

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: Teesside University		
Unit of Assessment: 32		
Title of case study: Shaping cultural policy and enhancing cultural regeneration through historical understandings of arts participation and regional arts policy.		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2006 to 2019		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Natasha Vall	Associate Dean (Research and Innovation) and Professor of Urban and Cultural History	Jan 2006 to present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2015 to 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		

1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

Research on regional cultural history, industrial decline and cultural regeneration has shaped cultural policy and enhanced cultural participation in the Tees Valley. Research has informed the development and delivery of a region-wide arts and culture project (Great Place Tees Valley; Tees Valley Combined Authority Creative Visitor Economy Recovery and Growth programme), supported regional arts and culture organisations to develop initiatives that have increased cultural participation (Tees Valley Arts); and underpinned the development of a flagship exhibition at Kirkleatham Museum in Redcar that has engaged new audiences and enabled new interpretations of Redcar's industrial past (Steel Stories).

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

Research at the Centre for Culture and Creativity at Teesside University on regional culture has focussed on the complexities of representing post-industrial culture today and in the past. Against the authorised, dominant and yet declinist accounts of the North East's identity being intrinsically about heavy industry, the research seeks to valorise alternative narratives for the region.

In Bringing art to the 'man in the back street', Vall demonstrates that the settlement movement was an essential forerunner for the emergence of state-led cultural policy in Britain after 1945 [3.1]. The settlement movement derived from the growing concern over the condition of urban society during the late nineteenth century. The first residential settlement was established in 1884, at 'Toynbee Hall' in Whitechapel, where it was hoped that the educated middle-class men it housed would restore 'organic unity' to neighbouring working-class districts. By the 1930s six settlement houses had been established in North East England, most notably in the County Durham mining towns, but also on Tyneside and Teesside (Middlesbrough). The movements' efforts to improve working-class culture in times of economic crises (the 1930s) produced some unexpected benefits, including an increase in community participation in art and community representation of working-class culture across the North East's industrial conurbations. This work showed that there were significant historical precedents for later adaptations of the settlement principle in local art and culture programmes (Great Place).

Cultural Region reveals how an industrial society left the region with modest bourgeois cultural infrastructure, such as notable venues, museums and major art galleries [3.2]. However, the socio-economic legacy of deindustrialisation did not preclude engagement with culture and art. The distance from metropolitan influence allowed cultural policy to evolve in a comparatively unorthodox way. Regional cultural policy extended its reach beyond the funding and management of arts programmes allowing local protagonists to construct cultural policy that celebrated and legitimised vernacular culture to an unprecedented degree. This drew on the professionalization of a deeply rooted folk culture and the amateur world, which in turn created

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space for community actors and stakeholders to champion vernacular (industrial) culture and to imagine and experience the North East as a 'cultural region'.

This research highlights the complex task faced by cultural sector organisations, such as museums, in negotiating the industrial past during deindustrialisation. The emergence of a modern regional identity yoked to widespread veneration of industry produced a challenging context for the representation of industrial heritage in museums in the North East [3.3]. The study of regional industrial museums identified two divergent approaches to the representation of North Eastern mining heritage. Firstly it showed how Beamish Museum in County Durham was conceived during the 1960s when dramatic changes to the regional industry were benignly managed. In this instance, a world was being lost but the future appeared bright and Beamish held the promise that the past could be revisited and nostalgic yearnings assuaged. In contrast, the second example was Woodhorn Colliery Museum in Northumberland which was largely assembled during the coal industry's most conflictual decade: a period when central government was hostile to miners and their communities. The study revealed how Woodhorn museum evolved to memorialise a former industry and prompt the visitor to reflect on the sacrifices and achievements of working in a coalmine. The study's focus on this much less profiled mining museum revealed the cultural context for the 'end of coal' and the local responses this elicited. It showed how the re-purposing of the museum concept gave legitimacy to new approaches and extended the parameters for the curation of industrial heritage.

Vall's more recent work is connected to her longstanding ambition to increase understanding of industrial and post-industrial culture within North East England's urban spaces through international comparison [3.4]. Vall's history of Stockholm's industrial waterfront challenges the view of recent waterfront development as being exclusively an epiphenomena of late capitalism [3.5]. Whilst the property developer's conversion of derelict industrial land into commercial and residential properties carries much explanatory weight, the case of Stockholm demonstrates that the recent waterfront building boom drew inspiration and often followed closely the substance and the style of earlier developments. Most of these precedents were the product of Keynesian planning rather than ad hoc neoliberal capitalism. These conclusions have been pertinent to urban and regional policy makers in the North East and elsewhere where the process of reclaiming contaminated industrial land for residential and commercial reoccupation is an ongoing concern.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

[3.1] Vall N. 2010. Bringing Art to 'the Man in the Back Street': Regional and Historical Perspectives of Labour and the Evolution of Cultural Policy in Europe 1945–1975. *Labour History Review*. 75:1, 30-43. <https://doi.org/10.1179/096156510X12568148663845>. Selected for REF2014.

[3.2] Vall N. 2007. Regionalism and Cultural History. In Green A, Pollard A. eds. *Regional identities in North East England 1300-2000*. Boydell and Brewer. ISBN 1843833352. Selected for RAE2008.

[3.2] Vall N. 2011. *Cultural Region*. Manchester University Press. ISBN 0719082285. Selected for REF2014.

Outputs 3.1 to 3.3 led to Vall securing the below funding:

Heritage Lottery Fund. grid.507557.5. 2017-2019. OH-16-05111 RCBC. GBP69,800. *Steel Stories: Curating industrial heritage in a landscape of rapid change*. Partners: Teesside University and Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council.

[3.4] Vall N. 2018. Coal is our strife: representing mining heritage in North East England. *Contemporary British History*. 32:1, 101-120. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13619462.2017.1408541>. Selected for REF2021.

[3.5] Vall N. 2018. 'A view from the wharf': historical perspectives on the transformation of Stockholm waterfront during the twentieth century. *Urban History*. 45:3, 524-548. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0963926817000608>. Selected for REF2021.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Through sustained regional partnerships, research on post-industrial heritage and regional culture has been used to inform a suite of regional arts and culture projects that have sought, at once, to preserve Tees Valley heritage and also foster new understandings, interpretations, and futures for the region.

Working in partnership with Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council and the SSI Task Force (established in 2015 to help those affected by the closure of the SSI steel plant), research on industrial heritage by Vall has underpinned the design and delivery of an award-winning exhibition at Kirkleatham Museum that explored Redcar's industrial past. For the Museum Manager at Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council: 'research on the musealisation of the industrial past served as a key thought piece in helping us to navigate the complex landscape of post-industrial change and heritage practice. Through her research we were able to place the ambitions of the exhibition in a wider context of regional museum practice, which made it easier for us to understand both the pitfalls and opportunities of curating the industrial landscape' [5.1]. For a reviewer from Arts Council England, the collaborative nature and research-informed approach was a key to the exhibition success: 'the project was conceived with a number of partners locally, indeed without that involvement I doubt that the project could have come to fruition as it did, that indicates rigour and commitment from a number of key players including Teesside University' [5.2]. The positive effect of University/Museum collaboration on museum audiences has also been recognised through the exhibition's receipt of the 2019 Museums Change Lives award. For the Museum's Association, Kirkleatham museum won the award for its 'co-curated project Steel Stories, celebrating local iron and steel heritage. Based on in-depth research and collaboration with local community groups, the project paid homage to the people who worked in the industry and prompted debate on the future of the area' [5.3].

The 'Steel Stories' exhibition at Kirkleatham Museum launched in April 2019 and ran until Dec 2019. The innovative coproduced approach led to the museum attracting over 30,000 visitors in the period. Figures for April 2019 show an increase in visitor numbers of 28% when compared to figures from 2018 [5.4]. As well as exceeding expected visitor numbers, the exhibition also brought new audiences to the museum. According to the final report: 'it is safe to assume that Steel Stories has both engaged and resonated with local audiences, particularly retired male steelworkers. This demonstrates that the community-led consultation aspect of the exhibition has been a resounding success; respondents would not have been universally positive to the exhibition had it not paid homage to local industry, in a manner that both respects and celebrates the region's heritage. Furthermore, raw data suggests that the exhibition is pulling in large audiences, thereby boosting the local economy for Redcar and Cleveland as well as the cultural offer of Kirkleatham Museum' [5.4].

Qualitative feedback also reinforced that the community-engaged approach devised at the outset resonated with visitors and supported the exhibition's ambition to increase local pride and a positive sense of belonging: 86% of visitors reported that they 'felt pride in Teesside's heritage after viewing the exhibition' [5.4]. Taking place at a time of intensified deindustrialisation on Teesside following the final closure of the coke ovens and blast furnaces in Redcar in autumn 2015, the exhibition supported attendees to negotiate feelings about the past. As one visitor remarked: 'the exhibition really showed what it's like to live somewhere like Teesside a while ago and shows how it's affecting our lives today in this modern age' [5.4]. For Arts Council England: 'featuring as it does the decline of a once proud regional manufacturing tradition creates mixed emotions, on the one hand celebrating that history and the skills on Teesside whilst at the same time looking to find a new role for the area. Though not local I felt this quite keenly –it must be all the more emotional for those who live locally or who worked in the industry' [5.2].

Research on cultural regeneration and the 'settlement movement' principle has also been used to underpin a large-scale cultural programme for the Tees Valley. As a result of a series of project meetings between Vall and Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) in 2016, a proposal was submitted to the Great Places Fund run by Arts Council England and National Heritage Lottery Fund. The proposal focused on five 'settlement' arts, heritage, and culture locations within the Tees Valley communities and the settlement principle was a key feature of the application [5.5]. For the Great Place Programme Manager at TVCA, Vall's work 'on regional

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culture and the settlement movement provided significant thought leadership for the bid' [5.6]. Funding was secured in 2018 and the settlement principle developed by Vall provided the foundation for the delivery of the programme [5.7]. The programme evaluation shows that Great Place Tees Valley (GPTV) led to increased collaboration and partnership working across the Tees Valley, as well as the creation of training and employment opportunities for over 350 local artists and small businesses, supporting over 12,000 local people, children and families to create and enjoy cultural activities [5.8]. Perhaps more importantly, the settlement principle, and specifically the emphasis on the importance of authentic community involvement in cultural policy also ensured diverse population groups and geographies engaged with the project. Close to 50% of recorded participants live in some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country, running counter to national trends where engagement with arts and culture prevails in higher socio-economic groups [5.8].

Vall's research also went on to inform the working practices of GPTV project partners. For the Managing Director of Tees Valley Arts, a charity that uses arts to create social change: 'Vall's research on how regional heritage can be used to reimagine a region's future has directly informed our work. It led to the commissioning of three significant events as part of the Great Place Project that sought to actively foster and promote a positive sense of place through engagement with community groups, steelworkers, and young people, voices that have been side-lined in discussions of cultural regeneration' [5.9].

As a result of the success of this research-informed programme, investment in culture for the Tees Valley Combined Authority has been expanded from £1.8m in 2016 to a planned investment of £20m in 2019 and a TVCA Creative Visitor Economy Recovery and Growth programme developed [5.10, 5.11]. For the TVCA programme manager for culture, Vall's research has been central to this work: 'The emphasis in this research on the importance of community engagement and authentic involvement as a prerequisite of effective regeneration (Vall, 2010) has informed the work done to date' [5.6].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

[5.1] Signed Letter (pdf). Testimonial from Museum Manager at Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council. Received 13 October 2020.

[5.2] Report (pdf). Arts Council England. Artistic and Quality Assessment Report: Steel Stories Exhibition, Kirkleatham Museum. Dated 03 April 2019.

[5.3] News Item (pdf and link). 2019. Museums Association: Museums Change Lives Awards 2019. Available at: <https://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/museums-change-lives/museums-change-lives-awards-2019/>

[5.4] Report (pdf). Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council. Tees Valley Museums. Tees Valley Combined Authority. SSI Task Force. 2019. Steel Stories - Evaluation.

[5.5] Funding application (pdf). Tees Valley Combined Authority. 2017. Heritage Lottery Fund: Second Round Application.

[5.6] Signed Letter (pdf). Testimonial from Great Place Tees Valley Programme Manager at Tees Valley Combined Authority. Received on 16 December 2020.

[5.7] Press release (pdf and link). Tees Valley Combined Authority. (no date). Great Place Tees Valley. Available at: <https://teesvalley-ca.gov.uk/culture-tourism/great-place-tees-valley/>

[5.8] Evaluation Summary Report (pdf and link). Tees Valley Combined Authority. Teesside University. 2020. Great Place Tees Valley: Evaluation Summary Report. Authored by Vall. Available at: https://research.tees.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/25196693/Great_Place_Tees_Valley_Evaluation_Summary.pdf

[5.9] Signed Letter (pdf). Testimonial from the Executive Director at Tees Valley Arts. Received 24 March 2021.

[5.10] Report. (pdf and link). Report of Group Commercial Director Culture and Tourism. 2020. Growth Programme for the Creative and Visitor Economies. Available at: <https://teesvalley->

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[ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/10-Growth-Programme-for-Creative-Visitor-Economies.pdf](https://teesvalley-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/10-Growth-Programme-for-Creative-Visitor-Economies.pdf)

[5.11] Press release (pdf and link). Tees Valley Combined Authority. (no date). Visitor Economy and Culture Industries COVID-19 Recovery Programme. Available at: <https://teesvalley-ca.gov.uk/culture-tourism/visitor-economy-and-culture-industries-covid-19-recovery-programme/>