities, where the events usually lasted only a few weeks, the architects of the Glasgow bid opted for a more ambitious year-long programme. Glasgow 1990 was also something of a watershed because it was the first city to approach its designation as a means of further catalysing a strategic process of urban regeneration and rebranding which had been ongoing in the city since the early 1980s.²¹ As discussed in previous chapters, Glasgow had invested heavily in efforts to overhaul the city's image. Stereotypes of the city as a drab and desolate place of drunkenness and violence (and the very real issues of unemployment, poverty, depopulation and poor housing) were countered with images of the 'New Glasgow' – the city of fine architecture, pleasant shops and bars, and plenty of arts venues and concert halls.²² From Saatchi and Saatchi's 'Glasgow's Miles Better' campaign, launched in 1984, to the 1988 Garden Festival, to investment in prestigious 'flagship' cultural venues, transformation was sought on both a physical and psychological level. By the time it made its European bid, GDC could boast that it was contributing £18 million per annum to the arts in the city.²³

²⁰ Booth and Boyle, 'See Glasgow', p.32.

²¹ This had been discussed extensively in various articles. See, for example: Beatriz García, 'Urban Regeneration'; Mooney, 'Cultural Policy as Urban Transformation?'; Gordon MacLeod, 'From Urban Entrepreneurialism to a "Revanchist City"? On the Spatial Injustices of Glasgow's Renaissance', *Antipode*, 34:3 (2002), pp.602-624.

²² For a critique, see: Damer, *Going for A Song*, p.6; on the economic problems facing the West of Scotland and how they were dealt with during the 1970s and 1980s, see: Paul Kantor, 'Can Regionalism Save Poor Cities?', *Urban Affairs Review*, 35:6 (2000), pp.794 -820.

²³ GCA, GDC/127, *European City of Culture Supplementary Bid*, (1986).

That the Year of Culture was ‘never going to be a celebration of art for art’s sake’ but rather marked ‘the apotheosis of a hard-headed economic strategy’ was no secret.²⁴ Before the year was over, organisers were already holding up 1990 as a remarkable success in this regard. This celebratory discourse drew liberally on figures generated by the Myerscough Report (1991), a statistical account of economic and social impacts which indicated that the Festival had indeed generated jobs, attracted tourists and enhanced Glasgow’s international reputation.²⁵ Eddie Friel, chief executive of the Greater Glasgow Tourist Board, even went so far as to claim in the press that Glasgow was ‘writing the book on the solution to the post-industrial dilemma’.²⁶ Such congratulatory accounts have contributed to what Beatriz García calls a ‘practically unquestioned mythology developing about Glasgow’s ability to tackle its many social and economic problems through arts programming’ in which the so-called ‘Glasgow model’ of arts-led regeneration has been held up as an example for other post-industrial cities seeking a reversal in their fortunes.²⁷

This discourse has, however, been subject to a robust critique. Pointing to Glasgow’s ongoing struggle with poverty, unemployment and poor health indicators, Mooney has demonstrated that although the Festival brought some positive changes to the city and many Glaswegians attended 1990 events, the

²⁴ *Scotsman on Sunday*, 23 December 1990.

²⁵ John Myerscough, *Monitoring Glasgow 1990* (Glasgow: Glasgow City Council, 1991).

²⁶ *The Herald*, 1 December 1988.

²⁷ García, ‘Urban Regeneration’; see also: María V. Gómez, ‘Reflective Images: The Case of Urban Regeneration in Glasgow and Bilbao’, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 22:1 (1998), pp.106-121.

economic arguments have proven hollow.²⁸ Gómez concludes that ‘Glasgow seems to have solved its image problem, but it has a long way to go before it achieves economic momentum and work for all its people’.²⁹ Meanwhile, focusing on the artistic legacy, García contends that large-scale events of this type usually fail to provide long-term sustainable investment in the arts; nor do they necessarily provide genuine empowerment to local people – a point to which this chapter will return.³⁰

6.2 Workers City

Criticism has not only been retrospective. Indeed, the City of Culture phenomenon quickly became a focal point for attacks on the GDC and its entrepreneurial agenda, as well as debates about what Glaswegian culture was and who had a right to define or defend it. The most vociferous criticism came from Workers City, a group of left-wing activists revolving around artistic and literary figures such as the authors James Kelman and Freddy Anderson, sociologist Sean Damer, and artists such as Ken Currie and Ross Sinclair. The group published two anthologies of writing in the run up to the Festival, ranging from poetry to polemic – *Workers City* (1988) and *The Reckoning* (1990) - as well as *The Glasgow Keelie*, a regular newsheet which ran to nearly 20 editions between 1990 and 1993.³¹

²⁸ Mooney, ‘Cultural Policy as Urban Transformation?’.

²⁹ Gómez, ‘Reflective Images’.

³⁰ García, ‘Urban Regeneration’.

³¹ For copies of both Workers City and the Glasgow Keelie, see: Workers City Archive, accessed 5 September 2018, [http://www.workerscity.org/keelie/april_1990.html].

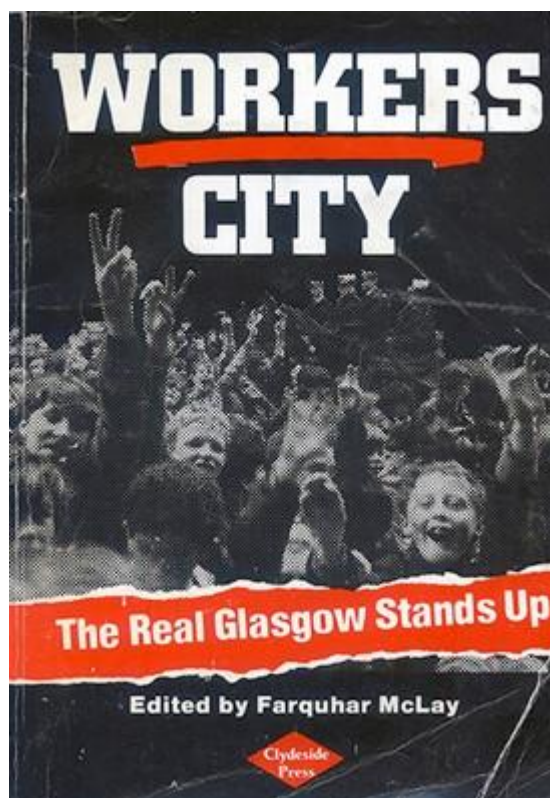


Figure 6.3 Front cover of the anthology *Workers City* (1988) [From Farquhar McLay (ed.), *Workers City: The Real Glasgow Stands Up*]

Running through the pages of these various publications was a two-fold critique. Firstly, contributors contended that the Festival was more to do with spin and profit than arts and culture. The 1990 celebrations, it was maintained, would serve only politicians and the ‘yuppies’ of the Merchant City and their ‘wine bar economy’.³² How could the council justify spending upwards of £50 million on culture, they asked, when it might be more profitably spent on housing or social services?³³ Ticket prices were another point of contention. Was it tactful, the *Scotsman on*

³² Farquhar McLay (ed.), *Workers City: The Real Glasgow Stands Up* (Glasgow: Clydeside Press, 1988), p.3.

³³ *Scotsman on Sunday*, 23 December 1990; Boyle and Hughes, ‘Representation of ‘the Real’’.

Sunday asked, to charge ‘£25-£75 for Pavarotti in a city where around a third of the population lives in households on state support’?³⁴ Workers City did not think so, and several members of the group picketed Pavarotti’s SECC concert.³⁵ Particular ire was reserved for the £2 million Saatchi and Saatchi PR campaign commissioned by the Festivals Office. That the London-based advertising company famous for their ‘Labour Isn’t Working’ billboard campaign (credited with helping the Conservatives win the 1979 general election) should be sought out by a Labour council was understandably met with some incredulity.³⁶

Secondly, setting themselves up as defendants of ‘the real culture of Glasgow’, the group maintained that in order to sustain the myth of the ‘New Glasgow’, Glasgow’s image makers sought to erase the realities of working-class life in the city, its socialist heritage, and the rich cultural offerings these had inspired.³⁷ In writer, socialist (and one-time associate of the Easterhouse Festival Society) Freddy Anderson’s view, what he called ‘indigenous Culture in Glasgow’ was ‘finding it a very difficult struggle to make its way’ in the lead up to 1990. He questioned why this should be the case when ‘there is a wealth of theatrical and literary talent in Glasgow, including in its huge peripheral housing schemes?’.³⁸ Turning the association between marginalised areas and marginal culture on its head, Anderson claimed that true Glaswegian culture existed ‘not in the upper echelons but in the

³⁴ *Scotsman on Sunday*, 23 December 1990.

³⁵ Farquhar McLay (ed.), *The Reckoning* (Glasgow: Clydeside Press, 1990), p.69.

³⁶ Damer, *Going for a Song*, p.11.

³⁷ McLay, *The Reckoning*, p.47.

³⁸ *Ibid*, p.57.

heart of Glasgow among the tenement dwellers'.³⁹ It was in the tenements that the Rent Strikers of 1915, those who joined with John Maclean and the Clydeside Workers' Committee to protest against the war, and those who had taken to the streets during the Hunger Marches of the 1930s all had lived. Anderson believed that this was Glasgow's real heritage, popular culture its real culture, and those who had been moved from the inner-city tenements to the city's peripheral housing schemes its real guardians. In the discourse of Workers City, 'real' Glaswegian culture was working-class, left-wing and firmly rooted in local cultural production. In contrast, events staged during the Festival were nothing but a 'bloodless imported culture'.⁴⁰ Real art and culture, Workers City maintained, served a critical function, allowing people to connect with their histories and fight for visibility and change in the present.⁴¹ Not only was the 'imported' culture of Glasgow 1990 inauthentic, to promote it was to take part in a process of erasure whereby more critical voices were drowned out.

If the group were looking for an example of apparent cultural suppression to focus on, they could not have found one more inflammatory than the so-called 'Elsbeth King Affair', which became one of the biggest controversies in the run up to 1990. For sixteen years, King had been the curator at the People's Palace, a museum dedicated to Glaswegian social history. Despite turning around the fortunes of this award-winning museum, King was overlooked for the newly created post of Keeper of all Glasgow's museums, a position for which it had been widely assumed she

³⁹ McLay, *The Reckoning*, p.58

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p.40.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p.3.

was the most qualified candidate.⁴² The incident touched a nerve in Glasgow. Whatever the GDC's intentions, it was not difficult for Workers City to position King's dismissal as an attempt to gloss over the more complex and sometimes politically confrontational aspects of Glasgow's history. When Workers City held a demonstration in defence of King outside the City Chambers, over 1000 people turned up, and as many as 5000 signed a petition in her favour.⁴³ In this climate, exhibitions such as the much-maligned *Glasgow's Glasgow*, an interpretation of Glasgow's 1000-year history and one of the Festival's most expensive undertakings, were subject to particular derision for the sanitised picture of Glasgow they presented. Workers City even picketed the event on the day it opened.⁴⁴

Effectively, the Workers City campaign reflected tensions apparent throughout the city about whose Glasgow was being represented in 1990. As Boyle and Hughes have discussed in relation to Glasgow 1990, times of rapid change or stress (such as the processes of deindustrialisation and economic restructuring) tend to create a desire to stabilise and fix meaning.⁴⁵ This contest over the meaning of place, they argue, is one of the defining aspects of postmodern urban life. The rhetoric surrounding Glasgow 1990 was repeatedly presented by Workers City as offering a 'false' image of place which highlighted 'only one aspect of the totality and covers up the other harsher realities of life as it is lived in the city'.⁴⁶ Through discourses

⁴² Boyle and Hughes, 'Representation of 'the Real''.

⁴³ McLay, *The Reckoning*, p.48.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p.47.

⁴⁵ Boyle and Hughes, 'Representation of 'the Real''.

⁴⁶ McLay, *The Reckoning*, p.67.

which associated working-class culture with notions of authenticity, the group sought to undermine the idea that the cultural programme presented during 1990 had any representational legitimacy.

Aspects of the Workers City critique were ultimately borne out. There was no denying that the events of 1990 were approached by the GDC as a salve to heal some of the wounds of deindustrialisation. The group also correctly predicted that the fruits of this labour would be unevenly spread. For the group, the disparities between the cleaned up, floodlit city centre of the tourist brochures and the realities of life in the city's housing schemes gave lie to any notion that Glasgow had in any way undergone a true 'renaissance'. Of those jobs which were created, they were largely in the low paid, precarious service sector rather than well-paid, sustainable full-time work.⁴⁷ Yet in taking up this position, Workers City not only ignored the possibility that its own conception of Glasgow was a constructed one; it also largely chose to ignore one aspect of Glasgow 1990 – its community programme - where alternative agendas, not based on an economic understanding of the utility of culture, were able to wrest some space to flourish – and where hegemonic meta-narratives about Glasgow, its culture, and what it meant to be Glaswegian were frequently contested.

⁴⁷ Between 1991 and 2001 service sector employment in the city rose by 33%. See: Mooney, 'Urban Transformation?'; Glasgow also continues to suffer from significantly poorer health outcomes than comparable UK cities. See: David Walsh (et al.), *History, Politics and Vulnerability: Explaining Excess Mortality in Scotland and Glasgow* (Glasgow: Glasgow Centre for Population Health, 2016).

6.3 The Communities Programme

In 1987, Strathclyde Regional Council agreed to contribute funding to the Glasgow 1990 budget on the basis that it would help support SRC's various social, economic and educational objectives. Funding was therefore directed specifically towards a programme of community events taking place not just in Glasgow, but across Strathclyde.⁴⁸ In order to co-ordinate its efforts, the SRC created a City of Culture committee of councillors and heads of major departments. This committee met regularly with the Arts and Culture Officers group, which represented the arts officers seconded to the social work and education departments to oversee grants and the general organisation of programming across Strathclyde. The Festivals Office also turned its attention to community and grassroots events. In 1988, Barbara Orton, who had previously worked as a community arts development worker in Pilton, was appointed to manage this aspect of the programme. One of Orton's initiatives was a 'DIY scheme' which made grants of up to £500 available 'to help even the humblest of cultural projects off the ground'.⁴⁹ In the case of both the GDC and the SRC, groups and individuals could apply for small pots of funding. Other events were initiated by the arts officers themselves - involving anything from helping professional companies such as Scottish Opera set up an outreach programme, to putting small-scale community arts projects in touch with other groups or artists.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ GCA, SRC 1/2/161, *City of Culture Funding Report*, (29 March 1989).

⁴⁹ GCA, GDC/127, *Factsheet no.11, The Glasgow 1990 Local Arts Programme*, (1988).

⁵⁰ GCA, SRC 1/2/161, *A Post 1990 Cultural Policy for the Regional Council*, (13 May 1991).

For years, community artists in Glasgow, as elsewhere, had sought to raise the profile of arts and culture at the local level.⁵¹ Here, at last, was some degree of recognition not only of the richness and importance of local culture but also a willingness to fund it. If community artists were critical of the mainstream arts programme and the economic imperatives underpinning it (and many *were* critical), they were also unwilling to turn down an opportunity to celebrate the arts and culture of ‘ordinary’ Glaswegians. What emerges from interviews with community artists is rarely a full-scale, enthusiastic acceptance of the City of Culture model, but rather an approach which was both critical and pragmatic. Like many Glaswegians, community artists recall meeting the announcement that Glasgow had been selected as City of Culture with a degree of amusement. As Phyllis Steel noted: ‘for those of us who worked in the city, when we were told we were City of Culture, it was a bit of a laugh. We just all thought it was a bit of a joke...and a good joke at that’.⁵² Steel, one of the founders of Mayfest (discussed below, p.307) - was born in Springburn and first became aware of community arts whilst working as the administrator for Strathclyde Theatre Group in the late 1970s. Steel was amused by (although not opposed to) the idea that projects which celebrated the city’s own culture might hold their own against the Bachs and Beethovens of European high culture.⁵³

⁵¹ Bianchini, ‘Remaking European Cities’, p.1.

⁵² Interview with Phyllis Steel (7 October 2015).

⁵³ Angela Bartie, ‘Maydays to Mayfests: Cultural Politics and the Popular Arts in Glasgow, c.1983-1990’, Conference paper given at the *Working Class Studies Association*, 2015; by 1990, Mayfest been largely appropriated and sanitised by the council.

For some, the City of Culture was in keeping with the attitude of left-wing defiance which had long characterised Glasgow's history. Diane Dawson, who grew up in Glasgow and Irvine, started her career in community arts during the late 1980s. During 1990, she co-ordinated numerous events, including Welfare State International's *All Lit Up*. Reflecting on the Festival year, Dawson stated that:

Glasgow had Red Clydeside. That was always what it was. And so you'd had those 1980s elections. And [we were] very discontented because even though we were completely Labour, we had a Scottish Secretary of State who was Tory...so the politics in 1990 would have been more for me...who's getting what? It was much more on the ground...it wasn't so much about voting, because we just hated Thatcher with a passion. So we were united. And the Miners' Strike had been a disgrace...and the Poll Tax, don't get me started... So that was just, just rage. No power.⁵⁴

Unlike Workers City, for whom the Festival was a *rejection* of the city's socialist heritage, for Dawson community-based work was a continuation of this lineage of past political struggle. Working in a situation where many people in Glasgow felt powerless to effect change through the usual channels of representative democracy, work 'on the ground' became doubly important. In this formulation, rather than operating as an example of neoliberal 'event capitalism', Glasgow 1990 was positioned as an affront to the Thatcherite establishment. As Dawson put it, the event was 'Glasgow showing off for a year. It hadn't happened before, and it was massively ambitious for them. So I think it was almost one in the...y'know, get it up ye sort of thing [laughs]'.⁵⁵ In the face of a perceived democratic deficit, the cultural visibility that 1990 offered served not to make Glasgow an attractive tourist

⁵⁴ Interview with Diane Dawson (3 February 2016).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

destination or locus of international investment, but as a means for people to demonstrate that their culture and their views *were* important. The mere act of taking part in the community programme, regardless of what individual projects might achieve, was presented as an act of political assertion.

Others were more guarded in their enthusiasm, expressing their ambivalence towards the official cultural agenda by mocking what they perceived to be its more cynical aspects, whilst simultaneously rejecting what they saw as the overly-negative attitude of groups like Workers City. Alastair McCallum of Cranhill Arts Project, for example, highlighted the present-day ubiquity of the City of Culture model, distancing himself from any wholesale acceptance of the concept, but also acknowledged that his attitude at the time was more accepting:

the Cities of Cultures are like mushrooms, aren't they? Town of Culture, Village of Culture...Highland City of Culture...Y'know what I mean, it's like...The West Ross-shire City of Culture...that's what it's like.

But also it was part of that eighties thing, so...civic society in Scotland changed, it was popular culture, Hue and Cry, Deacon Blue, through theatre, Mayfest, you name it...which, I mean, the roots of all that goes back to what became the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, the People's Festival, in the late forties...that was a democratic, leftist, folk-song revival, people like Hamish Henderson and Norrie Buchan were engaged in that, and it became the biggest festival in the world. So that was an impetus, and people viewed culture differently and more democratically after that. So, I mean, some terrible things happened in the eighties here but Glasgow woke up smelt the coffee and got on with it. And so we weren't as critical as some people were of the whole Culture City thing cos we saw where it was coming from. Yeah, we weren't Shining Path...The Workers City, sorry [laughs].⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Interview, McCallum (2016).

Here, McCallum stresses that Glasgow 1990 built on substantive groundwork laid by others. Throughout the 1980s, a shared anti-Thatcherite sentiment encouraged a broad coalition of charities, cultural organisations, activists, trade unions and churches to build alliances in opposition to the New Right.⁵⁷ Meanwhile, some trade unions had begun to approach culture as an important locus of political action. The STUC had, for example, been instrumental in setting up Mayfest. Billed as ‘Glasgow’s Festival of Popular Theatre and Music’ the two-week festival - which began in 1983 - developed out of the organisation’s annual May Day parades, sought to celebrate popular music and theatre, and had a clear socialist slant.⁵⁸ Though they had done little to foster and support this broad cultural network, the organisers of Glasgow 1990 could nevertheless point to their existence as proof of the city’s status as a hub of cultural activity.⁵⁹

In McCallum’s eyes, these shifts had their roots in popular and community art. In particular, he argued that Glasgow 1990 would not have taken the particular tone that it did without a broadening of the notion of ‘culture’ to include something much wider than the traditional ‘high arts’ – an idea which had its roots in the people’s festivals of the 1950s and the thriving folk culture of the time, driven by figures like Henderson and Norman ‘Norrie’ Buchan, the Rutherglen school teacher and folk

⁵⁷ See e.g. Lowndes, *Social Sculpture*, pp.104-105.

⁵⁸ Bartie, ‘Maydays to Mayfests’; Mayfest built on the example of ‘Clyde Fair International’ which ran for two years in 1972 and 1973 and sought to bring a carnival of popular culture to Clydeside. There was some controversy when Mayfest changed its tagline to ‘Mayfest – Glasgow’s International Festival’ in 1987, signalling a move away from popular or community arts towards high profile, international and professional acts.

⁵⁹ GCA, GDC/127, *European City of Culture Supplementary Bid*, (1986).

enthusiast who founded the Glasgow Folk Club and later served as a Labour MP. Although Cranhill Arts worked on a different model from that of Craigmillar and Easterhouse Festival Societies, McCallum also stressed that these organisations were the missing link between the folk revival of the 1950s and the GDC and SRC's populist approach to the Culture City programme.⁶⁰ These organisations had, over the course of the seventies and eighties, reshaped popular perceptions of what might constitute art or culture and alerted councillors to the idea that the arts might serve as a useful mobilising vehicle - encouraging self-help and turning around the fortunes of areas beset by economic and social problems. In McCallum's view, however, the GDC's approach to Glasgow 1990 was not the outcome of careful cultural planning. Not having invested in a coherent arts policy themselves, he argued that 'without being explicit about it they [took] that festival society model and applied it city-wide - and it worked'.⁶¹ Although sceptical of the lack of recognition given to earlier pioneers, for McCallum, willingness to engage with the programme was in part due the links he could see between some aspects of Glasgow 1990 and a broad inheritance of folk and working class cultural organisation.

This degree of continuity was useful to community artists in several respects. Firstly, for all their desire to rebrand the city, organisers understood that an event like Glasgow 1990, which drew down millions of pounds worth of local authority funding, would have to make concessions to popular culture if it was not to be met with significant criticism from the arts community and the press. Secondly, the very

⁶⁰ Interview, McCallum (2016).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

lack of a long standing cultural policy agenda in the city encouraged many of those involved in the arts to believe that they would be able to subvert some of the more cynical aspects of the programme. Thus in his ‘Letter from Glasgow’, broadcast on BBC Radio Three on 9 March 1990, playwright John McGrath asserted that Glasgow’s dynamic working-class culture was strong enough to trump the ‘hollow’ and synthetic culture pushed by Saatchi and Saatchi. It was the role of the arts community, he argued, to appropriate 1990 and push an agenda which focused on social and cultural enrichment for the many rather than economic enrichment for the few.⁶²

Thirdly, as McCallum stressed, it was hard to deny that in many respects, Glasgow *was* suffering economically, and any opportunity to bring change to people’s lives should be welcomed. Unlike Workers City, who took an uncompromising – and, in McCallum’s view, unnecessarily puritanical view – many community artists felt it was not their place to snub any offer of inclusion. Phyllis Steel’s attitude towards the event was one which similarly combined enthusiasm and cynicism. As she recalls:

We were all game for it. We could rise to the occasion. And I really do think Mayfest had a lot to do with it, the planting of the seeds of people doing things in their own locale, making theatre, doing exhibitions. A lot of photography, a lot of poets...And I think the city had...has always had a really good community arts network from the eighties onwards probably, so...bring on Pavarotti and the Bolshoi or whatever. Cos the city could cope with it.⁶³

⁶² For a discussion of McGrath’s ‘Letter’, see: Boyle and Hughes, ‘Representation of ‘the Real’’.

⁶³ Interview, Steel (2015).

Like McCallum, Steel felt that much of the groundwork had already been laid, not least of all through the efforts of community artists. This is not to say that the idea of 1990 was accepted without debate and deliberation as to how the programme might affect those living in less privileged circumstances. In Steel's account, her attitude combined detachment from the official cultural programme (exemplified by £75 tickets to see Pavarotti) with a willingness to use the available resources to further a different set of priorities, ones which focused on improving individual or community wellbeing:

I suppose if you were working in places like Easterhouse, or Drumchapel, or Castlemilk, you were still working in not the best of circumstances. So there was probably quite a lot of discussion about - what would this mean to the city? And how could community artists make the best benefit of that? And I think artists in Glasgow are pretty astute [about] how to get the best out of what they've got. Or what is available to them. So we just went for it. And took what best we could to put back into working with those communities. And obviously, not many people would have bought a £75 ticket to hear Pavarotti sing at the SECC. But that's not important, the important thing was we'd still to make sure [people] were being fed, and given information, or had opportunities to be creative. At the end of the day, that's what it's about.⁶⁴

Both Steel and McCallum signal that they were aware of the official agendas underpinning the Glasgow 1990 bid, whilst also stressing the extent to which their own personal agendas (and those of other arts workers, and communities themselves) did not necessarily tally with these intentions. Nevertheless, they each make clear their belief that if Glasgow 1990 were to go ahead, it was imperative

⁶⁴ Interview, Steel (2015).

that this opportunity be turned to the advantage of the people of Glasgow, whatever the council's agenda might be.

6.4 Culture, Authenticity and the Rise of Identity Politics

Locating authentic Glaswegian culture in a deindustrialising and increasingly diverse city was no simple feat. Though Glasgow undoubtedly had a keen sense of its own identity, heavily inflected with the language of socialism and class struggle, mythology did not always dovetail with present day realities. As one newspaper reminded its readers:

Every year more than 400,000 Glaswegians file through the doors of the People's Palace to gaze on the relics of Red Clydeside, the memorabilia of rent strikes, socialist Sunday schools and the Cooperative Women's Guild. Then they file out again into a city where less than a fifth of the economically active population is employed in manufacturing, while nearly three quarters work in the largely non-unionised service sector.⁶⁵

Effectively, Glasgow had become 'the worker's city with nae work'.⁶⁶ In any case, for some groups such as Glasgow's substantial Asian community, many of whom had first come to the city in the fifties and sixties, this was not necessarily their understanding of what it meant to be Glaswegian. And although women had played a prominent role in events such as the Rent Strikes, the focus on industrial struggle as the locus of authentic Glaswegian identity at times distracted attention from other forms of activism based around home and community life, as well as ongoing struggles to raise consciousness around issues relating to women's rights and

⁶⁵ *The Scotsman on Sunday*, 23 December 1990.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

gender equality. Despite assertions to the contrary, there were many instances of projects and performances which took place during Glasgow 1990 that celebrated and sought to reconnect people with the culture of industrial and tenement life; equally, there were those who saw the Festival as an opportunity for Glaswegians to explore and engage in debate about the complex realities of life in the contemporary city. Meanwhile, for communities whose shared sense of identity was not based, first and foremost at least, on class, Glasgow 1990 was an opportunity to celebrate this identity and increase visibility. In this regard, the Festival programme was something of a testimony to the rise of identity politics, as well as the changing shape of Glaswegian life and demography more generally.

Glasgow had been less affected by immigration from Commonwealth countries in the post-war period than comparable English cities.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, 1990 boasted a number of community arts projects which celebrated the religious and ethnic diversity of Glaswegian life. One project which owed its inauguration to the Year of Culture was the Glasgow Mela, a celebration of South Asian culture which took place at the Tramway and subsequently became an annual (and still ongoing) event. Barbara Orton, who worked with community groups to organise the Mela, offered a vivid description of how it was set up:

Hindu, Muslim, all the communities in Glasgow would do a part of. But it was properly designed by these wonderful designers to make it look like a Pakistani fair. Then we had food from the local restaurants, brilliant, we had the musicians. And then we had commercial stalls, tapes and bangles and saris. Then there was a stage in the middle of the market place. This is in the middle of the Tramway. And every half an hour, people would come on and they'd do twenty minutes, and then go off...there was this professional quality, that's what I was trying to do. It wasn't like Papua New Guinea

⁶⁷ Keating, *The City that Refused to Die*, p.63.

bare-breasted tourist. It was, y'know, a *group*...that displayed their culture. On the night it was like the atmosphere of a real Mela. It was amazing. We had people come in, in the day, like bus drivers with their uniforms on, or women with saris, the whole family, kids in push chairs...these women were just crying with...it made them feel like it was home, and it was their culture and somebody was honouring it. So that's sort of, for me, that emotional impact...it over-rides any ideological...it was just...humanity. And at the night time we had a programme of the big stars. We got a big star from the Punjab, we got Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan from Pakistan...we got a playback singer from Bangladesh who sang on movies. Little realising that these were huge stars, so the *whole* community came, right? We were charging £6 for a ticket, and they ended up changing hand for £60. So it was *massively* successful.⁶⁸

In many ways, the Mela captured the spirit of Orton's approach to Glasgow 1990. It was her belief that, where possible, projects should be community run, create a context in which local arts groups might stand side by side with international and professional artists and performers, and be of sufficient quality to make people proud to share their work with others beyond their community. By appealing to the 'emotional impact' of the Mela, Orton also suggested that the sense of belonging and pride that work of a high standard could engender trumped the more ideological considerations of groups like Workers City. In the process, Orton drew a different but no less clear-cut distinction between 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' culture by contrasting the genuinely popular and contemporary Pakistani and Punjabi performers who took to the stage during the Mela with the sort of patronising 'tourist fare' that gave a false or stereotypical view of Asian cultures to white western audiences. For Orton, the success of the Mela – evidenced by the keenness

⁶⁸ Interview, Orton (2015).

of Glasgow's various Asian communities to attend – was a testimony to this authenticity.



Figure 6.4 Photograph from the Cranhill Arts 'Glaswegians' project - Glasgow Pensioners, [courtesy of Cranhill Arts Project].

Projects engaged with the notion of authenticity in different ways. During 1990, the Cranhill Arts Project took over an old shopfront in the Saltmarket, a historically working-class area to the east of the city centre. Throughout 1990, the shop acted as a gallery for a wide range of photographic exhibitions covering various aspects of Glaswegian life. Alastair McCallum recalls how the shop quickly became a popular social hub:

We opened a shop during 1990 in the Saltmarket, because we thought that's where Glaswegian working-class people all come together, down at the Barras. We encouraged them to bring in their family photos and we made an exhibition ['Out of the Biscuit Tin'] that started off with bare walls, apart from a map of Glasgow and a map of the world [...] The Saltmarket had loads of people from Calton and people that came down there on buses

[from the outer estates]. I mean you would have to throw people out at the end of the day, because instead of meeting across the road in the Tollbooth [Bar] retired old guys would come in there every day and talk about the photos. And then go for a drink – “c’mon get out of here, I’ve got...” – And they’d be splitting hairs about “oh, is that Plantation...or Kinning Park...” ...y’know, that brilliant Glasgow thing.⁶⁹



Figure Figure 6.5 Photograph from the Cranhill Arts ‘Glaswegians’ project – Shipyard Workers, [courtesy of Cranhill Arts Project].

In the process of showcasing the social history of Glasgow, the photographs on show also had the effect of highlighting the city’s long history of working-class cultural activity, such as the autonomous networks of darkrooms and camera clubs that grew out of the co-operative movement in the 1950s and 1960s.⁷⁰ If the project brought people together to discuss Glasgow as it had once been, it also had the

⁶⁹ Interview, McCallum (2016).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

effect of encouraging visitors to connect with this legacy by going out and taking their own photos, many of which were subsequently put on display.⁷¹ By the end of 1990, the project had amassed a huge archive of photographs, both old and new, donated by residents of Glasgow from across the city.⁷²



Figure 6.6 Photograph from the Cranhill Arts ‘Glaswegians’ project – Outside Glasgow Mosque, [courtesy of Cranhill Arts Project].

One of the most prominent exhibitions Cranhill Arts co-ordinated during the Festival was ‘Glaswegians’, a photographic survey of the people of Glasgow ‘at work rest and play’ conducted over a period of 15 months by 22 different

⁷¹ Interview, McCallum (2016).

⁷² Jackson and Guest, *A Platform for Partnership*, p.86; many of these photographs have been archived online by Cranhill Arts Project. See: Cranhill Arts Project, ‘Family Album See’, accessed 12 December 2017, [<http://www.glasgowfamilyalbum.com/>].

individuals. Like *Clyde Film*, discussed in Chapter Five, ‘Glaswegians’ was in part a reaction to the new, sanitised image of Glasgow pushed in the media, which, McCallum felt, rarely showcased ordinary residents of the city or their culture. The young people involved in the project were free to take photos wherever and of whoever they chose {Figures 6.4, 6.5 and 6.6, p.314, p.315, p.316}. Nor did they shy away from documenting some of the less tourist-friendly aspects of life in a city where issues like sectarianism continued to shape some people’s sense of cultural identity:

Got you out of lots of scrapes in places like Orange walks where they didn’t want their photo taken. Well, it’s Glasgow. They were Glaswegians...got some quite good photos, but quite scary. Y’know, going inside an Old Firm match. They would never let us in. Neither Celtic nor Rangers would let us inside to take pictures...we took photos outside, in the street, and that was scarier than Orange walks...but we took photos of all sorts of things. Nuns, and primary school kids first day, we would have had one of that...nightclub bouncers...Trying to just get everybody into it. Policemen, horses. Guys with carts and horses.⁷³

Images of Orange walks or sectarian skirmishes were not necessarily the ones the City Council or the Glasgow City Tourist Board would choose to project. Nevertheless, as McCallum put it of those photographed: ‘they were Glaswegians’ and their culture as ‘real’ as anyone else’s.⁷⁴

Across the city, a different project was underway which sought to raise the profile of women’s cultural endeavours. In late summer 1990, a group of young artists – Rachael Harris, Julie Roberta and Cathy Wilkes - who met whilst studying at the

⁷³ Interview, McCallum (2016).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

Glasgow School of Art, took over an empty four-storey tenement of flats at 39 Glenacre Quadrant in Castlemilk, one of the city's post-war peripheral estates. Over the next few months, artists from across Britain worked with local women and their children to renovate the block and set up installations in its various rooms in preparation for 13 September, the day the house opened as a month-long public exhibition. Throughout this time, Glenacre Quadrant was busy with women taking part in workshops, helping set up events, and using the space - which also provided a crèche - as a place to socialise or escape for a while from the mundanity or stresses of domestic chores and childcare. The project, Castlemilk Womanhouse, was inspired by an earlier feminist art installation, Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro's Womanhouse, which took place in 1971-2 in a soon to be demolished house in Los Angeles, and which quickly became a major touchstone of feminist arts practice.⁷⁵ The Glasgow group explicitly set out to reclaim some of the ideas – such as the links between womanhood, domesticity and labour, issues around relationships and marriage, and the value of creative self-actualisation – with which the original Womanhouse had dealt, whilst also allowing the project to be guided by the needs and interests of the women who chose to take part.⁷⁶

Once they had obtained the house from the GDC's housing department, the group sought to generate local involvement by distributing flyers and holding open days and meetings around the area.⁷⁷ In the spring of 1990, adverts were placed in

⁷⁵ On the original Womanhouse project, see Miriam Schapiro, 'The Education of Women as Artists: Project Womanhouse', *Art Journal*, 31:3 (1972), pp.268-70.

⁷⁶ Glasgow Women's Library (hereafter GWL), Women in Profile, Box 3, Adele Patrick Transcript (11 March 2014).

⁷⁷ GWL, Women In Profile, Box 3, Loose Posters and Leaflets.

newspapers, arts newsletters and feminist publications calling for artists to submit proposals for residencies.⁷⁸ These proposals were then pinned to the walls of the flat, allowing women from the neighbourhood to choose those which most appealed to them. The chosen artists were each allocated a room in which to install their work, and were also invited to set up workshops, encouraging women and children to try out the techniques the artists used in their own work. Workshops included everything from making pin-hole cameras, to rug-making, pottery, sculpture and carpentry, the results of which were displayed throughout the building.⁷⁹

Many of the installations offered a feminist rereading of the rooms in which they were located. Claire Barclay, one of the artists selected, and herself a Glasgow School of Art graduate, used coal, carbolic soap and pieces of fabric to create a bathroom installation which served as a reflection on both the claustrophobic nature of domestic life, and the hidden labour inherent in domestic work. In one of the bedrooms, Rachel Harris worked on 'The House that Jill Built', an oversized Wendy house structure inspired by the dovecots around Castlemilk, built from scrap materials that Harris gathered with local women and children. Meanwhile, 'A Girls Night Out', a collaboration between Josie Wilkinson, Aideen Cusack and a group of six Castlemilk women, saw the women each making three-dimensional papier-mâché mannequins of themselves getting ready for a night out. As Claire Barclay recalls: 'at that time, there was really very little for women to do in the Castlemilk area. There was one misogynist pub that the women weren't welcomed into. So the

⁷⁸ GWL, Women In Profile, Box 3, Cuttings.

⁷⁹ Julie Roberts, Rachael Harris and Cathy Wilkes, (eds.), *Castlemilk Womanhouse: Exhibition Catalogue* (Glasgow: Women in Profile, 1990).

idea was to get a gang of women together and go for a night out in this pub and upset everything. And they made this work about it'.⁸⁰ Throughout the house, professional work sat side by side with individual and collaborative pieces, with no hierarchies drawn between professional and non-professional, age or technique. Some events even catered specifically to local children, such as a Halloween event where the tenement was transformed into a haunted house, complete with dry ice, a giant hippo sculpture and a series of strategically placed 'scares'.

As Barclay recalled, this mix of fun and more serious work was typical of the Womanhouse project, which approached the issues women faced head on, but also sought to generate an atmosphere of camaraderie and support. Many of the women involved reflected positively on the project. Lorraine Shaidon, for example, first became involved in the project after seeing a poster on a noticeboard in Castlemilk Community Centre advertising for a paid crèche worker, a job she successfully secured.⁸¹ Along with her eight-year-old daughter Stephanie, Shaidon embraced the artistic activities on offer. Noting that there were few opportunities for single mothers with young children in the area to be creative, use their intelligence, or step outside of their traditional domestic 'duties', she was emphatic that: '[t]he Womanhouse is my salvation, for a few hours a week I feel like a person, not someone's wife/daughter/mother. A totally new person exists inside me. I'm finally doing something for myself without having to ask permission or feel guilt. The

⁸⁰ GWL, Women In Profile, Box 3, Claire Barclay Transcript (7 July 2014).

⁸¹ GWL, Women In Profile, Box 3, Lorraine and Stephanie Sharp Transcript (25 April 2014).

feeling is wonderful'.⁸² As Shadoin's reflections suggest, the project not only equipped women with new skills and confidence, it also functioned as a site of collective feminist consciousness raising. Castlemilk Womanhouse provided an alternative space for women and their children, in which it was possible to reconnect with or discover new interests, talents and ambitions.⁸³

Castlemilk Womanhouse was one of many projects which sat under the banner of an umbrella organisation, Woman in Profile, set up in 1987 with the aim of securing a place for women's art within the City of Culture programme. During 1990 itself, Women in Profile and a splinter group, Women 2000, organised a month-long Glasgow Women's Festival. Prominent events included *Glasgow Girls*, a major retrospective of more than 30 female artists active in the period 1880-1920, and Women in the Arts, a four-day conference which took place to coincide with the launch of the Womens' Festival.⁸⁴ Like many artists, those who took part in Women in Profile recall having mixed feelings about the announcement that Glasgow had been nominated City of Culture. Adele Patrick, who grew up in Doncaster and moved to Glasgow to study at the Glasgow School of Art in the early 1980s, was one of the women responsible for setting up the organisation. She noted that although there was a degree of excitement about the prospect of Glasgow's culture becoming the centre of international attention, there was also an 'anticipation that whatever 1990 might achieve in terms of a celebration of culture in the City that

⁸² Roberts, Harris and Wilkes, *Castlemilk Womanhouse*.

⁸³ Hannah Hamblin, *Castlemilk Womanhouse: History, Labour, Feminism*, Unpublished MSc Dissertation (University of Edinburgh, 2014), p.43.

⁸⁴ Jackson and Guest, *A Platform for Partnership*, p.78; *1990 The Book*, p.91.

women and their work would not be adequately represented'.⁸⁵ Determined not to give into this feeling of resignation, members of Women in Profile determined that rather than boycotting the event altogether, they would fight to carve out a space within it.⁸⁶

Women in Profile was set up to promote women's cultural endeavour, shed light on forms of creativity (such as decorative or domestic crafts) typically ignored by the high art establishment, and provide a support network for female artists. The organisation was also a reaction against what its members perceived as the 'alienating spectacle of a heightened 'masculinisation' of Glasgow's Culture', exemplified by the celebration of (all male) groups like the Glasgow Boys and the Glasgow Colourists, attempts to generate a Charles Rennie Mackintosh 'industry', and promotion of the so-called 'New Glasgow Boys' – artists like Steven Campbell, Ken Currie, Adrian Wisniewski and Peter Howson.⁸⁷ Patrick summed up feelings at the time as follows:

if you don't do something now, when are women ever gonna get a look in? And also, they're obviously white guys, I mean any idea of plurality or hearing different voices...there's not gonna be another opportunity. So we were quite opportunistic in thinking – ok, this thing's gonna happen, we're already critical of the idea of it, everybody's gonna have a beard, it's gonna be Billy Connolly, all the old school, and the New Glasgow Boys. So I think it was just an opportunity really to *do* something.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ GWL, Women in Profile, Box 3, Adele Patrick, *Women's History in Scotland: A Decade of Struggle 1980-1990*, (1989).

⁸⁶ Patrick, *Women's History in Scotland*.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Interview with Adele Patrick (20 June 2017).



Figure 6.7 Castlemilk Womanhouse Posters advertising arts workshops, [Courtesy of Glasgow Women’s Library].

This willingness to see Glasgow 1990 as an opportunity also set Women in Profile apart from those who chose to side with Workers City. As Patrick recalled, although many artists she knew chose to turn their backs on the whole event:

I was critiquing them as well because they were quite masculinised terrains - the left, socialist and communist. I’d had my try at that, actually, when I first came to Glasgow, and there was no room for any feminist discussion, whatsoever. And I just thought, y’know what? I don’t feel like an alliance there is gonna enable us to do what we’re gonna do [...] So I did know about them and I respected their work to a degree, but I thought, there are other critiques here that need to be made.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Interview, Patrick (2017).

For all its anti-establishment stance, Patrick felt that the conception of culture offered by Workers City mirrored rather than offered a true alternative to the male-dominated triumphalism of the City of Culture narrative.

Patrick's attitude towards Glasgow 1990 was (and remains) an ambivalent one. As she concedes, the City of Culture did have the effect of galvanising women's projects in the city – projects that would not have got off the ground without funding, however small an amount. On the other hand, she felt that funders were rarely supportive of the group's aims, describing the relationship between Women in Profile and both the GDC and the SRC as 'embattled'.⁹⁰ In Patrick's view, the status of feminist and other forms of identity politics was extremely low in Glasgow – and Scotland more generally - even as late as 1990. Comparing the GDC and SRC's attitudes with those of the Greater London Council, Patrick noted that arts policy in Glasgow had rarely made any space for feminist, LGBT or other minorities programming. By way of contrast, between 1981 and 1986 (when Thatcher abolished the top tier of the English local government system), the GLC embarked on an extensive programme of arts initiatives designed to meet the needs of London's multicultural and socially diverse population. Projects which received funding included community centres run by and for black, minority and LGBT groups, as well as women's video projects, and projects focusing on issues such as AIDS, anti-fascism and peace.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Interview, Patrick (2017); Castlemilk Womanhouse applied for but did not receive funding from the SRC. Funding for the project came from the GDC, via Women in Profile.

⁹¹ On the GLC's art policies, see: Mulgan and Walpole, *Saturday Night*.

Much of this activity was in keeping with the ‘post material’ politics of the new urban left which was building strength across Britain at the municipal level during the 1980s.⁹² In his 1988 book *The Hard Road to Renewal*, cultural critic Stuart Hall argued forcefully that a left-wing political renewal would have to mobilise around categories other than class alone if it was to build a broad leftist coalition capable of taking on the Thatcherite cultural hegemony.⁹³ In a city like London, with its large ethnic minority and middle-class population, this may have been a natural development, but Glasgow remained a predominantly white and largely working-class city.⁹⁴ Nor did local government in Glasgow experience the same influx of middle-class, university-educated professionals and activists into its ranks as many other industrial cities in Britain did during the 1980s.⁹⁵ As Patrick reflects, grassroots organisation around issues other than class were also fairly underdeveloped:

There was a very acutely, very highly developed and heightened awareness around class issues...it was one of the reasons why I wanted to come here, during the Thatcher years. [...] But as far as the other stuff, other areas of concern...all the LGBT stuff was virtually underground. I can’t remember when Pride started, but it was *several* years after 1990. In terms of minorities activism, there was some little fledgling BME projects. Quite a lot of anti-Nazi stuff and anti-racist stuff, but it wasn’t high profile. It was almost an unrecognisable context we were working in.⁹⁶

⁹² On the politics of the ‘new left’ and the GLC, see Geoff Eley, *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850-2000* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.461.

⁹³ Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal*.

⁹⁴ Daisy Payling makes a similar point with regards to Sheffield: Daisy Payling, ‘“Socialist Republic of South Yorkshire’: Grassroots Activism and Left-Wing Solidarity in 1980s Sheffield’, *Twentieth Century Brit History*, 25:1 (2014), pp.602-627.

⁹⁵ Keating, *The City that Refused to Die*, p.62

⁹⁶ Interview, Patrick (2017); for example, the first Pride march in Scotland did not take place until 1995.

In this regard, the work Harris, Roberts and Wilkes were undertaking in Castlemilk felt very much like a new step for feminism, as well as feminist art practice, in Glasgow. This is not to say that class had no role to play in the Castlemilk project. By taking the name ‘Womanhouse’, the artists involved signalled that they saw their work as a continuation of feminist work pioneered by women in the early 1970s. However, the original Womanhouse had not been overly concerned with class issues.⁹⁷ In the view of Rachel Harris, by situating the project in Castlemilk, the Glasgow project could not help but take on its own identity, arising from specific needs related to class as well as gender. As Harris reflected, ‘it was feminist...but it was also about poverty and accessibility and shifting some of this arts funding away from the usual places’.⁹⁸ What Castlemilk Womanhouse strove towards, then, was an intersectionality that allowed consciousness raising around both class and gender issues: a reflection of the fact that both categories structured issues such as cultural access, representation and production.

6.5 Community Arts and Social Policy

Although ‘community art’ had frequently operated as a synonym for ‘working-class art’, within this context, it had often emphasised provision for young people, the unemployed, women, the elderly, and so on. In so far as community arts projects tended to be based in predominantly working-class communities, the consciousness-raising potential of these groupings could hardly avoid this issue of

⁹⁷ Hamblin, *Castlemilk Womanhouse*, p.23

⁹⁸ GWL, Women In Profile, Box 3, Rachael Harris Transcript (25 March 2014).

class: young people were *working-class* young people; women, *working-class* women. Nevertheless, rhetorical appeals to community rather than class solidarity had the effect of opening community arts practice up to other agendas in which class was not the primary category of analysis. By the 1970s, class identity was slowly beginning to be displaced or at least augmented by other categories of identity. Feminism, LGBT rights, youth subcultures, ethnic groups, and anti-fascist or anti-racist campaigns – these were all issues or identities beginning to make themselves felt in Scottish political and cultural life, albeit to a lesser extent than in comparable English cities.⁹⁹ But in the process of unmooring itself from questions of class solidarity, there was no guarantee that community arts practice would realign itself with alternative political gestures such as identity politics. Within the community arts movement, there had always been practitioners and projects which emphasised the recreational and therapeutic values of creativity, expressed through the language of ‘self-discovery’, ‘confidence’ and ‘self-esteem’. Over time, this language came to dominate, in many instances supplanting a more collective or political understanding of the value of participatory practice.¹⁰⁰ It was this more individuated and therapeutic approach which policy-makers and politicians tended to latch onto.

As the above examples demonstrate, the Festival was used to further a wide variety of different agendas. Nowhere was this more apparent than at local government level. It is commonly asserted that the two councils responsible for the programme

⁹⁹ See p.17.

¹⁰⁰ For a case study of how this process occurred in the context of the London borough of Tower Hamlets, see: Wetherell, ‘Painting the Crisis’.

– Glasgow District Council and Strathclyde Regional Council – took opposing views as to the purpose of cultural investment, even though both were Labour Party controlled. Phyllis Steel, for example, suggests that: ‘the arts side for the city was the flowery bit, the icing on the cake, but that was the one that got all the kudos. That was why there was this constant conflict between the region and the city’.¹⁰¹ Within this framework, the economic focus of the District Council is compared (usually unfavourably) with the more socially-minded and inclusive approach of the Region. Although the Festival Office co-ordinated its own communities programme, it was widely perceived that it felt pressure to do so in order not to be outdone by the Region.¹⁰²

This perception had some grounding in reality. As we have seen, for the Region, Glasgow 1990 offered a high-profile opportunity to further some of the aims of its Social Strategy.¹⁰³ However, many critics have suggested that a policy framework such as the Social Strategy, which was not fully integrated with a complementary economic policy oriented towards redistribution of wealth and the creation of meaningful employment, was unlikely to make any serious inroads into the social issues it was designed to confront.¹⁰⁴ From 1975 onwards, economic policy in the West of Scotland was in large part the preserve of the Scottish Development Agency, a non-elected body directly accountable to the Conservative-controlled Scottish Office. As Kantor argues, the SDA was for a time able to stand aloof from

¹⁰¹ Interview, Steel (2015).

¹⁰² *Ibid*; Interview with Liz Gardiner (10 February 2016).

¹⁰³ Keating, *The City that Refused to Die*, p.143; SRC, *Social Strategy*.

¹⁰⁴ Kantor, ‘Poor Cities?’; Keating, *The City that Refused to Die*, p.159.

some of the more private-sector oriented policy agendas imposed by central government on its English regional counterparts.¹⁰⁵ However, by the mid-1980s, the sorts of economic policies pursued in Glasgow focused heavily on property-led regeneration: such a strategy was driven by the search for financial return on investment and did not seek to reduce deprivation in any direct way.¹⁰⁶ It was largely left to the Region to develop programmes designed to deal with the social fall-out of industrial decline. In effect, by 1990 the two councils were pursuing something of a ‘dual urban strategy’, whereby entrepreneurial policies which supported highly visible inner-city regeneration projects were complemented only by a fragmented social policy targeted at specific ‘problem’ areas’.¹⁰⁷

Meanwhile, there was a considerable degree of dissonance between what Barr calls ‘the image of the [Region’s] strategy as a means of combating structural inequality’ and the actual focus on small-scale, localised problems.¹⁰⁸ It has been argued that the emphasis on targeted intervention ran the risk of validating ideas such as the ‘cycle of deprivation’, the theory fashionable in some circles during the 1970s that poverty was caused by the transmission of ‘deviant’ cultural values and behaviours, rather than structural issues beyond the individual’s control.¹⁰⁹ From this

¹⁰⁵ Kantor, ‘Poor Cities?’; Keating, *The City that Refused to Die*, p.96.

¹⁰⁶ Kantor, ‘Poor Cities?’.

¹⁰⁷ Chris McWilliams, Charlie Johnstone and Gerry Mooney, ‘Urban Policy in the New Scotland: The Role of Social Inclusion Partnerships’, *Space and Polity*, 8:3 (2004), pp.309-319.

¹⁰⁸ Alan Barr, ‘Outcome Based Community Development Practice – How Did We Get Here and Does It Matter?’, Paper given at the *Scottish Community Development Alliance Conference* (3 June, 2005), accessed 26 June 2017, [http://109.233.117.82/standards_council/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/progress_of_community_development.pdf]; Keating, *The City that Refused to Die*, p.150.

¹⁰⁹ Keating, *The City that Refused to Die*, p.145.

perspective, policies like the Social Strategy constituted ‘a residualised poorly funded strand of urban policy...focused more on managing decline and social anomie’ than lifting people out of poverty.¹¹⁰ Thus, despite the Region’s more overtly progressive leanings, the different approaches taken to Glasgow 1990 were to some extent two sides of the same coin, with both councils using the arts to negotiate, reluctantly or otherwise, the spectre of encroaching neoliberalism. This raises questions about where community arts sat in relation to this agenda and how they understood this relationship.

When the SRC declared its intention to ‘help make the City of Culture...a people’s festival’, it was building upon work it had been pursuing on an ad hoc basis since 1975, the year the council was founded.¹¹¹ Although the Region had no specific community arts policy, it did support community artists as part of its wider community development, community education and anti-deprivation policies. The Region also supported a number of arts centres as part of its wider educational remit, including the Glasgow Arts Centre, based in a disused school at 12 Washington Street, and the Dolphin, based in Bridgeton. In February 1989, the SRC’s Arts and Culture Steering Group agreed on a cultural policy framework which would guide their approach to Glasgow 1990. The key aims of this framework were to improve the ‘cultural environment of the region’ and in doing so, ‘improve the quality of life of its residents’.¹¹² Specific measures were also taken

¹¹⁰ McWilliams, Johnstone and Mooney, ‘Urban Policy in the New Scotland’; for a similar point, see: Kantor, ‘Poor Cities?’.

¹¹¹ McCabe and McVicar, *Streets, Schemes and Stages*, p.xii.

¹¹² Charles Gray, Leader of the SRC, quoted in: McCabe and McVicar, *Streets, Schemes and Stages*, p.v.

to include those ‘who would otherwise have gained no benefit or enjoyment from 1990, if deliberate measures had not been taken to open up cultural opportunity to them’, particularly those living in priority areas, as well as priority social groups - such as the elderly, the disabled, and young people.¹¹³ The participatory elements of community art made it a ‘good fit’ with this particular objective.¹¹⁴ Unlike the District, whose priority was to promote the professional arts, the Region therefore diverted the majority of its funding towards projects which allowed local people to exercise or develop their creative talents.¹¹⁵

Neither Strathclyde’s Glasgow 1990 programme - nor the Social Strategy on which it was based - were embraced without caveats. During the 1980s, with local government facing ‘the twin evils of unemployment and a rapid erosion in the abilities of local authorities to continue to provide adequate services’, critics argued that the focus of those implementing the Strategy had shifted from changing things for the better to merely preventing them from getting worse.¹¹⁶ Meanwhile, a more Thatcherite vocabulary, extolling the values of individual transformation, entrepreneurship and self-help, increasingly trumped the language of social equality in the council’s policy discourse.¹¹⁷ These trends are mirrored in the framework which governed the council’s involvement in Glasgow 1990.¹¹⁸ The focus throughout was on ‘soft’ objectives such as raising aspirations, boosting self-esteem

¹¹³ McCabe and McVicar, *Streets, Schemes and Stages*, p.v.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, p.xii.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.vii.

¹¹⁶ SRC, *Social Strategy*, p.3.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, p.7.

¹¹⁸ McCabe and McVicar, *Streets, Schemes and Stages*, p.xiii.

and improving quality of life. Although ostensibly about involving communities, participation was often discussed in terms of how it would benefit individuals.¹¹⁹

Nor was the language of entrepreneurialism entirely absent: improving quality of life was also about making the Region attractive to inward investment.¹²⁰

Workers City were quick to question the value of the programme, demanding to know if ‘any of the users of Strathclyde Region’s services [were] asked whether they thought £20 million should be blown on getting in on the Culture City...at a time when £21 million cuts this year and £42 million next year were about to be made?’.¹²¹ Others took issue with what they considered the patronising tone at times apparent in the Region’s justifications for its involvement in Glasgow 1990.¹²² The implication of much of the Region’s literature was often that those living in its priority areas somehow *lacked* culture: through participation in Glasgow 1990, it was held, people ‘who lived in housing schemes, people in groups who suffer disadvantage, people who would have said that culture belonged to someone else’ had ‘found creativity...found that the arts could belong to them’.¹²³ Such sentiments did little to dispel the belief that community art was more condescending than it was genuinely liberating.¹²⁴

The Region was not alone in promoting community arts as a means of effecting social regeneration; nor was it alone in discovering that such an approach was open

¹¹⁹ McCabe and McVicar, *Streets, Schemes and Stages*, p.xiv.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, p.xii.

¹²¹ McLay, *Workers City*, p.69.

¹²² *Ibid*, p.129.

¹²³ McCabe and McVicar, *Streets, Schemes and Stages*, p.xi.

¹²⁴ McLay, *Workers City*, p.129.

to criticism. As Owen Kelly had warned in 1984, there was a growing tendency to see community arts as a pleasant enough (if sometimes patronising) pursuit, one that was perhaps not worthy of priority funding in times of fiscal hardship.¹²⁵ In order to make the case for public investment in the arts, then, it became increasingly necessary to prove that investment would pay socially beneficial dividends. Providing evidence to support such a hypothesis has long proven challenging, and this made it difficult for those working in the arts to defend their practice against cuts.¹²⁶ In 1995, in a bid to overcome this particular impasse, the independent research organisation Comedia was commissioned by the Gulbenkian Foundation to conduct a study which would provide an empirical basis for many of the social claims made of participatory arts.¹²⁷ The ensuing report, *Use or Ornament? The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts*, was written by François Matarasso and set out 50 ‘social outcomes’ apparently accruing from involvement in arts projects.¹²⁸ Although Matarasso stressed that the arts were not capable of resolving all social ills, Matarasso’s report was widely influential - not least on the incoming New Labour government, for whom the arts were to form an important building block of both their economic and social policies.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Kelly, *Storming the Citadels*, p.1

¹²⁶ For a review of these debates, see: Belfiore and Bennett, *Social Impact of the Arts*.

¹²⁷ Hewison, *Cultural Capital*, p.71 - Comedia was set up in 1978 by Charles Landry, a pioneer of the ‘creative city’ concept.

¹²⁸ François Matarasso, *Use or Ornament? The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts* (London: Comedia, 1997).

¹²⁹ Hewison, *Cultural Capital*, p.71.

Far from dispelling cynicism, Matarasso's report has been much dissected.¹³⁰ Paola Merli, one of Matarasso's most vociferous critics, rests her critique of *Use or Ornament?* on two grounds. Firstly, she suggests that the benefits the report sought to demonstrate cannot adequately be proven to have taken place, or sustained over time; and secondly, these apparent benefits are in any case not the ones on which a truly liberating practice should focus its attention.¹³¹ For Merli, Matarasso's research is underpinned by 'a particular philosophical attitude towards society' in which social conditions are understood 'as mere fact'.¹³² Practitioners working in this vein 'do not venture questions, hard criticism and struggle anymore'.¹³³ Instead, 'they increasingly behave like 'new missionaries', who play guitar with marginalised youth, the disabled and the unemployed, aiming at mitigating the perception which they have of their own exclusion' – that is to say, they do not attempt to use the arts to bring about social change, they merely accommodate people to society as it currently is.¹³⁴ More to the point, Merli argues, 'making deprivation more acceptable is a tool to endlessly reproduce it'.¹³⁵ Such a practice does not encourage the sort of critical awakening that is a necessary precondition of organising politically to demand change. Merli also takes issue with the way in which such an approach seems to imply - in moralistic terms - that any difficulties participants face are the result of personal deficiencies rather than structural

¹³⁰ Hewison, *Cultural Capital*, p.73; Matarasso himself has subsequently stated that he did not anticipate his findings would be used to justify a purely instrumental understanding of the value of cultural investment.

¹³¹ Merli, 'A Critical Review'.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

inequalities. To use art to inculcate in participants ‘employability skills’ is merely a modern-day reformulation of the old civilising aims of cultural policy. Finally, particularly unhelpful in Merli’s view is the emphasis on the ‘chimera’ of social cohesion. Matarasso claims the arts ‘contribute to a stable, confident and creative society’; but surely, Merli argues, lack of conflict in a community is a sign of indifference and anomie rather than an indication of connectedness or health.¹³⁶ As she identifies, this emphasis on cohesion and consensus was less apparent in earlier community arts practice, where artistic expression was often used to demand rights or seek emancipation from social control and state bureaucracy.

Writing in *The Herald* in 1992, musician and journalist Pat Kane used Fable Vision’s *Ruchazie Ruchazie* to launch a similar attack against some of what he saw as the more spurious claims made by the SRC about the relationship between community art and community empowerment.¹³⁷ For Kane, such arts projects did little to undermine the dependency culture they purported to disrupt. Although, Kane argued, Thatcherism may have ‘traumatised the Left of these isles into a last-ditch defence of anything that wasn’t grasping market individualism’, Kane reminded readers that there had been, in the early 1970s, an ‘alternative view of social welfare coming from the Left, which didn’t accept easy definitions of community or how people should behave within them’.¹³⁸ Highlighting community development’s origins as a strategy of colonial governance in the dying days of the

¹³⁶ Merli, ‘A Critical Review’; see also Keating, *The City that refused to Die*, p.72.

¹³⁷ *The Herald*, 29 February 1992.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

British Empire, Kane noted that while African nationalists had identified a need for highly trained lawyers, teachers, doctors and nurses, they were encouraged instead to celebrate ‘spear-throwing, tribal dancing, the wearing of traditional clothing’.¹³⁹ Critical education had been supplanted by something far less likely to break the links of dependency between colonies and colonialists. Kane felt that the festivities in Ruchazie were troublingly akin to this model and noted that the Year of Culture was likely to remain little more than ‘a bright, bitterness-tinged memory’ for those who continued to live in less than ideal conditions long after the lights had dimmed.¹⁴⁰ The emancipatory potentials of such celebrations were compared unfavourably with the recent Poll Tax campaign. In Kane’s view, the glimpse of independence and empowerment this struggle had offered was likely to give people ‘far more lasting dignity than Ruchazie ‘having a ball for 10 days’ in 1990’.¹⁴¹

As Banks and Carpenter note, it is not unusual for those who work in community settings ‘to be caught in conflicting pressures between central policymakers, local agencies and the communities who are ultimately supposed to benefit’.¹⁴² Given that from the mid-1970s, local authorities were one of the key sources of support for community arts initiatives, few community arts workers could afford not to engage with local authority agendas and funding streams. In any case, Barr argues, by the time of local government reorganisation, the so-called ‘romantic age’ of community-based work was largely over: the utopianism of the late 1960s had been

¹³⁹ *The Herald*, 29 February 1992.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² Banks and Carpenter, ‘Radical Community Development Projects’.

heavily tempered by the fiscal realities of life in the 1970s.¹⁴³ In the early 1990s, Barr conducted a study which looked at the relationship between the work performed by community development workers in Strathclyde and their professional identities. Barr concluded that behind much of the socialist or social democratic discourse of empowerment and transformation used by community workers tended to lie a more conservative reality.¹⁴⁴

The term 'community work', of course, covers a wide range of attitudes and practices, within which Barr identified three broad positions. On the more conservative side were those concerned, consciously or otherwise, with accommodating people to the circumstances of modern industrial society and ensuring 'a more orderly acceptance of policies and services'.¹⁴⁵ Others, working in a more liberal vein, tended to see the problem as a technical one: society had the resources to lift people out of poverty, but was unlikely to make these resources fully available unless people either demanded them or were subject to positive discrimination policies. Finally, there were those who possessed a genuine desire to shift the balance of political power and sought to achieve this by undertaking work which encouraged people to articulate their own local or personal experience in terms of a wider constellation of class, race, or gender struggles.¹⁴⁶ In Barr's view, most work fell into what he called the conservative or liberal pluralist mode, and only occasionally the socialist democratic mode. Radical work was very rare.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ Barr, *Practicing Community Development*, p.4.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p.7.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p.16.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p.144-5, p.24.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p.130.

In some respects, Barr's analysis is borne out in terms of community arts workers working in and around Strathclyde Region in the run up to Glasgow 1990. Many of the community artists active during 1990 had started work in the late 1970s or early 1980s, at a time when it was taken for granted that the state was to be defended rather than criticised. In the face of rising unemployment and cuts to public services, criticism of local government tended to centre more on its failure to recognise community arts as a valuable practice rather than any more fundamental critique of the aims and agendas of social work or education departments. Instead, community arts workers tended to take a more pragmatic attitude which acknowledged that there were many factors over which community-based work could have little control, focusing instead on small, incremental changes and feasible outcomes.

However, the way community artists understood and positioned their work was also more complicated than Barr's schemata suggested. Phyllis Steel's attitude towards Glasgow 1990 is a case in point. As Steel saw it, the Festival offered an opportunity to raise the profile of work that had long been underway in the city, often with little formal support and recognition. As Steel points out, the main benefits with which the Social Work department in particular were concerned were those relating to wellbeing and mental health. In her view, the communities programme was 'an obvious acknowledgement by some key workers within social work' that they 'really did see the benefit of the arts within their groups of people that they worked with'.¹⁴⁸ Steel accepted this as a positive development which allowed a great deal of valuable work to go ahead. Yet Steel's own practice was not limited to work

¹⁴⁸ Interview, Steel (2015).

which focused on wellbeing. From 1983 onwards, she had been part of a small team which had set up and organised Glasgow's annual Mayfest celebrations. On the other hand, work Steel undertook during 1990 was often less overtly political in nature. The Big Noise Children's International Festival, for example, though loud and vibrant in its execution, was concerned with the quieter aims of supporting arts and leisure activities for children. As Steel herself described it, her practice was very much a response to individual communities, letting their needs dictate the shape of the project: 'when you get into the actual situation, in a community centre, where people have sometimes difficult, sometimes chaotic lives, you just have to...maybe *not* deliver a drama workshop, you might just end up sitting talking to someone, because that's the need of the day'.¹⁴⁹ For Steel, there was room for both types of work – that which pursued socialist politics, and that which provided individuated, therapeutic support; sometimes a workshop could not even begin until the latter had been addressed.

Steel's understanding of the benefits of her work similarly complicates Barr's analysis. Although, community artists in Glasgow 'had a very strong sense of mission, in that we wanted to do the very best for Glasgow as a community', she was more comfortable expressing the value of artistic engagement in terms of how it benefited individuals. Discussing work in Easterhouse, for example, she stated that:

I think a lot of people...for some reason being able to express themselves did allow them to feel a bit more confident about maybe going for job interviews. Some of them took on going to college, because like myself they probably left school without any qualifications at all. There was a cycle of,

¹⁴⁹ Interview, Steel (2015).

particularly in Easterhouse at that time, serious gang warfare, and drugs. So there were people who did want to move away from that cycle. And playing in a local rock band, or writing poetry, poetry was quite a thing then... So that in itself also gave them a great boost of confidence to go and do other things.¹⁵⁰

In Steel's experience, taking part in arts activities gave participants a sense of self-worth, and encouraged them to apply this new-found confidence to other areas of their lives. In particular, it gave young people – such as those who had not thrived in the formal school system - the sense that alternative paths were open to them. What Steel's narrative also suggests, however, is that change did not necessarily occur at a community level. Indeed, it was precisely because of conditions in the local area that having the confidence 'to go and do other things' was so empowering. Notably, Steel positioned grasping new opportunities as breaking away from a 'cycle' of potentially negative influences – in this instance, drugs or gang culture – invoking the idea that poverty is a learned, rather than structurally imposed condition.

On the other hand, discussing the community arts scene in Glasgow during the 1980s, Steel goes on to imply that the small-scale ways in which the arts affected individual lives were nevertheless related to wider political struggles:

People were beginning to find confidence and a bit of a voice, and [...] people [were] feeling confident about their own opinions being of value. So I think probably in the seventies, and certainly going into the early eighties when there was things like the Miners' Strike, it was a really strong power struggle about making sure that your voice....and the ordinary man and woman on the street had to be heard, and how do you do that? Demonstration, and voice, making theatre, making art work...and rock music, you know popular music at that time was also very vibrant and

¹⁵⁰ Interview, Steel (2015).

making those political statements. So the arts themselves can be ‘art for art’s sake’, which is also a thing needed, but I think that the power of the voice of the people coming through...local issues, and being able to articulate them out, literally on a stage, or in an exhibition hall, I think people saw that as being a powerful thing to do. And, you know, on a very individual level, the confidence that gives you. It’s amazing. Particularly young people, being able to express themselves very clearly about what’s right and what’s wrong in their lives.¹⁵¹

In this narrative, notions of empowerment – both personal and political – are refracted through the notion of ‘voice’. In Steel’s formulation, ‘having voice’ is a multifaceted process: it is the process of being able to articulate ‘what’s right and what’s wrong’, gaining confidence to speak out, and finding (sometimes creative) ways or platforms from which to make demands or put opinions across. More than this, it is having faith in the idea that voice is listened to, and that it has the capacity to effect change – that speaking out is ‘a powerful thing to do’.¹⁵² Whether this was achieved in practice is difficult to judge. As Bradley points out, ‘voice’ is often used in discussions of social struggle in a metaphorical sense to imply having or asserting power, but voice and power are not the same thing.¹⁵³ There is no direct, causal relationship between speaking and influencing decision making processes unless voice is backed up with the prospect of collective action.¹⁵⁴ What is clear, however, is that community artists such as Steel saw their work – largely focused on cultural access - within the context of wider political struggles over cultural representation and resistance. Through repetition of the appeal to ‘voice’, Steel rhetorically aligns

¹⁵¹ Interview, Steel (2015).

¹⁵² On the concept of ‘voice’, see: Nick Couldry, *Why Voice Matters: Culture and Politics after Neoliberalism* (London: Sage, 2010).

¹⁵³ Bradley, *The Tenants’ Movement*, p.65.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p.66.

the use of art as a means of building individual confidence and capacity for self-expression with its use as a platform for political expression (whether regarding local or national issues), thereby implying not only that both are political, but also that both are interlinked.

In some respects, this reflects Steel's personal and professional identity as someone firmly on the side of 'the ordinary man and woman'.¹⁵⁵ Yet to invoke a campaign like the Miners' Strike – the strategic but also emotive power of which rests on the fact not only that individual mining communities organised collectively, but also that alliances were forged with other sympathetic interest groups – to some extent masks the fact that many community arts projects did not have the capacity to build alliances between communities as well as within them. Nor did participants necessarily make the leap from seeing their problems as local issues to think about them critically in terms of a wider, class context or in terms of structures and relations of power; indeed, this was rarely the aim of more therapeutic work. Nevertheless, Steel's intermingled references to individual, community and cross-community issues or protest suggests a belief in the idea that the arts might foster what Mead and Shaw call 'a more dialectical relationship between the cultural politics of people in communities and the wider political culture of the state' – that is to say, that confident and informed individuals or communities are a necessary precursor of wider-scale political protest or organisation.¹⁵⁶ In this sense, Steel articulates an understanding of the transformative power of artistic involvement

¹⁵⁵ Interview, Steel (2015).

¹⁵⁶ Meade and Shaw, 'Community Development and the Arts'; Bradley, *The Tenants' Movement*, p.65.

which assumes that social change is driven not by individual or structural changes alone, but by the interplay between them.

To some extent, Steel's narrative points to an elision by the late 1980s between what had effectively become two distinct forms of community arts practice. On the one hand, there was work which targeted specific 'problem' or 'excluded' groups, and which sought to encourage relatively benign forms of inclusion; on the other, work which approached artistic practice as something more open ended in its aims, open to a wider spectrum of people, and concerned with a more collective vision of empowerment. Some groups were adamant that their aims differed fundamentally from what they saw as the instrumental and fundamentally a-political agenda of what was fast becoming the 'mainstream' of community arts practice. For Adele Patrick, her antipathy towards this agenda was expressed in terms of anger about both the 'lack of values' embedded in the work the Regional and District councils seemed most willing to fund:

I'm really [experiencing] quite rising levels of dissatisfaction about this sort of, in the worst-case scenario, the anaesthetising of people. I feel like the aspirations for people [are lacking]....It seemed to me with my rose-tinted spectacles on that during that 1990 period there was unbelievably high quality levels of engagement, in terms of high levels of artistic practice, and *artists* involved in stuff, and great gains and benefits for people who were working with those artists and think of themselves as artists themselves as a result [...] But the politicisation of all of them, because Rachel, Julie and Cathy were not *heavily* involved in feminism beforehand, and they got politicised at the same time almost as the women in Castlemilk, so it wasn't like – we'll tell you all about it – or the other way round. It was everybody learning about what happens when you're in a space with a load of other women, achieving things and making things. None of them had ever done it before. And the sense of solidarity when it was achieved.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁷ Interview, Patrick (2017).

In Patrick's view, truly empowering work – though it might, of course, bring with it the pleasures of solidarity and friendship – was in some ways the *opposite* of therapeutic: awakening women to their own possibilities and the possibilities of collective action, and allowing them to think critically about their situation, demand visibility, or communicate their views to those in positions of power. Though such work might change or improve the lives of individual women, the benefit was never conceived in terms of the sorts of wellbeing outcomes that made participants more pliable, rather than more assertive.

Patrick's narrative also highlights another aspect of Castlemilk Womanhouse which she felt differentiated it from other projects: the fact that it was facilitated by artists rather than social workers or community workers.¹⁵⁸ Whilst the majority of projects undertaken under the banner of Glasgow 1990 were led by those with an arts background, it was Patrick's belief that not all of these projects saw producing work of artistic quality as their primary aim. Echoing this sentiment, Alastair McCallum drew a distinction between what he saw as 'leisure activities' and genuine cultural activities. Whilst the former saw improved physical or mental wellbeing as the end goal, cultural work saw the quality of artistic output as an integral part of any social or political possibility creative endeavour might hold. Both Patrick and McCallum were insistent that projects like Castlemilk Womanhouse or Cranhill Arts were not social work or community education, that these were separate services, valuable in their own right, but which should be properly resourced. As McCallum stated:

¹⁵⁸ Interview, Patrick (2017).

It would have been dead easy to specialise in it [social work], especially in those days. Because it's an educational, social and very good role, right? But by going down that road, or working with ex-prisoners, or delinquent kids, it excludes the other kids [...] It was culture. Social work should be paid for properly. And if you set the agenda of being part of social work, you'll get people who are needing social work. And some people do, some people don't. Let's try and deal with as many people as possible, and get as many people as possible in...we were trying to, y'know...*not* be social work. Be culture. Be engaged and be networked into everything else that was going on.¹⁵⁹

McCallum's narrative alludes to the way in which community arts, once concerned with a conception of cultural democratisation which would extend access to *everyone* had over time been recalibrated as a means of bringing art only to specific priority groups. This was, of course, in keeping with a broader development in social welfare policy whereby thinly spread resources were targeted at those groups deemed the most deprived or excluded. Fiona Rogan, who worked within the Social Work department during 1990, conceded that: '[t]here's a difference between art and art therapy [but] particularly with social work client groups, there's always an assumption of therapy'.¹⁶⁰ Rogan was appointed as one of two arts officers responsible for coordinating community events from within the Strathclyde Region's social work department in 1987. An English teacher by trade, Rogan had worked on community drama projects for many years prior to taking up this role. Rogan also stressed that the Region was driven by the pursuit of quality, whether artistic or therapeutic, across all aspects of its programming.¹⁶¹ Nevertheless, as McCallum argued, breaking people down into smaller, targeted groups went against

¹⁵⁹ Interview, McCallum (2016).

¹⁶⁰ Interview with Fiona Rogan (22 June 2017).

¹⁶¹ Interview, Rogan, (2017).

the ethos of groups like Cranhill Arts, which encouraged people to be ‘engaged and be networked into everything else that was going on’ at the end of a tumultuous decade - whether this was popular and folk culture, political protest, or a mixture of the two.

6.6 Conclusions

Looking back, many community artists remembered the 1990 celebrations as a time of genuine optimism and excitement about the future of Glasgow and prospects for its people. Both contemporary and subsequent analysis of Glasgow’s year as European City of Culture has tended to fall into one of two camps – celebratory or condemnatory. In both instances, it is a neoliberal vision of the post-industrial city which competes on an international level to attract business, tourism and (low paid, precarious) service sector jobs that is either valorised or shown to be a hollow conceit. These are important debates, but they have tended to obscure other ways in which the Festival might be framed, or indeed was understood by the many artists and participants who helped shape the programme. As this chapter has shown, community artists often held ambivalent or contradictory views about what the Festival meant and what could be achieved by working within such a framework. There were many who approached Glasgow 1990 as an opportunity, without necessarily buying into the ‘official’ narrative of an urban renaissance fuelled by high-profile cultural events. Instead, they articulated an alternative narrative, celebratory but not without caveats - one which was in keeping with the general tenor of anti-Thatcherite sentiment apparent across the artistic community working in Glasgow during the 1980s. For those involved in the Festival, other prominent

events of 1990, such as the Poll Tax demonstrations, were often understood as part and parcel of a single, broad-based push to improve life for the city's citizens - rather than two separate and contradictory practices. Moreover, for many, working within the Festival was a way to assert a new pluralism, and ensure that the culture of different groups was adequately represented.

The Festival is also remembered fondly for other reasons. For many, it was the first time that their work was fully recognised by those with the power to disburse funds. The money made available was an unexpected boon, and several community arts workers pointed out the budgets they had in 1990 were 'unheard' of then, or any time since.¹⁶² Freedom came in other guises. Phyllis Steel, like many others involved in Glasgow 1990, has remained in the community arts field since; and like many of those interviewed, she was deeply critical of what McGuigan calls the 'reductive politics of measurable impact' which have become deeply entrenched since the late 1990s and which demand that artists evidence the value of their work using a limited set of social and economic 'indicators'. As Steel recalls, there was far more freedom during 1990 to pursue open-ended and responsive work than current funding regimes allow for. Similarly, Steel bemoans the culture in which funding is broken down and targeted towards specific 'problem' groups, which may or may not think of themselves as collective entities:

¹⁶² After 1990, there was far less money available: although the Region continued to fund certain projects, Washington Street Arts Centre closed in 1992, and after the Region was disbanded in 1996, much of the momentum generated by 1990 was lost. Notably, some of the projects which started in 1990 which are still ongoing have survived without local authority funding – e.g. Glasgow Women's Library, an offshoot of Women in Profile, which has proven one of the most successful projects in terms of longevity and long-term legacy.

being naturally inclusive in your life, and just taking people as you find them is actually quite a battle, because....now, you can't just work with a group, because of [box ticking]. Y'know, if you're working with asylum seekers, it's "which country they come from?", and what their ethnicity is, and what their religion is. You don't want to think: "I'm working with this group because they're an ethnic group". It's horrendous. It's just working with people.¹⁶³

Here, Steel touches on the ways in which the radical potential of an identity politics that allowed people to forge solidarity with others has been subverted into a practice which serves instead to break collectives down.¹⁶⁴ This willingness to use the arts to shape particular 'excluded' groups into well behaved citizens via targeted social intervention, rather than let grassroots collectives define their own subjecthood, identity, beliefs and demands, has become a cornerstone of social policy from the New Labour period onwards. For Adele Patrick, this tendency towards less critical work had always been inherent in the attitude and funding preferences of local government. At the end of 1990, Castlemilk Womanhouse was taken over by the council. For Patrick, this signalled the end of the project as she had known it: 'Once they started running it, all the essence of Castlemilk Womanhouse seemed to evaporate for me [...] It didn't have any of the feminist values that those women had so carefully laid down it just didn't feel like I recognised it at all, it was working on a totally different register'.¹⁶⁵ Divested of its feminist principles, Castlemilk

¹⁶³ Interview, Steel (2015).

¹⁶⁴ Bradley, *The Tenants' Movement*, p.29 – Bradley makes a similar point about how housing tenants, once a collective group have been fragmented and individuated, making it easier to deal with them one-to-one.

¹⁶⁵ Interview, Patrick (2017).

Womanhouse became just another council community arts project with little consciousness raising intent and little commitment to serious artistic standards.

Nevertheless, it remains the case that the arts have, in modern British society, come to be celebrated as a key driver of urban regeneration under New Labour and their Conservative successors. Not only do the ‘creative industries’ contribute significantly to urban economies, culture has also been instrumentalised as a tool of *social* regeneration.¹⁶⁶ As we have seen, by 1990, much of the community arts work that was funded, particularly by the Regional Council, was funded for its therapeutic impacts; and in those cases where this was not the professed aim, work was still nevertheless targeted at the groups deemed the most ‘deprived’. This is not to entirely discount the value of work which focused on outcomes relating to wellbeing, or deny that there was a genuine commitment to high quality cultural programming. Nor is it to overlook the many artists who did continue to pursue other ends, standing aloof from the aims of the social work or education departments and pushing to redefine or expand the parameters of ‘Glaswegian’ culture.

Through notions such as ‘voice’, often used in vague ways, it was possible for the community artists interviewed to express sometimes contradictory views about the purpose of community arts. These views, which often favoured a practice focused on therapeutic modes of wellbeing and couched the value of participation in terms of how it might help individuals, nevertheless also nodded to a more politicised or collective understanding of what community arts might aim to achieve. What these

¹⁶⁶ Hewison, *Cultural Capital*.

contradictory accounts point to is a fracturing of community arts practice. Although work based around improving individual wellbeing had always formed a strand of community arts practice, by the late 1990s it had increasingly become the dominant one; going forward, it would shape the way community artists positioned their work, and determine which projects were funded and which were not. Community arts – like community development – has a ‘contradictory provenance’ in ‘both benevolent welfare paternalism and autonomous working-class struggle’ – to which we might add a countercultural emphasis on individual freedom and expression.¹⁶⁷ It is in the sometimes awkward hybridity of these various trends that both the different rhetoric of value and purpose, and the wide range of projects undertaken under the banner of ‘community’ during Glasgow 1990, owe their origin.

¹⁶⁷ Mae Shaw, ‘Community Development and the Politics of Community’, in Craig and Mayo, *Community Development*, p.302.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

As this thesis has demonstrated, the community arts movement as it took shape in Scotland between 1962 and 1990 was not just an artistic phenomenon, but one which encompassed debates about the social, political and economic value of culture. As such, this thesis makes a contribution to a wide range of areas of mid to late twentieth century Scottish historical study. These include the particularly Scottish dimensions of: the history of popular culture; the history of everyday urban life; the history of community action; the history of arts policy; and the history of urban and social policy. Although these historiographical areas tend to be treated as distinct, this thesis has drawn attention to the connections and overlap between them. It has argued that the community arts movement in Scotland allows us to examine connections between counterculture and popular culture; culture, politics and everyday life; grassroots activism and top-down policy initiatives; and class and identity politics. This final, brief chapter provides some conclusions about the history of the community arts movement in Scotland, highlights the unique contributions this thesis has made to the literature, and outlines some of the implications of these contributions.

This thesis has, first and foremost, offered a history of a movement about which very little has been written. Community art in Britain has been a neglected subject; this has been even more true for the history of community art in Scotland. This thesis has provided an outline of the origins of the movement, as well as an overview of the purpose, aims and ambitions of practitioners, and an extended

discussion of how the movement developed over time in relation to the particular context of Scottish urban life during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.

The community arts movement represents one response to a much broader debate ongoing throughout the twentieth century about the role culture should play in Scottish society. The roots of the Scottish community arts movement can be traced back to a number of different points of origin. Perhaps the most immediate and obvious influence was the cultural ferment of the late 1960s - particularly in Edinburgh, where the annual Edinburgh Fringe exposed many young artists and activists to street theatre, performance art, and other experimental strands of non-object or non-gallery-based art. By the early 1970s, those who came to call themselves community artists determined to go a step further, taking art (and the countercultural ideals of fun, freedom of expression, and the right to a creative and fulfilling life) into those areas of the city where attending the Edinburgh Festival remained a remote prospect for those cut off from 'high culture' by barriers of class, education, or money.

Here, in the housing estates of post-war Scotland, these sentiments and practices met with the popular and folk culture of working-class communities. As Hall and Whannel observed during the 1960s, working-class traditions and cultural forms were popular 'in the sense that they belonged to the whole people'.¹ Nor were they necessarily 'objects of contemplation like the works of high art, but communal artefacts, part of a whole rhythm of life'.² In Scotland (in contrast to England),

¹ Hall and Whannel, *The Popular Arts*, p.55.

² *Ibid*, p.55.

community art was pioneered as much by ‘non-professional’ working-class residents as by art school trained artists or other activists from outside the communities in question. Nevertheless, the notion that art or culture was something communal and bound up with everyday life also struck a chord with those artists who were professionally trained and who sought new ways of making art that was expansive, egalitarian and socially (and sometimes politically) relevant.

The counterculture with which many early community artists aligned themselves began as a cultural movement, but its concern with values such as freedom and liberation naturally drew community artists into the field of community action. An interest in cultural democratisation naturally lent itself to an impulse towards more pluralistic and participatory forms of political culture. Similarly, many of the popular forms on which community art in Scotland drew had a long association with socialist politics and ideals, and the celebration of working-class life and values. This made them an ideal vehicle through which to express demands not only for better welfare services or greater control over community resources, but also for a better quality of life for all. Gramscian cultural politics of the sort associated with the New Left and the folk revival of the 1950s and 1960s – both of which placed renewed emphasis on the value and quality inherent in distinctively popular and working-class forms – were also important. These ideas gave an intellectual rationale for that which many working-class communities already implicitly understood: that culture was a field of struggle; that the way working-class

communities were represented mattered; and that cultural visibility and the right to self-representation were crucial facets of social and political agency.³

Community artists rejected many of the values of the 'art world' and the cultural policies (particularly those of the ACGB and the SAC) which they believed sustained these values. They were not the first to raise questions about how culture should be defined and democratised. From the mid-1960s, government cultural policy had been moving (albeit tentatively) in this direction. In particular, the publication in 1965 of the Labour Government's White Paper *A Policy for the Arts* called for wider cultural access, particularly for young people. However, whereas funding bodies (by and large) saw the purpose of 'democratisation' as 'encouraging more people to enjoy or appreciate the arts on which the majority of the money is already spent', community artists called for a practice that genuinely extended control of the *production* of culture to the whole population.⁴ Access to the means of 'cultural production', they argued, was the true marker of cultural democratisation.

Another important backdrop to the development of community arts was the emergence of the related field of community development. Although the arrival of the welfare state and new modes of urban governance which encouraged active citizenship gave the community development movement a new impetus, the roots of the practice can be traced back to the Victorian period. Although community

³ As Barnes notes, agency – and the ability to be a 'maker' of the world in which we live, as well as simple a member of society, is one of the defining qualities of citizenship: Barnes, 'Users as Citizens'.

⁴ Braden, *Artists and People*, p.8, p.6.

artists were often keen to disavow the idea, community arts can also be positioned within a longer history of philanthropic reform and welfare experiments stretching back to the 19th century that were designed to 'improve' working-class areas and residents through cultural activity.

Firstly, then, this thesis offers a counterpoint to the argument (discussed in Chapter One) that the counterculture of the 1960s passed Scotland by, whilst also demonstrating that it took on its own particularly local shape in relation to the popular culture of urban Scotland. Secondly, this thesis has shown that community art was often aligned with the broader field of community activism. Insofar as such localised, non-parliamentary forms of political engagement remain an under researched aspect of Scottish political culture in the latter half of the twentieth century, this thesis is an important contribution to an area which deserves far greater historiographical attention. Thirdly, this thesis offers insight into the particularities of Scottish cultural policy and looks at some of the ways it was received and contested. Fourthly, as discussed in Chapters Two, Four and Six, community art as it took shape in Scotland was very much aligned with the practice of community development. This has left community art open to many of the criticisms that community-based work has also faced - particularly the suggestion that it is paternalistic, morally prescriptive, ameliorative, or a distraction from class struggle. Paying particular attention to the ways in which community artists negotiated the relationship between communities on the one hand and the state on the other, this thesis has offered a unique insight into how those working with community development techniques (a practice which itself deserves greater historiographical

attention) understood the purpose of their work. In the process, it has demonstrated the value of oral history as a means of understanding how community-based workers understood, justified and reflected on their work.

Emerging from a complex mix of potentially radical and more paternalistic or reformist influences, community art was a sometimes contested and always malleable practice. This is apparent, for example, in debates about the ‘purpose’ of community art, its relationship to funding bodies, and the way in which it should be judged. Community art has often been dismissed as lacking in quality or aesthetic rigour. Certainly, for some practitioners, the process of creative work was deemed more important than the final output. However, most practitioners interviewed insisted that process work and the end product were of equal value and importance. As discussed in Chapters Five and Six, community art was not about *lack* of standards, but *different* standards. As Claire Bishop puts it ‘[w]hat came to define community arts was less an artistic agenda than a behavioural attitude or moral position...Its criteria were more ethical than artistic’.⁵ For others, aesthetic quality was of paramount importance, not least of all because it was bound up with the desire to prove that working-class communities were not in any way less capable than anyone else of producing drama, music, art and so on of the highest quality. To have one’s culture taken seriously, these practitioners believed, was to have one’s existence, and capacity for agency more generally, to be taken seriously. This led some practitioners to reject the term ‘community art’ altogether, on the basis that it reduced the artistic practices in question to the status of a sub-category within

⁵ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, p.188.

the wider sphere of cultural production. Seeking for art to be judged by a different set of criteria implied that there was something exceptional about the idea of working-class communities having ‘culture’, thereby further contributing to the marginalisation of the people who lived there.

Community artists tended to present their work as either agitational, or an expression of radical aspiration: indeed, this stance was central to their personal and professional self-identity. Many countercultural values – such as self-expression, self-realisation or the importance of ‘voice’ – gained currency over the following decades, and this allowed community arts workers to position their work as a challenge to the more undemocratic and technocratic aspects of state welfare and state cultural policy. However, dependence on funding bodies ensured that the practice of community art was, from its very beginnings, vulnerable to shifting policy contexts. Changing modes of welfare provision and understandings of citizenship also served to reshape the role that community arts projects played in urban communities, particularly after 1979.

This shift was often disguised by use of ambiguous terminology: what ‘participation’, ‘empowerment’ or even ‘community’ meant to community arts workers might mean something else entirely to funding bodies. This thesis has examined the ways in which community arts moved from a project concerned with community (often understood as working-class) politics, to a more individualistic and benign concern with individual confidence or self-expression. By the end of the period, community artists had largely moved away from projects directly concerned with raising consciousness or building community solidarity, turning instead

towards vague aspirations such as ‘self-expression’ or ‘giving people a voice’. This allowed community artists to focus on providing depoliticised forms of individual therapy, rather than making people conscious of the political and economic forces shaping their lives and giving them the resources to confront or change them. As discussed in relation to the Craigmillar and Easterhouse Festival Societies, early community artist projects often made demands for improved welfare services *and* a recognition that working-class people had the right to a higher quality of life. However, in the willingness of community artists to focus on wellbeing, the more concrete demands of community arts groups were increasingly side-stepped.

As we have seen in relation to Glasgow 1990 (Chapter Six), many community artists were critical of the use of arts and culture as a means of driving the economic regeneration of post-industrial cities. The association between cultural and economic policy has only deepened since 1990. Upon his election as Prime Minister in 1997, Tony Blair promised to make the arts part of the ‘core script of government’, and creativity was central to the New Labour vision of ‘Cool Britannia’.⁶ It was also under Blair that the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) became a fully-fledged government department – having begun life in 1992 as the Department of National Heritage. Although the enhanced status of the department was closely allied to the popularity of arts-led regeneration initiatives and the rise of the creative economy as a ‘growth sector’, it was also linked to the perception that cultural policy had an important role to play in securing social inclusion (a term and policy objective adopted, laterally, by the newly formed

⁶ Hewison, *Cultural Capital*, p.1.

Scottish Executive in 1999).⁷ Culture became a ‘cure all’, utilised to deal with the social and economic problems arising from the failures of neoliberal capitalism.⁸ As Hewison suggests: ‘[i]ssues of deprivation, educational dysfunction, community disintegration, and even crime would be magically transformed by the application of culture, both high and low. This social purpose was explicitly instrumental. Cultural production would generate employment; deprived communities would be transformed’.⁹ Similarly, Slater and Iles argue that there is an underlying coerciveness to the way the arts – increasingly approached as a useful form of ‘soft control’ – have come to be utilised within contemporary urban policy, whilst Shaw and Meade note that community development is now frequently framed as ‘a technique to help activate ‘problem’ groups’ and promote community cohesion – something which is often equally true of community arts.¹⁰ In many ways, the communities programme of Glasgow 1990 (particularly those projects concerned with securing the aims of the SRC’s Social Strategy) foreshadowed the development of social inclusion as an overt aim of cultural policy in Scotland (as elsewhere in the UK). However, as we have seen, even in the earliest days of the movement, the resources community arts projects helped people win came at a price: communities were obliged to demonstrate that residents were capable of responsible conduct and community life. Although they rejected the heritage of

⁷ Hewison, *Cultural Capital*, pp.5-6, p.67; the DCMS began life in 1992 as the Department of National Heritage; it was renamed (and its remit widened) in 1997.

⁸ *Ibid*, p.70.

⁹ *Ibid*, p.6.

¹⁰ Slater and Iles, *Room to Move*; Mae Shaw and Rosie Meade, ‘Community Development and the Arts: Towards a More Creative Reciprocity’, in Peter Mayo (ed.), *Learning with Adults: A Reader* (Rotterdam: Sense, 2013), p.195.

Victorian ideas about the relationship between culture and society which continued to underpin ACGB and SAC policy, the lingering association between art, morality and civility made it a useful vehicle through which to demonstrate the community's 'worthiness' - albeit that the forms of cultural expression celebrated were folk or working-class culture, rather than strictly 'high culture'.

Although the work they performed on a day to day basis often fitted into a reformist paradigm, staying within the parameters of what was acceptable to the local authority or funding bodies, any sense of domestication is rarely made explicit in the way community artists represented their practice. Particularly for those active in Scotland in the 1980s, during a time when voters consistently elected Labour MPs and yet were repeatedly faced with a Conservative government committed to 'rolling back the frontiers of the state', committing to work with the public sector *did* in many ways seem oppositional, or emblematic of the drive to secure a more equitable society. However, as Barr suggests, there is nothing inherently radical about community-based work.¹¹ For Barr, community work could not call itself radical if it was not concerned both with tackling 'small-scale local problems' and moving outwards towards 'a broader understanding of need which places local experience in the context of an analysis of broader social inequality'.¹² Nevertheless, as Barr acknowledged, although '[t]he community development approach substantially favour[ed] service delivery arguments' it often took account 'both of social pathology and structuralist arguments'.¹³ In reality, community

¹¹ Barr, *Practicing Community Development*, p.116.

¹² *Ibid*, p.144-145.

¹³ McConnell, *Community Education*, p.14.

workers tended to display a mix of these views, approaching different problems from different perspectives.¹⁴ Similarly, the way community artists spoke about their work often integrated multiple political perspectives, some more radical than others. The approach taken also depended heavily on the particular issue at hand, or the needs or wishes of the group in question.

This is not to dismiss the many important achievements of the community arts movement. In its attempts to widen access to cultural production, celebrate working-class culture, and give people the opportunity to represent themselves, their lives and their beliefs and aspirations as they saw fit, community art raised the profile of grassroots cultural production, challenged the position of the expert by verifying local expertise or ‘knowledge from below’, and opened up the means of creative expression to a much broader range of people. Of course, the meaning of the word culture is one that is notoriously difficult to define: community art also offered a more expansive definition of culture than had hitherto prevailed in Scottish society, one which celebrated and valued popular, folk, working-class and other non-canonical art forms hitherto ignored by the cultural establishment.

Sometimes creativity, festivity and celebration of identity were ends in themselves. In other instances, they fed into broader campaigns for community resources or demands for a more fulfilling life for all. On some occasions, campaigns driven or supported by community arts projects were successful in influencing local government policies, or winning additional resources from local government; but community arts groups were also part of a wider (if ultimately unsuccessful)

¹⁴ McConnell, *Community Education*, p.14.

struggle to change not only policy, but the entire nature of the political process.¹⁵ Like other forms of community action, community arts helped widen access to the means of political representations, and brought the politics of consumption and, later, issues relating to gender, race, sexuality, disability, and age to the fore. Community art also served as an important form of education, imparting artistic skills, but also (in some cases at least) generating a sense of community solidarity, awakening people to the injustices they faced, and encouraging people to take pride in their own history and culture. As Ravetz notes, '[w]hen viewed sympathetically there was seen to be a lot of vitality in estate culture', and the practice of community art is testimony – despite the paternalism of the post-war welfare state – to the agency of Scotland's working-class communities as they sought, collectively, to improve life for themselves and their neighbours and transform the social meanings and values embedded in urban space.¹⁶

Community art has also left its mark on cultural policy. When community artists first began to lobby the Scottish Arts Council for greater recognition of their work in the mid-1970s, the response was a muted one. Although the SAC did at first seem willing to fund community arts projects, support was never offered on more than a tentative or ad hoc basis. In its 1993 publication 'Charter for the Arts in Scotland', the SAC itself conceded that there was still a 'notable lack of coordination in the Scottish community arts scene' and that funding, though reasonably extensive, remained 'piecemeal'.¹⁷ However, the Charter also indicated that 'the best of

¹⁵ Crowther, 'Popular education', p.38.

¹⁶ Ravetz, *Council Housing*, p.146.

¹⁷ *The Charter for the Arts in Scotland* (Edinburgh: HSMO, 1993).

community art' might be considered 'significant art in its own right', and therefore fall within the SACs funding remit – an important acknowledgement that art produced by 'non-professionals', or which embraced non-canonical popular forms, was worth cultivating.¹⁸ As previous chapters have indicated, local authorities were another major source of funding, particularly after the reorganisation of local government in 1975. Local authorities tended to approach community art as a form of community development, community education, or social work, and funding was largely provided on the ability of art to tackle social and economic issues. Some community artists were more accepting of these agendas than others. Nevertheless, funding streams such as Urban Aid did allow many community arts projects which might otherwise have struggled to find funding to go ahead, even if on a precarious short-term basis. Without these projects, it is doubtful that large scale arts events such as Glasgow 1990 would have been so willing to make concessions to grassroots Glaswegian popular culture.

Writing with reference to Britain as a whole, Hewison has argued that the community arts movement had by the early 1980s become little more than a form of cultural 'missionary work', taken up by government agencies to help ameliorate rising unemployment and plug the gaps in welfare provision.¹⁹ The cultural revolutionaries of the 1960s, Hewison maintains 'had lost out to the bureaucrats' of the 1980s and 1990s.²⁰ Whilst the general trend in community arts has been towards professionalisation (the first professional community arts course was set up at the

¹⁸ *The Charter for the Arts in Scotland*.

¹⁹ Hewison, *Experience and Experiment*, p.104, p.107.

²⁰ *Ibid*, p.109.

University of Strathclyde in 1989), depoliticization was never a smooth path. From the very beginnings of the movement, there were those who saw their work as social rather than political. Moreover, the advent of Thatcherism created the conditions for more overtly oppositional forms of community art, in some quarters at least, and it is striking how frequently community arts groups repurposed older left-wing traditions of worker's theatre, photography or filmmaking. Nevertheless, by the 1980s, community art *was* heavily associated, not always unfairly, with apolitical or therapeutic work; and the term 'community' with all sorts of practices (more notoriously, the community charge, or poll tax) that had very little to do with emancipation.

With hindsight, it is possible to read a focus on local culture and local cultural traditions as an attempt to hold on to or reinvigorate an older way of life or culture of socialist politics (one which managed to sustain solidarity across communities as well as within them) that was slipping from view as class solidarity began to fragment and a new regime of urban poverty began to appear - defining features of which included worklessness and long-term unemployment.²¹ And as Banks and Carpenter remind us, it is easy to look back on the community action and utopian aspirations of the 1970s and 1980s and dismiss people's confidence about what could be achieved at the local level through voluntary or grant funded action.²² However, as Banks and Carpenter observe, that we may 'marvel at such optimism' may 'say less about them and more about us, living latterly in 'capitalist realist'

²¹ Wacquant, *Urban Outcasts*, p.163

²² Banks and Carpenter, 'Radical Community Development Projects'

times which deflate notions that there are alternatives to the prevailing neoliberal order'.²³ Community art – at least in its early days – was part of a broader attempt to improve community life, reinvigorate leftist politics, and 'resolve the inherent contradictions that were becoming increasingly visible in the classic welfare state'.²⁴ In its later instantiation, it sought to defend the state against the attacks of the political forces of New Right. If these objectives remained elusive, or the ambitions of community artists were, over time, dampened down, this was not a case of straightforward accommodation. It was part of a wider struggle to remake Scottish society and defend socialist or social democratic values against neoliberal assault – the success of which was, at this juncture, by no means clearly inevitable. The plays, films, videos, murals and other works of art that still survive from the period, many of which drew large audiences, won awards and were otherwise accepted as aesthetically proficient in their own right, are testimony to the fact that these struggles, although serious, could be also fun, chaotic, risky, satirical and above all, celebratory.

²³ Banks and Carpenter, 'Radical Community Development Projects'.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

Appendix 1: Biographical Details of Oral History Interview

Participants

Burdon, Morna

Interview Date: 15 June 2015

Born in 1950 and grew up in the Highlands. Initially trained as a primary school teacher but did not pursue this as a career. Lived in Edinburgh for several years in her early twenties, where she became involved in the Women's Movement and worked for the Georgie Dalry Free Press. Volunteered for Theatre Workshop Edinburgh and later studied community work at Moray House School of Education. Has since worked mainly in community theatre/drama.

Cameron, Neil

Interview Date: 30 November 2015

Born in 1946 and grew up in Liberton, a middle-class suburb of Edinburgh. Father was a vet. Attended public school in Edinburgh. After travelling for several years, returned to Edinburgh in his early 20s, where he worked in an adventure playground in Craigmillar. Worked as a drama worker for Theatre Workshop Edinburgh in the early 1970s and later as the Director of Arts Programmes for Craigmillar Festival Society. Emigrated to Australia in 1984 and continues to work in community arts.

Crummy, Andrew

Interview Date: 16 July 2015

Born in 1959 and grew up in Craigmillar, Edinburgh. Mother was Helen Crummy, who founded the Craigmillar Festival Society. Attended Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art in Dundee and has subsequently worked as an artist. Designed the Great Tapestry of Scotland (2013), a series of 160 hand-stitched embroidered cloth panels depicting 12,000 years of Scottish history.

Dawson, Diane

Interview Date: 3 February 2016

Born in 1963. Lived in Glasgow but moved to Hawick and later Irvine after her parents divorced. Studied Graphics at the Glasgow College of Building and Printing. During Glasgow 1990, organised a number of community events, including Glasgow's 'Big Day' and community lantern procession *All Lit Up*. Has since worked on other large-scale events including Glasgow City of Architecture and Design 1999. Continues to work in the arts and has since graduated from Glasgow School of Art.

Elphick, Chris

Interview Date: 10 May 2016

Born in London. Left school at 16 and worked in manual jobs for several years before becoming involved in youth work. Worked as a youth worker in Toxteth, Liverpool where he first became involved in community arts via the Granby Street Festival. Sat on the ACGB's Community Arts Committee during the mid-1970s. Appointed Organising Secretary of the Easterhouse Festival Society in 1982.

Miller, Fiona

Interview Date: 20 January 2016

Born in 1963. Grew up in Dundee and attended drama college in Glasgow. Started work in 1984 for a MSC-funded scheme in a community centre in Hilltown, Dundee where she set up a company called 'The Cats Out the Bag', providing drama workshops for local people. Was then employed as a drama worker for Dundee Repertory Theatre, where she worked on their youth and community outreach programmes. Oversaw the large-scale community production 'Witches Blood' in 1987. Continues to work in community drama.

Gardiner, Liz

Interview Date: 10 February 2016

Grew up in Glasgow. Attended the University of Glasgow between 1972 and 1976, during which time she joined Strathclyde Theatre Company. Trained and worked initially as an English teacher. Set up the Glasgow-based theatre

company Fablevision in 1984 with theatre director Bert Scott. Worked on drama projects during the 1980s and throughout Glasgow 1990. Continues to direct Fablevision in addition to working as a freelance cultural planning consultant.

Gibson, Rosie

Interview Date: 10 November 2015

Born in 1953 in Inverkeithing, Fife. First in her family to attend university where she studied Mathematics. After university, worked as a summer playscheme worker in Craigmillar. In 1975, started working as a youth worker in Craigmillar; became Community Transport Manager in the area and was later appointed head of the Craigmillar Community Arts Team. Later studied sculpture at art school and now works as an artist.

Greenlaw, Michael

Interview Date: 13 January 2016

Born in 1955 and grew up in Edinburgh. Attended Edinburgh College of Art where he met other students working in community art. After he left college, worked at a playscheme worker at Leith Adventure Playground before being appointed arts supervisor in the Craigmillar Community Arts Team. Continues to work in community arts.

Hague, Cliff

Interview Date: 29 June 2015

Born in 1944. Trained as a town planner. His involvement with the Craigmillar Festival Society began in 1971, by which point he was a lecturer at Heriot-Watt University. Provided planning advice and assistance on a voluntary basis throughout the 1970s. From the mid-1970s, was a member of the Radical Institute Group. Later became president of the Royal Town Planning Institute.

Harding, David

Interview Date: 25 June 2015

Born in 1937 and grew up in Leith. Attended Edinburgh College of Art, then trained as a teacher. In 1963, moved to Nigeria, where he ran the art department in a teacher training college. Between 1968 and 1978, worked as Town Artist for the Glenrothes Development Corporation. After teaching for several years at Dartington College of Arts in Falmouth, returned to Glasgow in 1985 where he set up the Environmental Art course at Glasgow School of Art.

Kemp, Liz

Interview Date: 5 May 2016

Grew up in Falkirk. Studied Fine Art at Edinburgh College of Art, where she met Hugh Graham, who went on to work as an assistant to Town Artist David Harding. Upon graduating, spent a year working as a community artist for the

Craigmillar Festival Society. Set up the Environmental Arts Team in Dundee in 1981. Continues to work in community arts, largely in Scotland and India.

Marshall, Bill

Interview Date: 22 June 2016

Born in 1956 and grew up in the Southside of Glasgow. Studied English at the University of Strathclyde, where he became involved in Strathclyde Theatre Group. Trained as an English teacher before taking up a role at the Easterhouse Festival Society in 1978, working largely on theatre projects. Worked on projects during Glasgow 1990, including *Ruchazie Ruchazie*, and has since worked in theatre on a freelance basis.

McCallum, Alastair

Interview Date: 27 January 2016

Born in 1959 and grew up in the Southside of Glasgow. Studied at Glasgow School of Art. Set up Cranhill Arts Project in 1981, aged 22, turning a Scottish Arts Council artist in residency scheme into a long-term arts resource. Ran Cranhill Arts until 1991. Has since worked mainly in media and design.

Massey, George

Interview Date: 4 March 2016

Born in 1956 and grew up in Glasgow. Attended Glasgow School of Art. After graduation, worked on a series of seven gable-end murals across Glasgow with other GSA graduates. Worked as one of the five artists employed to work on the Easterhouse Mosaic. Has continued to work on public art commissions across Britain.

Orton, Barbara

Interview Date: 15 October 2015

Born in Newcastle-on-Tyne. Studied English at the University of Lancaster. After she graduated, worked for an adventure playground in Washington New Town. In the early 1980s, undertook a postgraduate course in community work at the Moray House School of Education, Edinburgh, where she completed a placement with the Easterhouse Festival Society. After she graduated, took up a role as Arts Worker in Pilton, Edinburgh. In 1988, started work as organising the communities programme for Glasgow 1990. Now works as an independent filmmaker and producer.

Patrick, Adele

Interview Date: 20 June 2017

Born in 1961 and grew up in Doncaster. Attended Glasgow School of Art during the 1980s. Helped set up Women in Profile in 1987, which organised the month-

long Glasgow Women's Festival during Glasgow 1990. Set up Glasgow Women's Library in 1991, where she continues to work.

Rogan, Fiona

Interview Date: 22 June 2017

Born in 1954 and grew up in Paisley. Attended Stirling University and trained initially as an English teacher. During the 1980s, worked for Paisley-based community arts organisation Cartwheel, before forming her own organisation, Pandemonium. During Glasgow 1990, worked for Strathclyde Regional Council, overseeing the social work department's communities programme. Continued to work for the SRC until it was disbanded in 1996 and now works as Learning and Outreach Manager for the Rosslyn Chapel Trust.

Steel, Alan

Interview Date: 24 June 2015

Grew up in Glasgow. After university, worked for several years as a history teacher. After leaving teaching, began work in adult education across Renfrewshire and Glasgow, working on arts and oral history projects. Was a member of Strathclyde Theatre Group during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Worked on community arts projects across Renfrewshire during Glasgow 1990. Continues to work in community theatre and storytelling.

Steel, Phyllis**Interview Date:** 7 October 2015

Grew up in Springburn, Glasgow. Left school at 15 to work in the local railway offices. In her late teens, moved to Holland to work for an engineering firm. Returned to Glasgow in 1973 and attended the University of Strathclyde, after which she worked for the University's drama centre throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s. Helped set up the first Mayfest Festival in 1983. During Glasgow 1990, was responsible for organising a programme of events for children called 'The Big Noise'. Continues to work in community arts.

Tracey, Jamie**Interview Date:** 28 October 2016

Born in 1962 and grew up in Garthamlock, Glasgow. Moved to Cranhill when he was 14. Became involved with Cranhill Arts in his late teens, where he worked on projects including photography, poster printing and filmmaking. Currently works as a youth worker.

Venet, Joel**Interview Date:** 19 January 2016

Born in 1950 and grew up in Manchester. Attended the University of Lancaster, during which time he became involved in the New Planet Street Theatre Company. Obtained a postgraduate certificate in drama education. Spent a year

working for Liberation films in London in 1979 before moving to Edinburgh, where he set up Video in Pilton in 1981.

Winters, Rita

Interview Date: 29 April 2016

Grew up in Glasgow. Studied at Glasgow School of Art and worked for several years as an art teacher. Started volunteering for the Easterhouse Festival Society in 1982 and was later appointed as an arts worker for the organisation. Worked on a wide range of projects, including overseeing the Easterhouse Mosaic project. Continues to work in community arts.

Wolverton, Ken

Interview Date: 25 June 2015

Born in 1944 in Colorado. Moved to Scotland in 1973 after spending ten years travelling across America making a living as an artist. Worked as a mural painter and later as a community artist with Theatre Workshop Edinburgh, working in communities across Edinburgh. In 1976, obtained a grant from the Leverhulme Trust and curated *Organised Accident is Art* at the Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh in 1977. In 1977, set up Arran Arts with his then wife, Chrissie Orr. Returned to America in 1986 and lives and works as a community artist in New Mexico.

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