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From *Out of Apathy* to the Post-Political: the Spatial Politics of Austerity, the Geographies of Politicisation and the Trajectories of the Scottish Left(s)

Abstract

This paper offers an alternative approach to some of the temporalising logics and imaginaries which have dominated debates around the post-political and post-democracy. It does this through engaging with the writings of figures associated with the 'First New Left' notably Stuart Hall and E.P. Thompson between 1956 and 1962. I argue that their essays in texts such as *Out of Apathy* bear some striking similarities with the claims of literatures relating to post politics and post-democracy. Their work I argue repays substantive engagement, however, because through its attentiveness to emergent practices and geographies of antagonism, it offers a more generative and politically strategic resolution to some of the common discontents of consensus and marketisation of politics that has characterised work on post-politics. The paper develops these arguments through a discussion of how the uneven geographies of politicisation and trajectories of the Scottish left(s) in different parts of the post-war period have shaped and impacted on the spatial politics of austerity in significant ways.

Keywords: austerity, spatial politics, post-politics, new left, Scottish independence movements

Introduction

Writing in *New Left Review* in 2014 Neil Davidson drew attention to the forms of politicization associated with the 2014 Scottish Independence referendum campaign. He argued that while the official Yes campaign backed by the Scottish National Party (SNP) was shaped by 'the suits, arguing in conventional set-piece debates', the other, unofficial campaign 'drew in previously marginalized working-class communities' and 'suddenly flowered, over the course of the summer, into an extraordinary process of self-organization'. These campaigns included over '300 local community groups' which 'sprang up, alongside dozens of other spontaneous initiatives—Yes cafés, drop-in centres, a National Collective of musicians, artists and writers, Women for Independence, Generation Yes' and 'were complemented by activist websites, like Bella Caledonia, loosely connected to the anti-neoliberal CommonWeal think-tank' (Davidson, 2014: 14). Central here was opposition to austerity as a dominant political response to the 2008 crisis. This was articulated both in relation to long standing animosity towards the Conservative Party, but also through contesting the way austerity policies built on the long-standing accommodation of New Labour to neoliberalism. The result were 'newly formed social movements' which 'were entirely unpredicted, uncalculated, and fundamentally disruptive in the established static model of confined democratic engagement present in the UK over the previous thirty years' (Johnstone, 2018: 127).

The experience of politicization during the referendum campaign signals a need to think beyond the temporalising logics which have structured the terms of debates around post-politics and post-democracy (eg Crouch, 2004, Mouffe, 2005a Sywngedouw, 2018). One of the remarkable aspects of the referendum was the way it conflicted with and unsettled pervasive ideas that politics is 'in retreat' (Crossan, 2018: 27-28, Mocca and Osborne, 2018). In this paper I situate the relations between opposition to austerity and the referendum in

relation to a discussion of some of the longer and contested trajectories of Scottish left politics. To offer an alternative approach to the temporalising logics of recent debates on the political this paper engages with writings of figures notably Stuart Hall and E.P. Thompson who were associated with the activity of the 'First New Left' between 1956 and 1962. I argue that their essays in texts such as *Out of Apathy* bear some striking similarities with the claims of literatures relating to post politics and post-democracy. Their work I argue repays substantive engagement, however, because through its attentiveness to emergent practices and geographies of antagonism, it offers a more generative and politically strategic resolution to some of the common discontents of consensus and marketisation of politics that has characterised work on post-politics.

The paper develops these arguments through a discussion of how the uneven geographies of politicisation and trajectories of the Scottish left(s) in different parts of the post-war period have shaped and impacted on the spatial politics of austerity in significant ways. The paper uses this engagement to situate the politicisation of austerity in relation to the referendum as part of the longer experiences and trajectories of the Scottish left. In particular it explores key aspects of the geographies of politicisation shaped in relation to processes of de-industrialisation. To do this the paper draws on a range of sources including political song as well as articles, pamphlets and accounts by trade unionists and political figures on the left. The paper also draws on testimonies from workshops which used discussion of the banners of trade unions and social movements to engage with the histories and geographies of political activism in Glasgow (Crossan et al, 2016). This material is used to help position left trajectories in relation to particular placed political cultures, archival sources are also used to engage with some of the internationalist political imaginaries of the Scottish left and to consider how these related to different ways of articulating nationalist politics.

Through engaging with such diverse materials and the political trajectories of left activists and movements the paper seeks to broaden out ways of thinking about the spatial construction of the political and debates around austerity and Scottish nationalism and independence beyond leadership figures and key political parties. The paper first contrasts literature on post-politics and post-democracy with the work of New Left authors using a focus on the 'spatial politics of consensus' to challenge the temporalizing logics which have structured recent debates on politicisation and de-politicisation. It then considers the attentiveness of New Left writers to emergent forms of political antagonism, before exploring some of the uneven and contested geographies through which austerity has been politicised in contemporary Scotland.

The New Left, Antagonisms and the Spatial Politics of Consensus

'The Supply of Demand', Stuart Hall's contribution to the pivotal New Left collection *Out of Apathy* published in 1960, closes with a trenchant critique of Hugh Gaitskell's speech to the Blackpool Conference of the Labour Party in 1959. Gaitskell, the 'political figurehead of Labour's revisionsists', had used the speech to seek to abolish the Party's totemic Clause IV - promising the 'common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange' - in response to the Party's recent electoral defeat (Jobson, 2013: 124). Hall's essay does more, however, than simply defend clause IV, rather, it contests the whole logic of Gaitskell's construction of politics. He argues that Gaitskell's speech was defined by 'nothing short of a tragic failure in political imagination.' Hall continued:

For without the movement of politics to give the new aspirations of the new groups in society direction and clarity, the danger is that the society, unable to cross the social barriers raised before it by capitalism, will harden into a mediocre meritocracy. Gradually, the elites will draw more and more from within their own ranks: the way to the top will sift and separate us according to our talents, helping to develop the acquisitive, self-aggrandising instincts, shutting off the generousities of our culture and social responses to life. The whole notion of community responsibility one for another could with another round of this kind of prosperity disappear from politics as a force. We should be left, then, with competing political firms, shuffling out the same goods, expending vast sums of money to achieve what the detergent manufacturers call 'marginal differentiation in the product'. This is not where we are, but it is certainly where we are going (Hall, 1960: 96).

Hall's concerns about the reduction of political difference and debate to 'marginal differentiation' were part of the New Left's broader challenge to the forms of the so-called 'post-war consensus'. They also offer a timely reminder that claims about depoliticisation are not as new as current debates on the political often suggest. Indeed, if it were not for the references to Gaitskell, and the anachronistic reference to soap detergent, Hall's statement would not look out of place in the recent writings diagnosing a 'new condition' of post-politics or post-democracy which have been a major theme of recent writing in both political theory and critical geography (see Crouch, 2004, Houghton et al, 2016, Mouffe, 2005a, Swyngedouw, 2011).

Reading Hall's essay, and other contributions to *Out of Apathy* such as those by E.P. Thompson, can usefully unsettle the framings of the histories and geographies of political contestation that underpin these accounts. These literatures which variously mobilise terms such as anti-politics, post-politics and post-democracy have different emphases in their approach but they tend to share a strongly temporalising logic. The broad framing of work is that there has been a shift away from modes of political engagement based on antagonism and a strong distinction between 'politics' and the 'political'. As Erik Swyngedouw has argued 'An emerging body of thought has begun to consider the suturing of 'the political' by a consensual mode of governance that has apparently reduced political conflict and disagreement to either an ultra-politics of radical and violent disavowal, exclusion and containment or to a para-political inclusion of different opinions on anything imaginable' (Swyngedouw, 2011: 371). In similar terms Chantal Mouffe has described the 'democratic deficit that characterises the "post-political" age' that has been brought about by 'neoliberal hegemony' (Mouffe, 2005b: 70).

Such work depends on particular ways of characterising left political trajectories and resistances. Thus in *Promises of the Political* Swyngedouw contends that the disappearance of 'Communist thought' has led to a 'relentless, yet politically powerless, resistance (rather than transformation), social critique, and obsessive but impotent acting out' (Swyngedouw, 2018: 167). Chantal Mouffe's work adopts a very different orientation to the histories of left politics, but still tends to think about antagonisms in very temporalized terms. Thus in *On the Political* she argues that 'new antagonisms have emerged which represent challenges that decades of neo-liberal hegemony have made us unable to confront' (Mouffe, 2005a: 119). Further, her work tends to conceptualise such antagonisms as 'returning' through particular articulations of nationalism and populism (cf Mouffe, 2018). While Mouffe is attentive to the different ways in which populism can be articulated, her temporalized framing of antagonism means she is not directly attentive to the ways in which different political trajectories can co-exist or come into conflict (Mouffe, 2018). As a result her account of the political results is largely unable to account for the spatial articulation of the political such as

the ‘contested alignments between different notions of state and nation’ and the different political projects that can be constructed in relation to them (Newman, 2019: 21).

To engage with such dynamic forms of spatial politics and the diverse antagonisms they shape I argue it is important to attend to diverse spatial practices of politicisation account of the political and de-politicisation (cf Hadjimichalis, 2018, Drago, 2018). In this sense my concern here is less to contest claims by figures such as Swyngedouw about the importance, and discontents, of ‘managerial governance’, than it is to locate such claims in relation to broader histories and geographies of the political. As the extract from Stuart Hall’s ‘Supply of Demand’ suggests, however, there are history of claims about de-politicisation which indicate a need to think about their different dynamics and spatialities, rather than to simply understand them through temporal ruptures. By reading key essays from *Out of Apathy* and the interventions of Scottish figures associated with the New Left such as Lawrence Daly alongside recent writings on the post-political or post-democracy my intention is not to imply any straightforward similarity between the conjunctures which informed these theoretical and political projects. I also do not seek to flatten out differences between such contexts or to suggest the operation of universal depoliticising logics across different times and spaces. Rather, by attending to different processes of politicisation and de-politicisation and the spatial politics they shape I argue that attending to the spatio-temporal contingency of politics, contestation and political engagement can shed light on forms of political activity and contestation that have often been occluded in current debates.

This is a necessary move because it can help to position the implications of contemporary political engagement in more generous ways, rather than closing them down by suggesting forms of resistance are simply ‘acting out’. As Hall’s argument makes clear, for example, the New Left positioned their concerns about consensus and apathy in relation to a broader critical narrative about democratic politics. Central here was Hall’s argument that Gaitskell’s position evaded significant antagonisms about the direction of society, part of a broader critique of the limits of political imagination which were integral to the ‘post-war consensus’ and the modes of depoliticisation it worked through. Hall’s account of depoliticisation is developed more explicitly in his less well known essay ‘Political Commitment’ which directly challenged models of politics which he argued were fundamentally de-politicising.

Thus he noted in relation to the rise of psephology that the ‘point about this model of politics is that it omits the praxis of politics,- the whole dynamic by which latent human needs are expressed in political terms and, by being formulated, become the conscious demands of a section of the society’ (Hall, 2017: 88). He argued that ‘It is the de-politicisation, the defusing, of hot issues which is so striking.’ His essay demonstrates some of the ways in which such de-politicisation worked in relation to the activities of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, which Hall was directly involved with (see Hall, 1960 and Hall with Schwarz, 2017: 338). Thus he argued that press reporting of the activities of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), with the exception of the Guardian, presented CND ‘either as an aspect of ‘Easter madness’ or in terms of the Labour MPs who have spoken from CND platforms (that is with reference to the existing *modus vivendi*)’. He argued that on ‘the basis of this bias it isn’t unfair to suggest that the British press would have missed such events as the formation of the Labour Party in the 1890s, on the grounds that nothing of real political significance could possibly be happening outside the Tory-Liberal seesaw’ (Hall, 2017: 88-89).

Hall's critique of an understanding of politics based only on examining formal party political sphere was something that emerged from and shaped New Left political interventions. As Celia Hughes notes the 'social community fostered by CND marches and early left milieus only added to youngster's feeling that they had become "political in a different kind of way"' (Hughes, 2014: 75). These social milieus also partly unsettled some of the gender relations of the left which remain, however, un-problematized in the essays in *Out of Apathy*. This reworking of understandings of the political was a significant achievement and terrain of engagement of the New Left. Thus Hall argues in his posthumously published memoir *Familiar Stranger* that 'an expansive conception of the domain of "the political"' emerged from these political experiences and commitments (Hall with Schwarz, 2017: 229). His account emphasises that the ideas of the New Left came out of an intense and significant period of political engagement, constituted through political networks such as those associated with the New Left clubs (see also Davis, 2018, Kenny, 1995). These engagements emphasise the need to unpack the term post-war consensus and to consider both its limits and some of the struggles which brought it into contestation.

Colin Crouch has located the post-war consensus, in relation to what he has described as a 'parabola of working-class politics' (Crouch, 2004: 5). Crouch uses this term to refer to how 'during the course of the twentieth century, that class moved from being a weak, excluded, but increasingly numerous and strong force banging on the door of political life; through having its brief moment at the centre, in the period of formation of the welfare state, Keynesian demand management and institutionalized industrial relations; to end as a numerically declining and increasingly disorganized grouping being marginalized within that life as the achievements of the mid-century were booted out after it' (Crouch, 2004: 5). Crouch's account describes a broad historical movement and terrain, but it tends to downplay the ways in which this 'consensus' was both a precarious achievement, riven in various ways and also the product of 'active political struggle' (Pilon, 2018: 18). As Pilon argues the 'most basic issue with western electoral democracies is that they are not- and never have been- terribly democratic, a problem that was masked for a time by the post-war economic boom' (Pilon, 2018: 1).

This situates the consensus as in part a political achievement which indicated the strength of what might be broadly defined as the 'labour movement' in Britain and beyond. By 'labour movement' I refer not only to Labour as a political party, but also to the broader trades unions and social movements that were broadly allied with it. Central to the investments of labour in the post-war consensus was a strong identification with a political geography shaped by the idea that 'socialist nationalist struggles for social justice and democratization of the polity and their eventual ideological incorporation into the nation' were to be 'mediated by the Labour Party as well as the trade union movement (Virdee, 2014: 5, see also Agnew, 2018: 9). This 'consensus' was produced, however, through very differentiated forms of labour agency. The 'undoubted gains for one section of the working class' during the era of the 'post-war consensus', as Satnam Virdee has argued, were 'accompanied by systematic racism and discrimination against another section of the working class' (Virdee, 2014: 98, see also Duffield, 1988). The 'consensus' was experienced, then, in markedly uneven ways in both social and spatial terms.

Different parts of the UK were also enrolled unequally into this project, in ways which align with the continuing uneven and contested geographies of Britain. This was made clear in

a 1962 *New Left Review* essay, 'Scotland on the Dole' by Lawrence Daly, a miner from Fife who was elected to the executive of the Scottish Area of the National Union of Mineworkers' (NUMSA) that year and who had strong connections to the New Left. Daly's essay drew attention both to the impact and scale of proposed pit closures and of the attendant rise of youth unemployment in areas like Fife, illustrating forms of uneven regional politics which are masked by generic constructions of post-war prosperity. He also argued in response to the strong showing of the SNP in the West Lothian by election of 1962, where the SNP had come second with the Tories and Liberals both losing their deposits, that '[s]ocialists should not dismiss' Scottish nationalism as an amusing piece of quaint Celtic revivalism'. Rather he argued that 'Its economic and psychological roots are deep and its relevance to the problem of democratic governance and social planning is immediate and significant' (Daly, 1962: 17).

Later in the decade the 'Scottish miners' President and communist', Michael McGahey, argued at the 1969 conference of the Scottish Trade Union Congress (STUC) that the labour movement's need to 'come to grips' with the 'national question' to stymie the 'demagogues of nationalism' (Phillips, 2008: 5). McGahey rooted his argument in an articulation of the Scottish miners' reputation for internationalism arguing that they 'were proud of their international solidarity and had [a] record in this respect that was widely acknowledged' (STUC, 1968: 399). Constructing Scotland in quasi-Leninist terms as a nation with a right to self-determination, McGahey argued that 'the subject of a Scottish Parliament was one which had to be discussed in and deliberated by the Trade Union Movement in Scotland.' Further he contended that the 'best guarantee of a proper handling of the national question was for the STUC and the Scottish Labour Movement to take up the question of nationalism, challenge the chauvinists, and deal with the issues concerned in a proper working class fashion' (McGahey, 1968: 400).¹

McGahey's invocation of the miners' reputation for 'international solidarity' was more than rhetorical bluster. At the 57th STUC Congress held in April, 1954 delegates from the NUMSA, for example, led a strong condemnation of the UK Labour Party's role in supporting the deposing of the left-leaning People's Progressive Party (PPP) in what was then British Guiana. British Guiana's constitution had been 'suspended' in October, 1953 at the instigation by the Colonial Governor Alfred Savage in association with the Conservative Secretary of State for the Colonies Oliver Lyttleton, as a response to the alleged Communist sympathies of leading figures in the PPP such as Cheddi and Janet Jagan. The PPP leadership had begun to introduce modest, but certainly not revolutionary reforms after winning a landslide in the country's first elections under universal suffrage earlier that year. The NUMSA delegates, who reflected the strong Communist presence in their union, challenged the STUC and the Labour Party's support for the deposing of the PPP which was based on a vehement anti-communist position shaped by the analysis of organisations like the Fabian Colonial Bureau (STUC, 1953: 290-1; James, 2015: 101). Through doing so the NUMSA delegates contested the pressure the National Executive of the UK Labour Party exerted on attempts to offer solidarity to the PPP, the organisation having declared that it was "inadvisable for local Parties to provide a platform for PPP speakers or to co-operate with other bodies (which

¹ The reaction of to the speech recorded in the account of the STUC conference by D Crawford of the Amalgamated Society of Painters and Decorators to the speech, however, casts some doubt on how seriously it was intended or received. Crawford noted that he 'had a very great respect for the miners and had heard many a good case put forward by Michael, but his statement arguing for the setting- up of a Scottish Parliament had been the worst he had ever heard from him. It was full of clichés and he really thought he was speaking a little with his tongue in his cheek' (STUC, 1968: 404).

might be Communist-dominated) in supporting them' (Jagan, 1954: 92). Despite this pressure as Cheddi Jagan notes a tour he made of Britain in November, 1953, 'received rank and file support' from '[m]any individual members of the Labour Party- city councillors, labour agents' who 'defied the ban' including at a 'large meeting in Glasgow' (Jagan, 1954: 93).

These internationalist activities indicate some of the ways in which the spatial articulations of the post-war consensus were challenged through left politics and trade unionism. Such contestation of colonial policy and the critical arguments of Daly, Hall and Thompson about the construction of the post war settlement position different left interventions in relation to what might be termed a spatial politics of consensus. For E.P.Thompson the 'consensus' was at its most stifling in terms of the ways in which it pushed key questions around coloniality and nuclear arms from the arena of political contestation and debate. Thus Thompson noted in one of his (three) contributions to *Out of Apathy* that 'In the General Election of 1955 the British people elected the government which was to see them through the crisis of Quemoy, Suez, Hungary, hydrogen bomb tests, Jordan and other critical incidents of the twentieth century. The three major parties ensured that the election was conducted entirely within the political and strategic premises of NATO. And it was an election in which the great majority of British intellectuals were silent' (Thompson, 1960a: 141).²

This critique of the effects of the post-war consensus emphasises the importance of thinking about the geographies through which such a consensus was generated, envisioned and challenged. As Thompson indicates with his reference to the 1955 election, 1956 was pivotal here in relation to the challenges of the Soviet invasion of Hungary and the Khrushchev speech detailing the enormity of repression and genocide during the Stalin era which led to mass-resignations from the Communist Party of Great Britain. In this context '1956' was central to the trajectories of figures like Thompson who first set up the dissident Communist publication and later in the year broke with the Party. This was a notably different trajectory from many influential figures in the Scottish labour movement such as McGahey who were to be part of an enduring Communist presence in the leadership of Scottish Trade Unions. It was also the year of 'the war with Egypt' which, as Bill Schwarz, notes was 'known in politeness parlance as "Suez"'. Schwarz notes that 'an angry, monster demonstration filled Trafalgar Square in London on Sunday, November, 4, 1956', but concedes that 'this was one of the only occasions [...] when the formal politics of decolonisation, broke free from the institutions of Westminster, and spilled on to the street' (Schwarz, 2007: 48, see also Worsley, 1960). As Schwarz indicates then, the New Left in uneven ways sought to politicise and challenge key aspects of the post-war consensus. The next section explores some of the generative politics of antagonism through which they theorised and engaged with such forms of politicisation.

Contingency, Antagonism and the Spatial Politics of Austerity

The political writings of Stuart Hall and E.P.Thompson from the period of the First New Left are significant not just for their diagnosis of a problematic of 'apathy' and depoliticisation, but because they offer a more politically generative approach to this impasse than has largely

² John Saville, Thompson's comrade in the Reasoner and New Reasoner, notes that Labour's post-war foreign policy was defined from the 'earliest days' of Ernest Bevin's tenure as Labour foreign secretary by 'strong agreement between the two front benches on foreign affairs' something that was underpinned by Bevin's close personal friendship with Anthony Eden, Saville, 1993: 93.

characterised the ‘post-politics debates’. It is for these reasons that their work bears a close re-reading in the context of the current political conjuncture. Their engagement with the geographies of ‘actually existing contestation’ also has relevance for work on space and politics in particular because they offer a distinctive resolution which is based in. Thus while Thompson is attentive to the forms of consensus which were the product of the accommodation of Conservative and social democratic labour politics, his account does not see this as the end point of the political analysis. His interventions were alive to, and engaged with, the different ways that this consensus was unable to stem the production of antagonisms (see Davis, 2018).

Thus Thompson notes that ‘controlled antagonisms are constantly breaking out in new uncontrolled ways: the compensation received by coal owners burgeons into profits in light industry: the housing schemes of well-intentioned municipalities sink under the earth beneath accumulated interest-repayments- money searches continually for new ways to breed money. And, at the end of it all, we have a society grounded on antagonism. We remain forever removed from a Society of Equals’ (Thompson, 1960b: 291). Thompson here gives a dynamic and diverse sense of the practices through which consensus was challenged and articulated and the antagonisms shaped through doing so. Further Thompson drew attention to different places where such antagonisms were breaking out. In a characteristically intemperate discussion of the ‘Third Worldism’ of some of his comrades on the newly established board of *New Left Review*, he warned ‘internationalists and intellectual workers’ that ‘the old mole, revolution, may still be at work in Battersea and Fife, in Tyneside and Ebbw Vale’ (Thompson, 2014: 238).

This explicit engagement with the geography of antagonisms being articulated in relation to the post-war consensus is important. Thompson’s reference to Fife is particularly instructive. In 1957 Lawrence Daly had established the Fife Socialist League therewith which was directly influenced by and strongly connected with the New Left, and was arguably the ‘most proletarian, best established, and most politically successful in the Scottish (or British) New Left’ and was based in that area’s coal field (Thompson, 1978 : 221, see also Davis, 2018). Daly’s writings also give a strong sense of how some of the emergent antagonisms in relation to the post-war consensus were being given specific articulation in Scotland. Thus he noted that ‘When young Scots are politically enthusiastic today they are to be seen sporting Ban-the Bomb badges or “Free Scotland” badges’, or both at the same time’ (Daly, 1962: 17). Gaitskell himself, a strong opponent of unilateral nuclear disarmament, had been at the sharp end of such political ‘enthusiasm’ when his speech at the 1962 May Day demonstration in Glasgow was disrupted by Young Socialists, CND members and Communists (Glasgow Herald, 1962).

In this regard Thompson and Hall’s interventions were attentive to emergent forms of political antagonism which were challenging the terms of the post-war consensus. One of the sensibilities these interventions shaped was through distinctive and original engagements with the ways in which political movements were reshaping the existing terrain and logics of the political. In his book *Stuart Hall’s Voice*, a compelling collection of letters addressed to Stuart Hall after his death in 2014, David Scott has drawn attention to the significance of the political ethics that shaped Hall’s work. He observes that ‘You will remind me here, Stuart, I’m sure that you’ve been a *public* intellectual all your adult life (from the Suez and Hungary crises in 1956 that led into the first New Left and Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in the

late 1950s, through the public broadcasts for the Open University much later) [...] but what especially interests me is that quality in your voice of always being *turned* out toward an audience, however small. There is a relation therefore between voice and action- voice and *political* action, specifically that I believe is central to you' (Scott, 2017: 31, emphasis in original). Scott's reflections on Hall's 'voice' and how it relates to his conception of political action signal differences of real importance in understanding the different orientations towards political activity that shape the work of Hall and the New Left's work and much of what has been produced under the rubric of the 'post-political'. They also disclose some of the limits associated with the latter position, which are significant for engagements with questions of politicising austerity and understanding the politicisation of the post-crisis conjuncture.

Central to Scott's passage is the modality of what he discerns as being a public intellectual who is 'turned out'. Scott argues that Hall's work and voice was constituted through an ethics of listening and generosity which was sensitive to the contingency of political identifications and antagonisms. This engagement with such antagonisms and the conjunctures was shaped by Hall's attention to forms of popular culture and his contention that they needed to be taken seriously. As he argued in his 1981 essay 'Notes on Deconstructing the Popular' 'Popular culture is one of the sites where this struggle for and against a culture of the powerful is engaged: it is also the stake to be won or lost *in* that struggle. It is the arena of consent and resistance' (Hall, 1981: 239, emphasis in original). Hall's engagement with popular culture was also a key aspect of his attentiveness to the contingency and spatio-temporal specificity of particular conjunctures (Scott 2017: 82). This in turn is one of the qualities that he insisted was so important in Gramsci's writings arguing that he directs 'our attention unswervingly to what is specific and different about this moment. He always insists on this attention to difference' (Hall, 1988: 162).

One of the important ways in which Hall's mode of political and intellectual engagement was 'turned out' was an attentiveness to diverse articulations of the political an attention to which was a decisive and original contribution of New Left intellectuals in different ways. As Hilary Wainwright has recently argued this was part of an attentiveness to political developments beyond established forms of 'politics'. Thus she argues that Thompson with 'the instincts of the social historian' was 'attentive to what was happening beneath the surface of the institutions of the Cold War' and 'Prompted by the 'positives of Aldermaston and the negatives of "hip" and "beats"', he spied a new critical temper. It offered a future outside the political culture shaped by the Cold War' (Wainwright, 2018: 29-30). She draws attention to Thompson's argument in his essay 'Outside the Whale', his most substantive contribution to *Out of Apathy*, that 'beneath the polarisation of power and ideology in the Cold War world, a new, rebellious human nature was being formed. These abstract ideologies contended for people's mind; but people, educated by circumstances, changed by a logic which challenged these abstractions' (Thompson, 1960a: 187).

Stuart Hall pushed some of these methods and engagements further, and developed them in ways which were less tied to a slightly romantic articulation of socialist humanism (see Hall, 1988, 2017). The significance of this approach for debates on space and politics is drawn out by Clive Barnett who contrasts Hall's analysis of Thatcherism with subsequent work on neoliberalism, noting that one of the key aspects of Stuart Hall's writings on Thatcherism was a 'concern with the experiential conditions of action' (Barnett, 2017: 116). Barnett argues

that ‘contemporary academic conceptualizations of neoliberalism and neoliberalization’ tend to construct a ‘politics of support’ that is ‘conceptualised instrumentally, as an automatic effect of the production of new types of ‘neoliberal subjects’. For Barnett the ‘prevalence of this style of theoretical narrative is itself an indication of the degree to which Hall’s account of the cultural politics of support has been marginalized by the rise of theories of signification, discourse, and governmentality that can find no space of the account of popular experiences that Hall developed’ (Barnett, 2017: 115-116).

There are marked contrasts, as Barnett indicates, between Hall’s commitment to engaging with the terms of popular articulations of political subjectivity and the tone and style of engagement of authors such as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe whose work has strongly influenced the terms of debate around the post-political (eg Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, Laclau, 2005, Mouffe, 2005). Mouffe’s more axiomatic understanding of the political in her work around post-politics, also represents something of a shift from its orientation towards political activity and organising than her earlier work (see particularly Mouffe, 2005a). Thus while *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, originally published in 1985 had a resolutely theoreticist cast of argument, it was clearly animated by political developments on the broader left such as feminism and anti-racism not just by the impact of post-structural thinking (see also Mouffe, 1988: 91, 2018). Mouffe’s work around the ‘post-political’, however, gives little space for such a generative engagement with political practices and organising. There is little discussion in *On the Political* of the innovative forms of organising associated with the then influential counter-globalisation movement and the ways in which it unsettled some of the divisions between international and domestic politics which structured her analysis of the political in that book.

This stance towards ‘actually existing contestation’ tends more broadly to characterise work defined by a ‘post-political’ approach, even where such work seeks to engage more explicitly with the dynamics of ‘ordinary’ politics. Thus Haughton et al’s insightful paper on questions of ordinary political engagement in Manchester around opposition to tree felling in Manchester’s Alexandria Park in 2015 makes a significant attempt to engage with contemporary oppositional politics from an explicitly post-political perspective (Haughton et al, 2015, see also Paddison, 2009). While their analysis does provide some analytic purchase on the events- and some reasonable criticisms of the protesters’ strategies, their account tends to trap political opposition within an already bifurcated construction of politics and the political. This is a contrast to work which has sought to be ‘turned out’ and to engage with the terms and spatial practices through which claims are made and articulated. Rather, the geographies through which demands are forged and constructed the political logics in which they are constructed seem pre-determined before political activity takes place. As Millington has argued in the context of post-political accounts of the London riots they tend to ‘impose an unnecessarily inhibited social and urban imaginary, where there is little sense of an open future or capacity for astonishment’ (Millington, 2016: 720).

Recent work on forms of opposition to austerity by contrast have usefully been informed by a greater sense of curiosity in relation to the ways such forms of contestation might rework understandings of the political, rather than slotting them into already circumscribed divisions between politics and the political. Thus Bailey et al in their account of opposition to austerity across Europe *Beyond Defeat and Austerity* take as their starting point an engagement with different forms of ‘disruptive agency’ shaped by movements and organising. They argue that

for ‘those of us who wish to challenge the structures of inequality’ it is important ‘to focus on both the occurrence, and the causal impact of the forms of disruptive agency that manifest themselves at particular times’ (Bailey et al, 2018: 4). This approach is significant, for as Anna Richter and Susan Fitzpatrick argue- to not acknowledge ‘generative’ political and oppositional spaces is to concede too much ground to the “strong” post-political narrative that an entirely managed public sphere lacking in any dissenting encounters is an extant reality’ (Richter and Fitzpatrick, 2018: 4).

Key here is engaging with the generative spatialities of politicisation that have shaped opposition to austerity. In this regard the relations between the Yes movement and anti-austerity politics, as Neil Davidson’s discussion at the beginning of this paper emphasises, indicate that the spatial politics of austerity has been related to a broader challenge to the hegemonic spatial relations of UK (Johnstone, 2018, see also Nairn, 1977). Central in this respect was a challenge to the de-politicising logics of New Labour and the spatial imaginaries through which they were articulated. Under successive New Labour governments a whole swathe of issues were depoliticised not just through how particular issues were envisioned, but as in Hall’s critique of Gaitskell, through the whole approach towards the political and social adopted by New Labour (see Hall, 2017). As Jo Littler has suggested New Labour’s political narrative was rooted in foundational notions of social mobility shaped by constructions of ‘meritocracy’ which evaded uneven geographies and power relations (Littler, 2017: 205-6). These narratives and their depoliticising logics shaped the approach adopted by both New Labour and the party under Ed Miliband’s leadership to questions of regional inequality and the fractured geographies of the UK state.

Despite his attempt to displace and challenge some of the neoliberalising logics of the Blair-Brown years, such as through advocating limited state intervention in energy, Miliband adopted a notoriously timid attitude to challenging inequality and austerity, which led him to defend a limited austerity under pressure from the leaders of the Green Party, SNP and Plaid Cymru during the 2015 general election leaders debates. The persistence and construction of ‘meritocratic’ ideas around regional inequality had significant implications for the Labour Party’s approach to the spatial politics of the UK can be demonstrated in some of the policy reports Miliband commissioned in this period. A report on the economy written by Andrew Adonis, for example, has a disproportionate focus on issues of skills and the anxieties about the productivity of the UK which structure the report on the economy. The report is informed by an underlying assumption that if workers can become more effectively skilled and productive then economic problems will be solved. This analysis is shaped by an analysis where regional inequalities are too often treated as patterns of differentiated skills, what Adonis calls a ‘skills mismatch’, and are not related to some of the processes that produce such spatial inequality (Adonis, 2014: 58).

Such dominant discourses, as Costis Hadjimichalis notes, have ‘helped to direct regional development questions towards non-combative paths by de-politicising them’ (Hadjimichalis, 2017: 115-116). Such depoliticisation of questions around uneven development became entrenched through Ed Miliband’s adoption of a ‘One Nation’ approach, however, directly elided such challenges and it quickly became all too apparent with the remorseless focus on Englishness of politicians like Jon Cruddas which nation ‘One Nation Labour’ was referring to. This has been symptomatic of a broader failure of the Labour Party to think in terms of devolution as an ongoing set of political processes- which demanded political innovation and

originality – rather than as a one off event which would stymie demands for Scottish, and to a lesser extent Welsh, independence (see Mackinnon, 2017). Indeed the so-called ‘Clear Red Water’ strategy adopted by the popular first minister Rhodri Morgan which explicitly defined Welsh Labour in the mid to late 2000s against Blairite New Labour has arguably been the only distinctive political narrative to emerge in this regard (see Davies and Williams, 2009). The One Nation Labour project also represented a failed attempt to depoliticise the questions of the uneven and contested geographies of Britain, or what Andy Cumbers (2012: 33-36) has described as the ‘dysfunctional economic geography’ of the UK state. Labour’s catastrophic decline in Scotland at the 2015 general election, when the party lost forty parliamentary seats holding on to just one, has generally been attributed to Labour’s decision to enter in to alliance with the Conservative Party in the Better Together campaign, leading to the enduring taunt of ‘Red Tories’.

The One Nation Labour framing indicated in serious and structural terms the real failure of Labour to acknowledge the shifting political landscapes opened up by devolution and to imagine itself as a party in a multi-national state. This has also characterised debate more on the left of the party such as the interventions of *The Red Paper Collective* a group of Scottish trade unionists, academics and left leaning Labour MSPs which included the present left-leaning Scottish Labour leader Richard Leonard and is broadly linked to the Scottish Labour-left affiliated Campaign for Socialism. In their writings the collective has sought to delink opposition to austerity from ‘nationalist’ framings. Pauline Bryan and Tommy Kane’s introduction to the *Red Paper 2014 Class, Nation and Socialism* argues, for example, that ‘whatever the ultimate solution for the UK the answer to the real problems facing us all will not be found in constitutional change but in political change’ (Bryan and Kane, 2014: 8). This position, however, still tends to under-estimate the ways in which, as the next section will suggest, questions of political and constitutional change have become intrinsically articulated together in powerful ways through opposition to austerity in Scotland (see Hasan, 2017).

There were challenges to such de-politicising logics from prominent Labour activists and trade unionists in Scotland, particularly in relation to the failure to strongly confront austerity. Thus Mark Lyon the ex-Unite convenor at the massive Grangemouth Refinery Complex now owned by Ineos, notes in his book about the major industrial dispute there in 2013 that ‘in not embracing radical change in priorities and focus, the party risked becoming marginalised’ and ‘was struggling to peep out of the murky shadows of the middle political ground’ (Lyon, 2017: 96). Lyon’s account signals the depth of grassroots support for alternative visions of the Labour Party, which propelled Jeremy Corbyn to the leadership of the party in 2015, and which so surprised both mainstream media commentators and party grandees. Indeed Ed Miliband’s response to disputes within Falkirk Labour Party over the selection process to succeed to the disgraced MP Eric Joyce, tensions which were in part linked to Unite’s dispute at the Grangemouth refinery, were integral to the decision to allow registered supporters to join the party for a small fee.

This opened up a significant process of democratisation within the party and became a powerful part of the surge for Corbyn as Labour leader. In this context Jeremy Corbyn’s decisive break with Labour’s failure to oppose austerity and neoliberalism has significantly changed the political terrain in relation to the post-crisis conjuncture in the UK (Perryman, 2017). While Corbynism has had some resonance in Scotland, and seemed to partly arrest the

Pasokification of the Scottish party in the 2017 general election, the failure of the party to build on this and to gain any significant traction emphasises that the geographies of politicisation of austerity have varied considerably in different parts of the UK. The failed attempts at depoliticising the fractures of the UK through narratives such as One Nation Labour, and the disastrous alliance with the Conservative party in the Better Together Campaign, have in this respect had important consequences for the geographies through which austerity was envisioned and politicised. This geography of politicisation of austerity relates, at least in part to the maps of grievance of de-industrialisation which became shaped and experienced in ways through the 1980s (as elsewhere) in relation to the divisive geographical imaginaries mobilised by Thatcherism as a political project. As Doreen Massey argued in *World City* this was shaped by a core geographical project through which Thatcher prioritised certain areas of the UK (most notably South East England over others (cf Massey, 2007). The next section discusses how these uneven geographies have impacted on the imaginaries through which austerity has been politicised in Scotland.

Austerity, De-Industrialisation and the Uneven Geographies of Politicisation

Austerity has been consistently articulated in Scotland as a political project which is of a piece with a broader history of neoliberalism inflicted by the UK Conservative party on Scotland that have lacked either popular support or a democratic mandate. Thus opposition to austerity has invoked the political memory and dynamic trajectories of struggle against the 'Poll Tax', which replaced the rates which were differentiated by income, with a flat rate tax applicable to all adults. The injustices of the Poll Tax were seriously aggravated by it being 'tried' a year early in Scotland in 1989. This served to compound a strong sense of grievance that Scotland was being treated as expendable by the Tories and catalysed to a mass non-payment campaign (Gibbs, 2016). Such opposition has also invoked the long standing resentment that Conservative Governments were indifferent at best to processes of de-industrialisation in Scotland and elsewhere. These political struggles were at their most intense during the 1980s and early to mid-1990s, but these antagonisms pre-dated Thatcherism. There was strong popular resentment, for example, at the 'disdain displayed by the Conservatives of Westminster in attempting to shut down the shipbuilding industry on Clydeside in the early 70s' (Johnstone, 2018: 123).

To engage with the spatial politics through which austerity has been contested by Scottish left(s) it is useful to engage with some of the distinctive ways in which grievances around de-industrialisation were articulated and generated. This involves going beyond accounts which simply register the importance of de-industrialisation as a context for the political geography of Scotland to considering the ways this geography has been understood and mobilised. John Agnew has recently commented, for example, that the decline of manufacturing industry in west-central Scotland has long set the tone for politics in Glasgow and its environs, not least in terms of the social and economic costs it has imposed on local populations' (Agnew, 2018: 12). Such associations, as Agnew's comments demonstrate, however, tend to be treated as given rather than interrogated in depth. To trace the ways in which de-industrialisation has been articulated and linked to 'actually existing forms of contestation' over austerity it is helpful to adopt a more dynamic sense of the geographies and 'maps of grievance' of deindustrialisation.

While the geographies of deindustrialisation have tended to be seen as having straightforward political consequences and effects, engaging with some of the spatial imaginaries through which deindustrialisation was experienced and contested, can shed useful light on some of the

ways in which austerity has been politicised. Some of the nuances in the geographies through which de-industrialisation and left nationalism were articulated can be gleaned from political songs from the period of deindustrialisation in the 1980s and early 1990s. This engagement with political song draws on Hall's positioning of popular culture as 'one of the sites' where 'struggle for and against a culture of the powerful' is constituted.³ It also reflects the importance of politicised folk song to articulations of Scottish nationalist politics, particularly on the left (Gibson, 2015). Two songs which evoke the geographies through which processes of de-industrialisation were envisioned and politicised are Brian McNeill's 'Bye Bye Big Blue' and Davy Steele's 'We're No Gonna Leave Here'.⁴ During this period both McNeill and Steele were a part of the long-standing politicised culture of the central belt of Scotland which had connections to the broader labour movement and to forms of Scottish left nationalist politics. Both musicians featured, for example, on a CD released in 1997 to mark the centenary of the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC), Steele as part of the group *Ceolbeg*. Their songs shed light on the ways in which questions of deindustrialisation became powerfully articulated through left nationalist imaginaries.

McNeill wrote the song 'Bye Bye Big Blue' as an elegy to the Ravenscraig Steel Works in Motherwell, which was closed by British Steel in 1992. Popularly known as 'Big Blue', Ravenscraig was once the biggest steel works in UK and was itself shaped by the commitment to regional Keynesianism of the 'post-war consensus'. The plant was established in 1958, prior to the nationalisation of the industry and the formation of British Steel, when the Scottish steel dynasty Colville's were persuaded to site a new strip mill in Motherwell despite their concerns that it would accrue significant potential losses (Phillips, 2008: 31). The closure of the plant became a significant wider symbol of de-industrialisation in Scotland and in the final verse McNeill recounts walking near the plant as it is about to be decommissioned. The song observes 'As I walk the streets that surround you/ I think of the talk of a nation once again/ in a hard headed steel town defiant in the rain/ no paradise lost/ but what could there be to gain for the likes of me and you' (Clan Alba, 1995). Through this narrative the song directly relates the impact and the significance of the closure to the re-emergence of Scottish nationalism in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

McNeill's song wrestles with the question of how to memorialise a steel works, but its gestures towards independence, and the possibility of a hopeful, if certainly not utopic future, signal important ways in which deindustrialisation was narrated and politically articulated through left articulations of independence. The masculinities and gender relations that were central to industrialisation and the post-war consensus are present, albeit unexamined, through the patrilineal logic of the narrative. Davy Steele's song 'We're No Gonna Leave Here', similarly gives a sense of the shifting geographies through which labour struggles in relation to deindustrialisation and capital flight were envisioned. The song was written about

³ While political song was not in itself a particular concern of Hall his *The Popular Arts* co-written with Paddy Whannel drew attention to the importance of the Radio Ballads series of Ewan MacColl, Charles Parker and Peggy Seeger, arguing that at time 'the Radio Ballads represented the only truly imaginative attempt to use sound broadcasting creatively' (Hall and Whannel, 1964: 259).

⁴ Both musicians were also part of the Scottish folk 'super group' *Clan Alba* which also included Dick Gaughan, Mary MacMaster and Patsy Seddon and both songs were recorded on their only CD which unfortunately due to decisions made by the record company Celtic Music was never given a general release.

the occupation of the Caterpillar Factory in Uddingston, to the South East of Glasgow, in 1987 by the unionised workforce in protest at plans to close the plant. The occupation lasted for 103 days and like the closure of Ravenscraig was a high profile political event in Scotland (see Woolfson and Foster, 1987; Crossan et al, 2016).

The song dramatizes the impact of capital flight and signals anger both at a remote and aloof UK government and the actions of the US multinational. The Conservative government had paid Caterpillar significant subsidies shortly before the 1987 general election, but the company still decided to close the plant. This was significant politically as 1987 was the election which saw support for the Conservatives beginning to haemorrhage in Scotland, and the party lost eleven out of its twenty-one seats. Steele's song articulates anger towards the actions of a US multi-national with an emergent left Scottish nationalism: 'We're here to show some Scottish pride/ Against American shame'. The song has a strong defence of the legitimacy of direct action to save jobs and communities, against the scandal and neglect of communities experiencing capital flight. It also represents the UK government as a stooge of the US multinational: 'the Government all looked really smug/ when they coughed up to the Yanks'.

These antagonistic geographies ally a critique of deindustrialisation and its discontents to a critique of a distant and hostile UK government in ways which contrast strongly to the constructions of the UK as a redistributive state which, as Virdee notes, underpinned the idea of the post-war consensus. While there is a critique of deindustrialisation in both songs, particularly in terms of the unjust ways in which it was carried out, they also articulate a progressive and forward looking politics. Steele ends 'We're No Gonna Leave Here' by presenting the occupiers at Caterpillar as part of an intergenerational struggle against injustice: 'We're here for the future/ A time that we'll not see/ to free our children's children from the crime of poverty'. In similar ways to McNeill's song this speaks to a forward looking, hopeful future which is very different from some of the defensive and xenophobic invocations of deindustrialisation during the EU referendum of 2016 with its regressive scapegoating of migrants (cf Watkins, 2016, Virdee and McGeever, 2018). It also prefigures the positivity of popular slogans during the Scottish Independence referendum campaign such as 'Bairns not Bombs'. As Johnstone notes the 'argument for independence was based around a hopeful alternative to austerity, when Westminster dictated there was none. Migrants and the EU were celebrated not condemned, and renewable energy and climate change formed key priorities' (Johnstone, 2018: 126).

The significance of Steele's narration of the occupation emerges by contrast with the narratives of key labour movement figures. Thus Campbell Christie, then general secretary of the STUC, described the occupation as having shown 'an important lead for the Labour Movement in Britain' (STUC, 1987). Steele's song, however, indicates how deindustrialisation became directly articulated as part of a critique of the existing territorial structure and inequalities of the UK, rather than the UK state being appealed to defend communities against deindustrialisation or to offer alternative forms of employment. Such left Scottish nationalist articulations of key grievances became more entrenched through the late 1980s and early 1990s as institutions such as the STUC, and particularly the Labour Party, became sidelined in the struggles against the Poll Tax, through their refusal to back the non-payment campaign. While non-payment of the Poll Tax was the 'largest act of civil disobedience in recent Scottish history' in 'terms of the number of people directly involved',

it was, as Ewan Gibbs notes, 'led by political forces in conflict with the leadership of the labour movement' (Gibbs, 2016: 441).

Thus a 1989 pamphlet of the Scottish Anti-Poll Tax Federation likened influential Scottish Labour politicians such as Donald Dewar to Eric Hammond the EEPTU leader who was notorious for signing 'no-strike agreements'. Further, it characterised their arguments against non-payment as a 'political "no-strike" clause' (Scottish Anti-Poll Tax Federation, 1989: 40). As a result while Labour party members and MPs such as Glasgow Maryhill MP Maria Fyfe on the left of the party, argued in favour of a 'a non-payment campaign' (Fyfe, 2014: 44), the impetus for the dynamic, grassroots opposition to the Poll Tax was led by autonomous and extra-parliamentary left(s) (Gibbs, 2016). Thus John Cooper, an anarchist activist who was involved in Castlemilk Anti-Poll Tax Union, and has a long history of organising in the area, recounted that at a Banner Tales workshop in 2015 that the political base of opposition to the Poll Tax reflected a strong opposition to the Labour Party. He recalled that in Castlemilk, 'there was a couple of guys from Militant Labour, there was the guys from the SWP (Socialist Workers Party) at the time and various other parties and people with no particular political persuasion' (Cooper, 2015: 26). These networks coalesced into the Scottish Socialist Party which gained six seats in the 2003 election, and also provided an important route for working class voters from Labour to the SNP (cf Davidson, 2014).

Speakers at the Castlemilk workshop also drew attention to the ways in which the opposition to the Poll Tax had influenced contemporary opposition to austerity. One of the powerful ways in which austerity and earlier Conservative neoliberal policies were articulated was through the symbolic linking of the Poll Tax with the Bedroom Tax which was introduced by the Coalition Government in 2013 and which sought to displace social housing tenants into smaller properties if they were deemed to have empty rooms. This linking of current and past forms of injustice in opposition to austerity was not only a symbolic move. Opposition to the Bedroom Tax in the area drew on the strategies of opposition to the Poll Tax. These trajectories were made clear by Jean Devlin, a housing activist from Castlemilk, who noted in a discussion of the opposition to the Bedroom Tax that 'There a lot of similarities here with the Anti-Poll Tax Campaign and you can see this from the look of the banners. It is no accident that the banners are similar, because we learnt a lot from the Poll Tax campaign. That campaign was 'Can't Pay Won't Pay' and you can see from this- that it's a Can't Pay Won't Leave scenario because the main concern- and this is the difference between us and the Poll Tax- is that we were at risk of people losing their homes. It wasn't just about losing independence and losing furniture which was bad enough, but being evicted and ending up on the street' (Devlin, 2015: 28).

Castlemilk, one of Glasgow's four major post-war housing schemes in the South East of the city, is home to some of the 'marginalised working class communities' which Davidson notes were drawn into the political debates around the Independence referendum. In this respect the geography of support for Independence was predominantly shaped by areas like Castlemilk which have been badly hit by austerity policies and de-industrialisation- and drew explicitly on opposition to totemic injustices associated with austerity such as the Bedroom Tax. Paradoxically the four council areas that had majorities for Yes, Dundee, Glasgow, West Dunbartonshire and North Lanarkshire, had historic associations with the Labour Party, which opposed independence, and the areas where the support base for the SNP has strong roots in the Highlands and North East Scotland have strong roots did not deliver majorities

for independence. The opposition to austerity in Castlemilk, noted by activists such as Devlin, also speaks to the relation between anti-austerity politics and the forms of politicisation associated with the independence referendum.

As Jenny Morrison and Satnam Virdee have argued the gendered and racialized character of such politicisation was more contested than some over celebratory accounts have suggested (Morrison, 2017, Virdee, 2017). Thus Morrison notes that a ‘tendency towards individualism and moralism in the use of privilege politics’ in groups like the Radical Independence Campaign (RiC) served to marginalise ‘movement building, and reinforced rather than tackled, exclusions of working class feminists’ (Morrison, 2017: 64). Morrison’s account indicates that the terms of coalition building through opposition to austerity and support for independence could be fraught and speak to contested and unfinished forms of politicisation. The coalition built through the independence movement between the SNP and more radical activists around the greens and broader left have also been shaped by specific geographies. These alliances effectively allowed the SNP to hegemonise opposition to austerity in Scotland in the post-independence referendum period, with disastrous consequences for Labour particularly in relation to the 2015 general election. As the uneven geography of support for anti-austerity independence suggests, however, the politics around austerity in Scotland have been more fraught than this hegemonising logic might suggest.

Thus Foley and Ramand have noted that while ‘socialist activists assumed that exposure to left wing ideas would lead away from mainstream politics; instead, they legitimized it’ enabling the SNP to hegemonise anti-austerity politics with a limited content to such a political stance (Foley and Ramand, 2017: 88-89). Indeed there seems to have been a fairly conscious distancing of the SNP leadership in recent years both from grassroots forms of politicisation and from a strong opposition to austerity. This emphasises the contingency and shifting constructions of political antagonisms in relation to austerity. The publication in May 2018 of the Scottish Growth Commission by the ex SNP MP Andrew Wilson in particular has marked a significant break with the kind of anti-austerity politics which were significant in the 2014 Independence campaign and its immediate aftermath. The report eschews such commitments to emphasise the SNP’s sober economic credentials with the Institute for Fiscal Studies commending the ‘the SNP’s New realism, while predicting that it would mean another 10 years of austerity’ (Macwhirter, 2018: 31).

The report unsurprisingly, received a hostile reaction from the left wing of the Independence movement. Mike Small of the influential *Bella Caledonia* website has argued, for example, that in ‘the face of biting austerity, growing inequality and a collapsing British state in crisis, the idea that you would put forward public spending cuts as your vision of the new dawn of a new country and received unprecedented public support is ...just fantastical’ (Small, 2018). Arguably, this maps on to a broader ambivalence of SNP leadership figures towards popular political mobilisation. Some of these tensions have played out in very visible and spatially-articulated form in relations to recent independence marches, organised by All Under One Banner and not officially linked to the SNP. Thus Manny Singh, the organiser of a pro-independence march held in Glasgow was charged ‘under section 65 of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982’ over a dispute relating to the timing of the march on the 4th May in 2019, despite the march having passed off peacefully.

While organisers of the march had held to their preferred time of 1.30pm to maximise impact and attendance, Glasgow City Council SNP-led administration pushed for the march to be held much earlier in the day. While this was ostensibly for reasons relating to concerns from ‘the ‘police and fire service about disruption to the city centre and public safety’, as Robin McAlpine of *Commonweal* noted tensions over All Under One Banner marches have also been related to strongly polarised ideological positions between centrist and radical articulations of independence (McAlpine, 2019). Thus he noted that ‘A 'super-soft' independence none of us were asking for is imposed. The policies move to the right, almost as if alienating a large number of us is the plan’ and ‘Another group of us are tarred with quite unbelievably hostile language by people who are supposed to represent us’ (McAlpine, 2019: n.p.). In similar terms Iain Macwhirter argued shortly after the publication of the Growth Commission that while the Yes campaign had ‘managed to galvanise voters in working class communities’ ‘it would be hard to build that kind of engagement on a programme that has spending constraint as its core economic strategy’. Macwhirter and McAlpine’s comments emphasise the dynamic relations between politicisation and austerity and the shifting and contested articulations between space, politics and opposition to its attendant injustices. They also signal tensions between renewed forms of political centrism within the SNP and more critical articulations of opposition to austerity.

Conclusions

This paper has sought to make sense of the uneven and contested geographies through which austerity has been politicised and the political trajectories that shape opposition to austerity. To do so it has sought to go beyond some of the temporalizing logics which structure literatures on post-politics and post-democracy. Through re-reading key texts from the New Left collection *Out of Apathy* alongside such literatures I have sought to consider implications of the ways that claims to depoliticisation have been constructed in different conjunctures. Through doing so I have sought to argue for a focus on diverse and contested spatial practices of politicisation rather than a focus on temporal ruptures. I have also argued that the ways in which New Left authors adopted a hopeful and generative disposition towards emergent forms of political antagonism is a more productive starting point for engaging with actually existing contestation of austerity than has characterised the debates around post-politics, which have tended to trap forms of political contestation within pre-determined categories, rather than to engage with their agency or to treat them as generative.

There have been many different political usages and invocations of the New Left. And paradoxically Thompson and Raymond Williams were invoked by figures associated with the One Nation Labour project (see Davis, 2013). Here I have argued by contrast that engagement with New Left authors such as Hall and Thompson can help shed light on the political fractures and contested spatial politics that were so elided by the claims of One Nation Labour. I have sought to consider the ways in which their interventions can help understand the antagonisms constructed through and against what has been constructed as a period of post-war consensus. Through doing so I have sought to enliven understandings of political contestation and engagement and to position them in relation to dynamic and contested left political trajectories. This has helped to develop an engagement with the ways in which the uneven geographies of politicisation of austerity in Scotland. Further, I have sought to draw out the important political horizons and possibilities associated with such oppositions which have often exceeded the limits of narrowly defined nationalist politics.

As discussion of Bye Bye Big Blue and We're No Gonna Leave Here has emphasised such songs did not just contest de-industrialisation, but also shaped hopeful political narratives. This sets their political opposition to deindustrialisation and austerity apart from the kinds of regressive spatio-temporal imaginaries which have defined debates around Brexit. This also emphasises why it is useful to position opposition to austerity in relation to these broader histories and geographies of actually existing contestation. The political relevance of such engagements is significant as both the Corbyn project and debates around it have tended to reproduce aspects of Miliband's blindness to the multinational and contested character of the UK (see Perryman, 2017). This is also important as recent debates about Labour's position on a second Scottish referendum have emphasised that politics in Scotland continues to be read by dominant political commentators as subordinate to the logics of UK electoral dynamics and in relation to potential coalition politics (see Freedland, 2019). As this paper has hoped to demonstrate, however, these questions are important not only for their electoral implications. The way such questions are resolved and negotiated also have important implications for the kind of left politics, projects and agendas that are emerging especially in relation to attempts to go beyond the destructive and unequal logics of austerity.

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