Emotion and place promotion: Passionate about a former coalfield

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ABSTRACT

Emotion is everywhere in place promotion, from the stickers and t-shirts announcing love for a place to the despair and estrangement experienced by residents when confronted with unrecognisable representations of home. Although academic work has drawn attention to such emotion, even commenting on its potential power, the emotionality of place promotion has not been fully examined. This paper begins to fill that gap. It also contributes to theoretical discussion regarding how emotion moves, taking an object centric approach to consider impressive place promotion that prompted some passionate performances. The paper is indebted to the work of Arlie Hochschild (1990, 2003) on institutional emotion management and Sara Ahmed (2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2008, 2009) on affective economies. The empirical focus of the paper includes the objects, performances, technologies and techniques of two eras of place promotion concerning the former coalfield of East Durham and is based on fieldwork (1998–2000, 2005–2008) dealing with coalfields regeneration in North East England.

1. Introduction

His performance was extraordinary. He was up and down like a jack in the box, excited, exuberant, sleeves rolled up, tie loosened, shooting over to the other side of the room for a pamphlet, back to us, to the other side of the room again for his flip chart paper, back again, ringing a colleague to come and meet us, back again. It was 1998 and this District Council officer, Andy, played a key role in the regeneration of East Durham, a place in North East England that had witnessed the eradication of deep coal mining—an industry that it had relied upon for its existence. We were in Andy’s office interviewing him about the work of the council in the regeneration of this former Durham coalfield. He was talking to us about the promotional campaign for the area and how the District Council1 was sharpening its image and practices to attract new industry and jobs to the place. Andy was keen for us to learn about the council’s new emblem due to feature on council vehicles, letterheads and its website. Andy’s exuberance contrasted with the scene outside—a depressed ex-mining village with grass where the colliery had once been located, shuttered shops and empty buildings in what I imagined had once been a vibrant place.

Eight years later and I was interviewing Michelle, who worked for ONE NorthEast Development Agency (ONE), in her office in Newcastle about ONE’s award winning regional image campaign—Passionate People. Passionate Places. This was an altogether different experience. Despite being late for the interview—‘caught up in traffic’—Michelle was relaxed, calm and slid straight into the job of answering my questions, reiterating the messages of the regional image campaign. She was highly organised and she had everything she needed to hand. There was no jumping about. Her responsibility was not only the place promotion of East Durham, but the region in its entirety and key to her campaign was people who lived and worked in the area. She managed a big budget worth £34.5 million over a five year period and a team of people involved in transforming the image of the region. I left the interview with a glossy calendar, DVDs and magazines brimming with local people talking passionately about the North East and information on forthcoming national television slots for the campaign. As the campaign developed, I saw it on the London Underground, at airports in the North East, at stations on the east coast mainline and on taxis in London and in North East England. I also saw local companies use the Passionate People. Passionate Places strapline and branding in their own marketing activity.

This paper is about the emotionality of place promotion. It considers the engineering of emotion in place promotion, explicitly dealing with the issue of how institutions get people passionate about the places they promote. To address these concerns the paper begins by exploring the emotional resonances of place promotion that are often touched upon by academics, but rarely explored. It then equips itself for a more sustained focus on emotion in place promotion, starting with the work of Arlie Hochschild (1990, 2003)
and the overt power of institutions to demand particular emotional performances of its employees. In Andy's performance at the start of the paper, I think he, I and my colleague all experienced the watchful gaze of the local authority in his anxious performance. There was evidence of institutional emotion management in ONE's regional image campaign too. Unlike Andy who drew upon his emotional resources as he attempted to drive place promotion and economic regeneration, bending colleagues and potential investors to his vision, Michelle, through a range of sophisticated techniques and technologies that a much bigger budget facilitated, orchestrated the passion of others. These others included not only members of her team, but, also people not employed by ONE. The paper sets ONE's regional image campaign against the context of Eastingston Council’s earlier place promotion efforts to highlight new practices regarding emotion in place promotion as well as emphasising the resources available to ONE and the sophistication of its place promotion activities. The paper particularly focuses on the second stage of ONE’s regional image campaign with its emphasis on local ambassadors and perceptions of the region as a location for business. Of interest here is how the regional image campaign was so apparently seductive (Allen, 2006), creating a mood that encouraged (or engineered) passion (Thrift, 2004), was the push behind affect (Kraftl and Adey, 2008). Of particular concern is how the campaign got people not employed by ONE expressing their passion for the North East. In a later section, the paper draws upon Sara Ahmad’s work (2004c) on ‘affective economies’ to consider some of the impressive objects produced by the campaign and the relationship between these and what felt like contagious emotion (Thrift, 2009), although, as the paper argues, was not (see also Ahmed, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c). Finally, the paper ends by considering the power of emotion and what it does. Clarke et al. (2006) influence this paper’s concern regarding what emotion does and ‘the role of emotions in the exercise of power’ (2006: 175, see also Pile, 2010).

The paper contributes to theoretical discussion regarding how emotion moves. In a paper that considers conceptual influences, divergences and convergences of emotional and affectual geographies, Pile (2010) repeatedly returns to the issue of ‘how it is that emotions and/or affects actually do move between people’ (Pile, 2010: 13). He describes affectual geography’s focus on how ‘affect flows between bodies by circulation, by transmission and by contagion (see for example, Thrift, 2008: 235–43) as rendering “opaque the actual mechanisms and media through which affect might actually travel between people. We simply do not know how an affect might be transmitted, or passed, from one body to another’ (Pile, 2010: 15–16). In this paper, building on Ahmed’s (2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2008, 2009) work, I consider an object-centred account of how emotion moves, exploring (and experiencing) passion through the materiality, multi-media presentations, techniques and technologies of place promotion. All I can say at this point is that things get sticky.

This paper is based on two periods of fieldwork. The first period was part of a project dealing with collifields regeneration in England and Wales (1998–2000) that included twenty interviews with representatives formally involved in the regeneration of East Durham, such as key individuals who worked for ONE North East Development Agency, Government Office for the North East, Eastingston District Council, Durham County Council, County Durham Development Company and East Durham Business Services. The second period of fieldwork (2005–2008) explored the relationship between regeneration and identities in East Durham and involved fifteen interviews with key actors similarly involved in the regeneration of the former collifield. Interviews usually lasted for between one and 2 h and took place in interviewees’ offices or work space. Both periods of fieldwork involved extensive participant observation work, attending, for example, local events, such as Wheatley Hill’s centenary celebrations and public meetings, such as those organised by the Collifields’ Task Force. Since 1998 I have collected place promotion material concerning East Durham and North East England, requesting it from various offices and sites, but also collecting it at unexpected times too, such as from magazines left by others on trains.

This paper has taken a reflexive, multi-method approach to the analysis of not only textual, but embodied and contextual knowledge produced during fieldwork (Doucet and Mauthner, 2008; Mauthner and Doucet, 1998, 2003, 2008; Ward, 1998). This paper largely deals with the techniques and technologies of orchestrating emotional performances and so I employed discourse analysis to explore the processes and strategies of place promotion, examining image and texts of promotional material collected over a thirteen year period alongside interview transcripts that discussed practices of place promotion and their cultural, social, economic and political context (Rose, 2001; Ward, 1998). This process involved a grounded theory approach that examined what the respondents were telling me, narrative analysis to explore words, plots, sub-plots with further layers of data analysis reflexively considering why people told me what they did (Doucet and Mauthner, 2008; Mauthner and Doucet, 1998). Although this paper does not directly deal with how place promotion was experienced, incorporated into the analysis was an interest regarding growing lines of connection between psychotherapeutic techniques and the social sciences (Bondi, 2003, 2005). A strand of this data analysis was concerned with experiencing, including my experience of interviews, events and place promotional material. This aspect of the analysis can be traced throughout the paper, starting with the opening paragraphs about Andy and Michelle.

2. Place promotion and emotion

Academics have focused on many different aspects of place promotion, tracking its historical development (Ward, 1998), decoding the subtext and imagery of place marketing and, increasingly, place branding efforts (Burgess, 1982; Burgess and Wood, 1988), analysing the relationship between place promotion, entrepreneurial governance, public policy and politics (Broudehoux, 2007; Sadler, 1993; Spellman, 1991), exploring how place promotion is received by local people and the impact of marketing and branding on places as representations mediate everyday realties of a place (Hubbard, 2006). Although emotion haunts narratives of place promotion, it is never explicitly discussed. Yet emotion is everywhere in place promotion, from the text of, for example, ‘I love Cleveland’ (Holcomb, 1993) stickers to the despair and alienation experienced by local residents when confronted with unrecognisable representations of their place (Boyle and Hughes, 1995; Broudehoux, 2007; Gotham, 2007). Furthermore, in place promotion, places are ‘products offering emotional and economic benefits to their “consumers”’ (Burgess and Wood, 1988: 115) and comprise activities whereby key individuals have been expected to drive campaigns with their enthusiasm, acting as ambassadors, ‘impressing business men’, and getting exciting when, for example, Edinburgh refused to carry Glasgow’s advertising campaign — Glasgow’s miles better — on its city buses (Ward, 1998: 192). What’s more, daring to engage with, and challenge, the hegemony of politics and capitalism driving place promotion can generate angry, threatening responses from powerful individuals directing regeneration and economic development (Sadler, 1993).

Andy was clearly a product of the late eighties and 1990s, when places were dealing with deindustrialisation, decline and job loss and individuals formally engaged in economic regeneration were
drawn into tough, competitive battles for inward investment and jobs. Hard capitalism set the emotional tone of place promotion at this time, fuelled by a conservative government that strengthened ‘capital’s hegemonic thrust’ and the power of the market (Sadler, 1993: 177). Politically motivated local elites, comprising local businesses and financial services pushing for a greater share of national prosperity, directed place promotion (Hubbard, 1996). In East Durham, at the centre of regeneration efforts and dealing with the muscle of local elites was Andy, whose anxious performance can be explained through East Durham’s particularly desperate position in the 1990s. He was responsible for the economic regeneration of a place that had witnessed the swift eradication of its coal mining industry from the early 1980s until 1993, when the final pit closed of what was once a coal mining heartland of the UK. In 1951 25,000 people in East Durham were employed in the coal mining industry. By 1991 this had reduced to 3600 and in 1993 it was 0. At the same time big employers in manufacturing like Siemens and Fujitsu were relocating, or threatening to relocate, elsewhere where costs, especially labour, were cheaper. Closures meant that 60.6% of Easington district’s working population was economically active, compared with 78.8% for England and a large proportion of the district lived in poverty (Bennett et al., 2000a). The place promotion was overtly aggressive. Like other places that had witnessed deindustrialisation on a massive scale, East Durham was in a ‘win or die’ competition for inward investment and became a commodity to be packaged, marketed and sold (Burgess and Wood, 1988; Kotler et al., 1993). Individuals like Andy were ambassadors for their place, leading by example, networking at every opportunity and entrepreneurial in their efforts to reverse a place’s decline and transform its image (Harvey, 1989; Holcomb, 1993; Hubbard, 1996). Place promotion tended not to be aimed at local residents, simply identifying them to outsiders as cheap to employ, but skilled (Bennett et al., 2000b). Instead, place promotion mainly targeted potential inward investors. This meant that the local authority assertively stripped East Durham’s association with coal mining from promotional material, disregarding the ‘dead labour’ and industrial past of the area (Mitchell, 2003). The focus was on a shiny post-industrial future that embraced everything high-tech, clean and economically upbeat (Barke and Harrop, 1994; Short et al., 1993; Wakefield and McMullan, 2005). Challenges to the hype of place promotion in the North East faced a barrage of abuse. Academic reports that disputed the representation of inflated places (and exaggerated employment figures) were described as ‘a diatribe in despair and an exercise in uncontrollable pessimism’ and ‘depressing and soul destroying’ (Sadler, 1993: 184). Sadler (1993) wrote about the absence of challenge to established values at that time and the disturbing fact that academic reports elicited condemnation rather than debate.

Yet, more recently, as Michelle begins to demonstrate, the emotional tone of place promotion has shifted. One of the marketing and communications agencies involved in ONE’s regional image campaign described it as a ‘warmer sell’ given ‘the failure of previous such initiatives’ (Pressahead Marketing and Communications Ltd, undated). Another key objective was to ensure that the region collectively understood what the campaign was aiming to achieve encouraging local people to be ‘positive advocates of the messages’ (Pressahead Marketing and Communications Ltd, undated). Rather than the aggressive place promotion of the 1980s and 1990s, recent place promotion has been about, as Hospers (2011) emphasised, ‘warm’ place marketing that addresses “actors that have built up emotional or socio-economic ties with the area, notably existing residents and firms” (Hospers, 2011: 373). This approach recognises, and builds on, the feelings that residents often have for their place through memories, experiences or routines associated with a location. Although described as a ‘warmer sell’, there is nothing soft about emotionally literate capitalist practices involving the manipulation and engineering of emotion for economic gain. If Sadler’s (1993) account of place promotion typified what had happened in the 1980s and early 1990s, then Andrew Gretter (1993: 168), Head of Economic Development at Gwent County Council, provided an account of what was to come:

if local people are proud to live, work and hopefully prosper in your area, then they will be your greatest ambassadors in helping to increase awareness, improve image and understanding opportunities.

Important to the success of ONE’s place promotion from 2005 onwards was targeting not only outsiders, but particularly residents, entrepreneurs and firms already located in a place, encouraging growth, expansion and creativity. The regional image campaign for the North East involved developing a brand, Passionate people. Passionate Places. As the paper will discuss later, this campaign was especially aimed at local people, encouraging them to ‘internalise the brand’ (Gotham, 2007: 842) and act as ambassadors for the region. Place promotion was less about financial incentives on offer and more about places as spaces of consumption, creativity and possibility (Rantisi and Leslie, 2006). Like other place promotion, the regional image campaign was aimed at the hopes and desires of ‘the creative class’ (Florida, 2002: ix, Vanola, 2008) who it is assumed want to live in interesting and exciting places (see Fig. 1). It is also increasingly aimed at a generation focused on work/life balance with a bigger appetite for pleasure. Aguir et al. (2005) contrasted the new middle class and their pleasure seeking goals with the old middle class – or petite bourgeoisie – whose different codes of morality and duty meant a ‘fear of pleasure and associated every satisfaction of the forbidden impulses with guilt’ (Aguir et al., 2005: 127).

To some extent, place promotion has always involved feelings for a place and working on such feeling (Holcomb, 1993), but recent place promotion efforts have been labouring harder at engineering emotion, pushing individuals and communities to feel and express emotion for a place. For example, in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, a new branding campaign encouraged people to ‘Fall in Love with Louisiana All Over Again’ (Gotham, 2007). In a similar vein, Hubbard (2006) discussed a campaign for Leicester designed to ‘provoke local people to take more pride in their city’ (Hubbard, 2006: 89).

Fig. 1. Use of regional image campaign (and image of NewcastleGateshead Quayside) in presentation. Source: Author’s photo.
Clearly, the orchestration of emotion in place promotion campaigns deserves attention. On the penultimate page of his book Ward (1998) described promotional material as possessing ‘the emotional power to move all but the sterner cultural critic’ (Ward, 1998: 238). This paper begins where Ward left off.

3. Staging the campaigns: orchestrating emotion through place promotion

In this Section I draw upon Arlie Hochschild’s (2003) influential work to explore the staging of the two campaigns and how institutions powerfully managed the emotion work of employees and others involved in place promotion (see also Bolton, 2005; Lois, 2001; Schweingruber and Berns, 2005; Thoits, 1996). Influenced by the symbolic interaction work of Goffman (1959, 1967, 1969) and his focus on rules, others and occasion, Hochschild (2003) examined how institutions trained, supervised, staged and managed employees so that they were adept at expressing emotion (or feeling) appropriately depending on the needs and demands of customers, clients and bosses. She detailed the staging of emotion work and institutional ‘feeling rules’ learnt through training and the efforts of ‘influential stage directors’ authorised to coach employees, the hired cast, in techniques of (deep) acting.

For Hochschild (2003), ‘feeling rules’ are the ‘pinch between what I do feel and what I should feel’ (2003: 57) and meant intervening in either the outer appearance of feeling or in creating the inner shape of a feeling. The former refers to surface acting, the latter to deep acting, and for Hochschild (2003) both are forms of labour to be sold as an individual’s feelings take on the properties of a resource used in the pursuit of profit.

In 1998, East Durham had limited resources for the staging of its place promotion campaign. Key to the campaign was a website and glossy promotional material sent, on request, to potential inward investors. This promotional material evoked how East Durham might eventually look, as it had little to invest. This promotional material evoked how East Durham was identified as the place to be, supported by financial incentives to attract big business. It was preened and pumped up to not only be on the map for potential investment, but to take up more space than any other place on that map:

Any firm, no matter how small, can benefit from the huge potential market of 320 million people provided by the Single European Market. But in order to take advantage of this golden opportunity – a population nearly as big as the whole of the USA and Japan put together – one needs good communications. That’s why companies located in East Durham have the edge over less fortunate firms in other parts of the country (East Durham Development Agency, undated).

Central to the place promotion of East Durham was an emblem that became the figure head of the campaign, symbolising the ambition of the district. This emblem featured on the district authority’s vehicles, website, letterheads, place promotion material and billboards. The emblem took the form of a slim, fit figure on the move, a friendly hand up, waving at its audience. The design of the emblem changed over time. In its early incarnation on the District of Easington’s website it was male, wore a flat cap and was acidic yellow. Later on, its head was replaced by an ‘e’ (for Easington) and the colour scheme softened to a gentle green (see Fig. 2). It is worth quoting Andy in more detail as he introduced and rapidly talked about the emblem he held before our eyes:

it’s got the ‘e’ for Easington, it’s meant to be warm, friendly, ‘hi there, how ya doing’, you know, we’re a bit out of the ordinary...everyone comes to work to shine. It’s brilliant, fantastic, you’re part of the team, we’re number one collectively as people. ‘Hi there!’: Glad to please, another champion idea, most excellent,...it’s like Bill and Ted isn’t it? You’re welcome, pull it together, free spirits, thanks, making a splash. It’s about being brilliant, being magic on the pitch. We’ve got to be slick and cohesive and if you’re not you’re dead (Officer for Easington District Council, 1998).

This emblem symbolised a framework – feeling rules – for council employees. To catch the eye of investors, there was a sense that performances had to improve. Council employees needed to be pro-active, ‘out of the ordinary’, enthusiastic and ‘magic on the pitch’. Andy recounted a time when a team of people from different organisations with responsibility for East Durham met with a big American owned potential inward investor at the county cricket ground. Following a slick presentation on East Durham and some short answers to questions, he believed that attempts to secure investment failed when a colleague pulled a tatty piece of paper from his pocket to answer a question. This was not an appropriate performance. As Andy went on to say:

Throw the rule book away, go out, be aggressive, use whatever you’ve got to do. If someone tapped me in a pub on a Sunday morning I would think nothing of getting one of my team out even if he’d been night clubbing and say right, you’ve got to see this guy within the next hour... be it here, have the keys, do a.b.c.d.e, offer whatever x,y,z. right you’re on your own, you sign this up (Officer for Easington District Council, 1998).

The success of the emblem was limited. Despite Andy’s hard sell, the emblem was not easy on the eye with, for example, its strange ‘e’ for a head. Furthermore, the symbolisation was perhaps too abstract for people to emotionally connect with it. This was a campaign with a small budget and reliant on the energy of a few key individuals spread across many organisations involved in the East Durham Task Force. These people often had responsibilities for other areas shaping Durham and the North East. Andy’s immediate

Fig. 2. Billboard promoting ‘District of Easington’ on the A19. Source: Author’s photo.
team, working for the local authority, was small and much of the responsibility for the job fell on his shoulders. Whilst Andy’s enthusiastic performances were faultless, other colleagues were wary of their audience. A junior, but older colleague, who had worked for the local authority for more than twenty years was cynical about an agenda of attracting big business that made large financial demands but showed no long-standing commitment to the area, leaving when incentives dried up. Others were deflated by the fact that property developers could get away with paying nothing for land, whilst also having little time for residents regarding the design of East Durham’s development. This was reiterated by an Officer for Easington District Council in 2006 when he said:

I’m not going to get a developer like (name of developer) sat round the table with residents or community groups and them telling him what he should be doing……

He went on to say:

The power to influence and condition developers is a damn sight less than what it would be down in Leeds, Bristol, anywhere else. The developers are accountable to shareholders and (pause) we’re glad for something to be happening here (Officer for Easington District Council, 2006).

Although the emblem was designed to inspire pro-active performances in a depressed former coalfield, it never achieved these. Attempts to be pro-active, as the Council Officer above suggested, quickly gave way to cow towing to the demands of investors and developers concerned with cheap costs, low wages and financial incentives. There was muffled amusement of council employees (and loud laughter from residents) when, at its launch, a local man asked if the emblem represented the general managers skating on thin ice. The demands of his job (and employer) took their toll on Andy, who eventually left the job, rumour had it, exhausted.

With a budget of more than £34.5 million over a five year period, ONE had far greater resources to hand to develop its regional image campaign. This meant that ONE could employ sophisticated techniques and communication technologies to ensure an effective campaign. Sophisticated techniques involved intelligence gathering through MORI research (2005) to gauge international, national and local opinions regarding the image and identity of the North East before hiring branding and communications expertise that included DIFFERENT Ltd and Pressahead Ltd, marketing and communications agencies with a base in the North East. Technologies involved a range of far reaching multi-media that included advertising slots on primetime national television, outdoor advertising in the North East, South East and London including posters, taxi sides and bus sides, a presence on British Airways TV, a dedicated website, local radio phone-in shows encouraging people to air why they were passionate about the North East, DVDs, calendars, branding at high profile events such as the Great North Run and national and regional press advertising and supplements, as exemplified by the Sunderland Echo:

Wearside and East Durham is brimming with people who make a contribution to the community but do not ask for recognition. We want Echo readers to help us shout loud and proud and celebrate these shining stars for the difference they make in improving people’s lives across the region (http://www.communitynortheast.co.uk/ wear_1/community_champions).

There were two stages to the regional image campaign (see Table 1). The first stage (2005–2007) of the campaign was designed to improve knowledge and perception of the region and place promotion included a diverse range of people, such as students, an opera singer, kite surfer, head gardener and teacher as well as entrepreneurs and business leaders. The second stage (2008–2011) of the campaign aimed to change perceptions of the region as a location for business. It explicitly focussed on what some might describe as the ‘creative class’ — people employed in ‘knowledge intensive works’ including scientists, analysts, business managers and opinion makers (Florida, 2003: 8). The focus of this paper is the second stage of the regional image campaign and its drive to attract, sign up and feature local entrepreneurs, scientists and business leaders as ‘ambassadors’ for the North East (see Fig. 3). Some of this stage of the campaign might be familiar, because it appeared, for example, in the business sections of national broadsheet newspapers and magazines. Advertisements in the national press included a head shot of a local business owner, entrepreneur or scientist against a related workplace or landscape and identified a key industrial sector with which the region wanted to be associated.2

Particularly important to the second stage of the campaign was a dedicated website for ‘ambassadors’. Headline ambassadors that featured in advertisements aimed at national and international audiences were also in the spotlight on the website, starring in short films that could be downloaded. Anyone, though, could sign up as an ambassador, providing they supplied details regarding their job title and business or organisation. Once logged into the system, ambassadors had access to a wealth of information, advice and permission to use branding material.

Unlike the place promotion campaign for East Durham in the 1990s, which was largely aimed at potential inward investors, both stages of ONE’s regional image campaign were aimed at a much bigger audience that included tourists, visitors, investors and, significantly, local residents, businesses and potential ambassadors. A significant aim of ONE’s campaign was to target local businesses, looking at ways to add value, develop expertise and encourage the growth of supportive networks and hubs so that businesses could be ‘more innovative and smarter’ which involved ‘inculcating that

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2 Key sectors important to the North East include energy and low carbon technology, advanced automotive manufacturing, digital media, health care and life sciences and process industries and chemicals.

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Table 1

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<th>Brief timeline of ONE’s regional image campaign.</th>
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<td>2004–2005</td>
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| 2005–2007 stage 1 of ONE’s regional image campaign | Aimed to improve knowledge and perception of region. Advertisements in national press and slots on primetime national television in 2006, especially targeting potential visitors and tourists. Production of first DVD — Passionate People. Passionate Places. Other material produced for the campaign included calendar, magazines, outdoor advertising in the North East, South East and London. Aimed to change perceptions of the region as a location for business. Launched ambassadors’ website. This stage included the production of short films about the region as a business location, its ambassadors and key industrial sectors, including energy and low carbon technology, advanced automotive manufacturing, digital media, health care and life sciences and process industries and chemicals. |
sort of mindset’ (representative of County Durham Development Company, 2006). ONE aimed to attract local business leaders to its campaign and affect business practices in the process. On the back of intelligence gathered from MORI research, the regional campaign was specifically devised to get local people onto the stage of place promotion, acting as ambassadors for the region. People who live in the North East were identified in the MORI (2005) research as a valuable asset because of their perceived friendliness. At the same time, 55% of local people would only speak highly of the region if asked (MORI, 2005). ONE was not only keen to use this valuable asset — local people — in the regional image campaign, but to get them publically expressing their passion for the region.

To attract local attention, ONE needed to get the staging right for passionate performances so the campaign deliberately drew upon countryside, coastline, attractions and (aspects of) heritage identified in the MORI (2005) research as important to local people, particularly ‘the creative class’. This meant that the Northumberland coast, Durham countryside, Newcastle Gateshead Quayside (Fig. 1) and attractions such as Durham cathedral created a significant backdrop to the campaign (ONE NorthEast, undated-a, undated-b, undated-c). Of ambassadors at a black tie event calendar; ONE NorthEast, undated—a Short Film):

It’s really just sort of making it relevant to local people and not imposing things on them, not pretending that I understand sort of what somebody in that particular (area) wants to see….. And finding ways in which people have to do something themselves so it’s not us just sort of telling people, you know, we’re asking them to tell us and contribute and getting (them) to talk about it because we went right back to the research, that was the issue, that it wasn’t that they didn’t feel it. It was that they just didn’t express it and so we’ve looked for ways to get people to express how positive they feel (Director of Communications for ONE, 2006).

For those individuals who signed up as ambassadors on ONE’s website, feeling rules emerged through the toolkit available on the ambassadors’ website and in the performances of selected ambassadors featured in its promotional material. The toolkit included recruitment information, regional business information, presentation tools and the campaign’s logos. It also included a media and image library with the promotional films mentioned above that featured the performances of selected ambassadors. Performances were edited so that ambassadors talked briskly and urgently with no umming or erring, pauses or meandering (ONE NorthEast, undated-a). Ambassadors looked animated as they talked, eyes bright, plenty to say, clear and confident. They sometimes smiled at the camera, but not necessarily. They provided some information about themselves, where they had studied, whether or not they were from the North East, why they ‘loved’ living and working in the North East or were ‘proud’ to be an ambassador for the region (ONE NorthEast, undated-a, undated-b). They were also, though, serious and meant business. One ambassador featured in promotional material was Paul Callaghan, Chairman of the Leighton Group. In a magazine produced by ONE (2006a) his performance when interviewed was described in the following way:

Whoever coined the expression ‘passionate people’ may well, in my opinion, have met with Paul Callaghan the same day. His enthusiasm for life and business is fantastic, but as we make our introductions he is keen to show Carole and I one of his favourite places — the University of Sunderland Informatics Centre. As we walk briskly, Callaghan enthuses about various local businessmen who have ploughed some of their wealth back into the city (West, 2006).

If feeling rules were merely emergent in selectively edited performances of ambassadors, then they were made explicit through other aspects of the ‘toolkit’ on the website for ambassadors. In the presentation tools, for example, was a section on “create a speech about your business and North East England” which provided “useful inserts for your speeches and presentations”. Words and statements that figured in these ‘useful inserts’ included ‘revitalisation’, ‘on the up’ ‘exciting’, ‘strength’, ‘diverse and dynamic’, ‘opportunity’, ‘innovative’, ‘cutting edge’ and ‘expansion’. The toolkit also provided a template for powerpoint slides that carried the ‘Passionate People. Passionate Places’ strapline, selected images, key figures and statistics for the region.

Although, as the next section demonstrates, many individuals and companies signed up to the regional image campaign, becoming ambassadors for the North East, there were moments in performances when there was evident tension between what ought to have been felt and what was actually felt. In a short film (ONE NorthEast, undated-c) of ambassadors at a black tie event sponsored by ONE, business leaders, entrepreneurs and representatives of ONE are filmed networking, sipping drinks, eating from trays of food being circulated around the room, talking, laughing. Participants are surrounded by the branding of the campaign, which forms a backdrop to the event. Individuals are pulled out of this event to talk about the North East to camera. Behind them are glossy banners with the ‘Passionate people. Passionate places’ strapline and the buzz of people networking and chatting. They have to talk loudly to make themselves heard against the noise of the event. The final young male interviewee is asked to sum up the North East in one word. Not easy. He looks uncomfortable. ‘Passionate’ he says, which he follows with the word ‘perhaps’ and a twitch of a smile. The flow of the performances is broken in this one instant as the process — and, on this occasion, failure — of emotion management comes into full view.

4. Impressive campaign

‘The spirit of innovation with which North East England is synonymous, is infectious. Here people approach life with passion and look to the future with optimism’ (ONE NorthEast, undated-d http://live-and-work.northeastengland.co.uk/people-s-stories).

ONE’s regional image campaign effectively orchestrated passionate performances and brought together a network of ambassadors that was pivotal to its agenda regarding place promotion. More than a 1000 companies and organisations in the North East signed up to the campaign, adopting the logo and/or
branding in their own marketing activities and joining ONE on the stage of place promotion as the campaign made an impression on them. Although ONE was clearly steering the campaign, ambassadors stated on ONE’s website that it was ‘not just run by others’ but ‘run by us’ (MD of Clipper Windpower Europe, ONE NorthEast, undated-a). All manner of companies joined the campaign, ranging from small firms selling, for example, caravans or making ice cream to large corporations like CORUS Teeside Cast Products, which not only erected a massive banner ‘Passionate about steel’ at the entrance to its site, but also dispatched slabs of steel around the world etched with a ‘Passionate about steel’ message. Some of the reasons for becoming an ambassador and following ‘feeling rules’ might be explained through the clear gains and a ‘profit motive’ (Hochschild, 2003) for their participation. Firstly, developing particular industrial sectors and growing the cultural, social and economic capital of the region benefitted ambassadors’ own organisational interests. Secondly, it opened up opportunities for accessing support from regional development programmes. Thirdly, selected ambassadors’ companies headlined particular promotional campaigns aimed at national and international audiences. Fourthly, ambassadors became part of a network with access to expertise, advice and information to support their various needs. There were others, however, who were impressed by the campaign and joined its network of ambassadors, but were less motivated by accessing regional development funds and did not necessarily have a vested business interest in taking part. This might be demonstrated though radio phone-in shows and also the ‘Wear 1’ (pronounced ‘we’re one’) campaign launched by the Sunderland Echo. Feelings flowed as listeners, for example, rang to talk on air about what they were passionate. Although in some way moved by the campaign, the content of passionate talk, text and film was not always supportive of ONE’s regional image campaign. The Taxpayers Alliance, for example, was outraged by the cost of the regional image campaign to the British tax payer and alternative representations of the North East (with the passionate strapline) were posted on You Tube. There was also deliberate ‘misuse’, or alternative use, of the passionate strapline, such as the document posted on Newcastle’s Flickrwall (Bell’s Court) describing the wall as ‘Passionate about graffiti’ (http://flickr.com/photos/samjudson/4742711106/).

Whilst some of the emotion on display in the regional image campaign may be explained through the work of Hochschild (2003) on institutional emotion management, there are strands of ONE’s regional image campaign that are harder to explain through the lens of Hochschild’s (2003) work. Significantly, people not employed by ONE (and often without much of a profit motive) were impressed enough to become ambassadors for the region. Furthermore, the campaign prompted passionate performances that suggested various feelings for the region (and the campaign) so that although, for some, emotion might have felt contiguous, it was far from this. To explain how people experienced the campaign differently and were moved to become ambassadors for the region or oppose the campaign, this paper draws upon the work of Sara Ahmed (2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2008, 2009) and the significance of objects in the regional image campaign. ‘Objects’ is a loose term for material about the North East that included articles in business magazines, advertisements in national broadsheet newspapers, calendars designed for desktops, DVDs, banners hung in buildings and websites. These objects were encountered in different ways as people, for example, walked past posters at train stations. Objects not only mediated public places but also the intimate space of home life as individuals watched television or read a magazine. This paper argues that the campaign material itself was stirred by its association with these various places, such as the affect of home and other places routinely important to individuals and the hum drum of daily life.

These objects contributed to how emotion moved between bodies and its ‘surfacing’ effect on individual and collective bodies, such as a network of ambassadors (and groups of people opposed to the campaign). Ahmed (2004c) drew upon Marx to explore the significance of objects and signs in her work on ‘affective economies’ whereby ‘the subject’ is ‘one point in the economy, rather than its origin and destination’ (Ahmed, 2004c: 121). Her work on emotional economies was also influenced by psychoanalysis, and Freud’s notion of unconscious emotion in particular, to show ‘that emotion may only seem like a form of residence as an effect of a certain history, a history that may operate by concealing its own traces’ (Ahmed, 2004c: 119). Ahmed (2004c) wrote:

> Psychoanalysis allows us to see that emotionality involves movements or associations whereby ‘feelings’ take us across different levels of significations, not all of which can be admitted in the present. This is what I call the rippling effect of emotions; they move sideways (through ‘sticky’ associations between signs, figures and objects) as well as backward (repression always leaves its trace in the present – hence ‘what sticks’ is also bound up with the ‘absent presence’ of historicity) (Ahmed, 2004c: 120).

**Passionate People. Passionate Places** was experienced differently meaning that feeling for the campaign was not simply some kind of property passed on from one person to another, but an ‘effect of the circulation of objects. Such objects become sticky, or saturated with affect, as sites of personal and social tension’ (2004a: 11). The material produced for the regional image campaign mediated people’s lives, touching, and touched by, home, work, public and private worlds. Objects became sticky with the affect of these different places and the relationships they embodied which in turn affected how the objects of the campaign were experienced.

Whilst Ahmed’s (2004a, 2004b) work explains why the campaign was experienced differently and its surfacing effect on bodies and networks, a nagging question remains, however, of why people engaged with material produced for the regional image campaign in the first place. As mentioned earlier, as a result of the MORI research, the campaign drew upon landscapes and things important to (some) people. Furthermore, looking closer at ONE’s campaign, it not only referred to meaningful landscapes, but promised something good. Building upon Ahmed’s (2008, 2009) work on sociable happiness, **Passionate People. Passionate Places** comprised objects of feeling that not only evoked home but promised ‘home’ and individuals moved by the campaign to become ambassadors shared ‘an orientation to those objects of being good’ (Ahmed, 2009: 4). There is no obvious, causal relationship between emotion and object, but a sense that people mouldily engage with objects, that feelings are directed towards objects and direct us towards objects ‘in the messiness of the experiential, the unfolding of the bodies into the world and.... the drama of contingency’ (Ahmed, 2008: 10). Ahmed wrote:

> Happiness does not reside in objects; it is promised through proximity to certain objects. So the promise of happiness – if you do this, then happiness is what follows – is what makes things seem ‘promising’, which means that the promise of happiness is not in the thing itself (Ahmed, 2008: 11).

Her work on objects seeming to promise happiness makes sense here. ONE’s campaign was compelling because it concerned home, speaking of home, reaching into homes, promising home. It drew...
upon findings of the MORI research to identify key signifiers of home important to local people and used these in its promotional material. The North East was represented in the circulation of objects embodying Northumbrian beaches, Teesdale countryside and landmarks that signified arriving ‘home’, such as the Penshaw Monument and the Angel of the North. Furthermore, the regional image campaign represented the North East as an ‘ideal home’, which is held in tension with lived experience of home and often culturally and historically specific and unreachable, existing in other places and times (Bennett, 2011; Blunt and Dowling, 2006).

Ideal home, the promise of future happiness ever after, emerged through aspirational images of luxury homes that included detached, newly built houses with off street car parking and designer interiors and costly country cottages occupied by, most importantly, harmonious families and happy couples. A recruitment brochure encouraged its readers ‘To feel right at home’ (ONE, undated-e) and a magazine about the North East, produced by Living North for ONE, concluded with a feature called ‘Home Sweet Home’:

> Whether your ideal home is a peaceful and secluded barn conversion in a picturesque village, or a state of the art studio in the heart of a bustling city there is no place like home — and there’s no place to make your home like North East England (Anderton, 2006: 47).

Similarly, the North East was also depicted as an ideal home for business leaders and entrepreneurs wanting to be part of a growing, creative economy, especially those working in key sectorsfavoured by ONE and representative of its knowledge economy. Objects promising ideal home for successful businesses included representations of clean, bright, modern office space, hi-tech science laboratories and computer suites endlessly buzzing with knowledgeable, creative, scientific people with entrepreneurial spirit, drive and ambition. There was no sign of tardiness or gossip by the water cooler. Ideal home for business was reinforced by the ambassadors’ website that delivered multiple performances indicating the range of skills, knowledge and creativity shaping the North East. Ideal home included being at the centre of ‘hubs’ of businesses, and supportive networks of business people wanting to ‘join up’ and ‘work with others’ (Chief executive for CPI (ONE NorthEast short film, undated-a)).

ONE had less control regarding the affect of its promising material. Objects of feeling promising home obviously made an impression on people, generating not only a network of people who became ambassadors for the campaign and noisy dissenters, such as the Taxpayers Alliance, but also ‘friends’ evoking an industrial heritage important to their sense of ‘home’ but largely absent from the regional image campaign (Philo and Kearns, 1993). Alongside the regional image campaign, there has been a notable growth of web/sites dealing with industrial heritage, such as, for example, the Durham Mining Museum (http://www.dmm.org.uk) and Wheatley Hill Heritage Centre. Whilst coal mining heritage and landscapes that shaped the former coalfields are largely absent from the regional image campaign, they dominate representations of home important to the ‘friends’ of these sites. Both sites are nests of information memorialising lives, landscapes and an industry that shaped the former Durham coalfield through vast collections of photographs, artefacts and records. Significant to both is the ‘dead labour’ that shaped the North East with the opening page of the website for the Durham Mining Museum entitled ‘In Memoriam’ and comprising a careful account of every Durham miner killed in an accident at work. Similarly, Wheatley Hill Heritage Centre is located in a former chapel of rest in a cemetery. These web/sites deflate overblown statements of ambassadors indicating that they are ‘the first generation who have made a mark’ in the region (West, 2006: 11) causing alienation on the part of people who feel let down by objects of feeling that fail to deliver their promise of home (Ahmed, 2008; Bennett, 2009, 2011). Home for the friends of Durham Mining Museum and Wheatley Hill Heritage Centre involved different landscapes, industries, stories and things.

5. Concluding thoughts

The focus of this paper has been emotion and place promotion. A particular concern has been how institutions get people (especially those they don’t employ) passionate and involved in place promotion. Connected to this concern, is the issue of how emotion moves. Although the regional image campaign was described as ‘infectious’, individuals did not feel the same, experiencing it differently. This paper considers two different eras of place promotion dealing with East Durham, the first in the late 1990s when local authorities, and Easington District Council in particular, were in an aggressive competition with others for inward investment and jobs on the back of devastating industrial closures and job loss. A decade later and ONE NorthEast Development Agency handled place promotion activities for the North East that included districts such as Easington and involved much bigger budgets and a large team of people.

The paper initially draws upon Arlie Hochschild’s (2003) work to consider how institutions orchestrate emotional performances evident in place promotion. The disciplinary gaze of institutions was evident in the place promotion campaigns of both Easington District Council and ONE as feeling rules provided the framework for emotional performances. In the 1990s, Easington District Council heavily managed the emotion work of key individuals, like Andy, who were formally involved in the marketing and regeneration of East Durham. In competition with other places for the attention of inward investors, the emotional resources of Andy (and his colleagues) were drawn upon in assertive, persuasive performances intended to get this former coalfield on the map for inward investment. In 2006, ONE’s regional image campaign was designed to manage not only the passionate performances of employees working for the regional development agency (RDA) with targets to meet, but also the performances of ‘ambassadors’, who live and work in the region, but are not employed by the RDA. ONE launched a designated website for ambassadors, giving them access to the edited performances of established ambassadors and the necessary tools and props to support their own performances.

The work of Hochschild (2003), however, does not fully explain how the regional image campaign for the North East got local people, not employed by ONE or necessarily motivated by profit, expressing their passion for the region. To address this concern, the paper draws upon the work of Sara Ahmed (2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2008, 2009) and her focus on affective economies comprising the circulation of objects of feeling that concern home and made an impression on people. A network of ambassadors had been impressed by the campaign and its objects of feeling concerning home, sharing an orientation to these objects as being good. The regional image campaign also made an impression on others, inspiring passionate performances that produced alternative representations of the North East. All these different performances addressed ONE’s agenda of getting people to express their passion for the region (and what they loathed about the campaign), making the North East a focal point.

The regional image campaign has now come to an end with Regional Development Agencies replaced by Local Enterprise Partnerships in 2012 and UK Trade and Investment centrally managing place promotion and attracting jobs to the regions. Funding for regional marketing activity has been massively cut and
capped at £25,000 per annum and any marketing activity above this amount must be approved by central government (Adrian Pearson, 2010, The Journal July 19, 2010). Activities and programmes organised by ONE have been wound down, funding streams switched off and physical references to the campaign removed from, for example, train stations and airports. ONE’s website for ambassadors was shut down in August 2011.

Impressions made by the regional image campaign, however, remain, affecting how the North East is experienced. Emotion is effective and powerful. This is because ‘emotions do things’ Ahmed (2004a, 2004b, 2004c: 26). They can move, impress, consume overwhelm or possess. Van Vuuren and Cooren (2010) wrote that ‘people are consumed by jealousy’ and ‘individuals are moved by passion that overwhelms or possesses them’ (Van Vuuren and Cooren, 2010: 94). The campaign involved the circulation of objects that were sticky with affect as they seeped into and were absorbed and entangled with the minutiae of working, domestic, public, leisurely, intimate life and places that mattered. ONE might have been wound down, funding cut and (some) objects taken out of circulation, but the regional image campaign has left a stickiness that lingers in the regions, shaping networks, bodies, performances and home.

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