

## Second to what? Glasgow's Cultural Role in Scotland, the UK and beyond

Abstract of paper presented at

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Traditionally known as the 'Second City of the British Empire', Glasgow's history as a world leading industrial centre, subsequent depressed post-industrial economy and currently growing cultural hub at a UK and European level, poses many questions about the value of the term 'second city'. Since 1999, with the advent of devolution and the official designation of Edinburgh as capital of Scotland, Glasgow may resent its status as 'second city' more than ever before. This paper inquires about the meaning of this term when applied to Glasgow's case.

To make an assessment of the city's role and relevance, this paper reviews the evolution of cultural representations of Glasgow in the media, through tourist promotions and in government discourses over the last twenty years. A comparison is made between the way the city is represented at a local, Scottish national, UK wide and international level. This revision starts with the announcement of Glasgow's title as 1990 European City of Culture in 1986. At the time, Glasgow was undergoing a major urban regeneration process very much inspired by the experience of US cities such as Baltimore, Minneapolis and Denver, which leads to some interesting comparisons between Glasgow's case and other termed 'second cities' in the US context. The revision ends with a reflection of the current position of Glasgow as a leading cultural centre in Scotland and its potential to increase its presence and influence at a UK and European level. The paper then considers the changing representation of traditional arts institutions in Glasgow – which comprise most Scottish national cultural organisations including Scottish Opera, Scottish Ballet and the Scottish National Orchestra; the internationally renowned Glasgow School of Art and the Citizens Theatre among others. This is compared with the representation of emerging institutions and practices in what has been defined as the cultural or creative industries, including design, fashion, music and film. Finally, the paper studies the representation of other distinctive aspects of the city, which contribute to or question the use of the term 'second city'. These include references to Glasgow's value as a shopping destination ("the second largest in the UK after London West End", according to Greater Glasgow Tourist Board) and a conference centre ("one of the fastest growing conference destination in Europe", according to the Union of International Associations).

The review of these representations reveals a remarkable change in the media and tourist discourses of traditionally termed 'second cities'. While up to the 1990s it was common to identify countries and/or nations with their major capitals almost exclusively (UK = London; Scotland = Edinburgh), Glasgow's experience shows a radical departure from this trend. This is notably marked with its nomination as 'European City of Culture' after an uninterrupted succession of capital and major cities such as Athens, Florence, Paris, Amsterdam and Berlin. After Glasgow, other 'second cities' have occupied the spaces traditionally reserved to first cities. This has been the case of Barcelona and Bilbao in Spain and Manchester and Liverpool in the UK, among many others.

The paper concludes with a brief remark about the need to develop a broader enquiry into the value of keeping the term 'second city'. In a globalising world, where the traditional boundaries associated to nation-states are dissolving and being replaced by the ever-growing role and influence of individual cities and regions, what changes need to occur to really understand the current role of cities? What new measures and terminology do we need to compare them and categorize them according to the emerging trends?

## Second to What? Glasgow's cultural role in Scotland, the UK and beyond

Second Cities Conference | 30 April – 1 May 2004  
Dr Beatriz García, Research Fellow

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## Background

- Pre-1990: From the 'Second City of the British Empire' to depressed post-industrial centre
- 1980s-1990s: The Renaissance City, City of Culture
- 2000s: Creative and cultural hub in post-devolution Scotland, cool Britannia, EU expansion, global economy
- What is Glasgow position today? Is Glasgow second to Edinburgh, to London... to what?
- What is Glasgow's role at a Scottish, UK, European and/or world level?

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## Paper focus...

- Evolution of cultural representations of Glasgow over the last twenty years
  - From the announcement of Glasgow's title as 1990 European City of Culture in 1986...
  - ...to the announcement of a new city brand, Glasgow: Scotland with Style
- Comparison between the way the city is represented at a local, Scottish national, UK wide and international level
  - Focus: media, tourist promotions and government discourses

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## media representations Glasgow 1986-2003

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## Media representations: material reviewed

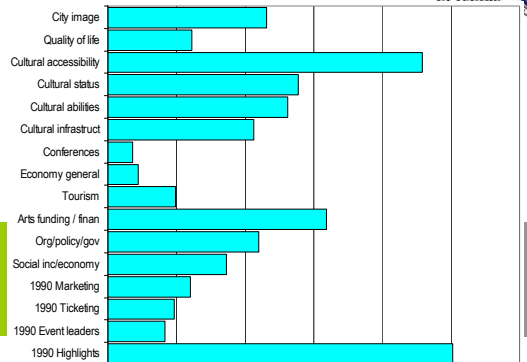
- City of Culture press archive (Mitchell Library)
  - Covering period 1986-91
  - 4,955 articles coded
  - Over 248 different newspapers and magazines
  - UK and Scottish National and Local Press, International Press
- Lexis-Nexis (electronic database)
  - Examining period 1992-2003
  - Sample of 700 articles
  - UK and Scottish National and Local Press, some International

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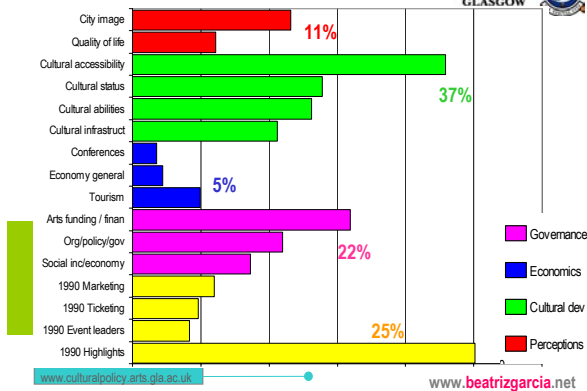
## 1986-91 Coverage: main themes



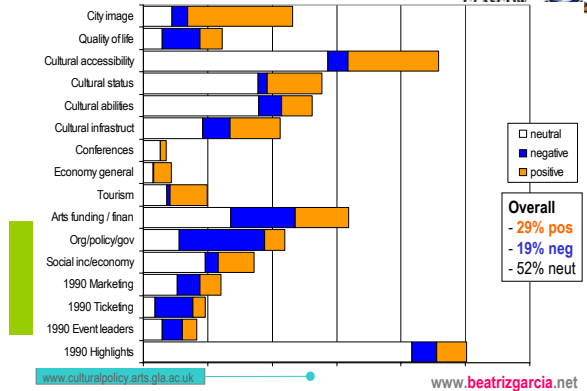
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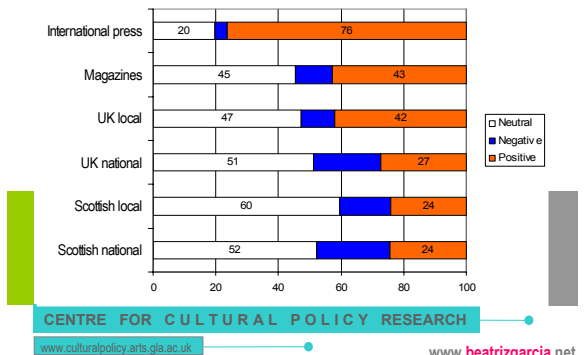
### 1986-91 Coverage: thematic areas



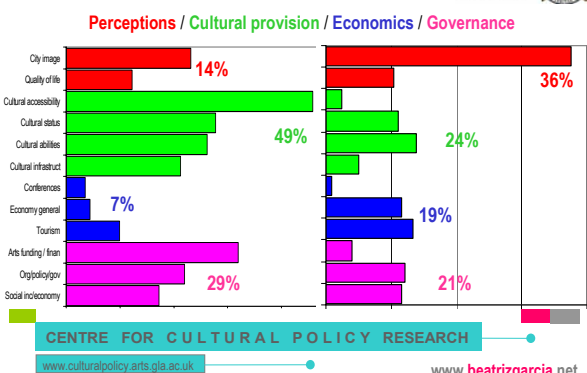
### 1986-91 Coverage: attitudes to themes



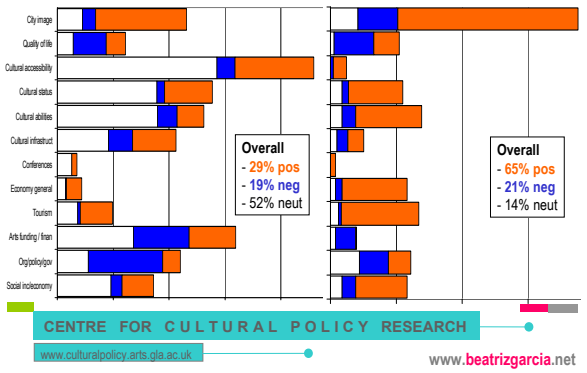
### 1986-91 Coverage: attitudes by paper



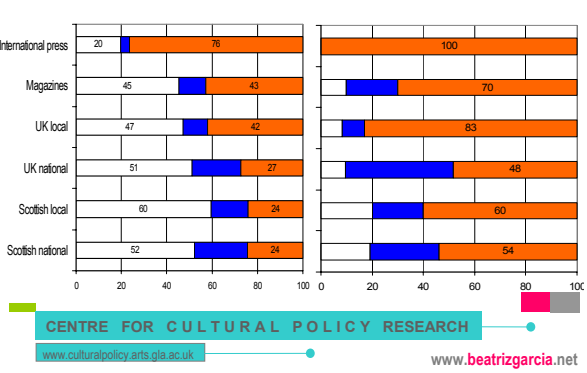
### Thematic change: 1986-91 to 1992-2003



### Attitudinal change: 1986-91 to 1992-2003



### Paper attitudes: 1986-91 to 1992-2003



## official representations Glasgow 1986-2003

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## Official representations

- From city marketing to city branding
  - Tourist board, local authorities, developing agencies
- Promoting Glasgow...
  - 1983, Glasgow's Miles Better
  - 1988, Glasgow: Renaissance City
  - 1990, There's a lot Glasgowing on
  - 1991-2, Glasgow can do it
  - 1993-4, Glasgow's alive
  - 2004, Glasgow, Scotland with style



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## Changing representations

- Winning the 1990 title...
  - arts excellence: Scottish national cultural organisations (Scottish Opera, Scottish Ballet, Scottish National Orchestra); Glasgow School of Art; Citizens Theatre; Burrell Collection
  - heritage: Victorian architecture, gardens
- Repositioning the city in the 2000s...
  - creative hub: digital design, architecture, fashion, music and film; combining diversity of offer & vibrancy with sense of community
  - shopping destination: the second largest in the UK after London West End (GGTB)
  - conference centre: one of the fastest growing conference destinations in Europe

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## The rationale behind the change

- 1980s: boost local confidence
  - local focus, emphasis on celebrating improvements
- 1990s: sell Glasgow nationally and internationally
  - Glasgow's renaissance through culture
- 2000s: position Glasgow in the new creative economy
  - Is the Scottish context a strength or a weakness?
  - What about Edinburgh? The potential for collaboration...
  - Glasgow in Europe. Competing with Prague and Budapest?
  - International projection?

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## Using culture to boost 'second cities'

- Up to the 1990s it was common to identify countries and/or nations with their 'capitals' almost exclusively
  - UK = London; Scotland = Edinburgh
- Glasgow pioneers a radical departure from this trend
  - nomination as 'European City of Culture' after an uninterrupted succession of capital cities (Athens, Paris, Amsterdam, Berlin, Madrid)
- Since then, other 'second cities' have occupied the cultural spaces traditionally reserved to first cities
  - Barcelona (Olympics); Bilbao (Guggenheim); Manchester (Commonwealth Games); Liverpool (ECC)

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## Discussion

- Does it make sense to keep talking of 'second cities'?
  - In a globalising world, where the traditional boundaries associated to nation-states are dissolving and being replaced by the ever-growing role and influence of cities and regions, what changes need to occur to really understand the current role of cities?
  - A few world cities vs the rest? – the importance of the 'margins'
- What new measures and terminology do we need to compare them and categorize them according to the emerging trends?

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