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| Institution: Teesside University |
| Unit of Assessment: 30 - History |
| Title of case study: “Engaging with British Regional and Urban Culture” |
| <p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>This case study in the history of British regional and urban culture demonstrates research impact that is an extension of the unit’s longstanding commitment to benefitting regional and local constituencies. The impact extends to non-academic audiences locally, regionally and nationally. It has formed the basis of local collaborations with organisations that are prominent in curating Teesside’s industrial and post-industrial heritage. Its local impact has also exemplified the unit’s strong interaction with local and community history groups. The findings of Vall’s underpinning research into the history of British regional and urban culture has also engaged local and national audiences through radio and television features and documentaries addressing regional identity and industrial heritage. This research has helped to raise public awareness of the specific challenges attached to the promotion of creative economies in industrial regions. Moreover, it has benefitted local people by revealing and contextualising the complexity and diversity of contemporary regional industrial heritage.</p> |
| <p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Dr Natasha Vall was appointed Lecturer in History in 2006 and conferred as Reader in 2011. Prior to her appointment at Teesside University she was post-doctoral research fellow in the AHRC Centre for North East England History (Northumbria University strand), contributing research into twentieth century regional history, in line with the Centre’s brief to investigate the ‘longue durée’ of North East England’s regional identity. Vall is a member of the management committee of the Centre for Regional and Local Historical Research (CRLHR) and she has been a member of management committee of the Heritage Lottery funded Teesside Industrial Memories Project (TIMP) since 2012.</p> <p>Vall is the author of a body of scholarship on the modern and contemporary history of British regional and urban culture. The central theme of impact activities generated by her underpinning research has been an appraisal of the deployment of cultural and heritage led approaches to urban regeneration.</p> <p>Output 1, published as <i>Cities in Decline? A Comparative History of Malmö and Newcastle after 1945</i> (Vall, 2007). This single authored monograph explores the transition to post-industrial society in the cities of Malmö and Newcastle. The book critically evaluates the economic regeneration efforts that were launched in both cities during the 1980s, demonstrating how distinct national approaches allowed each city to mediate the pressures of globalisation.</p> <p>Output 2, published as ‘Regionalism and cultural history: the case of North East England, 1918-1976’ (Vall, 2007). Vall’s contribution to <i>Regional Identities in North East England</i>, a seminal collection of essays that showcased the research findings of the AHRC Centre for North East England, exemplified the edition’s central insight that the regional identity of the North East was a modern preoccupation, demonstrating how contemporary cultural identity was underpinned by the combination of media and regeneration narratives during the twentieth century.</p> <p>Output 3, published as <i>Cultural Region: North East England 1945-2000</i> (Vall, 2011). This single authored monograph provides the first historical assessment of English regional cultural policy. Through the lens of the North East, this study reveals how the discourse of history and industrial heritage was deployed to shape the boundaries of the contemporary cultural region. The book represents the first historical appraisal of the deployment of culture and heritage in modern and contemporary approaches to regional economic regeneration. The major conclusions of this work are that cultural policy was devised in the 1960s as a strategy to attract inward industrial development; however, by the 1990s the service and property sectors</p> |

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dominated and investment in cultural infrastructure was seen as an instrument of economic growth in its own right. This argument is an important challenge to both regional planning policy and the history of regional economic development, where the influence of culture-led regeneration was initially overlooked and more recently characterised by advocacy. The historical and critical evaluation of this process, which pinpointed the haphazard and ad hoc experience of the conurbations in North East England, provides an important point of departure for the study of, and future planning for, regeneration in industrial regions.

3. References to the research

Outputs:

1. Natasha Vall, *Cities in Decline? A Comparative History of Malmo and Newcastle after 1945* (Malmo, 2007).
2. Natasha Vall, 'Regionalism and cultural history: the case of North East England 1918-1976', in A. Green and A. Pollard (eds), *Regional identities in North East England 1300-2000* (Woodbridge, 2007).
3. Natasha Vall, *Cultural Region: North East England 1945-2000* (Manchester, 2011).

Quality indicators:

All three outputs were peer-reviewed.

Output 1 has been praised for its complex comparative approach eliciting positive reviews in *Urban History* in the UK (35, 02, 2008) and *Historisk Tidskrift* in Sweden (35, 1, 2009).

Output 2 has been described as a decisive contribution to the edited collection and a 'nuanced assessment' of regional cultural policy, *English Historical Review*, (125, 515, 2010).

Output 3 has generated favourable reviews in journals including *Journal of Modern History* (85, 1, 2013), *American Historical Review* (117, 3, 2012) and *Twentieth Century British History* (24, 1, 2013), described in the latter as 'undoubtedly an important work' that 'intelligently question[s] accepted orthodoxy'. Its disciplinary reach also reflects its impact upon disciplines related to the heritage and cultural sectors, eliciting positive reviews in the *Journal of British Studies* (51, 3, 2012) and *Museum and Society* (10, 2, 2012).

4. Details of the impact

Vall's scholarship continues to have beneficial impacts upon the CRLHR's local constituents of community and public historians. Vall is a regular participant and contributor to the Centre's monthly public research seminar series, in addition to delivering research informed public lectures on the history of North East regional culture to the local museums and community history groups including the Dorman Museum (2008), Great Ayton Local History Society (2008), North East Labour History Society (2012), Heritage Gallery at Cargo Fleet (2013) and the Gallery and baring Wing, Northumbria University Gallery (2013).

In 2007 her research into industrial heritage (output 1) was recognised by Middlesbrough Borough Council, when she was invited by the head of urban regeneration, Tim White (now retired) to discuss her insights on the Swedish experience of urban regeneration, for the benefit of future planning in Middlesbrough. The following year her expertise in urban regeneration was recognised by a Leverhulme Visiting Fellowship that brought Dr. Katarina Friberg (Södertörn University College, Stockholm) to the CRLHR to contribute to researching the history of urban regeneration in Middlesbrough. The final project workshop, regarding past and present approaches to urban regeneration, was hosted by the CRLHR in 2008 and engaged public participants, including Malcolm Race, former editor, *Evening Gazette*, and Franklyn Medhurst, Director of Teesplan (1965), in dialogue with academics, including Professor Simon Gunn and Professor Helen Meller, regarding past and present approaches to urban regeneration. The project report, which Vall supervised, was subsequently disseminated to Middlesbrough Borough Council's principal regeneration officers [1].

The local and community impact of her work continues as a member of the Management Committee of the HLF funded Teesside Industrial Memories project, where she replaced Margaret Williamson as the University representative in 2012. Vall regularly attends management and

steering committee meetings regarding the dissemination and publication of the TIMP oral history project results. Her presence within the project continues to bestow benefits upon this community history group. These benefits have been acknowledged by the Chairman as, “making an important contribution to TIMP’s future strategy” [2]. Moreover, her role within TIMP affirms the unit’s broader approach to impact through local community engagement [see REF3a]. In recognition of her expertise in the cultural and visual heritage (outputs 2 and 3) Vall was invited by TIMP to curate an exhibition of photography and film, entitled ‘Memories of Industrial Teesside’, to coincide with the launch of the project’s most recent oral history volume, *Life at heads. Memories of Working at Head Wrightson, Thornaby-on-Tees*.

In preparing the ‘Memories of Industrial Teesside’ exhibition, Vall collaborated with the curator of the Heritage Gallery at Cargo Fleet where the exhibition was held. She also advised TIMP on the representation of the region’s visual landscape, including curating and editing a film reel of material showcasing the region’s industrial heritage from the Northern East Film Archive, formerly known as the North East Regional Film and Television Archive (NEFA, Yorkshire Film Archive). NEFA is a registered charity that is located at Teesside University and provides public access to moving image about North East England. Vall collaborated with staff at NEFA in developing and selecting film showed during the exhibition. The launch event featured a talk by Vall attended by fifty members of the public. The talk was subsequently commissioned for publication in the TIMP newsletter and distributed to its 31 community members, as well as to the local press and local MPs. On attending ‘Memories of Industrial Teesside’ the MP for Middlesbrough, Andy McDonald, commented that it was an ‘excellent and very moving’ representation of the region’s industrial heritage [3].

An important dimension of Vall’s research on the history of regional culture involves a critical appraisal of the process of culture-led regeneration in post-industrial conurbations (outputs 1, 2 and 3). In 2011 she was approached by the senior partner in Python Properties Ltd., a regional commercial property company and a major business contributor to the regeneration of Teesside’s urban landscape, to explore links between the History unit at Teesside University and Python Properties Ltd. The collaboration was taken forward following the launch in 2011 of Python Properties restored Cargo Fleet building, the former headquarters of British Steel. The building incorporates a Heritage Gallery dedicated to the representation of Teesside’s industrial heritage, and has hosted exhibitions of material from the British Steel Archive Project. In May 2013 Vall was commissioned to curate an exhibition of photography and film to be held in the gallery (see above). Vall’s timely appraisal of the process of culture-led regeneration is of benefit to the organisation whose signature regeneration of historic buildings actively uses art as a tool to stimulate business confidence and engagement with property development. To this end Vall contributed to the Python Properties ‘Arts Festival’ in 2013, delivering a public talk on ‘Art and urban regeneration’ attended by graduate students, heritage professionals as well as members of the public [4].

As well as extending the unit’s longstanding commitment to engaging local and community users, Vall’s research findings on culture-led regeneration in the post-industrial landscape (outputs 1 and 2) have also benefited a national constituency of broadcasters, audiences and policy makers. Specifically, her research into the cultural heritage of industrial regions has since 2009 drawn the attention of a range of national broadcasters. In 2009 she was invited as panel speaker to the BBC Radio 3 ‘Freethinking Festival’ to discuss the regeneration of the North East’s industrial riversides, broadcast on the station’s flagship arts and culture programme, *Nightwaves*. This was followed by her interview contribution to the same programme, which critically evaluated the launch of Anish Kapoor’s flagship public artwork, ‘Tememos’, on the Tees [5].

A central concern of her research has been to explore the tension between metropolitan connoisseur culture and vernacular traditions (output 2 and 3), and in 2009 this came to the attention of the Westminster Media forum when she was invited to speak to the Keynote Seminar ‘Nations and Regions’. She contributed as speaker and panel member, alongside representatives from media and government, including the Head of BBC audiences, Penny Young and the Rt. Hon the Lord Macdonald of Tradeston, Member of the Select Committee on Communications. The seminar was attended by 100 delegates and the transcript of her talk was published online by the Westminster Media forum [6].

Most recently, and following the publication of *Cultural Region* (output 3), Vall was contacted by BBC4 producer Paul Greenan and invited to act as historical consultant to a new documentary on the history of regional television. Vall contributed programme ideas in preparation for the

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documentary 'Regional Television: Life Through a Local Lens', and also featured as contributor in the broadcast documentary (last broadcast, Wednesday 22 November, 2011). This research expertise has at the same time continued to be responsive to local audiences through its impact upon regional media organisations, including BBC *Look North*, to which Vall has contributed interviews in November 2012 for features on the history of regional culture [7].

The benefits of Vall's insights on post-industrial society have also reached international audiences. For instance, in 2009 Vall was invited, with Friberg, to discuss the findings of their collaborative research into the history of urban regeneration at Malmö Högskola's Urban Studies seminar, which is attended by professionals in the Swedish urban planning sector (as well as graduate students). Most recently, Vall has been invited to the German University of Tübingen, to the Centre for the Study of Threatened Orders, to speak in a public lecture about her on-going research into waterfronts and the history of urban regeneration [8].

Vall's underpinning research is driven by its concern to have beneficial impacts for local audiences as well as professionals in the heritage and museum sector. This imperative continues beyond the census period through a new collaboration with MIMA (Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art), which will deliver a conference (with Dr Matthew Grant, now Essex) in the spring of 2014, to coincide with MIMA's forthcoming exhibition on British Art in the 1950s. The conference theme of 'Consensus politics and the new patronage: art and the post war settlement', draws upon Vall's research into cultural policy and community art (output 3) and will feature public talks by the conference organisers that will provide gallery visitors with an opportunity to appreciate the wider historical context for of the exhibition [9].

The impact of this body of work is cumulative and strongly embedded in the CRLHR's ambition to provide high quality research that benefits its constituency of local users. To date it has been delivered important benefits that have inspired individuals in the local community to think critically, comparatively and historically about the complexities of regeneration in an industrial region. Building on her recent work with the North East Film Archive (see above), Vall is extending this relationship through the AHRC funded 'Heritage Consortium' collaborative doctoral partnership. Vall is the lead for the Teesside strand of the Consortium, whose ambition is to work with heritage providers (including the NEFA), in providing doctoral training in post-industrial heritage that will embed impact in the research from its inception, engaging its beneficiaries in a dynamic fashion with the research as it evolves.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. 'The purpose of a plan: a history of regeneration in Middlesbrough' sent in draft form to Middlesbrough Council's principal regeneration officers on 19.9.2008;
http://www.tees.ac.uk/docs/docrepo/School%20of%20Arts%20and%20Media/history_newsletter.pdf
2. Minutes of the Teesside Industrial Memories Project Management Committee Meeting, 14.6.2012.
3. Transcript of 'Memories of Industrial Teesside' public talk sent to Chairman of the Teesside Industrial Memories Project for publication in the summer 2013 Newsletter, on 11 July 2013. 'New Exhibition Celebrates Teesside's Industrial heritage', *Northern Echo*, October 17, 2013.
http://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/10406756.New_exhibition_celebrates_Teesside_s_industrial_heritage/ Email sent from MP Andy McDonald's constituency manager to the curator, Heritage Gallery at Cargo Fleet, on 22.05.2013.
4. <http://www.pythonproperties.co.uk/galleries/heritage-gallery-at-cargo-fleet/events/talk-by-natasha-vall---art-in-urban-regeneration>
5. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio3/freethinking/2009/events/event10.shtml>
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00smv4r>
6. http://www.westminsterforumprojects.co.uk/forums/sample/Nations_Regions_Pages.pdf
7. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2050602/combined> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00j4vnq>
8. <http://www.mah.se/medarbetare/For-medarbetare-pa-KS/KS-Aktuellt/KS-Aktuellt-2009/KS-Aktuellt---vecka-38/Nyheter-fran-Urbana-studiers-forskningsnatverk/> <http://www.uni-tuebingen.de/forschung/forschungsschwerpunkte/sonderforschungsbereiche/sfb-923/veranstaltungen/sfb-kolloquium.html>
9. <http://events.history.ac.uk/event/show/10600>