**Sometimes… Sometimes… Sometimes… Witnessing urban place-making from the immanence of "the middle".**


## Abstract

This paper offers a critical analysis of how urban place-making as a top-down or bottom-up action, involving organisational intervention or facilitation, is typified by problematic angles of approach. Instead, we evidence a flat ontological perspective, entering into urban assemblages to feel the chaotic and ever-changing forces that make places. Specifically, we use the Deleuzoguattarian lens of the refrain to employ a transversal analysis of the place-making inherent within an urban event - the Manchester and Salford Whit Walks; a Church of England procession that has been iterated for over 200 years. This reveals the importance of always-becoming place, characterised by ongoing repetition with difference, and embodied in the notion of Sometimes… Sometimes… Sometimes… We conclude that urban place-making is not something that can be simply started through organisational intervention, or facilitation of community-led approaches, but a process which needs to be engaged with from the middle.

> It's not easy to see things in the middle, rather than looking down on them from above or up at them from below, or from left to right or right to left: try it, you'll see that everything changes. (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004, p. 25).

## Introduction

This paper argues for a new approach to thinking about interventionist modes of urban place-making, which neither privileges the top-down perspective or the bottom-up, community-based approach. To theoretically unpack this assertion, we apply Deleuze and Guattari's (2004) idea of 'ritournelle' or 'the refrain' – something which is repeated with difference[1] - to the Manchester and Salford Whit Walks; a Church of England religious procession that has moved through the centre of Manchester (UK) for over 200 years.

By employing the refrain as a mode of analysis we are starting in the middle; examining the ongoing, always emerging and never finished presence of the urban place-making, through which the world of the temporary festive event of the Whit Walks pierces the apparent mundanity of everyday lived space to create a topophilic sense of place (Tuan, 1974). The contribution of our analysis is in revealing the need for a re-attunement to how place-making emerges from the immanence of the middle. It is a view which de-centres the human actor to recognise that places are in a perpetually evolving state of iterative (re)production embedded within an ever-changing and enmeshed tapestry of the city – woven from strands of its physicality, its weather, its institutions, its human actors and non-human actants and objects. This echoes Massey's (2005: 140) contention that the special nature of place "is precisely that throwntogetherness, the unavoidable challenge of negotiating a here-and-now (itself drawing on a history and a geography of thens and theres)".

Our Deleuzoguattarian ontological approach accords with new-materialist, post-qualitative perspectives (Fox and Alldred, 2015a; 2015b). It affords an understanding of place-making through notions of 'flat alternatives' (Escobar, 2007; Marston et al, 2005) and non-hierarchical assemblages. In applying this post-qualitative framework, data is decentred and patterns are not sought as is often the case in traditional qualitative data analysis involving coding and thematic development. Jackson and Mazzei (2012, p. 12) suggest, "to plug data and theory into one another in the threshold is to position ourselves as researchers otherwise than merely always-already subject ready to capture and code the experiences of our participants and their material conditions as always-already object". We do not, therefore, seek to interpret what the Walks mean, but what they *do* through time and space, such that "past actualisations are retained as virtual folds of possibility…" (Fiser, 2001, p. 69), thereby producing an *affective flow* of urban place-making. In this regard, it is not the intention of the paper to provide an analysis of the specific event but to use it an illustrative lens of how place-making, as an interventionist process, is problematic and may need rethinking from the immanence of 'the middle'.

Our paper is structured as follows. We begin with an overview which problematises interventionist practices of placemaking before presenting the refrain concept. The context of the Manchester and Salford Whit Walks is then discussed along with the approach used to examine them. This is followed by insight into the interaction of milieus and the shifting assemblage of the Walks, emphasising that some things 'always are', and some things are new or discontinued. The paper then moves to consider how rhythm and the 'becoming-expressive' (Deleuze and Guatarri, 2004) of the refrain forms a basis for territory. We conclude by arguing that the Manchester and Salford Whit Walks illustrate the ever-emerging and chaotic nature of

place which is at odds with interventionist and neoliberal approaches to, and perspectives on, place-making.

**The 'problem' of place-making**

Place-making is term that has has become subsumed into the language and documentation of urban place-based policies (McCann, 2002), both in the Global North and for rapidly emerging economies across the world (Friedmann, 2010). Whilst there are valuable examinations of place-making instigated by citizens' everyday (inter)actions (for example: Dyck, 2005; Platt, 2019; Edensor, Leslie, Millington and Rantisi, 2009), our paper is not focused on adding to this canon of work. Instead, we are concerned with critiquing the idea of place-making as an interventionist process. We point toward need for a re-configuration or re-orientation of engagement in urban place-making by relevant organisations and stakeholders (planners, developers, city centre managers, local authorities, communities, etc.), recognising how such a phenomenon emerges from the immanence of the middle. In so doing, we reflect on Karaman's (2012, p. 1302) plea that the pursuance of such an "immanentist urban theory agenda" should not "throw the baby of capitalism out with the bathwater". This suggests that there may be a means by which existing urban socio-political structures can flexibly and ethically accommodate the ever-emergent immanence of place-making. Thus, we are expanding Pierce et al.'s (2011: 54) definition of place-making as "the set of social, political and material processes by which people iteratively create and recreate the experienced geographies in which they live". In fact, this *iterative* action plays a central role in our argument.

Place-making is often closely tied to notions of urban restructuring and regeneration, involving intervention by organisations and institutions with the apparent goal of creating a

vibrant and coherent sense of community that may improve the wellbeing of citizens. This approach is closely related to ideas of civic boosterism (Waitt, 2008), place marketing, and place branding (Kavaratzis & Kalindides, 2015; Warnaby & Medway, 2013; Medway & Warnaby, 2014). Urban organisational and institutional practice, particularly in the Global North, appears to have delivered two distinct routes to place-making, in terms of how it might be enacted. The *top-down* approach (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2010) constitutes a process for building urban communities, and is aligned with the idea that places can quite literally be *made* by organisational intervention. This is evidenced by the enthusiasm with which the place-making concept has been embraced and enacted by government (Ivacko & Horner, 2014), property investors and developers (Wu, 2000), planners (Jordaan, Puren & Roos, 2008), by the cultural sectors (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010; Shaw & Montana, 2013), and by using events (Richards, 2017).

Criticisms of top-down place-making, and organisationally led perspectives on place more generally, are that they are overly managerial and rooted in neoliberal narratives of urban entrepreneurialism and the city as a 'marketplace' (Fincher, Pardy & Shaw, 2016; Shaw & Montana, 2016). Such top-down approaches certainly appear to lack a deeper appreciation of how the practices of people and communities going about their lives make places, which links back to established ideas about the power of everyday place-making (Dyck 2005; Platt, 2019). In turn, these kinds of critiques appear to have facilitated the development an alternative interventionist approach to place-making, which purports to be more community driven and *bottom-up* in its orientation. This is a view strongly articulated by the Project for Public Spaces, for example:

> We do feel a responsibility to continue protecting, practicing, and advocating for the community-driven, bottom-up approach that Placemaking describes… (Project for Public Spaces, 2009a).

However, similar to a top-down perspective, this form of organisational advocacy for a bottom-up approach to place-making often implies that it is process that can be *started* – that there is some kind of proto-place canvas to be filled, added to, and potentially improved. Thus, the Project for Public Spaces (2009b), whilst championing an understanding of the historical context of places and acknowledging that place-making is "never finished", utilises language such as "the beginning of the process" when explaining how successful place-making can be reached (following eleven principles).

Other analyses of place-making consider how organisations and communities can work together in different forms of partnership arrangement to make places better for citizens (see Courage, 2017). Indeed, partnership working in urban contexts has the potential to be both productive and inclusive when it takes a collaborative approach involving "smart pluralism" (see: Le Feuvre, Medway, Warnaby, Ward & Goatman, 2016). However, urban partnership arrangements can also be criticised as reflecting a neoliberal agenda, particularly if they are perceived as a Trojan horse for the undemocratic imposition of entrepreneurial and market-led solutions onto place-based policy. Indeed, as Peck and Tickell (2002, p. 393) articulate, there is a danger that "elite partnerships, mega-events, and corporate seduction become, in effect, both the only games in town and the basis of urban subjugation".

**Flat ontological perspectives on place-making and the refrain**

Our contention is that both top-down, bottom-up and even partnership-based understandings of place-making are problematic, in the sense that they each perpetuate a view

of urban spaces and experiences being ordered and structured according to existing socio-political hierarchies. As an alternative, we turn towards a flat-ontological perspective. Over the last two decades, understanding and theorisation about the socio-political configuration and governance of urban places has acknowledged the importance of flat ontological perspectives that support non-hierarchical and non-binary views of sites (Marston, Jones III & Woodward, 2005; Jones III, Woodward & Marston, 2007; Springer, 2014). Such work recognises the importance of immanent (self-organising) space, "dynamically composed of bodies, doings and sayings" (Jones III et al. 2007, p. 265). This accords with a recognition that organised systems, structures and hierarchies are inadequate intellectual tropes to make sense of the potentially complex, messy and fluid nature of urban space.

Important to a flat-ontological understanding of urban space is the work of Deleuze and Guattari (2004), and their insights into a world comprising always-emergent assemblages of rhizomatically interconnected actors and actants. For example, urban planning theorists such as Hillier (2007; 2008) suggest that planning practice requires a constant state of readiness for the multiplicity of possibilities. Others are critical of Hillier's perspective (Purcell, 2013; Purcell & Born, 2017), arguing it still envisages planning as a mechanism of the state, and thereby denies Deleuze and Guattari's (2004) anarchic thinking about how space is (dis)organised. Instead, Purcell and Born (2017, p. 534) suggest that Deleuze and Guattari would urge us to engage in activity "that is immanent, where the power to act and to judge is distributed widely across the social realm rather than vested in a sovereign authority". This is not to say that the role of organisational power in place is dissolved under immanent approaches. Rather, power operates *within* a wider configuration of actors and institutions that "appear and disappear, and are part of an emergent order that is immanent" (Van Assche, Duineveld & Beunen, 2014, p. 2391).

To advance a flat-ontological understanding of place-making we turn to the *refrain* from within the Deleuzoguattarian "toolbox" (Massumi, 2004: xv). The refrain itself encapsulates non-linear thinking, and the iterative logic of Sometimes… Sometimes… Sometimes…

> *Sometimes* one goes from chaos to the threshold of a territorial assemblage: directional components, infra-assemblage. *Sometimes* one organises the assemblage: dimensional components, intra-assemblage. *Sometimes* one leaves the territorial assemblage for other assemblages, or for somewhere else entirely: interassemblage, components of passage or even escape. And all three at once. (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004, p. 344-345 – our emphasis).

Therefore, the refrain is an attempt to bring an order to chaos. Chaos here may be understood not as disorder, but as other potentials. It is the "plethora of orders, forms, wills – forces that cannot be distinguished or differentiated from each other…" (Grosz, 2008, p. 5). The refrain is a making of a territory – a movement to keep the forces of chaos outside; a drawing of a circle around a "fragile centre" (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004, p. 343), but concurrently the opening of the circle to a future that draws on the forces of chaos.

Clearly, the refrain and territory are related concepts, linked through the movements of de-territorialisation, re-territorialisation and territorialisation. Brighenti (2010) highlights inherent fluidity here, in that "territories are actualised when one leaves them [and] one cannot leave a territory… without at the same time creating another somewhere else" (2010, p. 63). In order for a territory to be expressed there has to be, according to Deleuze and Guattari (2004), a potential for an opening, a passage, a line of flight towards the chaos of the outside. Whether or not this line of flight is followed, and whether or not the refrain opens onto chaos and re-territorialises, determines how a territory becomes-expressive. The *whether or not* reflects the

immanent possibilities of the refrain, or the Sometimes… Sometimes… Sometimes… It also, reveals how the refrain "fabricates time" (Deleuze & Guatarri, 2004, p. 384), and moves beyond notions of time as a mere system of linear measurement. It is this aspect of the refrain that allows the Whit Walks to "carry on altering" (Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, 2015: 88), and in so doing to continually 'make place'.

**Witnessing a procession of witness**

Thinking with the refrain, we set out to witness the affective flows of the Manchester and Salford Whit Walks, thereby plugging theory and data into one another (Jackson & Mazzei 2012). This post-qualitative approach is not a rejection of the notion of method, but a way to, "explore how elements in assemblage affect and are affected, and assess what bodies and other things do: the capacities these affective flows produce" (Fox & Alldred, 2015, p. 408). The ongoing production of the Whit Walks over time, and their recording in news and film archives, means they are well placed for helping us put the refrain to work at a *molecular* level, and then to see how this endeavour can make sense of the *molar* aggregate of the lived experience of urban place-making (Saldanha, 2017).

During 2016 and 2017 we undertook four group discussions with different sets of Church of England members. Participants were accessed via email and phone communications with Walk organisers and local church leaders (vicars or community liaison workers) who then invited their parishioners to attend. All discussions involved both women and men, although women were in the majority in all instances. The age ranges of these participants varied from early 20s through to mid 90s, with most being in the 60+ category. These older church members appear to have strong emotional connections to the Whit Walks, with some being able to provide photos of themselves as children taking part in them. Whilst the majority of discussion

group participants were White British, other ethnicities were also present (reflecting the diversity of those taking part in the Whit Walks we observed). In this regard, recent migration to areas of Salford, in particular, has led to a shift in local demographics and a significant diversification (four figure percentages in some cases) in the ethnicity of Church of England membership (Council for Christian Unity, 2014). Indeed, one vicar commented in a phone conversation that, "if it wasn't for the migrant communities, my Church would have closed".

An interview was also conducted with a Canon who has documented the Walks through oral accounts and personal memorabilia. In addition, one of the authors carried out observational inquiry of the Whit Walks on the days they occurred during the period 2016-2018, and recorded this through fieldnotes and photography. Further, we interrogated materials reporting on the Walks from the British Newspaper Archives, the Manchester Archives and Local Studies Library, and the Worktown Archive of Britain's first Mass Observation study. All the above are considered part of a research-assemblage, wherein analysis becomes theory-enriched, allowing for "patterns of configurations that open up to unexpected readings of and listenings to materials" (Lather, 2013, p. 636). Thus, the texts (data and theory) inform each other, and the interpretation is only one potential amongst many; it is a "speculative middle" (Springgay & Truman 2018, p. 82). Here, we are not asking what the Whit Walks mean or represent, or what they say about the city of Manchester (or Salford). Rather, we wish to become 'origamists' (Doel, 1999), attending to the Walks' 'scrumpled geography' (Doel, 1996), and the constant folds, unfolds and refolds of space with which they are enmeshed.

The Manchester and Salford Whit Walks provide an example of an iterative urban event that has persisted for over 200 years. The Walks emerged during the mid-Industrial Revolution in Lancashire (north west England). They are tied to the Whitsun holiday, related to the

Christian festival of Pentecost, which was an important time in the working-class calendar (Entwistle, 2012). These Walks embody the theme of witnessing the Holy Spirit, in line with the depiction of Pentecost in the Bible's Act of the Apostles (www.churchofengland.org, n.d.). Like many cultural practices, it is difficult to identify any definitive start point to the Whit Walks. One suggestion is that they came about as an expression of inter-denominational religious politics, evidenced through small-scale processions undertaken by the children of Church of England Sunday schools in Manchester and Salford, before spreading outwards across Lancashire (Burns, 2013). Alternative derivations are identified in the rational recreation and temperance movement, where the Walks became a means by which social reformers could keep the working classes away from the perils of drink and gambling in holiday periods (Entwistle, 2012).

Historically the Walks attracted large numbers of processants and spectators. In 1933 the Manchester Evening News (MEN) reported that the scale of the event resulted in "1,700 minor casualties" (cited in Fielding, 1989). Whilst the size of the crowds has since lessened, the MEN reported in 2016 that, "Hundreds help keep the Whit Walk tradition alive as they walk in glorious sunshine" (Butler, 2016). The ethnic diversity of processants today also reflects the Whit Walks ongoing relevance for an increasingly variegated demographic composition across the cities of Manchester and Salford. In recent years, walkers have gathered on the Spring Bank Holiday Monday in May at Manchester Cathedral, before processing towards the Town Hall, situated in Albert Square at the heart of the city centre. Here, a short Church of England religious service takes place with prayers, hymns and sermons from Church leaders. Secular city dignitaries are also in attendance, such as the Ceremonial Mayors for Manchester and Salford.

In the ensuing discussion we reveal how the Whit Walks' annual iteration, combined with their persistence for 200+ years, constitutes a form of 'spacetimemattering' (Barad, 2007), through which place-making emerges by referencing the past, present and future as part of a transversal process - or a "nonlinear and nonfiliative system of relations" (Parr, 2010, p. 71). We will see how this transcends traditional binary perspectives of place-making as a top-down or bottom-up intervention.

**Milieus of the Whit Walks: The *always are*, the *new*, and the *discontinued.***

The Manchester and Salford Whit Walks are a performative bearing of witness to God within urban space, with the act of walking as a means of reinforcing or marching the physical and relational boundaries of the Church through perambulation. This is akin to the ancient English religious tradition of 'beating the bounds', where church goers walk the boundaries of their parish as an active prayer for its protection (Hindle, 2008). Thus, one participant explained that, traditionally, where and when you walked was dictated by which church group or Sunday school you belonged to: "if you belonged to a different organisation, you had to go where you were told" (Ron[2]). And, in the Worktown Archive there are observations which record walkers "grimacing" across to other church groups of walkers (Mass Observation Worktown Collection).

This idea of territorialising physical space, and creating geographies of relational belonging within the city through walking, is often how parades are conceptualised - see, for example, the work on Pride parades (Browne, 2007; Johnston & Waitt, 2015), political parades (Edwards & Knottnerus, 2010; O'Reilly & Crutcher, 2006), and parades of national identity such as St Patrick's Day (Scully, 2012). However, the fact that walking, parading or marching involves movement emphasises that territory is an act, and something you carry with you

(Deleuze & Guattari, 2004). Kärrholm (2007) suggests that further attention needs to be paid to territory and how it is produced and reproduced, thus echoing the formulation of the refrain. It is not, therefore, the subject that produces territory, but the becoming-expressive of milieus. We argue that ideas of place-making need to be similarly nuanced.

The Walks are territorialised and produce place-making through the coding and transcoding of milieus via rhythmic expression. Milieus are translated as meaning (at the same time) "middle", "surroundings" and "the medium" (Massumi 2004, p. xvii). They are relational and form assemblages of seemingly heterogeneous parts (i.e. human actors and non-human actants) - "the soup" (Bonta & Protevi, 2004, cited in Jackson, 2016, p. 186). The milieus are coded through repetition, but they are "open to transcoding" (Jackson 2016, p. 187) by interacting with other milieus. Transcoding is how each milieu becomes another milieu. Recalling Doel (1999), this is a folding, unfolding and refolding which makes (and re-makes) the assemblage over.

Specific milieus for the Walks are coded in a manner that gives them coherence, but because milieus interact and cross through and between each other as "blocks of spacetime" (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004, p. 345) they are constantly transcoding to form "the constitution of a new plane" (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004, p. 346) – a rhythm. Thus, Albert Square in Manchester, where the Walks pause for a religious service, is itself a milieu - a space of embedded Mancunian history and civic pride. It is, however, constantly transcoded through interaction with other milieus. This involves the use of the space for a multitude of planned and unplanned events that contribute to the making of the place of Manchester. These might include the annual Christmas Markets in the city, or gatherings in the square at times of celebration and crisis, as

seen during any given Whit Walk, or at the vigil in May 2017 after the Manchester Arena bombing.

The Walks as a *thing* that happen year on year are an assemblage, but constitute a past, present and future of individual walks, each one itself a milieu that produces affective flows of place-making. In this manner, any given Whit Walk is inevitably and rhizomatically interconnected and interwoven with all other Walks that have been before and are yet to come, in an ongoing, palimpsestic and diaphanous spatial and temporal rendering of repetition with difference - an 'eternal return' (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004). This difference is evidenced in the shifting assemblage of those actors and actants that constitute the Whit Walks, whereby some things *always are* or appear to stay the same, or are reprised after laying fallow or forgotten for a period of time; some things are *new*; and some things are *discontinued*. This encapsulates the refrain; it is this process of Sometimes… Sometimes… Sometimes… that is inherent to our re-configuration of place-making.

***The always are***

The fact some things *always are* was evidenced by watching hours of archival films of the Walks from the 1930s and onwards[3]. At first this was fascinating, but after a while it became less so because so much appears unchanged. Thus, marching brass bands are a feature that persist through time, as do banners carried by the marchers as identifiers of church groups and of place – stating the name of the church and the location or urban district in which it is based. These elements of the Walks are a longstanding phenomenon, as a newspaper clipping from the late 19th Century demonstrates:

> There was nothing particularly striking or certainly novel in the procession…
>
> We saw the same banners – very old friends many of them – and also faces

that have been seen in the procession for very many years past. (*Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser,* 11 June, 1892).

The banners are a milieu that stabilise the space of the Walks and their participants and onlookers through time, by repetition (compare Figures 1 and 2). In this manner, even during WWII, when the Manchester and Salford Whit Walks were temporally suspended, the (re)appearance of banners in smaller localised processions provided an ongoing thread of reference:

> In one or two districts individual schools held a "walk" in their own localities… Bury [a town to the north of Manchester] Sunday schools for the first time since the war brought out their banners in the revived processions. (*Manchester Evening News,* 18 June, 1943).

<FIGURE 1 HERE>

**Figure 1: Banner at the Manchester and Salford Whit Walks, early 1950s.**

Source: Image reproduced with permission of Jim Burns (2013).

Similarly, today, the continued presence of the banners (see Figure 2) appears to provide a symbol of place-making for walkers. Banners are rendered as mobile icons; moving through time and space to instil walkers with a sense of civic pride in taking part in the walk performance:

> We go into town, which we are unknown to a lot of people, except if you see a banner, "Oh they're from wherever, and they're from such and such a place"… Because I mean they now know who we are and where we are from. (William).

<FIGURE 2 HERE>

**Figure 2: Banner at the Manchester and Salford Whit Walks, 2017.**

Source: Image authors' own.

The walkers, the hand gestures as they proclaim their faith or wave to spectators, the banners decaying over years of Mancunian rain, the clothes walkers wear, are all milieus that come into contact with the milieu of the city, thus transcoding both the city and the walkers simultaneously. This raises a myriad of questions: How do walkers' milieus negotiate with the milieus of the paved and cobbled surfaces of the city streets, or a wind which picks up speed making the carrying of banners problematic? What about the milieus of the non-walkers, the observers who have no idea what they are watching ("well I don't think it's St Patrick's Day" a passer-by in 2016 utters)? These milieus collide and transcode to create new milieus in that moment, they are assemblages of seemingly heterogeneous parts, which are starting to make the place, the territory; but we are not there yet.

There are milieus that might be evident, visible in the time and space of the performance of the Walks and central to their enactment and persistence. At the same time there are milieus that are peripheral and likely invisible to the casual observer. For example, the *always are* of the banners requires constant repair and maintenance work (Graham & Thrift, 2007; Denis & Pontille, 2014) to ensure their continued role in the assemblage of the Walks year-on-year. Here, banners are patched up, stitched and sewn, and sometimes modified - the transcoding of the milieu of any given Walk with a milieu of community organisation and preparation. Such efforts protect against the ongoing chaos evident in the attritional forces of banners being folded and unfurled, and the Manchester weather which leads to "banners, which have been stained to darker shades of brown and purple by the rainfall of former processions" (*Manchester Guardian,* 22 May, 1956).

This cycle of repair and maintenance means that the *always are* of the Whit Walk banners is actually *sometimes slightly different*. Any stability that the persistence of these banners brings to the assemblage of the Walks is dependent on slight changes and repetition with difference. This is especially evident in comparing Figures 1 and 2. The former image shows the Whit Walk along Manchester's Moseley Street in the early 1950s, with processants holding the banner of St John's church in Miles Platting (1.4 miles north east of the city centre), which depicts the figure of St John the Evangelist. After the closure of St John's in 1972, this same banner is now carried by members of the All Saints and Martyrs church, Langley (5.5 miles north east of the city centre), with the church's name adjusted in the banner along with other repairs and alterations (Burns, 2013). In both the 2016 and 2017 Walks, the history embedded within this banner appears to have a special significance for informed onlookers:

> The Langley banner has great support outside the Moon Under the Water pub. A great cheer goes up as they pass by. (Fieldnotes, 2016).

> Outside Wetherspoons [the same pub as above], once again Langley church gets the biggest cheer and people sing along to *Land of Hope and Glory*. People are shouting the names of the men carrying the banner "Go on…" (Fieldnotes, 2017).

Transcoding emphasises the importance of perspective in how milieus are created by those actors and actants within them, and how milieus can be understood. At the time of banner repair and maintenance the milieu of community organisation and cooperation plays a central role, and that of a Walk is peripheral or distanced as an event past or to come. Whilst in the time and space of a Walk itself, this centrality/periphery paradox is flipped, whereby the milieu of community organisation as evident in banner repair and maintenance is pushed to the past, and takes a background supporting role. Transcoding is the shuttle weaving back and forth to make

the place; interconnecting time-space settings and constantly (re)defining relational territories of the present on the basis of ever-emergent retentions from the past and changing anticipated futures.

***The new and/or the discontinued***

The *always are* is about the incorporation of ongoing small changes that have allowed the Walks to keep going for over 200 years and remain an integral aspect of place-making. Put otherwise, the *always are* is paradoxically dependent on the fact that some things are *new*, whilst others are *discontinued.* As Deleuze and Guattari state:

> One opens the circle not on the side where the old forces of chaos press against it but in another region, one created by the circle itself. As though the circle tended on its own to open onto a future, as a function of the working forces it shelters (2004, p. 343).

We can explore this through the clothes that are worn by the walkers themselves. Whilst there have been inevitable fashion changes over the years, the dressing of young girls in formal attire has not changed. However, the milieu of the girls' dresses appears characterised by a constant state of becoming-expressive. Each year certain colours and designs supersede previous ones, with bright pink being the colour of choice in 2016 (see Figure 3).

<FIGURE 3 HERE>

**Figure 3: Girls' dresses in the 2016 Manchester and Salford Whit Walks**

Source: Image authors' own.

Thus, the walkers draw on their history in handmaking the dresses - "my mum won't let anyone see them until the day" (Janine) - but this opens up to the forces of chaos and "hazards an improvisation" (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004, p. 344) by using vibrant pink. This ongoing cycle

of change is not a recent development. For example, when reviewing newspaper archives, there are references in the 1950s to the introduction of green and yellow dresses into processions, dispelling any myths regarding the immutability of the white dresses of Whit. New dress designs therefore create a line of flight (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004); a puncture in the spacetimemattering that creates a new sense of local identity and home, yet one which is referenced against the stability of links to the past. Such a cycle of change is a necessary aspect of the Walks' survival and their *always-are* nature - the eternal return.

**Rhythm and Becoming-Expressive**

Deleuze and Guattari (2004) suggest that rhythm is the milieus' answer to chaos. The ongoing interaction and movement within and between the milieus of the Whit Walks, or the Sometimes… Sometimes… Sometimes… evidenced above, creates rhythms. This, in turn, forms the territory; a point of safety, and a circle around this when it becomes expressive. As Kleinherenbrink explains:

> The bodily features and behaviours of a living being are all part of their own or interrelated milieus and rhythms, but as soon as their sounds, colours, products or mere presence becomes a "mark" for other living beings, there is a ritournello[1] [i.e. a refrain] (2015, p. 216).

Thus, the mere standing in a space does not create a territory or a home; movement in time and space is required:

> Yeah. There is definitely something about walking in a procession rather than all just turning up in a space, isn't there? (Margaret).

Put otherwise, milieus alone do not make place. As a bird uses song or colours to mark its territory, the 'drawing of the circle' emerges in the expressive action – the territory does not exist until this point (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004).

In the same way, prayers and hymns are repeated every Sunday in Church for many walkers; yet, they become-expressive in the ephemeral space that forms between the Walk and its observers. Such a co-presence is a critical element in the creation of territory. In this becoming-expressive of the refrain, McCormack stresses that there is a "multiplicity of non-subjectifying relations that bridge and open onto a multiplicity of ways of thinking, feeling, and perceiving" (2002, p. 475). For the Walks, this bridging is particularly evident in the music that the walkers produce as they march – a literal rhythm, with and from movement. For example, the marching brass bands during the Whit Walks can be seen as one instrumental aspect in the formation of their territory - a becoming-expressive of the identity and place of the Walks and the walkers:

> …all of a sudden, the brass bands started. It was electric. We were all totally motivated… because everybody was together. We weren't then just on our own. We were part of this whole (Margaret).

Participants reflected how in *one year* there was a steel "zumba" band[4] within the affective flow of the Walks – "Oh yeah, that was good that" (Denise) - but the next year it was not there. Now it is just a memory, a discontinued trace. These new and discontinued aspects are embedded in the consistency of the event itself and how it unfolds and refolds into time and space.

**Conclusions**

By working *with* the theory of the refrain through the lens of the Whit Walks the analysis presented above draws on this iterative event to illustrate the complexities of the ever-emergent immanence of urban place-making. We show how the Whit Walks are a performative but adaptive and affective process, rather than an annual (time-bound) ritual moment of behaviours that are merely repetitive and representational. In this sense, the Whit Walks move in and

through the changes of the urban landscape and across time and space, drawing on milieus (the soup) to co-produce place and community, simultaneously and recursively. We therefore demonstrate how thinking *with* the refrain and this flattened ontology, characterised by repetition with difference and iterative change, allows for the place-making role of events in urban space to be examined. This approach acknowledges the fact that there is no obvious beginning and end, or bottom or top, to place. The emphasis here is on developing an understanding of the potential connections, movements and flows between entities through which urban place-making becomes an expressive act, rather than something that is done *to* place.

In summary, our molecular analysis of place-making, illustrated through the example of the Whit Walks, highlights an imperative to move beyond the notion of place-making at the molar level, and towards the idea of always-becoming place-making with no definitive beginning or end, encompassing an endless colliding and transcoding of a myriad of milieus. This perspective provides a foil to the aforementioned binary of top-down or bottom-up interventionist approaches to place-making, which regularly present it as a process that can be beneficially introduced. This is not to say that organisations and institutions cannot, or should not, constructively engage in place-making activities, or introduce new cultural events and festivities into urban spaces. Rather, these kinds of interventions must, we suggest, embrace a positionality at the middle, adopting a concomitant understanding that place-making is not simply started or brought to neat strategic conclusions. This perspective is more likely to develop if organisations themselves become fully enmeshed within those places where they are attempting to intervene, and in Deleuzoguattarian terms recognise that such involvement necessarily makes them part of the urban place assemblage rather than simply looking in on it from an external perspective.

To conclude, place-making has become an oft-used word in contemporary urban planning and development rhetoric. At best, it refers to attempts to provide a consultant-informed and facilitated toolkit of principles or steps for citizens to make or *re*make those places, in which they are already deeply embedded, from the bottom-up (e.g. Project for Public Space, 2009b). At worst, place-making appears to be a 'weasel word' of the urban neoliberal lexicon, synonymous with profit-led development projects or experiential interventions. These are typically imposed in a top-down manner by organisations on places, and often made more outwardly acceptable by covering them with the fig-leaf of urban partnership. On the basis of our analysis, we suggest that any consultant-led, organisational or institutional intervention in place-making needs to adopt a more immersive stance; being less about *making* place or starting something afresh, and more geared towards place-making as a transversal process. Further, our work indicates that to evidence flat ontological perspectives of events in urban space, we may need to look harder at 'speculative middles' (Springgay & Truman, 2018); or as Jackson (2016, p. 191) argues, "we need to see the world in terms of lines and movements within and among open systems". This means researchers entering into urban assemblages like the Manchester Whit Walks so they feel the nuanced pulse of those creative, chaotic and ever-changing forces that shape them. Place processes are composed of rhizomatic and often unreflexive repetitions with difference; capturing this is critical to developing a fuller understanding of the ongoing rhythms of milieus that constitute place-making of all forms.

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**Endnotes:**

[1] The French word 'ritournelle' is usually translated to 'refrain' in English. However, the Italian word 'ritournello' (little return) often captures the sense of repetition with variance more fully. For consistency, we opt to use the English word 'refrain' throughout.

[2] All participants have been given pseudonyms to maintain anonymity.

[3] Northwest Film Archive, Manchester Metropolitan University at Manchester Central Library www.nwfa.mmu.ac.uk

[4] The Walks rarely diverge from the tradition of brass bands.