

Hartlepool:

The causes of dissatisfaction in the North East of England and the rise of xenophobia

created by: Carson Zhang, Elvira Bolhuis, Klára Šašková

Across North East England, 58 % of voters called for leaving the European Union at last year's referendum. Only in Newcastle did the majority vote Remain and even there the margin was just 1 %. On the other hand, the biggest support for Leave was recorded in Hartlepool - where 69,9 % supported Brexit. These results revealed not only the region's dissatisfaction with the EU, they also uncovered some deeper issues, which are of significance for the people in the North East. This poster looks at the reasons for dissatisfaction in the region and it also focuses on some of the issues closely linked to the referendum - racism and xenophobia - which are both a prerequisite for the vote and its consequences.

What are the causes of dissatisfaction in the North East?

One of the main causes of dissatisfaction that can be observed in the region is presumably that many communities in North East England are simply feeling left behind by the elite - the pro-European Westminster politicians and the government that promised to 'make Britain work for all'. These communities are under the impression that the country's prosperity has not benefitted them and they missed out on the opportunities presented by the era of globalization.

These feelings are supported by the perceived parallel growth of wealth in the metropolitan areas in the South and the decline in the deprived North. The latter is closely linked to the deindustrialization that was accelerated by the closing of coal mines during the Thatcher era and a general shift away from manufacturing jobs and to services. North East England's incomplete transition from its industrial past made the region more vulnerable during periods of economic decline and rendered its population less secure in their sense of identity. This insecurity in terms of identity is due to the closeness of industrialism and Britishness, the first of which has been dismantled over the past decades.

Another reason for discontentment is the fact that the North East has consistently had the highest unemployment rate in the country. The latest figure of 6,4 % puts the region's unemployment at twice the rate of that of the South East and makes the region into the 'country's jobless blackspot'. Even though the government has attempted to support development across the region with its Northern Powerhouse project, meaning to boost the economic growth of the area, it seems that the results have failed to materialize beyond several city centres.

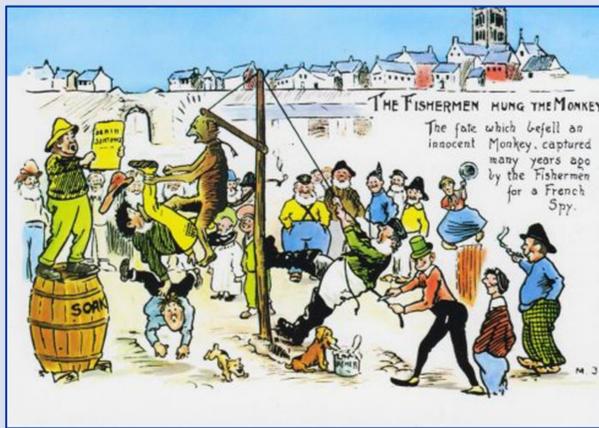
To sum up - the North East is struggling with high rates of unemployment, loss of traditional national identity and a feeling of being left behind. This discontentment often materializes into racism and xenophobia, when foreigners are seen as taking the jobs of local people and are, in the process, further alienated from the community.

Folklore: Hartlepool's legend about 'monkey hangers'

Where do the xenophobic attitudes come from? Could it have something to do with history?

The legend says that during the Napoleonic wars, when a French ship appeared in the vicinity of Hartlepool, people saw a strange creature (a monkey) which they believed to be a French spy and hung her. Some sources say it could have been 'a powder boy', who used to work on the ships during that time. That historic moment contributed to spreading the rumour, after which people of Hartlepool started to be called 'monkey hangers'.

Believe the legend or not - Hartlepool citizens have always been suspicious of newcomers.



Source: "The Hartlepool Monkey, Who hung the monkey?" *This is Hartlepool*, n.p. Web. 28 May 2017 <<http://www.thisishartlepool.co.uk/history/thehartlepoolmonkey.asp>>

The North East and the EU: a difficult relationship

It seems that the North East is stuck between a rock and a hard place.

On the one hand, the region needs immigration, because of its rapidly aging population, it receives support from EU structural funds, and a majority of its trade is with the EU - 60 %.

On the other hand, the population in some cities is deeply divided, with locals displeased with the influx of EU migrants in the past years and also the amount of money the UK pays as part of its membership of the EU.

The rise of xenophobia in the North East?

Xenophobia - extreme dislike or fear of foreigners, their customs, their religions, etc. ²

Hartlepool's record in hate crimes over the time period of 16 months with major occasions of racially motivated crimes gives serious reasons to worry. In April 2015-July 2016 took place an overall number of 192 incidents, which were noticed by the police almost every single day. That figure increased to 90% of all incidents around the time frame between June 16 and 28, which is known as the period of the EU referendum.

"It's only the rich, the elite, who want to stay. Immigration; erosion of powers; European despots and dictators telling us what to do all the time. Redcar steel; they didn't lift a hand. The fishing industry; they gave our sea away. It's as if they want big industry in Britain to be finished."¹

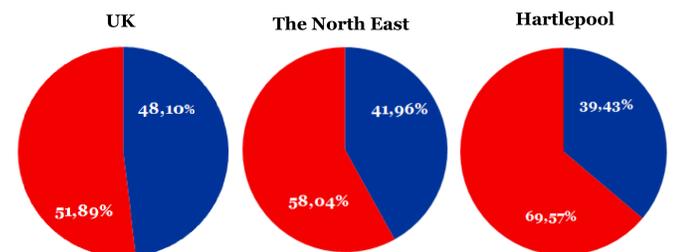
Paul, steel erector

Results of the Brexit referendum

Graphs below show the results of the Brexit referendum.

The meaning of the colours is as following: **blue for Remain, red for Leave.**

It can be seen that support for Leave was stronger in the North East than in the UK as a whole. In Hartlepool, the support was particularly strong.



"It's not an easy place to live. It's not easy to find work."¹

Jenny, a civil servant

"The main reason I voted to leave the EU was immigration. And that doesn't make me a racist. There needs to be a cap on immigrants coming to this country because, as things stand, this country just can't cope."¹

Tommy, joiner

¹ Taken from the interviews of Hartlepoolians by *Financial Times* "Demise of Hartlepool's economy has seen anti-EU feeling grow" (by Chris Tighe) and *The Guardian* "View from Hartlepool: 'The main reason I voted to leave was immigration'" (by Kevin McKenn)
² "Xenophobia." Cambridge Dictionary Online n.p. Web. 28 May 2017 <<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/xenophobia>>

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