

Assessing Industrial Heritage Through Collaborative Counter-Mapping: A Case Study of Salts Mill, UK

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Abstract

The decline of Britain’s traditional manufacturing economy has resulted in an increase in abandoned factories and industrial structures, signifying a crucial turning point for local communities historically anchored in these industries. This research centres on the Salts Mill complex, a former textile factory that has undergone a remarkable transformation into a versatile space in the heart of Saltaire Village in Shipley, West Yorkshire, England. It delves into the revitalisation of Salts Mill, focusing on the intersection of industry and art. This approach uniquely highlights the socio-cultural and intangible elements embedded in the regeneration process, exploring strategies crafted to inject vitality into local communities intricately connected to this industrial site. Counter-mapping served as the primary participatory method, allowing insights from both rational observers (experts) and the involved users (local communities) to be integrated into three main areas of inquiry: the embodied experiences of Salts Mill, the essence of the locale as reflected in the building, and the everyday life interactions facilitated by arts-led regeneration. The authors argue that these components are indispensable for achieving comprehensive understandings and insights crucial to pioneering research on industrial heritage buildings. Moreover, reimagining the transformation of old factory structures through innovative arts-led initiatives can significantly bolster long-term sustainability and nurture resilient community development. This highlights the importance of prioritising community and broader context over merely focusing on the assessment and conservation of collections and buildings within post-industrial cities and towns.

Keywords

arts-led regeneration; collective memories; counter-mapping; industrial heritage; Saltaire industrial village; spirit of place

1. Introduction

As the traditional manufacturing economy undergoes substantial changes, the prevalence of abandoned factories and industrial structures has become commonplace across the globe. This marks a crucial juncture in the evolution of local communities deeply ingrained in these regions—residents are increasingly resistant to the idea of leaving their communities in pursuit of opportunities elsewhere (Riger & Lavrakas, 1981). Consequently, local governments and agencies are facing a pressing challenge to rejuvenate these regions. Conventional approaches to industrial tourism, commonly characterised by heritage conservation and presentation, prove inadequate for industrial heritage settlements with varied circumstances. These encompass inadequate incorporation of local values and attitudes; restricted engagement with broader local, national, and global trends; narrowly defined set of objectives; weak development of performance indicators; as well as constrained collaboration with stakeholders (Landorf, 2009a).

In the meanwhile, there has been a notable surge in the consideration of socio-cultural or intangible factors within heritage preservation and regeneration activities in recent decades (Simeon & Martone, 2014). The focus has shifted from solely emphasising the physical context to a broader perspective that centres on “the narrative conveyed by the object or the experiences it generates” (Bazelmans, 2013, p. 89). This shift in attention towards different forms of value stems from a range of interconnected political, administrative, and societal trends. Consequently, in response to this societal shift, personal narratives, which may not necessarily originate from experts or scientific sources, have gained significance in the appraisal of heritage and its adaptive reuse and revitalisation. Adopting this approach enables heritage sites to maintain a robust connection between the old factories and their residents, fostering a lasting sense of place that serves as a driving force for the sustainable development of the community.

This study is centred around Salts Mill located in the heart of the Saltaire, Shipley, England. Saltaire achieved UNESCO World Heritage Site status in 2001 and the village is recognised as a model industrial village that significantly influenced global town planning. Salts Mill as the main factory of the village falls under the category of “textile industry complexes” as defined in Oevermann’s book *Urban Textile Mills* (Oevermann, 2021, p. 14), representing the cornerstone of the village’s heritage buildings. Its architectural structure holds a rich history, brimming with captivating narratives and cherished memories, each carrying a unique spirit that has evolved through the ages. Consequently, the refurbishment of Salts Mill holds considerable implications for the community; it has undergone a progressive series of renovations led by the entrepreneur Jonathan Silver in collaboration with the renowned British artist David Hockney, transforming the old factory building into a focal point for art-inspired, design-centric, and community-oriented galleries. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport in the UK apprised the transformation of Salts Mill and said it transcends mere emotional resonance; it narrates the origins of an industrial past, defines the identity of the place, and mirrors its ongoing evolution (Bradford Council, 2015). In this investigation, the authors delved into the transformation of intangible aspects of industrial heritage into tangible forms, employing a collaborative counter-mapping methodology to elevate the socio-cultural and intangible components of architectural heritage. Aligned with the prevailing societal shift, the counter-mapping specifically focuses on three aspects of inquiries: the embodied experiences, the representation of the locale’s essence, and the everyday life interactions through the regeneration. The methodology adeptly reconnects the data acquired through counter-mapping of the present to the spatial (physical) elements of the building, serving as a fresh addition to the established heritage valuation guidelines. These collective endeavours contribute to a deeper

understanding of how arts and culture significantly influence the revitalisation process of industrial heritage and cultural clusters within local communities.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Embodied Experience and Perception of Heritage Buildings

In the realm of architectural heritage discourse, there is an increasing acknowledgment that our understanding of the environment goes beyond words, as it is shaped by a range of tangible experiences and perceptions. Cognitive and experiential worlds, including significant engagements with spaces, are profoundly moulded by our physical engagements with the built environment. According to Jelić and Staničić (2020), architecture has a dual purpose. Firstly, it acts as a tangible manifestation of culture, impacting individuals' physical interactions and behaviours within its spaces. It then serves as a framework for our memories and personal narratives, shaping both our individual and collective identities. This underscores heritage buildings and sites, especially industrial buildings which encompass not only their physical attributes but also socio-cultural and intangible elements, like shared memories, collective experiences, and the sense of identity they cultivate, all of which architecture supports and reflects.

Many heritage experts emphasise the significance of shaping our own understanding of heritage through the potentialities inherent in embodied memory (Waterton, 2014). This process is intricately linked to “sensuous dispositions” that are influenced by cultural, economic, political, and historical, factors, as highlighted by Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy (2010). Bazelmans (2013, pp. 89–96) further argues that the realm of embodied emotions and sensations can be best explored by non-experts, implying that the assessment of our architectural heritage should encompass not only the viewpoint of the rational observer (the expert) but also that of the involved user. Schofield (2016, pp. 7–10) further expands on this idea, asserting that heritage extends beyond mere perception. In line with Bazelmans' perspective, Schofield (2016) suggests that while heritage experts excel at handling the former, it is often local communities who possess expertise in that specific context. This misalignment in local stakeholder value perspectives highlights the necessity for participatory approaches that address the underlying motivations and value frameworks (Azzopardi et al., 2023).

In the meanwhile, heritage conservation in the UK has increasingly recognised these socio-cultural and intangible elements (Aydın et al., 2022; Djabarouti, 2021). The focus has expanded to encompass the stories it conveys and the experiences it evokes. This societal shift indicates that in the future, the socio-cultural and intangible “experiential value” of our heritage rooted in sensory interactions will become increasingly important. However, despite the term “experiential value” (Korsmeyer, 2018) capturing the sensory aspects of how we perceive heritage through our senses of touch, smell, sight, and hearing, there still remains a need for further clarity regarding its precise definition and implications.

2.2. Socio-Cultural Links Between Industrial Heritage and Local Communities

This research primarily concentrates on intangible aspects associated with the preservation of industrial heritage buildings, which often receive insufficient attention during the valuation process, leading to significant uncertainty and a lack of understanding in this emerging field. Within the terminology used, there

exist several closely related terms and definitions that warrant consideration. For example, Carman (2009) defines the immaterial values of built heritage as encompassing “the essence of a place” tied to the foundational concepts of a specific design or the associations that have evolved over time within a particular location. Similarly, the literature also introduces the concept of non-tangible elements within the realm of built heritage. According to Clarke et al. (2020, p. 871), these elements encompass “spatial qualities, the spirit of place, or other (socio-)cultural associations.” This definition explicitly includes the notion of “spirit of the place” (Markevičienė, 2012) or “genius loci” (Norberg-Schulz, 2019; Vecco, 2020), a concept grounded in human perception that pertains to the unique and cherished ambience of a location. This often intertwines with the intangible facets of a location, such as memories, beliefs, local traditions, and similar aspects (Kuipers & De Jonge, 2017). In this context, this definition notably underscores the experiential and socio-cultural dimensions intertwined with built heritage and local communities.

It is important to recognise that socio-cultural aspects are most prominently evident in the realm of social values (Santos-Martín et al., 2017). For instance, Jones highlights the concept of social values, which are shaped by lived experiences and ongoing practices. These values highlight the significance of historical context for contemporary communities, encompassing elements such as individuals’ sense of identity, belonging, their connection to a place, and the myriad forms of memory and spiritual associations (Jones, 2017). Consequently, the definition closely aligns with earlier discussions of the less tangible aspects of heritage, particularly emphasising the social and human dimensions. In the context of industrial heritage sites, intangible values have consistently been intertwined with the collective identities of the local people. These values have influenced the formulation of physical, visual, and perceived boundaries, impacting not only neighbourhoods but also entire regions (Jigyasu, 2015). As a result, community involvement in cultural heritage preservation is essential for creating and sustaining local communities’ identities and social fabrics, in addition to helping to preserve the past.

In light of these recent advancements in knowledge, an increasing number of researchers advocate for a more comprehensive, expansive, and participatory approach to heritage valuation and preservation (Avrami et al., 2019; Tengberg et al., 2012). This approach, for instance, involves the active engagement of non-professional stakeholders, such as local residents and visitors, in the valuation process of heritage. Likewise, as mentioned earlier, Schofield (2016) also underscores the necessity for a fresh and more inclusive, people-centred approach in the care of heritage. Building upon this theoretical foundation and aligning with these contemporary developments, this study aims to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in promoting a participatory approach with the local communities to the assessment of architectural heritage.

2.3. A Collective and Alternative Practice Through Counter-Mapping

Presently, the procedures involving the selection, designation, and development of heritage areas often neglect the significance of intangible values. What is lacking is a greater recognition of the emotional, associative, and affective aspects of cultural attachment, encompassing the means by which individuals and communities establish bonds with buildings and places (Alcindor et al., 2021; Byrne, 2008). Forging this connection requires narratives about heritage that strike a chord with the intended audience, preferably stemming from that very audience. To effectively nurture these connections, it is crucial to transition toward an approach that is context-driven and flexible, rather than solely fixated on the creation, assessment, and

conservation of collections, buildings, and the place. Thus, the heritage sector must shift away from a defensive and unchanging stance and instead adopt more proactive, adaptable, and inclusive mindsets.

There is uncertainty and limited exploration in knowledge transfer between experts and the community, particularly in applying insights to develop a comprehensive heritage valuation system. Despite multi-criteria and holistic UK heritage assessment approaches (Donovan, 2013), uncertainties and knowledge gaps persist. Considering past, present, and future scenarios, this study advocates mental mapping or counter-mapping to expand knowledge of socio-cultural and intangible heritage values. Jones (2017) suggests these techniques are suited for evaluating socio-cultural values and should be integrated with community participatory approaches to understand the dynamic processes in valuing the historic environment. These collaborative-mapping or counter-mapping methods usually involve the integration of archival resources, like maps and aerial photographs, with various qualitative research techniques such as location-based oral interviews, site walks with community members, and the use of audio-visual recordings (Harrison, 2011; Thomas & Ross, 2013). Mental mapping methods, on the other hand, are more focused on intuitively sketching a personal, often individual, mental representation of the environment. This can be done either by hand on a blank canvas or by utilising an existing map as a reference point (Brennan-Horley, 2010; Lee et al., 2018).

Both mapping techniques share a common feature in their ability to promote a more participatory approach within the heritage sector, aligning with the fundamental purpose of this research. Verstijnen et al. (1998) highlight that mental mapping can serve as an engaging and enriching participatory method to imbue the social value of heritage with greater significance and influence. In contrast, counter-mapping and other related mapping methods diverge somewhat from mental mapping and often emerge in contexts that are more action-oriented and/or politically charged (Halder et al., 2020). This is because counter-maps or counter-cartographies stem from a longstanding tradition of post-colonial mapping practices that seek to reclaim agency, particularly for indigenous communities. In terms of terminology, counter-mapping, unlike methods such as mental mapping, places a stronger emphasis on mapping and drawing attention to what is typically left uncharted. This aligns with the main objective of this study, which is to work with the local post-industrial communities to co-render the intangible aspects of architectural heritage tangible and accord them a more prominent position in heritage care. This study embraces the methodology and definition of counter-mapping due to its inherently critical nature and its potential to establish a fresh and inclusive approach with local communities, distinct from the current evaluation methods within the heritage sector.

3. Methods

This research centres on the case study Salts Mill complex, which possesses a profound heritage history and holds significant socio-cultural value as the core of the Saltaire community. In order to achieve a comprehensive understanding, this study employs a multi-layered methodological approach including desk research and participatory counter-mapping to provide a comprehensive understanding of both the tangible and intangible aspects of the site, thereby giving them greater prominence in the evaluation and revitalisation processes. The initial phase involves desk research and archival analysis, including the collection of collecting historical articles and critical reviews about Salts Mill and Saltaire Village from sources such as the local community library, Google Scholar, and the British Newspaper Archive. To discover pertinent articles addressing the intangible aspects of the Salts Mill, terms like “memory,” “meaning,”

“opinion,” “feeling,” and “atmosphere” were employed in conjunction with the Salts Mill or David Hockney’s Gallery to find the social-cultural value of this regeneration project.

In the second phase, 30 in-depth architectural and regeneration reviews were carefully selected from the desk research. These reviews, spanning from 1992 to 2023, served as the foundation for an architectural critique of Salts Mill and Saltaire, drawing on the perspectives of rational observers (the experts; Bazelmans, 2013, pp. 89–96). Professional judgment and expert opinions are commonly utilised methodologies in heritage impact assessments, as evidenced by studies such as the “Study of the Visual Impacts of the Proposed Expansion of the Port of Budva in Montenegro on Cultural Heritage” (Ashrafi et al., 2022). In such circumstances, impacts are primarily recognised and projected using experts’ expertise, experience, and data gathered through fieldwork, interviews, workshops, historical maps, photographs, and documents (McCabe & Sadler, 2002). In addition, Sharp (2005) eloquently discusses the importance of architectural criticism in evaluating a building, artefact, work, or idea, emphasising the necessity for objectivity. He argues that a critic must possess keen judgment, sagacity, and the ability to resist the influence of mass cultural values. The contributors to these articles were all professionals, including heritage experts, architects, urban planners, and historians. Their insights on the Salts Mill project were gathered and analysed in Section 4.1.

In the final phase of this study, we focused on exploring local users’ perspectives on revitalising this industrial heritage site; the study employed the previously mentioned counter-mapping methodology as a strategic enhancement to existing heritage site valuation guidelines. This approach enabled the public to actively participate in the valuation process by gathering input from 30 participants, who marked their perceptions and provided comments on various areas within the Salts Mill complex. This effort led to the creation of three collective counter-maps of Salts Mill, each focusing on distinct themes. The initiative aimed to foster a more inclusive, community-centred, and participatory approach to heritage management, aligning with the broader societal trend towards greater community involvement. Participants were recruited through physical posters placed inside the Salts Mill complex and via various online platforms. The final group comprised 30 participants: 15 residents from Saltaire or neighbouring villages in Shipley, five on-site Salts Mill staff, and 10 diverse visitors who were either exploring the building or were invited by employees to participate. The careful selection of these varied target groups, each with distinct backgrounds and levels of engagement, ensured a comprehensive representation of perspectives.

Each registered participant received an envelope containing two research components: (a) a concise survey regarding the intangible aspects and functional spaces of Salts Mill (1 A4 page) and (b) a counter-mapping exercise (explained on 1 A4 page), accompanied by a simplified A3 map of the current gallery complex, spanning from ground to top floors, along with a set of feeling stickers (Smile—Neutral—Sad). This package also included an A4 sheet with a brief study overview and ethical justification. This data collection method offered a discreet, accessible, and personalised means of gathering intangible aspects. Importantly, it allowed participants to contribute at their convenience, mitigating the need for scheduled group meetings, which could pose multiple challenges due to COVID-related protocols on-site. Participants were also permitted to complete the task during multiple visits, ensuring that the reflection and recording process was thoughtfully documented without haste.

This comprehensive methodological approach, combining desk research and archival analysis, architectural and regeneration reviews, as well as community engagement through counter-mapping, provides a robust

framework for evaluating the socio-cultural significance of Salts Mill. The initial phase of desk research and archival analysis uncovered a rich tapestry of historical and cultural narratives tied to Salts Mill and Saltaire Village. In the second phase, a critical analysis provided a detailed examination of Salts Mill's transformation from an industrial site to a cultural hub, with insights from heritage experts, architects, and historians playing key roles in evaluating the success of the site's regeneration. The final phase introduced a participatory counter-mapping approach, which allowed local users to contribute their perspectives on the revitalization of Salts Mill. This method offered a platform for the community to articulate their views on the site's intangible aspects, such as sensory, atmosphere, and emotional significance—elements that are often overlooked in traditional heritage assessments. The study underscores the importance of integrating local perspectives and historical context to better understand the long-term impacts of cultural clusters on industrial heritage sites, aligning with broader societal trends towards increased community involvement in cultural heritage conservation.

4. Research Findings and Discussion

4.1. Insights From the Experts

The findings from the desk research underscored the widely acknowledged importance of Saltaire's model, assessing the post-industrial transformative changes witnessed in recent decades (Dishman, 2020, pp. 60–63; Pande, 2011, pp. 16–20). This recognition was further emphasised in the World Heritage nomination document, describing it as an “outstanding, well-preserved 19th-century industrial town,” highlighting its pivotal role in the economic and social development through the textile industry (UNESCO, 2001a, p. 60). In addition, the International Council on Monuments and Sites appraised that the textile mills are constructed in a “harmonious style of high architectural quality” tied to a local or regional identity through their style and choice of materials (UNESCO, 2001a, p. 60). These were also endorsed by experts consulted from the International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage in both 2001 and 2019 (Walczak, 2019).

Recent evaluations have consistently yielded positive feedback for the Salts Mill project. In the most recent periodic assessment of Saltaire, experts offered favourable comments on the “social/cultural uses of heritage” and the “impacts of tourism/recreation” (UNESCO, 2013, p. 3). This report underscores that local residents can influence management decisions, significantly boosting community engagement, which is evidenced by the wide range of community interest groups, festivals, and lectures hosted at Salts Mill (UNESCO, 2013). It aligns with Landorf's (2009b) study on sustainable tourism at six world heritage sites that Saltaire stands out as the only plan that thoroughly delved into local community values and attitudes.

Moreover, experts highlight the transformation of past glory into the modern era, as demonstrated by comments on Jonathan Silver's art complex, recognising the revitalisation as a pioneering arts-led regeneration initiative (Stratton, 2003). Experts consistently discuss the recurring theme of synergy between arts-led regeneration, community engagement, and local value in their articles. Their conclusion emphasises that the more seamlessly these elements are integrated, the more robust and resilient the community's development becomes. The gradual process not only modernises the building to align with contemporary needs but also sparks a reinvention within the community through existing spaces. This synergy was highlighted by Ruth Gray (2023), who values both individuals and the built environment instead of

dismissing them. Similar sentiments echoed in local tourism contributions (Rodwell, 2002) and enhancing community well-being with Jonathan Silver's grand vision, transforming the old community into a new hive of life (Grizzard, 2008). Mahony's study (as cited in Greenhalf, 2007, para. 24) argued that:

Jonathan Silver was incremental and pragmatic. He did what he could do at the time, that was the incremental part; and then he kept asking himself what he could do with Salts Mill. The only plan he had was in his head: what could he do to bring back Salts into full use? He did what was right at the right time. I suppose that's the key for regeneration.

Andy Coupland (1996) highlights Silver's efforts in enabling a mix of unlikely yet mutually supportive uses to evolve into a cohesive mixed-use scheme. The renowned British artist David Hockney's influence catalysed the Salts Mill art cluster, centred around the 1853 Gallery, and gradually transformed it into a cultural hub that integrates industrial heritage and art, including bookshops, cafes, and exhibitions. Despite Silver's passing, the cluster continues to thrive, indicating a sustainable growth model driven by art initiatives. Numerous architectural critics have observed Salts Mill's successful transformation into a mixed-use development; the presence of these enterprises not only sustains local employment but also enhances the economic vitality of the community, illustrating the vital dynamism essential for the Mill's ongoing survival and prosperity (Caignet, 2020; Grizzard, 2008). On the flip side, certain experts raise concerns about the overconsumption of this industrial heritage, when heritage is treated as a resource and commodity, potentially leading to a devaluation of its intrinsic worth (Walsh, 2002, p. 135). The potential detrimental effects of construction related to tourism development has become a focal point for community resistance to such initiatives (Vinter, 2022).

The aforementioned research delves into how experts examine the historical complexities of Saltaire, delving into areas such as regenerative planning with local stakeholders and evaluating the long-term benefits and challenges of integrating arts into the scheme. Many experts have commended the building, emphasising its significance in 19th-century industrial history, its community engagement, arts-led rejuvenation, and the pivotal role of local businesses, all contributing to local prosperity. The experts or academics focus predominantly centres on tangible aspects, frequently neglecting essential intangible elements like community identity, local pride, and community-driven regeneration, all integral aspects of Saltaire Industrial Village's essence. Despite Saltaire's distinctive ability to sustain vitality and promote development after achieving World Heritage status, its genuine uniqueness is rooted in the residents' perception of these intangible elements and their contribution to future development, and the authors believe this facet merits a more in-depth academic investigation.

4.2. Counter-Mapping the Industrial Heritage of Salts Mill With the Local Participants

Counter-maps were collected between January and July 2023 through coordination with the Salts Mill co-site management department and via postal methods. The authors initiated the data analysis process following the data collection; participants were categorised into three groups: Residents (R1–15), visitors (V1–10), and Salts Mill employees (E1–5). Identical comments from these groups were then combined and thematically grouped, as illustrated in Figure 1.

| Participant | Comments | Theme | Theme |
|-------------|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| R-1 | The Saltaire Sentinel played a significant role in Saltaire's community for 15 years and held a special place in our hearts. James Duncan and his creation, The Saltaire Sentinel, will always be remembered. We not only lost a cherished friend but also a culturally significant monthly treasure. | Spirit of place | Embodied experiences |
| R-1 | Such a wonderful place, I could've quite happily spent a day here. Great art, books, art materials and home store. | Arts-led regeneration | Embodied experiences |
| R-2 | The area was also utilized by Pace Electronics, a company specializing in television set-top boxes and other digital equipment. Subsequently, it was occupied by various manufacturers and retailers of a diverse range of goods who required the space. | Arts-led regeneration | |
| R-2 | Very impressive modernised old mill! | Spirit of place | |
| R-3 | For years, Saltaire villagers have tolerated limitations on improving their homes to preserve the distinctive Victorian heritage of Saltaire village, a crucial factor in its status as a world heritage site. | Spirit of place | Embodied experiences |
| R-3 | It's the industrial heritage jewel. | Spirit of place | |
| R-4 | Plenty of free parking and disabled parking near to the entrance. It is also a lovely walk along the canal if you fancy it. | Embodied experiences | Spirit of place |
| R-4 | New buildings would be the "permanent stain" on the heritage site. | Spirit of place | |
| R-5 | When I pushed open that heavy iron door, I could feel the industrial vibes of Salts Mill. | Embodied experiences | Spirit of place |
| R-5 | In the Mill complex, the spaces are still referred to by their original intended purposes. Therefore, regardless of how the Spinning Mill, Weaving, and Wool-sorting sheds are currently utilized, the process of transforming wool into cloth remains a constant and enduring memory. | Embodied experiences | Spirit of place |
| R-6 | An unique and 'very atmospheric' and 'calming' ambiance. | Embodied experiences | Arts-led regeneration |
| R-7 | A fantastic family day out with lots to do and see. Even though it was a busy bank holiday weekend, it wasn't too crowded, and the atmosphere was wonderful with friendly and helpful staff. We enjoyed a delicious, fresh, and reasonably priced meal. There's also plenty to explore in the nearby area. | Embodied experiences | Arts-led regeneration |
| R-7 | I am a big fan of David Hockney, the gallery is the Aladdin's cave for me. | Arts-led regeneration | Embodied experiences |
| R-8 | This old textile factory needs a bigger and faster elevator, and maybe we need more accessible bathrooms. | Embodied experiences | Spirit of place |
| R-9 | I was blown away with the gallery opening. | Arts-led regeneration | |

Figure 1. Summary of participants' comments.

| Participant | Comments | Theme | Theme |
|-------------|--|-----------------------|----------------------|
| R-10 | It is history and art combined in one place. In Salts Mill, most of the space is dedicated to artworks, while its industrial history exhibit is squeezed into a limited gallery on the third floor. The exhibition area doesn't quite match its historical significance. | Arts-led regeneration | Spirit of place |
| R-11 | The contrast between the paintings and the indoor lighting is striking. Additionally, it was the juxtaposition of the grey roofs and vibrant walls that drew me to Salts Mill. | Arts-led regeneration | Embodied experiences |
| R-12 | Layers of dull cream and blue paint were removed to reveal stunning stonework. | Arts-led regeneration | Embodied experiences |
| R-13 | This place is truly one-of-a-kind. The comprehensive design of Salts Mills, from its selection of shops to its array of captivating products and top-notch restaurant, reflects the genius mind behind it all. Undoubtedly, it is all inspired by the exceptional creativity of Hockney himself. | Arts-led regeneration | |
| R-14 | Salts Mill, with its exposed brick arches from the past, is truly remarkable. The atmosphere is special, and art is everywhere. | Arts-led regeneration | Embodied experiences |
| R-15 | Great free gallery. Lots of things for sale in the way of books, antiques, outdoor clothing. | Arts-led regeneration | |
| V-1 | The shop at the end of the corridor is easy to miss. | Embodied experiences | |
| V-2 | The interior is spectacular, with dark blue scagliola pilasters. | Embodied experiences | |
| V-2 | Not having enough time to visit! | Embodied experiences | |
| V-3 | Great building. To be honest I preferred looking at the structure than most of the Hockney paintings. | Arts-led regeneration | Embodied experiences |
| V-4 | Wonderful choice of books on art and other matters. Inspirational place. The art is amazing...the gallery space outstanding. Friendly helpful staff. We return annually for gifts, cards etc. And always will. | Arts-led regeneration | |
| V-5 | It's an amazing gallery. The Hockney exhibits are beautiful, and his use of the iPad in the Year in Normandie exhibit fascinating. | Arts-led regeneration | Embodied experiences |
| V-6 | We were staying in the nearby town of Bingley and chose to take a stroll along the Leeds Liverpool canal towpath, which turned out to be quite an interesting walk in its own right. | Arts-led regeneration | Embodied experiences |
| V-7 | I'm in the latter category but I have to say the new exhibit at Salts Mill has very much impressed me. | Arts-led regeneration | Embodied experiences |
| V-8 | Since you're in the mill, you can access other areas in the same building. It's lovely. | Arts-led regeneration | |
| V-9 | This gallery offers a wide selection of books and drawing supplies at affordable prices without compromising on quality. Additionally, it features artworks by David, including my personal favorite, his captivating chair piece, which is a highlight of the gallery. | Arts-led regeneration | |

Figure 1. (Cont.) Summary of participants' comments.

| Participant | Comments | Theme | Theme |
|-------------|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| V-10 | The food was excellent and the waitresses worked hard. | Embodied experiences | |
| E-1 | Saltaire Mill operated from 1853 until 1986, and in that time it was home to thousands of workers. | Spirit of place | Embodied experiences |
| E-2 | In Saltaire, there are a few individuals who recall the days when the Mill was actively producing. Their memories remain vivid, and they can still sense the aroma of raw wool, machine oil, and the hardworking sweat in the air. | Embodied experiences | Spirit of place |
| E-3 | I love this building both for what it symbolized in 1853 and what it stands for today: hope. It embodies aspirations for a brighter future, for positive social transformation, and a steadfast belief in the influence of culture and creativity. | Spirit of place | Arts-led regeneration |
| E-3 | The fragrance of lilies now fills the air, and the Mill serves as a space for both leisure and commerce. It is undeniably spacious enough for both to coexist successfully, and a shared sense of pride has grown over the past 25 years. | Arts-led regeneration | Embodied experiences |
| E-4 | The Club's quarterly meetings are free for anyone to join. These gatherings usually feature discussions about Saltaire's history, updates on recent research, and additions to the Saltaire Collection. Refreshments are provided. | Spirit of place | Arts-led regeneration |
| E-4 | Saltaire stands out as a globally renowned model village, boasting 96% of its structures in their original, unaltered state. Join us on a journey to discover some of its hidden gems. | Arts-led regeneration | Embodied experiences |
| E-5 | In addition to featuring artists from various parts of the UK, we are proud to highlight a rich pool of local talent, with more than 120 artists and creators participating in total. We eagerly anticipate welcoming them, along with our visitors, this upcoming Spring bank holiday weekend. | Arts-led regeneration | Spirit of place |
| E-5 | We are thrilled to offer a vibrant weekend filled with art and creative activities in and around Saltaire and Shipley. | Arts-led regeneration | Spirit of place |

R = Resident, V = Frequent Visitor, E = Employee. There are 40 comments in total, 25 items related to embodied experience, 16 items related to spirit of place, 24 items related to arts-led regeneration.

Figure 1. (Cont.) Summary of participants' comments.

To maintain brevity and consistency across the comments and counter-maps, identical comments were consolidated thematically. These maps illuminated intricate connections between intangible aspects and tangible, physical elements of the industrial building. The findings were condensed into three overarching themes:

- 1) Exploring embodied experiences through sensory encounters within the space;
- 2) Capturing the essence of the locale by identifying the spirit of place within Salts Mill;
- 3) Articulating the effects of everyday life interactions through the lens of arts-led regeneration.

Based on participants' counter-mappings, three overarching counter-mapping diagrams were crafted in response to themes (refer to Figures 2–4). Researchers supplemented this information with background details and contextual images cited in participants' counter-mapping comments. To enhance the visualisation of survey results, connections between comments and architectural spaces, exhibited objects, indoor activities, and spatial-related historical events were depicted using connecting lines. The comments generated through counter-mapping were represented by the size of coloured areas on floor plans in diagrams, indicating their intensity, with emotions expressed through emotion stickers.

4.2.1. Delving Into Embodied Experiences

Residents and visitors to Salts Mill hold a profound appreciation for tangible experiences, often expressing fascination with how the physical remnants of the Mill seamlessly intertwine with intangible memories, emotions, and entertaining elements of the building. This connection is vividly illustrated in both counter-maps and participants' narratives, as evidenced by specific interactions identified (R-6, V-8, E-2). The sensory connection with physical elements is particularly highlighted, such as the architectural facade meticulously crafted from local sandstone adorned with hammer-dressed ashlar and rock-faced dressings, the industrial gate constructed from heavy steel, and the yellow slate floor and cast-iron pillars painted in blue and white. These elements provide opportunities for tactile interactions with the rich history of the site. Additionally, participants' attention is drawn to the roof (R-12, R-14, V-3), which is composed of cast-iron struts and wrought-iron rods. Unlike the floors below, eliminating the need for decorative cast-iron columns for support, this engineering achievement resulted in an expansive, undivided space, recognised as the world's largest at the time of its construction (UNESCO, 2001b). Nostalgia among residents revolves around the operational era of the Mill, evoking sensory memories of raw wool, machinery lubricants, and the tangible sensation of strenuous labour. In addition, the presence of remaining looms, weighing machines, and weaving shuttles in the industrial museum on the third floor serves as tangible reminders, eliciting memories of the textile mill (R-10, V-2, E-2).

Salts Mill has transformed into a pivotal micro-social hub of the community. Locals appreciate its current status as a memorial and leisure complex, describing it as possessing a distinctive, "very atmospheric," and "calming" ambience (R-6, R-14). Notably, certain residents, particularly art enthusiasts, liken the gallery to Aladdin's cave (R-7). The inclusion of artists' works, biographies, oral histories, and more creates a diverse and multi-faceted embodied experience of Salts Mill. This experience is especially notable concerning the subjects of the locally born artist David Hockney's artworks—the Mill itself and the Bradford landscape (V-5, V-7). His paintings inspire local pride and evoke nostalgic sentiments about the textile industry's past. Moreover, participants commonly integrate the surrounding environment into the identity of Salts Mill. Nearby locations such as Roberts Park and Canal play integral roles in this shared embodied experience during visits. Residents thoroughly enjoy observing landscape artworks inside the building, followed by a leisurely stroll along the "Saltaire Heritage Trail" (Visit Bradford, n.d.) along the canal, which passes through the park next to the Mill (R-7, V-6, V-8). These artistically depicted historical scenes and current vistas enable community residents to view their own history through the lens of art appreciation, enhancing their sense of identity and pride.

However, there are some unfavourable comments regarding the internal layout of Salts Mill. Criticisms include the presence of "the overlooked shop at the corridor's end" and concerns about "difficult navigation and limited accessibility facilities" (R-8, V-1, V-2). This indicates a necessity to improve indoor circulation and ensure clarity

in signage systems. Residents typically lean towards maintaining the original exterior while endorsing internal improvements for accessibility and restroom facilities (Figure 2).

4.2.2. Capturing the Essence of the Locale

Despite the architectural criticisms, the counter-mapping exercise reveals a considerable amount of local pride. Participants engaged with Salts Mill exhibit a robust local identity deeply connected to its historical textile production tradition. This connection, in turn, profoundly shapes how residents view the heritage regeneration project. The life stories of ordinary individuals from the past are preserved within an open-source archival system “Saltairevillage.info” (Saltaire Village, n.d.), enabling the linkage between individual lives and the local context of Saltaire (E-1). Most of these individuals were mill workers from the 1870s to the 1960s, with records also documenting female and child labourers (Saltaire Collection, n.d.). This faithful representation of how people experienced in their lives in Saltaire at the time is crucial for Salts Mill, as it seeks to uncover its unique history and the people who form the heart of the place. Local pride also encompasses positive sentiments associated with a specific location and its quality, constituting an intangible heritage passed down by industrial heritage to the community, thus embodying social sustainability (R-3, E-4). Some participants have highlighted the significance of the exhibition on Saltaire’s industrial history, featuring a comprehensive building complex, sandbox model, fabric samples, and textile machinery. This exhibition provides individuals with a tangible understanding of the local textile industry and its working environment, making it particularly engaging (R-5, R-10).

In Saltaire, locals share collective memories and experiences from the prosperous era of the local textile industry during the Titus period. While tourists may admire the Italianate-style mill as a “very impressive modernised old mill” (R-2), for locals, it holds an even deeper significance. It is revered as a source of pride and cherished as an “industrial heritage jewel” (R-3, E-3). The building was praised for fully preserving the exterior and framework of the original factory structure, and most participants believe that the past and current exhibition programs remain relevant to the Mill’s historical function. The significance of shared memories is evident in the preservation of industrial history across generations. The local history groups actively collect and share their community’s heritage through websites, publications, and activities (R-1, E-4, E-5). In 2022, a significant celebration honoured original founders and custodians of the Mill—Sir Titus Salt. Salts Mill is deeply valued by the locals as a cultural treasure, and residents assume the responsibility to protect it, keeping a vigilant eye on its progress. They vigilantly observe developments at the site and there are concerns voiced about changes to the Mill’s exterior and the introduction of new structures in its location (R-4, R-8; Figure 3).

4.2.3. Articulating the Effects of Everyday Life Interactions

The Salts Mill Complex has greatly enriched community life, a sentiment strongly resonating among the locals. They recognise this collective effort has cultivated a distinctive artistic community spirit in Saltaire. The shops and businesses focused on art within Salts Mill infuse local life and workplaces with vibrant energy (R-2, R-13, R-15, V-9, E-3). This recognition primarily stems from the outstanding exhibitions of David Hockney—one of the most influential living artists of the 20th century and the success of his related ventures. Many participants perceive Salts Mill as a hybrid of “history and art combined in one place” (R-9, R-10, V-4, V-5).

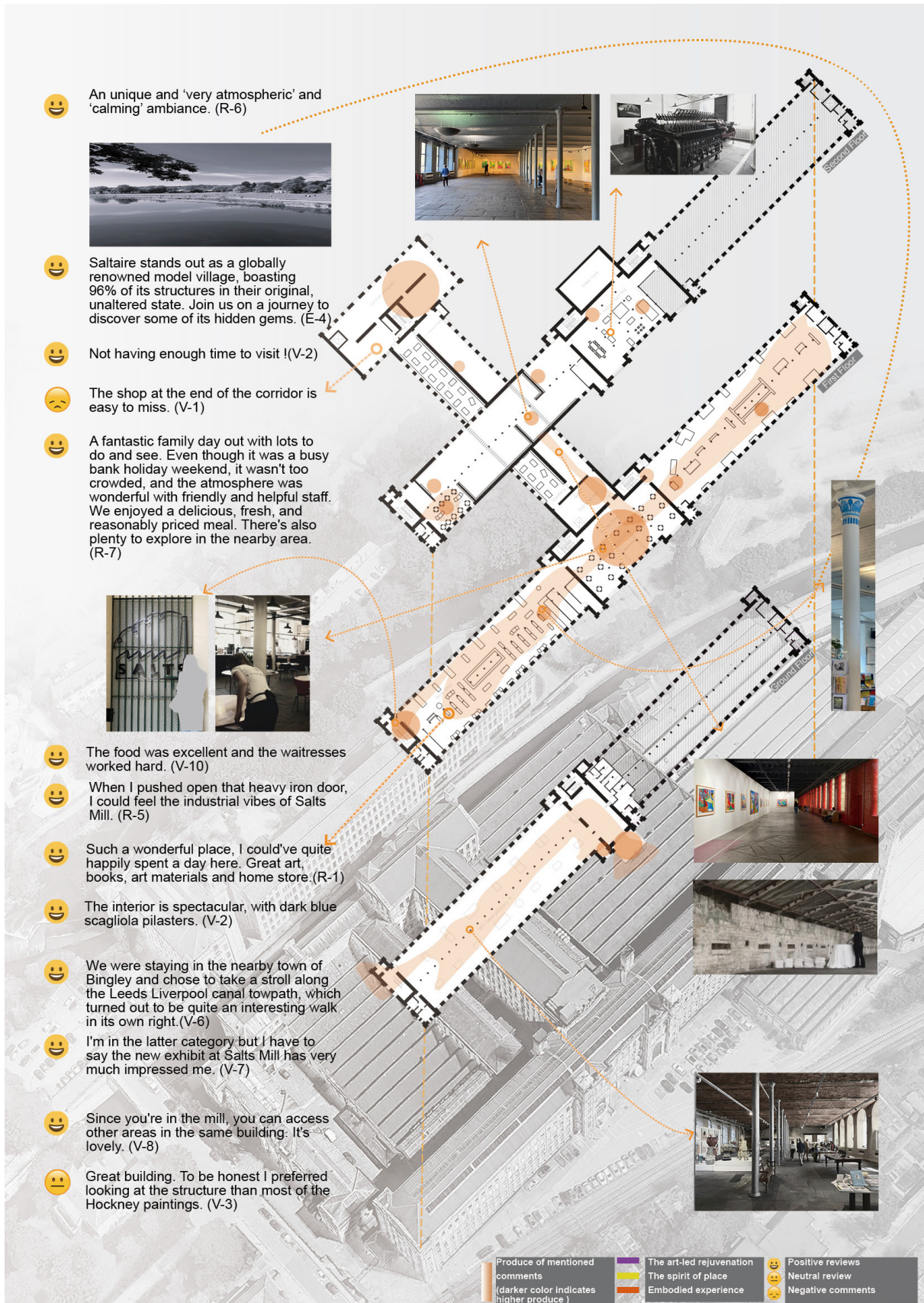


Figure 2. Delving into embodied experiences: Counter-map 1.

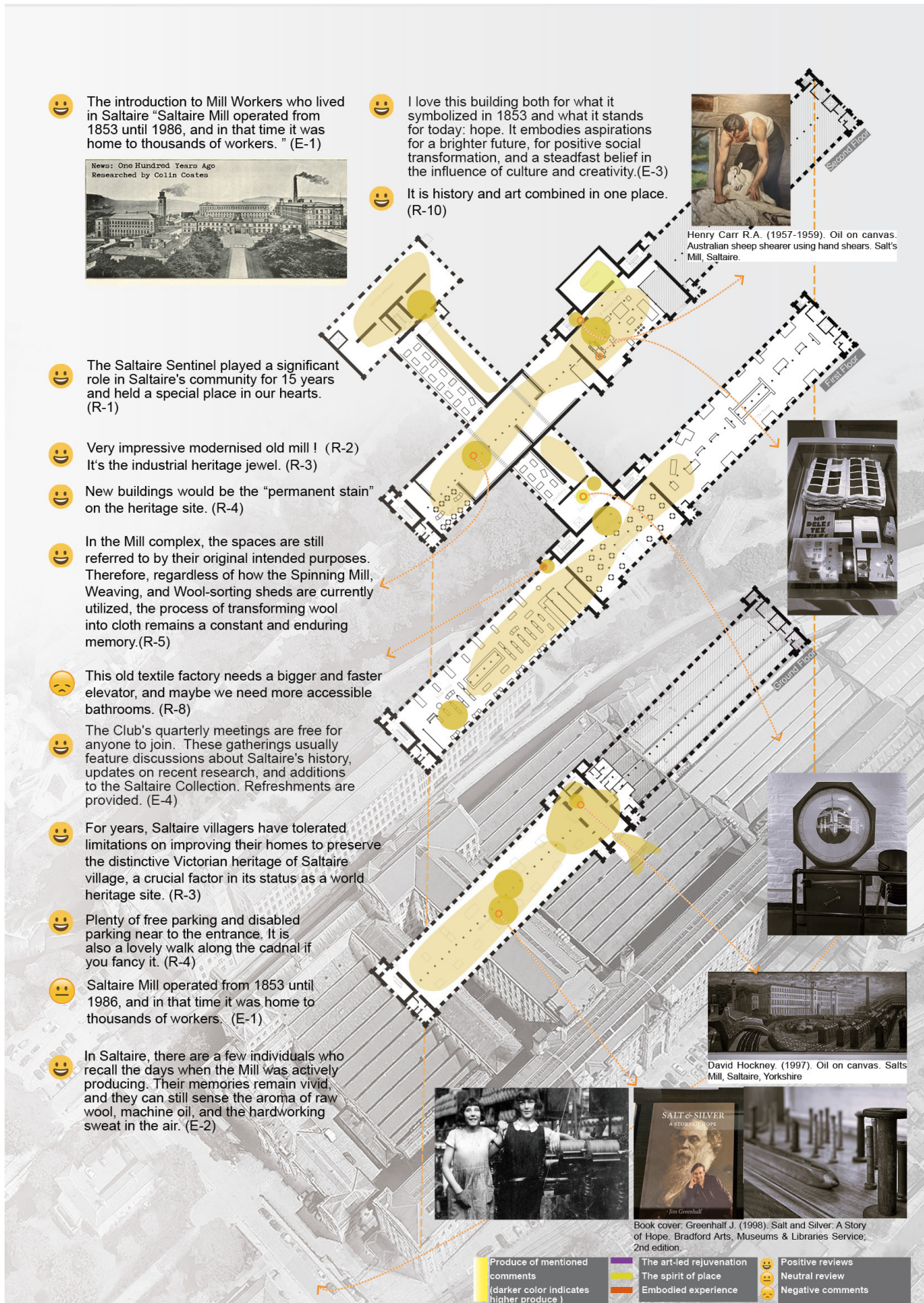


Figure 3. Capturing the essence of the locale: Counter-map 2.

The arts-led revitalisation, concerning spatial changes, primarily focuses on interior renovations to establish open and well-lit public areas. The juxtaposition of exhibition spaces with the industrial ambience creates distinctive lighting and textural features within Salts Mill with three gallery spaces. Local participants demonstrate a keen awareness of these characteristics, offering perceptive observations such as “the contrast between the paintings and the indoor lighting is striking,” “the juxtaposition of the grey roofs and vibrant walls,” and “exposed brick arches from the past.” These observations articulate the architectural features and atmospheric distinctions between the galleries (R-11, R-14). Moreover, various architectural elements linked to Hockney’s art hold significance. For example, the iconic character in a hat, from Hockney’s designs for the 1981 production of *Parade* at the Metropolitan Opera Company, appears on curtains and posters. Additionally, the logo for Salts Diner is Hockney’s signature dachshund sketch, which appears on numerous items within the restaurant and delights all visitors.

Simultaneously, initiatives driven by the arts have extended their reach beyond Salts Mill, actively involving the community, art colleges, and local artists in the region. This infusion of artistic energy imbues the place with a unique cultural essence, fostering a deep sense of heritage preservation. Noteworthy among these efforts are the regular festivals and fairs that play a pivotal role in boosting the local tourist economy. Events such as the Saltaire Arts Trail and Saltaire Makers Fair, organised by Saltaire Inspired (Saltaire Inspired, n.d.), enjoy enthusiastic support from residents and serve as platforms for showcasing artworks. Managed predominantly by registered charities and staffed by volunteers, these community-driven activities have successfully attracted both local residents and visitors every year. Through these events, people from diverse backgrounds come together to revel in the artistic charm of Saltaire, creating a shared celebration of this unique cultural hub (E-5; Figure 4).

4.3. Summary of Findings

The desk research and counter-mapping activities show that expert judgements in heritage assessment frequently prioritise material characteristics like architectural style and the exemplary significance of post-industrial buildings for future generations. As rational observers, these experts critically examine the adaptive reuse of heritage sites, questioning whether modifications and the utilisation of buildings and their surroundings could jeopardise preservation efforts. Additionally, the incorporation of contemporary urban objectives, such as urban regeneration, into heritage management has often brought planners into the decision-making process, working alongside heritage experts within the preservation discourse. In contrast, local community members tend to value the communal identity rooted in Salts Mill’s textile history, cherishing both this heritage and the sense of belonging it fosters within the village. They appreciate the diverse, embodied experiences that connect them to the original mill, the scenic landscape, and the new leisure or cultural activities emerging from local regeneration efforts. These insights highlight the importance of a holistic approach to cultural heritage management that balances both tangible and intangible elements.

The research findings also indicate that the symbiotic relationship between heritage regeneration and the local community in Saltaire is both strong and enduring. The study revealed that residents had few complaints about disturbances in their daily lives caused by external factors such as tourism. This suggests that Salts Mill has effectively managed power imbalances arising from both external influences and internal community dynamics. The situation underscores the interconnectedness of Saltaire’s industrial heritage, where the art complex and its surrounding community coexist in a mutually beneficial relationship.

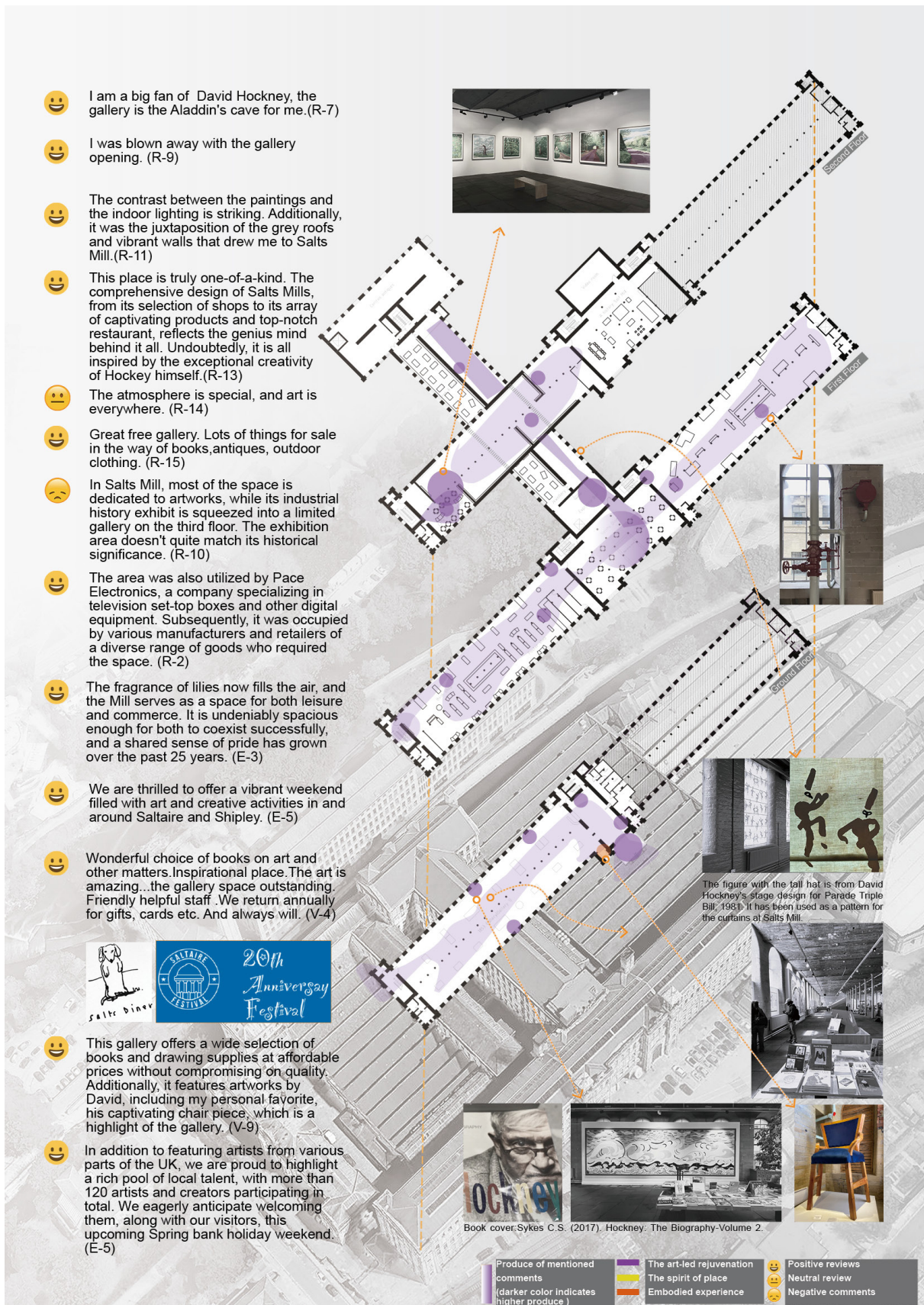


Figure 4. Articulating the effects of everyday life interactions: Counter-map 3.

It is important to mention that the participation of British artist David Hockney lends a distinctive touch. As a Bradford-born artist, Hockney has a wealth of works depicting local industrial and natural landscapes. These paintings and art films are well connected to the local area, making the transformed gallery spaces more appealing and promoting a sense of communal pride that integrates well with the community spirit. Additionally, the integrated programmes within the mill are finely attuned to the unique setting of the world heritage site, successfully creating a synergy between creative industries and the industrial heritage site. Last but not least, the local art community collaborates with various organisations and communities to inject energy into diverse, resident-centred, creativity-driven initiatives. This concerted, arts-led effort fosters a strong community bond with Salts Mill, commemorating historical highlights while promoting forward-looking regeneration infused with the arts, aligning with Saltaire's modern essence of the locale. As a result, Salts Mill itself became a highly concentrated art hub and cultural cluster. This participatory counter-mapping highlights the advantages of the creative bond between post-industrial communities and the buildings with modified roles, which play a crucial role in the sustainable preservation and revitalisation of historic sites.

5. Conclusion and Future Directions

Salts Mill exemplifies the ever-changing trajectory of an industrial site, marked by periods of prosperity, decline, and revival. The transformation of derelict buildings into a vibrant cultural cluster—featuring galleries, performance spaces, cinemas, and creative workspaces—represents a significant regeneration effort. This arts-led approach also distinguishes it from traditional heritage-focused models—the unique experiences, shaped by individual perspectives and shared memories within the Saltaire community, forge a deep connection to the industrial past. For nearly 50 years, the blending of creative industries with industrial heritage at Salts Mill has proven sustainable, becoming a vital part of local life. This heritage and cultural circle, which includes residents, cultural groups, and engaged property owners, has effectively promoted community cohesion and cultural vitality. The Salts Mill case highlights that successful creative industries depend on a profound relationship between their content, the essence of the industrial heritage site, and the evolving needs of community development.

In addition, this study effectively employed thematic counter-mapping as a key methodology to expand knowledge of socio-cultural and intangible heritage values, shining a spotlight on the voices of the locals. The approach incorporates embracing “spatial qualities,” “spirit of place,” and other “socio-cultural associations” within this industrial heritage setting. The resulting counter-maps reveal elements regarding collective memories, shared experiences and values, and local identity, which are often overlooked within the existing heritage value assessment framework. It opens up novel avenues for exploring both the constraints and possibilities within industrial heritage renewal initiatives, with a keen focus on locally rooted expressions. This effort proves invaluable for integrating comprehensive understandings and insights into transformative research for the future development of post-industrial sites, offering significant lessons for the sustainable development of industrial heritage and heritage communities.

Salts Mill has established itself as a vibrant cultural hub, celebrated for its extensive collection of works by artist David Hockney and a range of other exhibitions, making it a significant cultural landmark that draws in art and history enthusiasts. The site has seamlessly blended its commercial pursuits with cultural and community activities, ensuring that it remains accessible and appealing to a broad audience. By staying connected with

the local spirit and integrating into the daily lives of residents, it has avoided becoming solely profit-driven or merely a tourist attraction. The Saltaire World Heritage Steering Group, in partnership with local authorities, actively manages and oversees developments, ensuring that all changes and new initiatives are aligned with the long-term vision for the area.

Looking ahead, several strategic measures have been suggested by two contributions. First, combining expert knowledge with local insights is essential for a thorough heritage assessment. Second, policies should strike a balance between material conservation and community resource use, supporting development in a way that is culturally sensitive and gains community support (Landorf, 2009a). Finally, inclusive stakeholder participation and dialogue are vital for developing flexible and diverse opinions on revitalisation strategies, balancing various interests, and fostering effective conservation practices. Managers and policymakers should focus on identifying and reinforcing these elements to protect heritage effectively while promoting community involvement and economic development. This approach ensures that the needs of different stakeholders are balanced by using both scientific and inclusive mechanisms in regeneration processes.

However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations faced during this research. In addition to increasing the sample size, future research initiatives around counter-mapping could contemplate engaging a specialised intermediary with the capability to autonomously implement this inclusive and participatory methodology in an unbiased manner. Addressing participant selection bias, such as self-selection bias, which can lead to non-representative samples, researcher could introduce an additional identity descriptor tagging system. This system would clarify participant identities and data collection criteria while allowing participants to define their own identities. During the analysis, researchers could adjust participant identity attributes based on this tagging system to enhance accuracy. Additionally, employing combined phigital methods instead of manual approaches to organising and analysing the semantics and images involved in counter-mapping could significantly improve efficiency (Czepkiewicz et al., 2016). This modification would expedite the process and engage a wider range of local participants in the heritage assessment.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

Data Availability

The raw data were generated at Northumbria University, and the data supporting the findings of this study are included within the article and summarised in Figure 1.

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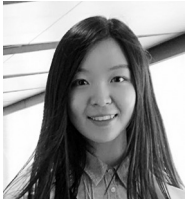
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