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Heley, Jesse; Welsh, Marc; Saville, Samantha

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tel: +44 1970 62 2400
email: is@aber.ac.uk

Globalizations

The Fanta-sy of Global Products: Soft-drinks, Counter Ubiquity and the Myth of Globalization --Manuscript Draft--

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Order of Authors:	Jesse Heley, PhD
	Marc Welsh, PhD
	Samantha Saville, PhD

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The Fanta-sy of Global Products: Soft-drinks, Counter Ubiquity and the Myth of Globalization

Jesse Heley (Email: eyh@aber.ac.uk ; Orcid: 0000-0001-7876-2337), Marc Welsh (Email: maw@aber.ac.uk; Orcid: 0000-0002-9482-9164), Samantha Saville (Email: sms10@aber.ac.uk; Orcid: 0000-0001-6307-0573, Twitter: @Samsaville)

All authors are affiliated with: Department of Geography and Earth Sciences, Aberystwyth University, UK

Project Twitter handle: @globalrural

Corresponding author: Jesse Heley eyh@aber.ac.uk Llandinam Building, Penglais Campus, Aberystwyth University, Aberystwyth, SY23 3DB

The Fanta-sy of Global Products: Soft-drinks, Counter Ubiquity and the Myth of Globalization

Fanta, a refreshment available in 188 countries, is a mundane, global product, ubiquitous and seemingly homogenous. We use Fanta to explore the complexities of how such an everyday product arrives in an ‘everyday place’, in this case a Welsh market town. Using an assemblage-based approach, we un-pick what makes up this fizzy drink, focussing on one particular ingredient – sugar – and what processes, places and politics this links us to when we consume it. Looking at these connections reveals how much variation is contained within an apparently ubiquitous object as it is reiterated across space. We argue that globalization, as a differentiated set of processes, occurs in places with differentiated outcomes. Globalization is constituted in place, and is constitutive of it. This acknowledges the role of global brands in place making and challenges the notions of both homogenous global goods and global experiences of the systems that bring them to us.

Keywords: globalization, assemblage theory, Big Soda, transnational corporations, place, sugar

Introduction

August 15th 2016. Two lost British geographers wander the redeveloped East Bay waterfront of Toronto, Canada. The midday heat is stifling, the area flooded with Pokémon GO hordes hoping to capture a Jigglypuff or Charmander as they navigate a new augmented reality emergent along the Toronto dockside. Our brave heroes are taking a break from the International Rural Sociology Association conference at Ryerson University. They have just presented a paper about a small town in mid-wales and its place in the world, drawing upon assemblage theory. The presence, absence and distribution of various sugary soft drinks in Newtown (Wales) was used as a marker for thinking about the banal everyday embeddedness of such places in global networks.

Beginning (and ending) with a can of fizzy pop, we explored how this small part of the

1 local milieu was put together, arranged and located within transnational flows, and how
2 this small - but not insignificant – object plays its part in constituting a town’s sense of
3 place, and its situatedness in the world.
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7 Seeking to escape the heat and PokéCrowds, our explorers continued west where
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9 - directly opposite a local landmark called ‘Sugar Beach’ - they were confronted by a
10 docked ship. A large banner with the words “Natural Cane Sugar” hangs at one end of a
11 huge crane methodically scooping this cargo from the hulk at a rate of some 600 tons
12 per hour and depositing it in to the factory behind. According to a handy ‘ShipFinder’
13 app hastily downloaded to our mobile phones, the vessel had departed Brazil 32 days
14 previous, before travelling down the St Lawrence Seaway to deposit its contents in
15 Toronto. It was then scheduled to proceed down Lake Ontario, through the Welland
16 Canal, eventually making its way to Chicago. Taking time to marvel at the sight, we
17 discussed the sheer logistics of growing, transporting, extracting, processing, shipping
18 and refining this batch of raw cane sugar; as well as the role of the ship in connecting
19 farmers and multinational combines in Brazil with Canada’s largest city. This is before
20 considering its many consumers, as raw product and ingredient in an array of other food
21 stuffs. The work being done to hold together these manifold actors is staggering, as are
22 the complex negotiated power relations involved in maintaining the assemblage over
23 time. Combine the commodity (sugar) with other things, and you have a product, like a
24 fizzy drink, that is everywhere at once; truly global in reach.
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48 The enormity of this exercise was to become yet more apparent to the authors as
49 fate intervened once more. Noticing a constant stream of trucks passing through a set of
50 factory gates, we identified the huge site adjacent to the dock as the home of the
51 Redpath Sugar Refinery. Curiosity piqued, we skirted the factory walls and came across
52 a small sign leading the way to an exquisite little museum devoted to the history and
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1 production of sugar, as told from the perspective of Redpath Sugar. The museum charts
2 its beginnings in 1854, the influence of the Redpath family, and the role of this family,
3 their business and philanthropic activities upon the material development of Canada
4 (particularly Montreal and Toronto). The history of this company alone reveals much
5 about multiple processes of globalization over time and their influence on place; not
6 least in terms of changeable global commodity markets and the critical role that
7 international trade agreements can have in making and breaking local economies, and
8 shaping the lives of those who live in their midst.
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19 Several hours later we emerged from the museum back into the baking summer
20 heat, immediately making a beeline for the local supermarket to purchase a drink. In
21 light of our reason for being in Toronto and our afternoon spent in the Redpath
22 Museum, we could not help but notice that Canadian cans were little different to those
23 on sale in Newtown. There was a distinct badging of Canadian ‘versions’ of global soft
24 drink brands as containing ‘real sugar’ - otherwise known as cane sugar. This was
25 overtly set in contrast to those equivalent soft drinks on sale south of the Canada/ USA
26 border. These versions predominantly make use of High Fructose Corn Syrup (HFCS)
27 for their sweetness, and there was no doubt that the absence of HFCS in our Canadian
28 cans was marketed as a ‘good thing’. Our refreshments were somehow more ‘genuine’,
29 and our wellbeing was being attended to by corporate forces.
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46 This recognition of those global/local tensions at the heart of contemporary
47 globalization, and an attentiveness to what we refer to as ‘differentiated ubiquity’, is at
48 the crux of our argument. As such, our collective experiences undertaking a commodity
49 survey in the food outlets of a mid-Wales town coupled with a day spent on the Toronto
50 harbourfront sparked an array of questions about the apparent homogeneity of global
51 brands, the variable outcomes of international commodity markets, and the ways these
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are materially embedded in local places, differently, around the world. In keeping with
that body of literature which challenges commonly-held notions and heavily mediated
discourses of globalization as an homogenizing and totalizing force (cf. Low & Barnett,
2000; Pieterse, 1994; Swyngedouw, 2004) what, then, can we learn from peeling back
the layers of a seemingly ubiquitous global product? How are such products assembled
and emplaced? What can thinking through the logics and logistics of ubiquitous items
tell us about the history and current forms of globalization? We approach these
questions through focusing on the original subject matter of our conference paper –
Fanta, a brand owned by the Coca Cola Company – drawing upon the framework of
assemblage theory to try to unpick the plethora of processes and practices encompassed
within the problematic term of globalization. Our goal is to shed light on how these
processes coalesce in *place*, the very moment we pick up that can or bottle of Fanta
from a shelf in a rural market town in Mid-Wales. The manner in which production,
distribution and consumption come together in particular localities – or rather, a
particular locality - is what is under consideration.

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Our line of argument proceeds in four stages. First, we set out our approach to
assemblage thinking theoretically and methodologically, and also in terms of how we
present our research here. Second, we situate this research in relation to wider work on
the geographies of food and critiques of corporate practices, paying particular attention
to the implications for place-making. This necessarily includes a brief account of the
historical beginnings of Fanta and its contemporary position as a Coca Cola brand,
inclusive of its system of ownership, production and marketing. Using this discussion
as a point of departure, we take one (crucial) ingredient and component of the Fanta-
Newtown assemblage - sugar – and consider the capacities for difference it enables
within the overarching Fanta product. This is not to suggest that sugar is the defining

1 component within Fanta; albeit a immediately recognisable and important one: rather,
2 sugar is a distinctly traceable component and one which allows us a platform upon
3
4 which to cut through and assay the complex constellation of interactions that make up
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6 Fanta as a differentiated yet seemingly ubiquitous product.
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10 This leads on to our fourth and final objective, where we connect our global
11 journeys with sugar back into our empirical work in mid Wales. Here we explore the
12 role that ‘global’ brands and everyday objects such as Fanta have in reproducing place
13 and anchoring communities in wider relations, but in a way that reflects and responds to
14 these communities. Inspired by Cindi Katz’s counter-topography (2001a, 2001b), we
15 suggest a move towards counter-ubiquity to continue the work of querying hegemonic
16 views of globalization. We argue that such a view usefully challenges assumptions of
17 ubiquity and difference, both in relation to objects and places. The diversity, difference
18 and unique qualities of place are often valorised as markers of distinction and resistance
19 against a totalising global homogenization. Yet places are marked as much by the
20 ubiquitous as they are by the unique. Here we argue for the acknowledgement of the
21 ubiquitous in making place and the importance of difference underpinning the ‘global’
22 product such as Fanta.
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42 **Assembling Fanta, ubiquity and place**

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44 It should (or indeed must) be noted that the mechanisms that deliver Fanta to our
45 palate are far from uniform and unchanging. This not just about bottle or can, flavour
46 and sugar content, but a vast array of interconnected and interdependent elements held
47 together. This brings together those who ‘make’ Fanta, move Fanta and drink Fanta,
48 inclusive those who govern these conduits through, for example, shifting legal
49 frameworks on labour rights, foodstuff contents and marketing campaigns. Enrolling
50 these different localities as internal to the Fanta assemblage involves a lot of work. Such
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1 a way of describing an ‘object’, Fanta, is an example of “assemblage thinking”
2 (Anderson & McFarlane, 2011; McFarlane & Anderson, 2011). This encompasses the
3 various ways in which assemblage can be employed as a means of description, a
4 theoretical concept and a methodological ethos. Cast in this light, Fanta becomes a
5 potentially unstable, changing set of relational component parts and processes, coming
6 together to constitute a global product which is regarded as consistent; but which in
7 truth is far from it.
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17 To summarise that expanding literature and engagement with Deleuzian and
18 Delandian theories of assemblage, assemblage theory provokes attention to historical
19 context, emergent structures, and a focus on processes and components (human and
20 non-human actors which may play material and/or expressive/discursive roles) that
21 stabilise or provoke changes in relations over time. It shifts our considerations towards
22 feedback loops, unexpected consequences, instabilities and renegotiations of power
23 (Grossmann & Haase, 2016). As Baker and McGuirk (2017) note, it can be a useful
24 methodological tool to analyse changing processes of governance and political-
25 economic structures. Moreover, its focus on non-linearity and the multiplicity of
26 processes, things and people which make up an ‘assemblage’ at any one time means that
27 assemblage thinking can also be a method of exposing complexity and ‘hidden and
28 recalcitrant agencies’ without a need to necessarily attribute responsibility and blame
29 (Greenhough, 2012, p. 205).
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48 Given this emphasis on the way people, capacities and things are brought
49 together, it is not surprising that assemblage thinking has started to be employed to
50 examine what Martin Müller describes as the ‘relentless juggernaut of globalization ...
51 which is made right there, where we live’ (2015, p. 35). Coupled with a growing
52 attentiveness to messiness, contradiction and unpredictability, globalization has become
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1 recast ‘not as a singular, circulating, encompassing hegemonic force, but as a contingent
2 set of translating logics that have to be enacted in practice’ (McFarlane, 2011, p. 379).
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4 Rather than engage in what Appadurai labelled ‘production fetishism’ (Appadurai,
5 1990) - an analysis that is centred on sites of production, this assemblage way of
6
7 thinking draws our focus beyond to all the global, local and translocal processes that are
8
9 enrolled in making and maintaining a recognisable, singular, yet simultaneously
10
11 differentiated brand. We would argue that the nebulous nature of the Coca Cola
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13 structure, of which Fanta is a part, lends itself to such an analysis particularly well. As
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15 the poster child of global corporate capitalism it has been subject of an array of analyses
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17 which centre on its business model, but it has also provoked a series of studies which
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19 demonstrate the highly differentiated global geographies of production, regulation and
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21 consumption tied to Coca Cola inc.
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29 As several authors have observed (Burrell, 2016; Dittmer, 2014; Greenhough,
30 2012) there are a number of difficulties and warnings that accompany assemblage-
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32 orientated approaches. Foremost is the problem of deciding what the assemblage of
33
34 study should be, and where and when to stop tracing its components, capacities and
35
36 processes. This is an inherently subjective query in which the role of the researcher and
37
38 the research itself becomes an integral part of the assemblage under consideration
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40 (Greenhough, 2012). For our part, Fanta came to our attention in the first instance
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42 through a survey of available everyday global products in the community that sits at the
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44 centre of our research project, with Fanta being one of the most readily available soft
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46 drinks available to purchase in the town. Here Fanta is only one (albeit popular)
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48 material and expressive component among thousands of others, and it is not a substance
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50 that is readily associated with any particular locality in the fashion of, say, champagne.
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52 In spite of this – or rather because of this – Fanta offers illustrative capacities when its
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1 specific labours, sites and practices are traced. On the one hand, it is trans-local and
2 trans-national, being intrinsically tied into the corporate structure and global footprint of
3 the Coca-Company and the ability of this edifice to derive a profit from the basic
4 ingredients of sugar and water. At the same time, it is successful because it is equally
5 embedded in other scales and localities, including the bottling plant, the regional
6 marketing platform, and the home. It is, then, very much embedded in place/s and
7 partly constitutive of them.
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17 The significance of objects and the material world is routinely acknowledged by
18 those who explore society and space (Rinkinen, Jalas, & Shove, 2015), while literature
19 on place-making tend to foreground uniqueness and those components of a landscape
20 that demarcate it as different from other places (cf. Kavartzis & Kalandides, 2015).
21 Bringing these debates together, the differentiation of ‘global’ brands and products is
22 not a novel insight (Jackson, 2004; Pike, 2009). As a strategy, differentiation is a classic
23 marketing technique. Concerned with establishing a market specific identity in different
24 jurisdictional and cultural spaces, this differentiation is not fully reducible to a
25 calculated tactic of global business. It is also a reflection of the unevenness of
26 geographically entangled brands (Pike, 2009, p. 620). These include the component
27 parts of products, which are often adapted to suit areal socio-technical regimes, such as
28 food safety standards. Distribution is shaped in part by transport infrastructure and the
29 capacity of different communities to purchase the product. Branding and marketing
30 strategies invariably take on cultural mores and linguistic differences. For example,
31 Coca Cola rendered phonetically into pinyin Chinese can sound like ‘female horse
32 stuffed with wax’, whereas the name chosen by the corporation, kekou kele, sounds like
33 ‘tasty fun’.
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Such products or ‘transactable objects’, then, are always and ongoingly entangled with the spatialities of economy, culture, society and politics. As Pike argues, the ‘spatialities of brands and branding suggest their geographical entanglements may be relational *and* territorial, bounded *and* unbounded, fluid *and* fixed, territorializing *and* deterritorializing’ (Pike, 2009, p. 633). In assemblage terms these spatialities are emergent and dynamic relations, made material as and in place/s. Taking this forward, we argue for a shift in attention from the strategies of corporations, to the interaction and intersection of such objects with individuals placed in social space. Here we suggest that - as well as tracing the complex and moving target of translocal assemblage involved in bringing together components in the form of an aluminium can of fizzy soda placed upon a shelf in a small market town in rural Wales – we also consider the place making nature of that assemblage in everyday landscapes. We contend that these forms of everyday globalization, of globalization made manifest *in place* rather than acting upon it, play a key role in contemporary social attempts to make sense of place and academic attempts to make sense of ‘the global’. Food and drink are an important part of this equation. As a human need for all people, everywhere, their role in society cannot be reduced to calorific requirements. Food and drink are intensely social, cultural and political. This corresponds with the current emphasis on value chains in studies of food and drink, which position production and consumption in much broader socio-economic contexts.

Unpacking the geographies of food and drink, value chains and global relations

The production and consumption of food and drink continues to be a major thread of debate within the academy, and particularly the interrelationship between globalization and agriculture. Covering a vast critical ground, Samir Dani notes that

1 food is a topic which is pertinent to such a range of disciplines that it is highly difficult
2 to comprehend and distil the volume of literature that surrounds it (2015, p. xvii). It is
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4 precisely because food is embedded in our everyday lives in so many ways that the
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6 study of food has been deemed cumulatively capable of illuminating all manner of
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8 things insofar as it is ‘simultaneously molecular, bodily, social, economic, cultural,
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10 global, political, environmental, physical and human geography’ (Cook et al., 2006, p.
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12 656).
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17 One strand of food research in the social sciences post-war has focused on the
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19 rise of industrialized and internationalized food production, with a particular emphasis
20
21 on vertical and horizontal integration and the increasing consolidation of agri-food
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23 governance within private corporate structures (Kalfagianni & Fuchs, 2015), or ‘big
24
25 food’ (Clapp & Scrinis, 2017). Fanta provides an excellent example of a particular form
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27 of corporate structure that operates at an industrial and international scale. Cook *et al*
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29 (2006) also highlighted the potential of pulling together Marxist and (after) actor-
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31 network theories (ANT), as well as underscoring the value of empirically intense
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33 ethnographic studies of food. Whilst assemblage approaches share much critical ground
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35 with ANT - including a preoccupation with the socio-material and relational character
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37 of space - there is ongoing debate regarding the similarity and (in)compatibility of these
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39 approaches (see Müller, 2015). Where ANT has tended to be characterized by a focus
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41 on fixity and the cyclical reproduction of particular orderings (see Bingham & Thrift,
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43 2000; McFarlane, 2011), assemblage approaches focus on the coming together of
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45 heterogeneous collections of relations, and upon the potential for change in these
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47 relationships.
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56 To date, the soft drinks industry has been critiqued on account of its corporate
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58 power (Gill, 2009; Nestle, 2015; Taylor, 2000), environmental impacts (Hills &
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1 Welford, 2005), and associated social injustices (Elmore, 2015; Wasley & Ferrara,
2 2016). There is also growing academic scrutiny of health risks attached to the
3
4 consumption of sugar based soft drinks, and particularly in regard to their role as part of
5
6 a global obesity epidemic (Cheng, Yang, Shao, Hu, & Zhou, 2009; Gertner & Rifkin,
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8 2018; Nestle, 2015; San Mauro Martin, Garicano Vilar, Rincon Barrado, & Paredes
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10 Barato, 2018; Woodward-Lopez, Kao, & Ritchie, 2011). Whilst acknowledging these
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12 lines of critique, we remain struck by the success of Coca Cola in turning combinations
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14 of water, sugar and acid, into one of the most profitable and widely distributed goods on
15
16 the global market. In this way the company can be critically positioned as a complex
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18 assemblage, which mobilises and moves various material and discursive elements
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20 across space and time, and situates them in landscapes of consumption. However, it is
21
22 beyond the scope of this paper to detail the assemblages of each ingredient, let alone the
23
24 manufacturing, refrigeration, vending, distribution or packaging regimes involved in
25
26 producing just one can or bottle of fizzy drink. We argue instead that by focusing on
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28 one particular company (Coca Cola), one brand of soft drink (Fanta) and one key
29
30 ingredient (sugar), we can illustrate how an assemblage-inspired approach might allow
31
32 us to differently dissect the bundled processes of neo-liberal capitalism. In turn, this
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34 provides a window into mapping the complex processes of contemporary globalization
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36 operating across space and, significantly, instantiated in place.
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47 *Fantastiche Coca Cola*

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49 The Coca Cola Company is one the most well-known global corporations. It
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51 sells its products in virtually every country in the world, owns more than 500 brands
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53 and boasts revenues in the vicinity of \$40 billion per year (Nestle, 2015). Moreover, it
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55 remains the single largest procurer of sugar, consumer of processed caffeine, and
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57 commercial buyer of aluminium cans and plastic bottles. And yet, Coca Cola does not
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1 physically manufacture a great deal. Indeed, the genius of their working model lies in
2 its capacity to deliver its drinks to the consumer through enrolling a range of businesses,
3 state organisations, and ecologies to do the productive work of assembling the product
4 and placing it on the shelf. Both costs and risk are outsourced and distributed amongst a
5 varied array of commercial interests, economic, political and social landscapes.
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11 Coca-Cola was founded in 1886, selling a thick black syrup to be added to fizzy
12 water by soda fountain operators in stores in the American city of Atlanta. From the
13 outset the business model was based on distributing this caffeinated concentrate, and
14 not selling a finished product (Elmore, 2015). This was not so much a calculated
15 strategy, but rather a pragmatic approach adopted by the inventor of Coca-Cola (John
16 Pemberton) due to his limited financial resources. Under the auspices of its first CEO,
17 Asa Chandler, and his focus on marketing and distribution mechanisms, by 1895 The
18 Coca-Cola Company had expanded sales to cover every state of the Union (Ibid.).
19 Independent soda fountain operators began to bottle the product, extending the
20 longevity and spatial reach of the product beyond the city and the confines of
21 established soda fountain vendors.
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39 And so began the franchising model of Coca-Cola capitalism. Local bottlers
40 would take the syrup and financial risk of manufacturing and distributing the product,
41 while the Coca-Cola Company would concentrate on concentrate, and advertising.
42 Mediating the expansion of both were governments – both local and national - who
43 provided the licences and infrastructure to access the key ingredients needed; i.e. water,
44 sugar, caffeine. Maintaining consistency in this context rapidly became a hallmark of
45 this business model, with the corporation providing technical teams to test and treat
46 component parts. Crucially, this included evaluation of water quality at each bottling
47 plant. In the early 1900s Coca-Cola began internationalising its operations, shipping
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syrup to bottlers in Canada, Jamaica, Cuba and Germany. By 1930 its ‘Foreign Department’ had negotiated bottling contracts in twenty-eight different countries, as far afield as Burma, Philippines, South Africa (Elmore, 2015).

At the start of World War Two the Coca-Cola Company had 50 plants in Germany with sales of 4.5 million crates a year. As the conflict progressed, corporate contact between the Atlanta Headquarters and German operations was initially maintained via neutral Switzerland. However, while the ongoing exchange of information could be secured in this way this did not extend to material goods. Supplies of syrup had ceased by 1941. In response, Max Keith, head of German operations, looked for an alternative way of driving production and making use of his bottling lines. Limited to ingredients available under conditions of rationing, Keith devised a soft drink based on the by-products of industrial cheese and cider production. Called Fanta, derived from the word *fantastisch* (fantastic), this recipe proved successful, with over 3 million cases produced in 1943. The success of this venture ensured the survival of the Coca Cola infrastructure through the war. As legend has it – the apocryphal first private telegram from Germany to the US after the liberation of Berlin was composed by Keith, and read: ‘Coca-Cola GmbH still functioning. Send auditors’ (Willett, 1989, p. 103).

When hostilities had come to an end Coca-Cola GmbH once again began bottling Coke, with Fanta being dropped. Brand managers did not see a good fit with the expressive aspects of the Coca-Cola corporate assemblage as envisaged by executives; in part, perhaps, because of Fanta’s association with the vanquished Nazi regime, and given the emerging role of Coke as part of a broader American imaginary now being pitted against a perceived Communist threat. After a decade had passed and the dust had settled, Fanta re-emerged, albeit within a much-transformed set of relations. This time around Fanta was produced in Naples, Italy, and instead of using the cast-off of cheese

1 and cider production, the flavour profile was derived from local citrus fruits. It was still
2 part of the Coca-Cola empire, however, and proved a highly successful diversification.
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4 Introduced in the US in 1960, it is now the second largest soft-drink in the world.
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7 8 ***What's in a can?*** 9

10 The Coca-Cola Company describes itself as 'a global business that operates on a
11 local scale'. It still manufactures and sells the concentrates and syrups used by bottlers
12 to make the final product, who also localise its marketing and distribution systems. The
13 Coca-Cola Company owns the brands and, when it needs to, the bottling operations (in
14 emerging and sub-optimal markets). In contrast to the more rigidly controlled Coca-
15 Cola global brand, Fanta is much more obviously 'glocal' – being both intensely global
16 and intensely local. Paraphrasing Swyngedouw, Fanta embodies a highly
17 internationalized, globally networked commodity that is organized around - and
18 embedded in - regionalized and localised production complexes (Swyngedouw, 2004, p.
19 38). This is in line with those features of contemporary capitalism. As Livesey (2017)
20 observes, consumer trends are beginning to sway away from mass produced goods and
21 towards custom-made items. This transition is facilitated, in part, by technologies such
22 as 3D printing and mass customisation production lines.
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42 Although Coca Cola's business model is not able to cater precisely to such
43 demands, it has responded of a fashion through the Fanta brand. It has, for example,
44 rolled out market campaigns tailored for specific, target audiences, and particularly
45 teenagers. This includes web 2.0 campaigns encompassing; consumer-generated limited
46 edition flavours, flavour elections, interactive graphic novels, YouTube and Snap Chat
47 video uploads, and Instagram competitions and campaigns (#FANTAxYou). Such
48 campaigns are evidence of a wider shift that sees consumers become more active in the
49 production of the goods they buy as 'prosumers' and 'value co-creators' (Ritzer &
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1 Jurgenson, 2010). Hence Fanta can be seen as a brand that is evolving to cope with
2 shifts in globalization and capitalism. Unlike sales in most other major soft drink brands
3 (which are losing ground as customers shift to sparkling and flavoured waters), in 2016,
4 sales of Fanta worldwide grew by 6.4% (Schultz, 2017).
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9 Through undertaking a brief survey of Fanta operations at a global level a
10 picture develops - not of a homogenous, global brand experience - but a brand globally
11 recognised and that connects distant places to a global identity. This is most obvious in
12 relation to flavour. There are a staggering array of flavours on sale; currently over 90
13 worldwide, not including discontinued varieties, with more unusual flavours including
14 Peach Mangosteen (Albania), Ice Kiwi Lime (Australia) and Green Tea (Thailand).
15
16 Official Fanta web sources suggest that Belgium and the USA have the largest number
17 of flavours domestically available (circa 10 each), and those varieties on sale vary
18 greatly between national contexts. This undoubtedly reflects regional tastes, but there
19 are other important forces at play. These include the availability of ingredients and
20 manufacturing facilities, as well as the presence of competing brands. Strawberry, for
21 example, is a popular flavour internationally, but not within Africa - even in countries
22 that grow a lot of strawberries (such as Egypt). The availability of Fanta 'zero', non-
23 sugar varieties has increased greatly, but only in certain markets; concentrated in
24 Europe and largely absent in Asia.
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29 Crucially for our argument, heterogeneity is also apparent on closer inspection
30 of just one variety; the 'standard' orange flavour Fanta. Available in every market
31 selling the Fanta brand and one of the most consumed drinks in the world, on closer
32 inspection, even this operates as multiple different versions of the Fanta assemblage,
33 enveloping a range of recipes and target audiences. There are even distinct differences
34 in the logos employed. In the USA and New Zealand, a soft, rounded version is used,
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whereas a more angular and punchy emblem features in Europe and Latin American countries. Perhaps the main variation concerns the type and amount of sweeteners and flavourings in use. In the UK, for example, Fanta Orange contains 3.7% orange juice and 1.7% citrus fruit juice, both of which come from concentrates. The US version, by comparison, has no fruit juice. The sugar content also varies; as does the type of sugars and sweeteners used. In the UK, a 330ml can of Fanta contains 15.18g of sugars, derived from ‘traditional’ sugar, sweeteners and orange juice. This is the lowest sugar version of ‘standard’ Fanta on sale internationally. In the US, the ‘home of Coke’, an equivalent serving has 41g of sugars, the source of which is High Fructose Corn Syrup. Whereas, the highest sugar content for Fanta Orange is to be found in India, Vietnam and Ecuador with 43g (Action on Sugar, 2015).

If a can of ‘classic orange Fanta’ purchased in mid-Wales is not sweetened by the same ingredients as a can of orange Fanta in the American mid-West, or Toronto, Canada, then we might reasonably ask why? They taste broadly the same to the casual imbiber, and tests have indicated as such (although it should be noted that a lively debate has emerged around this point among Fanta aficionados, who enjoy making comparisons between markets). Rather, these differences reflect the pursuit of economic profit. They are also a function of governance and divergent regulatory regimes, and are expressive of the relations between the component parts of the soft drinks industry and the global sugar assemblage. In this way both these regimes are responsive to, and reflective of, each other.

Sweetening the deal

As a traded commodity, the circulation of sugar has long been a feature of global geopolitical discourse. This is very much apparent in international trade agreements, where the production and mobility of sugar has – and continues to be – the source of

1 considerable debate, particularly under the auspices of the World Trade Organization.
2 Here, for example, Grant (2015) and Hopewell (2013) highlight the historic prevalence
3 of government subsidies and import tariffs across the industry, and how these regimes
4 favour, for example, sugar beet growers (notably the European Union) or High Fructose
5 Corn Syrup (the US). This in turn impacts upon the presence and practices of sugar
6 refineries and distributors such as Redpath in Toronto, and upon the methods of
7 sweetening employed by soft drink producers in different locations.
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17 Historically soft drinks the world over were sweetened with sucrose derived
18 from cane or sugar beet. This began to change from the 1970s onwards, when chemists
19 in the US developed a process to extract glucose and fructose from corn using enzymes.
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21 The High Fructose Corn Syrup (HFCS) this biological process generated provided a
22 new market opportunity for corn refiners: the food and drinks industry. Further impetus
23 for this transformation came in 1981, when a US federal tax in the form of a minimum
24 price for cane and beet sugar was introduced. Intended to support domestic sugar
25 producers in the US, it had the (unintended) consequence of pushing prices up above
26 international levels and – coupled with ongoing subsidies for corn growers in the US –
27 rendered HFCS an even more attractive for soda makers. Coca-Cola, for example,
28 authorized its bottlers to use corn sweeteners in approximately three quarters of its
29 drinks. Pepsi took similar action, allowing the use of HFCS in half of its canned and
30 bottled products (Nestle, 2015, p. 15). Taken together technological innovation, coupled
31 with a shifting policy landscape were assimilated into the soft drinks industry, and the
32 Fanta assemblage adapted and transformed accordingly.
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53 The corollaries of this transformation were felt by North American sugar
54 refiners like Redpath, and in ‘sugar towns’ like Toronto, which had to adapt to the
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1 challenges wrought by the changeable conditions of international trade and shifting
2 technological regimes. This is evident in the ‘official’ history of Redpath:
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5 Redpath Sugars itself was suffering the effects of rising world sugar prices which
6 increased the attractiveness of H.F.C.S. as an alternative sweetener to some of
7 Redpath’s traditional customers. In the raw sugar trading department, the
8 unpredictable fluctuations of the market reduced the profits from the facet below
9 its previous levels. Despite this, however, the continued full-capacity usage of the
10 refinery helped to maintain the financial viability of the company in the face of
11 increased import competition. (Feltoe 1993, p. 225)
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18 As this passage demonstrates, the emergence of HFCS had a profound impact on
19 ‘traditional’ sugar mills and those localities where refineries were situated. The
20 response for Redpath, for example, was to up-production, selling more at a cheaper rate.
21 For plant workers, this entailed more shifts and longer hours. Along the harbourfront,
22 lorries rumbled in and out of the Redpath gates with even greater frequency, and the air
23 grew slightly thicker with diesel fumes. These efficiency gains ensured that Redpath’s
24 manufacturing base at Sugar Beach would remain, but were not necessarily enough in
25 their own right.
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38 In 1959, Redpath Sugar had been acquired by Tate & Lyle, a British firm who
39 had refineries across the world. This global footprint allowed the company to mitigate
40 some of the risks brought about by price fluctuations and shifts in regional demand, but
41 not all. With refineries in Europe they could take advantage of a subsidy regime which
42 actively supported sugar beet production, and where manufacturers (including soft
43 drinks producers) remained more dependent on sucrose. Nevertheless, Tate and Lyle
44 were still driven to restructure their Canadian operations, shutting Redpath’s Montreal
45 refinery in 1980. This fate was echoed elsewhere in the world, with other localities in
46 Canada, America and the UK (among others) being pushed out of – and pulled into –
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1 the sweetener assemblage as a consequence of the realignment of the industry away
2 from cane sugar (see Chalmin, 1990; Hollander, 2010).
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4 The transition from cane sugar to HFCS within soft drinks production generally,
5 and Fanta specifically, was very much evident from the 1980s onwards but, as
6 discussed, this process has been highly variable, geographically. It is almost certain that
7 this basis for difference within the Fanta assemblage will continue to reciprocate and
8 reshape itself according to economic, political and social forces; some known, some not.
9 Health narratives are set to be expressly important, and the connection between sugar
10 consumption, soft drinks, industrializing economies and global (ill) health has been
11 made repeatedly (see for example Fraser, 2016; Richardson, 2015; and Smith, 2015).
12 Collectively these texts address what Smith refers to as the ‘sugarization’ of all aspects
13 of our diet, with sugars ‘hiding’ in processed foods ‘under a variety of names, including
14 sucrose, glucose, dextrose, maltose, lactose, galactose, malt syrup, maltodextrin, corn
15 syrup, high fructose corn syrup, molasses and corn sweetener, to name a few’ (Smith,
16 2015, p. 108). Elsewhere, Lang and Heasman (2015) emphasize the symbiotic
17 relationship between food production, marketing and dietary transformation at a global
18 scale. Rehearsing those accepted connections between sugar and disease in a
19 demographically ageing population, they lay considerable blame at the door of global
20 fast food brands. Soft drinks are afforded a prime role in this ascendant dietary
21 landscape, with Coca Cola often being cast as the main offender by nature of brand
22 recognition and market share.
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24 It is at this level that the consumer comes to the fore as a (or rather the) key
25 component of the soft drinks assemblage; although they are often (and, we would argue,
26 inappropriately) reduced to a somewhat passive role. An important part of this
27 relationship centres on physiology and the effect of sugars on the body. Soft drinks or
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‘sodas’ provide a highly effective mechanism for delivering large quantities of sugar into the bloodstream. Evidence indicates that this activates reward systems in the human brain, giving us pleasure (at least in the short term) (Lustig, Schmidt, & Brindis, 2012). It has also been suggested that sugars are addictive and can induce dependency, especially when combined with caffeine, which is an extremely common co-constituent of soft drinks. Whether or not these foods are addictive, notes Marion Nestle, the fact remains that ‘people love the taste of sweetness, and the more the better, up to what the food industry calls the “bliss point” – the taste perceived as optimal by participants in sensory tests’ (Nestle, 2015, p. 50).

Placing the consumer

So combinations of sugar, water and acid are mixed with some flavouring, colourants and fizzed up to hit that ‘bliss point’, generating a multi-billion dollar industry constantly searching for new markets and maintaining existing ones. To return to the study site for our research project, Newtown, the collective market is fairly small yet the atomised consumer sits at the heart of the global Fanta assemblage, so much so that complex and translocal production, marketing, logistical and retail assemblages organise around them.

Newtown is a small town of some 12,000 people in Powys, Wales. In 2015 we surveyed the retail offer of different soft drink brands in the town (including fruit juice, water and energy drinks). In just this one fairly peripheral rural town we found 243 different brands of soft drink on sale in 54 shops and cafés, where a ‘brand’ was, for example, ‘Coke’ rather than its various permutations. Of these, 48 brands were of carbonated soft drinks (62 including carbonated ‘energy’ drinks). Much of this variety was accounted for by ‘own brands’, boutique brands and discount brands rather than globally marketed brands. Unsurprisingly, shelf space and visibility was dominated by a

1 small number of ‘global’ brands. Looking specifically at carbonated soft drinks, the
2 most common brand on sale, as expected, was Coca Cola (in 35 out of 54 outlets). The
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4 second most commonly placed brand, in 28 different outlets, was Fanta. And it is this
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6 placing that we want to turn to here.
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10 In terms of volume, locations and visibility, retail outlets promote (and are
11 situated within an assemblage to promote) items that; sell, that come with marketing
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13 schema, that have brand recognition, and with simplified sourcing and distribution
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15 regimes. This results in a ubiquity of such global brands. Their location in lived and
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17 virtual worlds is ever-present and, yet – we would argue – marginal in the sense that we
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19 do not constantly ‘notice’ their presence. They are just ‘there’. Beyond its physical
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21 presence Fanta also exists as a virtual and imagined product.
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27 As we have already identified, the product (Fanta) exists in an assemblage that
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29 maintains a ubiquitous coherence across space yet is spatially differentiated in its
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31 components (water, sugar, flavours, colourants, containers, factories, franchisees,
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33 marketing and cultural significance) within national spaces. This global assemblage is
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35 subject to ongoing maintenance work and realignment, for example as regulatory
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37 regimes change or competitors grab market share – exemplified by the HFCS / ‘real
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39 sugar’ branding observed in Toronto. Part of that maintenance is conducted via national
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41 and regional representations of the brand – vibrant marketing campaigns, tie-ins and
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43 promotions with cultural events (a movie premier), sports sponsorship – and part
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45 through work to ensure the product is located in spaces of casual consumption (vending
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47 machines, public houses, restaurants - where exclusivity contracts between regional
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49 chains and beverage distributors are highly contested). The cumulative impact of these
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51 transformations is evident in the evolution and realignment of the Fanta assemblage and
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53 the manner in which it is a constituent of place; being consistently there but
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1 differentiated according to regional preferences and political discourse, at the national,
2 local and personal level.
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4 The anchor that holds the assemblage together is as much the atomised
5 consumer as it is the legal and financial Fanta institutions that siphon and accumulate
6 capital from mid Wales or downtown Toronto. Hence why the consumer is the subject
7 of ubiquitous global branding. Those same consumers subsidise and maintain the
8 assemblage; through waste collection and disposal, water licencing, healthcare,
9 transportation and other infrastructures provided by the state to deal with environmental
10 and social externalities associated with the product. Considering the Fanta assemblage
11 without its essential and placed based components – socially and materially located
12 consumers – generates a peculiarly polar reading of globalization as either located
13 across space or generating impacts upon places.
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30 **Conclusions**

31 September 15th 2015. Two un-lost British geographers wander along Broad
32 Street, Newtown. We are visiting all the food premises in the town, recording the main
33 items they sell and specifically the soft drinks they stock. We start at The Exchange, a
34 grand 190 year old building central to the history of the town. Constructed as a flannel
35 exchange during the heyday of a booming and globalizing industrial town it now hosts a
36 cinema and The Exchange pub. It sells Pepsi, not Coke. The mid-Autumn drizzle is
37 mildly oppressive, the streets fairly empty even though it is market day. A market has
38 been held here on Tuesdays since 1282. Our ipads, brought along especially to record
39 the data we want to capture are useless, the mobile phone network notoriously
40 unreliable has gone down. Pen and paper it is, then.
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57 We head towards The Cross, the traditional medieval heart of the 800 year old
58 town. We pass The Silver Fish – a fish and chip shop (Fanta orange), The Black Boy –
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1 another pub (Pepsi), the Spar – a mini-supermarket (a bank of four varieties of Fanta -
2 orange, lemon, fruit twist, zero orange, three sizes and containers), the News Express –
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4 a corner shop (two Fanta’s, orange and fruit twist - cans and bottles), Evan’s Café
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6 (Pepsi), The Castle Vaults – another pub (Pepsi), The Sandwich and Salad Bar (Fanta
7
8 orange). En route we pass The Bear Lanes – a small shopping centre that includes a
9
10 specialist sweet shop that sells ‘American soda’, including Fanta (corn syrup sweetened,
11
12 grape, mango, berry, grapefruit, strawberry and pineapple). Further perambulations
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14 would reveal a typical small market town, not quite a ‘clone town’ (Simms, Kjell, &
15
16 Potts, 2005) but with a sufficient number of chainstores and products to mark it out as a
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18 regional centre; a place on a global map. Indeed the arrival of high street chains is
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20 greeted by many as a sign of success, for others it heralds a loss of identity.
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26 Our brave heroes are newly arrived at the town, still navigating its routeways,
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28 green spaces, urban environs and landmarks. A little self-consciously we opt to covertly
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30 pop into the shops and cafes, quickly write down what is on sale and leave, one of us
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32 engaging the owner in small talk or a purchase if we feel particularly under scrutiny.
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34 We try not to think how much this feels like being shoplifter, surreptitiously stealing
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36 mundane data rather than Fanta. But why this reticence? Experience tells us that trying
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38 to talk about globalization, particularly as a thing that isn’t real, the outcome of relations
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40 rather than a universal force shaping our world, is tricky. It engenders strange looks and
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42 “they pay you to study that?” questions. Throw in “really we’re trying to uncover the
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44 multiple and mutable array of social relations that connect people here to other places
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46 and how these relations manifest in places like Newtown, producing the effects of what
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48 we commonly refer to as ‘globalization’” and the eye brows raise beyond what is
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50 normally possible on a human face.
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1 Yet connecting the place to the global, the ubiquitous object to a global
2 assemblage, in which this place is an essential component is the purpose of this paper.
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4 Newtown is unique. It is a place like no other; historic, beautiful, ugly, peopled,
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6 industrial, consumptive, rural, peripheral, global. It is assembled in relation to other
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8 places. And it is embedded in processes that operate across space, connecting,
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10 transforming, sustaining, locating Newtown as a place in a global order. Part of the
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12 placing of Newtown is less about what makes it distinct from other places, and is as
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14 much about what it shares with them. If Newtown had no Fanta what sort of place
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16 would it be? This is not a question we often ask, preferring to focus on the small
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18 business selling wheel balances to Australia or the textile firm that conquered the world
19
20 (Newtown was home of Laura Ashley). Yet this banal and ubiquitous object sits visibly
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22 in the social spaces of Newtown, consumed by some seeking the bliss point, piously
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24 ignored by others. Admittedly it hasn't always done so. But now that it does, and now
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26 that people know that when they visit another town, another city, or indeed another
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28 country the 'same' product is also present in their social space, what function does the
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30 ubiquitous but far from uniform play in the global sense of place of Newtown?
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50 Word Count: 8457
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54 Geolocations: Newtown, Powys, UK: 52.5132°N 3.3141°W , Redpath Sugar, Toronto, Canada:
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56 43° 38' 33.26" N, 79° 22' 13.65" W
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6

7 Authors Biographic details 8 9

10 Jesse Heley is a Senior Lecturer at Aberystwyth University. His research focuses on rural and
11 regional politics and governance, and the geographies of volunteering. He is currently a Co-
12 Investigator on the European Research Council funded GLOBAL-RURAL project, the ESRC
13 funded WISERD Civil Society Research Centre, and the EU Horizon 2020 ROBUST project.
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16 Marc Welsh is a Post-Doctoral Research Associate on the GLOBAL-RURAL project at
17 Aberystwyth University. His research focuses include technologies of social regulation,
18 resilience and environmental governance, processes of globalization and rural change with a
19 focus on the UK and sub-Saharan Africa.
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22 Samantha Saville is currently an ESRC Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Aberystwyth
23 University. Her current work returns to her doctoral research on value practices and
24 environmental politics in the Arctic archipelago of Svalbard. She has been part of the Global-
25 Rural research team contributing to theoretical development and data collection, analysis and
26 communication of everyday globalization in the project's Welsh case studies.
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Figure 1. USA (Grapefruit, Strawberry and Berry) and Mexican (Pineapple) Fanta, available in American sweetshop, Newtown, Wales (authors’ image).

The Fanta-sy of Global Products: Soft-drinks, Counter Ubiquity and the Myth of Globalization

Fanta, a refreshment available in 188 countries, is a mundane, global product, ubiquitous and seemingly homogenous. We use Fanta to explore the complexities of how such an everyday product arrives in an 'everyday place', in this case a Welsh market town. Using an assemblage-based approach, we un-pick what makes up this fizzy drink, focussing on one particular ingredient – sugar – and what processes, places and politics this links us to when we consume it. Looking at these connections reveals how much variation is contained within an apparently ubiquitous object as it is reiterated across space. We argue that globalization, as a differentiated set of processes, occurs in places with differentiated outcomes. Globalization is constituted in place, and is constitutive of it. This acknowledges the role of global brands in place making and challenges the notions of both homogenous global goods and global experiences of the systems that bring them to us.

Keywords: globalization, assemblage theory, Big Soda, transnational corporations, place, sugar

Introduction

August 15th 2016. Two lost British geographers wander the redeveloped East Bay waterfront of Toronto, Canada. The midday heat is stifling, the area flooded with Pokémon GO hordes hoping to capture a Jigglypuff or Charmander as they navigate a new augmented reality emergent along the Toronto dockside. Our brave heroes are taking a break from the International Rural Sociology Association conference at Ryerson University. They have just presented a paper about a small town in mid-wales and its place in the world, drawing upon assemblage theory. The presence, absence and distribution of various sugary soft drinks in Newtown (Wales) was used as a marker for thinking about the banal everyday embeddedness of such places in global networks. Beginning (and ending) with a can of fizzy pop, we explored how this small part of the

local milieu was put together, arranged and located within transnational flows, and how this small - but not insignificant – object plays its part in constituting a town’s sense of place, and its situatedness in the world.

Seeking to escape the heat and PokéCrowds, our explorers continued west where - directly opposite a local landmark called ‘Sugar Beach’ - they were confronted by a docked ship. A large banner with the words “Natural Cane Sugar” hangs at one end of a huge crane methodically scooping this cargo from the hulk at a rate of some 600 tons per hour and depositing it in to the factory behind. According to a handy ‘ShipFinder’ app hastily downloaded to our mobile phones, the vessel had departed Brazil 32 days previous, before travelling down the St Lawrence Seaway to deposit its contents in Toronto. It was then scheduled to proceed down Lake Ontario, through the Welland Canal, eventually making its way to Chicago. Taking time to marvel at the sight, we discussed the sheer logistics of growing, transporting, extracting, processing, shipping and refining this batch of raw cane sugar; as well as the role of the ship in connecting farmers and multinational combines in Brazil with Canada’s largest city. This is before considering its many consumers, as raw product and ingredient in an array of other food stuffs. The work being done to hold together these manifold actors is staggering, as are the complex negotiated power relations involved in maintaining the assemblage over time. Combine the commodity (sugar) with other things, and you have a product, like a fizzy drink, that is everywhere at once; truly global in reach.

The enormity of this exercise was to become yet more apparent to the authors as fate intervened once more. Noticing a constant stream of trucks passing through a set of factory gates, we identified the huge site adjacent to the dock as the home of the Redpath Sugar Refinery. Curiosity piqued, we skirted the factory walls and came across a small sign leading the way to an exquisite little museum devoted to the history and

production of sugar, as told from the perspective of Redpath Sugar. The museum charts its beginnings in 1854, the influence of the Redpath family, and the role of this family, their business and philanthropic activities upon the material development of Canada (particularly Montreal and Toronto). The history of this company alone reveals much about multiple processes of globalization over time and their influence on place; not least in terms of changeable global commodity markets and the critical role that international trade agreements can have in making and breaking local economies, and shaping the lives of those who live in their midst.

Several hours later we emerged from the museum back into the baking summer heat, immediately making a beeline for the local supermarket to purchase a drink. In light of our reason for being in Toronto and our afternoon spent in the Redpath Museum, we could not help but notice that Canadian cans were little different to those on sale in Newtown. There was a distinct badging of Canadian ‘versions’ of global soft drink brands as containing ‘real sugar’ - otherwise known as cane sugar. This was overtly set in contrast to those equivalent soft drinks on sale south of the Canada/ USA border. These versions predominantly make use of High Fructose Corn Syrup (HFCS) for their sweetness, and there was no doubt that the absence of HFCS in our Canadian cans was marketed as a ‘good thing’. Our refreshments were somehow more ‘genuine’, and our wellbeing was being attended to by corporate forces.

This recognition of those global/local tensions at the heart of contemporary globalization, and an attentiveness to what we refer to as ‘differentiated ubiquity’, is at the crux of our argument. As such, our collective experiences undertaking a commodity survey in the food outlets of a mid-Wales town coupled with a day spent on the Toronto harbourfront sparked an array of questions about the apparent homogeneity of global brands, the variable outcomes of international commodity markets, and the ways these

are materially embedded in local places, differently, around the world. In keeping with that body of literature which challenges commonly-held notions and heavily mediated discourses of globalization as an homogenizing and totalizing force (cf. Low & Barnett, 2000; Pieterse, 1994; Swyngedouw, 2004) what, then, can we learn from peeling back the layers of a seemingly ubiquitous global product? How are such products assembled and emplaced? What can thinking through the logics and logistics of ubiquitous items tell us about the history and current forms of globalization? We approach these questions through focusing on the original subject matter of our conference paper – Fanta, a brand owned by the Coca Cola Company – drawing upon the framework of assemblage theory to try to unpick the plethora of processes and practices encompassed within the problematic term of globalization. Our goal is to shed light on how these processes coalesce in *place*, the very moment we pick up that can or bottle of Fanta from a shelf in a rural market town in Mid-Wales. The manner in which production, distribution and consumption come together in particular localities – or rather, a particular locality - is what is under consideration.

Our line of argument proceeds in four stages. First, we set out our approach to assemblage thinking theoretically and methodologically, and also in terms of how we present our research here. Second, we situate this research in relation to wider work on the geographies of food and critiques of corporate practices, paying particular attention to the implications for place-making. This necessarily includes a brief account of the historical beginnings of Fanta and its contemporary position as a Coca Cola brand, inclusive of its system of ownership, production and marketing. Using this discussion as a point of departure, we take one (crucial) ingredient and component of the Fanta-Newtown assemblage - sugar – and consider the capacities for difference it enables within the overarching Fanta product. This is not to suggest that sugar is the defining

component within Fanta; albeit a immediately recognisable and important one: rather, sugar is a distinctly traceable component and one which allows us a platform upon which to cut through and assay the complex constellation of interactions that make up Fanta as a differentiated yet seemingly ubiquitous product.

This leads on to our fourth and final objective, where we connect our global journeys with sugar back into our empirical work in mid Wales. Here we explore the role that ‘global’ brands and everyday objects such as Fanta have in reproducing place and anchoring communities in wider relations, but in a way that reflects and responds to these communities. Inspired by Cindi Katz’s counter-topography (2001a, 2001b), we suggest a move towards counter-ubiquity to continue the work of querying hegemonic views of globalization. We argue that such a view usefully challenges assumptions of ubiquity and difference, both in relation to objects and places. The diversity, difference and unique qualities of place are often valorised as markers of distinction and resistance against a totalising global homogenization. Yet places are marked as much by the ubiquitous as they are by the unique. Here we argue for the acknowledgement of the ubiquitous in making place and the importance of difference underpinning the ‘global’ product such as Fanta.

Assembling Fanta, ubiquity and place

It should (or indeed must) be noted that the mechanisms that deliver Fanta to our palate are far from uniform and unchanging. This not just about bottle or can, flavour and sugar content, but a vast array of interconnected and interdependent elements held together. This brings together those who ‘make’ Fanta, move Fanta and drink Fanta, inclusive those who govern these conduits through, for example, shifting legal frameworks on labour rights, foodstuff contents and marketing campaigns. Enrolling these different localities as internal to the Fanta assemblage involves a lot of work. Such

a way of describing an ‘object’, Fanta, is an example of “assemblage thinking” (Anderson & McFarlane, 2011; McFarlane & Anderson, 2011). This encompasses the various ways in which assemblage can be employed as a means of description, a theoretical concept and a methodological ethos. Cast in this light, Fanta becomes a potentially unstable, changing set of relational component parts and processes, coming together to constitute a global product which is regarded as consistent; but which in truth is far from it.

To summarise that expanding literature and engagement with Deleuzian and Delandian theories of assemblage, assemblage theory provokes attention to historical context, emergent structures, and a focus on processes and components (human and non-human actors which may play material and/or expressive/discursive roles) that stabilise or provoke changes in relations over time. It shifts our considerations towards feedback loops, unexpected consequences, instabilities and renegotiations of power (Grossmann & Haase, 2016). As Baker and McGuirk (2017) note, it can be a useful methodological tool to analyse changing processes of governance and political-economic structures. Moreover, its focus on non-linearity and the multiplicity of processes, things and people which make up an ‘assemblage’ at any one time means that assemblage thinking can also be a method of exposing complexity and ‘hidden and recalcitrant agencies’ without a need to necessarily attribute responsibility and blame (Greenhough, 2012, p. 205).

Given this emphasis on the way people, capacities and things are brought together, it is not surprising that assemblage thinking has started to be employed to examine what Martin Müller describes as the ‘relentless juggernaut of globalization ... which is made right there, where we live’ (2015, p. 35). Coupled with a growing attentiveness to messiness, contradiction and unpredictability, globalization has become

recast ‘not as a singular, circulating, encompassing hegemonic force, but as a contingent set of translating logics that have to be enacted in practice’ (McFarlane, 2011, p. 379). Rather than engage in what Appadurai labelled ‘production fetishism’ (Appadurai, 1990) - an analysis that is centred on sites of production, this assemblage way of thinking draws our focus beyond to all the global, local and translocal processes that are enrolled in making and maintaining a recognisable, singular, yet simultaneously differentiated brand. We would argue that the nebulous nature of the Coca Cola structure, of which Fanta is a part, lends itself to such an analysis particularly well. As the poster child of global corporate capitalism it has been subject of an array of analyses which centre on its business model, but it has also provoked a series of studies which demonstrate the highly differentiated global geographies of production, regulation and consumption tied to Coca Cola inc.

As several authors have observed (Burrell, 2016; Dittmer, 2014; Greenhough, 2012) there are a number of difficulties and warnings that accompany assemblage-orientated approaches. Foremost is the problem of deciding what the assemblage of study should be, and where and when to stop tracing its components, capacities and processes. This is an inherently subjective query in which the role of the researcher and the research itself becomes an integral part of the assemblage under consideration (Greenhough, 2012). For our part, Fanta came to our attention in the first instance through a survey of available everyday global products in the community that sits at the centre of our research project, with Fanta being one of the most readily available soft drinks available to purchase in the town. Here Fanta is only one (albeit popular) material and expressive component among thousands of others, and it is not a substance that is readily associated with any particular locality in the fashion of, say, champagne. In spite of this – or rather because of this – Fanta offers illustrative capacities when its

specific labours, sites and practices are traced. On the one hand, it is trans-local and trans-national, being intrinsically tied into the corporate structure and global footprint of the Coca-Company and the ability of this edifice to derive a profit from the basic ingredients of sugar and water. At the same time, it is successful because it is equally embedded in other scales and localities, including the bottling plant, the regional marketing platform, and the home. It is, then, very much embedded in place/s and partly constitutive of them.

The significance of objects and the material world is routinely acknowledged by those who explore society and space (Rinkinen, Jalas, & Shove, 2015), while literature on place-making tend to foreground uniqueness and those components of a landscape that demarcate it as different from other places (cf. Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015). Bringing these debates together, the differentiation of ‘global’ brands and products is not a novel insight (Jackson, 2004; Pike, 2009). As a strategy, differentiation is a classic marketing technique. Concerned with establishing a market specific identity in different jurisdictional and cultural spaces, this differentiation is not fully reducible to a calculated tactic of global business. It is also a reflection of the unevenness of geographically entangled brands (Pike, 2009, p. 620). These include the component parts of products, which are often adapted to suit areal socio-technical regimes, such as food safety standards. Distribution is shaped in part by transport infrastructure and the capacity of different communities to purchase the product. Branding and marketing strategies invariably take on cultural mores and linguistic differences. For example, Coca Cola rendered phonetically into pinyin Chinese can sound like ‘female horse stuffed with wax’, whereas the name chosen by the corporation, kekou kele, sounds like ‘tasty fun’.

Such products or ‘transactable objects’, then, are always and ongoingly entangled with the spatialities of economy, culture, society and politics. As Pike argues, the ‘spatialities of brands and branding suggest their geographical entanglements may be relational *and* territorial, bounded *and* unbounded, fluid *and* fixed, territorializing *and* deterritorializing’ (Pike, 2009, p. 633). In assemblage terms these spatialities are emergent and dynamic relations, made material as and in place/s. Taking this forward, we argue for a shift in attention from the strategies of corporations, to the interaction and intersection of such objects with individuals placed in social space. Here we suggest that - as well as tracing the complex and moving target of translocal assemblage involved in bringing together components in the form of an aluminium can of fizzy soda placed upon a shelf in a small market town in rural Wales – we also consider the place making nature of that assemblage in everyday landscapes. We contend that these forms of everyday globalization, of globalization made manifest *in place* rather than acting upon it, play a key role in contemporary social attempts to make sense of place and academic attempts to make sense of ‘the global’. Food and drink are an important part of this equation. As a human need for all people, everywhere, their role in society cannot be reduced to calorific requirements. Food and drink are intensely social, cultural and political. This corresponds with the current emphasis on value chains in studies of food and drink, which position production and consumption in much broader socio-economic contexts.

Unpacking the geographies of food and drink, value chains and global relations

The production and consumption of food and drink continues to be a major thread of debate within the academy, and particularly the interrelationship between globalization and agriculture. Covering a vast critical ground, Samir Dani notes that

food is a topic which is pertinent to such a range of disciplines that it is highly difficult to comprehend and distil the volume of literature that surrounds it (2015, p. xvii). It is precisely because food is embedded in our everyday lives in so many ways that the study of food has been deemed cumulatively capable of illuminating all manner of things insofar as it is ‘simultaneously molecular, bodily, social, economic, cultural, global, political, environmental, physical and human geography’ (Cook et al., 2006, p. 656).

One strand of food research in the social sciences post-war has focused on the rise of industrialized and internationalized food production, with a particular emphasis on vertical and horizontal integration and the increasing consolidation of agri-food governance within private corporate structures (Kalfagianni & Fuchs, 2015), or ‘big food’ (Clapp & Scrinis, 2017). Fanta provides an excellent example of a particular form of corporate structure that operates at an industrial and international scale. Cook *et al* (2006) also highlighted the potential of pulling together Marxist and (after) actor-network theories (ANT), as well as underscoring the value of empirically intense ethnographic studies of food. Whilst assemblage approaches share much critical ground with ANT - including a preoccupation with the socio-material and relational character of space - there is ongoing debate regarding the similarity and (in)compatibility of these approaches (see Müller, 2015). Where ANT has tended to be characterized by a focus on fixity and the cyclical reproduction of particular orderings (see Bingham & Thrift, 2000; McFarlane, 2011), assemblage approaches focus on the coming together of heterogeneous collections of relations, and upon the potential for change in these relationships.

To date, the soft drinks industry has been critiqued on account of its corporate power (Gill, 2009; Nestle, 2015; Taylor, 2000), environmental impacts (Hills &

Welford, 2005), and associated social injustices (Elmore, 2015; Wasley & Ferrara, 2016). There is also growing academic scrutiny of health risks attached to the consumption of sugar based soft drinks, and particularly in regard to their role as part of a global obesity epidemic (Cheng, Yang, Shao, Hu, & Zhou, 2009; Gertner & Rifkin, 2018; Nestle, 2015; San Mauro Martin, Garicano Vilar, Rincon Barrado, & Paredes Barato, 2018; Woodward-Lopez, Kao, & Ritchie, 2011). Whilst acknowledging these lines of critique, we remain struck by the success of Coca Cola in turning combinations of water, sugar and acid, into one of the most profitable and widely distributed goods on the global market. In this way the company can be critically positioned as a complex assemblage, which mobilises and moves various material and discursive elements across space and time, and situates them in landscapes of consumption. However, it is beyond the scope of this paper to detail the assemblages of each ingredient, let alone the manufacturing, refrigeration, vending, distribution or packaging regimes involved in producing just one can or bottle of fizzy drink. We argue instead that by focusing on one particular company (Coca Cola), one brand of soft drink (Fanta) and one key ingredient (sugar), we can illustrate how an assemblage-inspired approach might allow us to differently dissect the bundled processes of neo-liberal capitalism. In turn, this provides a window into mapping the complex processes of contemporary globalization operating across space and, significantly, instantiated in place.

Fantastiche Coca Cola

The Coca Cola Company is one the most well-known global corporations. It sells its products in virtually every country in the world, owns more than 500 brands and boasts revenues in the vicinity of \$40 billion per year (Nestle, 2015). Moreover, it remains the single largest procurer of sugar, consumer of processed caffeine, and commercial buyer of aluminium cans and plastic bottles. And yet, Coca Cola does not

physically manufacture a great deal. Indeed, the genius of their working model lies in its capacity to deliver its drinks to the consumer through enrolling a range of businesses, state organisations, and ecologies to do the productive work of assembling the product and placing it on the shelf. Both costs and risk are outsourced and distributed amongst a varied array of commercial interests, economic, political and social landscapes.

Coca-Cola was founded in 1886, selling a thick black syrup to be added to fizzy water by soda fountain operators in stores in the American city of Atlanta. From the outset the business model was based on distributing this caffeinated concentrate, and not selling a finished product (Elmore, 2015). This was not so much a calculated strategy, but rather a pragmatic approach adopted by the inventor of Coca-Cola (John Pemberton) due to his limited financial resources. Under the auspices of its first CEO, Asa Chandler, and his focus on marketing and distribution mechanisms, by 1895 The Coca-Cola Company had expanded sales to cover every state of the Union (Ibid.). Independent soda fountain operators began to bottle the product, extending the longevity and spatial reach of the product beyond the city and the confines of established soda fountain vendors.

And so began the franchising model of Coca-Cola capitalism. Local bottlers would take the syrup and financial risk of manufacturing and distributing the product, while the Coca-Cola Company would concentrate on concentrate, and advertising. Mediating the expansion of both were governments – both local and national - who provided the licences and infrastructure to access the key ingredients needed; i.e. water, sugar, caffeine. Maintaining consistency in this context rapidly became a hallmark of this business model, with the corporation providing technical teams to test and treat component parts. Crucially, this included evaluation of water quality at each bottling plant. In the early 1900s Coca-Cola began internationalising its operations, shipping

syrup to bottlers in Canada, Jamaica, Cuba and Germany. By 1930 its 'Foreign Department' had negotiated bottling contracts in twenty-eight different countries, as far afield as Burma, Philippines, South Africa (Elmore, 2015).

At the start of World War Two the Coca-Cola Company had 50 plants in Germany with sales of 4.5 million crates a year. As the conflict progressed, corporate contact between the Atlanta Headquarters and German operations was initially maintained via neutral Switzerland. However, while the ongoing exchange of information could be secured in this way this did not extend to material goods. Supplies of syrup had ceased by 1941. In response, Max Keith, head of German operations, looked for an alternative way of driving production and making use of his bottling lines. Limited to ingredients available under conditions of rationing, Keith devised a soft drink based on the by-products of industrial cheese and cider production. Called Fanta, derived from the word *fantastisch* (fantastic), this recipe proved successful, with over 3 million cases produced in 1943. The success of this venture ensured the survival of the Coca Cola infrastructure through the war. As legend has it – the apocryphal first private telegram from Germany to the US after the liberation of Berlin was composed by Keith, and read: 'Coca-Cola GmbH still functioning. Send auditors' (Willett, 1989, p. 103).

When hostilities had come to an end Coca-Cola GmbH once again began bottling Coke, with Fanta being dropped. Brand managers did not see a good fit with the expressive aspects of the Coca-Cola corporate assemblage as envisaged by executives; in part, perhaps, because of Fanta's association with the vanquished Nazi regime, and given the emerging role of Coke as part of a broader American imaginary now being pitted against a perceived Communist threat. After a decade had passed and the dust had settled, Fanta re-emerged, albeit within a much-transformed set of relations. This time around Fanta was produced in Naples, Italy, and instead of using the cast-off of cheese

and cider production, the flavour profile was derived from local citrus fruits. It was still part of the Coca-Cola empire, however, and proved a highly successful diversification. Introduced in the US in 1960, it is now the second largest soft-drink in the world.

What's in a can?

The Coca-Cola Company describes itself as ‘a global business that operates on a local scale’. It still manufactures and sells the concentrates and syrups used by bottlers to make the final product, who also localise its marketing and distribution systems. The Coca-Cola Company owns the brands and, when it needs to, the bottling operations (in emerging and sub-optimal markets). In contrast to the more rigidly controlled Coca-Cola global brand, Fanta is much more obviously ‘glocal’ – being both intensely global and intensely local. Paraphrasing Swyngedouw, Fanta embodies a highly internationalized, globally networked commodity that is organized around - and embedded in - regionalized and localised production complexes (Swyngedouw, 2004, p. 38). This is in line with those features of contemporary capitalism. As Livesey (2017) observes, consumer trends are beginning to sway away from mass produced goods and towards custom-made items. This transition is facilitated, in part, by technologies such as 3D printing and mass customisation production lines.

Although Coca Cola’s business model is not able to cater precisely to such demands, it has responded of a fashion through the Fanta brand. It has, for example, rolled out market campaigns tailored for specific, target audiences, and particularly teenagers. This includes web 2.0 campaigns encompassing; consumer-generated limited edition flavours, flavour elections, interactive graphic novels, YouTube and Snap Chat video uploads, and Instagram competitions and campaigns (#FANTAxYou). Such campaigns are evidence of a wider shift that sees consumers become more active in the production of the goods they buy as ‘prosumers’ and ‘value co-creators’ (Ritzer &

Jurgenson, 2010). Hence Fanta can be seen as a brand that is evolving to cope with shifts in globalization and capitalism. Unlike sales in most other major soft drink brands (which are losing ground as customers shift to sparkling and flavoured waters), in 2016, sales of Fanta worldwide grew by 6.4% (Schultz, 2017).

Through undertaking a brief survey of Fanta operations at a global level a picture develops - not of a homogenous, global brand experience - but a brand globally recognised and that connects distant places to a global identity. This is most obvious in relation to flavour. There are a staggering array of flavours on sale; currently over 90 worldwide, not including discontinued varieties, with more unusual flavours including Peach Mangosteen (Albania), Ice Kiwi Lime (Australia) and Green Tea (Thailand). Official Fanta web sources suggest that Belgium and the USA have the largest number of flavours domestically available (circa 10 each), and those varieties on sale vary greatly between national contexts. This undoubtedly reflects regional tastes, but there are other important forces at play. These include the availability of ingredients and manufacturing facilities, as well as the presence of competing brands. Strawberry, for example, is a popular flavour internationally, but not within Africa - even in countries that grow a lot of strawberries (such as Egypt). The availability of Fanta 'zero', non-sugar varieties has increased greatly, but only in certain markets; concentrated in Europe and largely absent in Asia.

Crucially for our argument, heterogeneity is also apparent on closer inspection of just one variety; the 'standard' orange flavour Fanta. Available in every market selling the Fanta brand and one of the most consumed drinks in the world, on closer inspection, even this operates as multiple different versions of the Fanta assemblage, enveloping a range of recipes and target audiences. There are even distinct differences in the logos employed. In the USA and New Zealand, a soft, rounded version is used,

whereas a more angular and punchy emblem features in Europe and Latin American countries. Perhaps the main variation concerns the type and amount of sweeteners and flavourings in use. In the UK, for example, Fanta Orange contains 3.7% orange juice and 1.7% citrus fruit juice, both of which come from concentrates. The US version, by comparison, has no fruit juice. The sugar content also varies; as does the type of sugars and sweeteners used. In the UK, a 330ml can of Fanta contains 15.18g of sugars, derived from ‘traditional’ sugar, sweeteners and orange juice. This is the lowest sugar version of ‘standard’ Fanta on sale internationally. In the US, the ‘home of Coke’, an equivalent serving has 41g of sugars, the source of which is High Fructose Corn Syrup. Whereas, the highest sugar content for Fanta Orange is to be found in India, Vietnam and Ecuador with 43g (Action on Sugar, 2015).

If a can of ‘classic orange Fanta’ purchased in mid-Wales is not sweetened by the same ingredients as a can of orange Fanta in the American mid-West, or Toronto, Canada, then we might reasonably ask why? They taste broadly the same to the casual imbiber, and tests have indicated as such (although it should be noted that a lively debate has emerged around this point among Fanta aficionados, who enjoy making comparisons between markets). Rather, these differences reflect the pursuit of economic profit. They are also a function of governance and divergent regulatory regimes, and are expressive of the relations between the component parts of the soft drinks industry and the global sugar assemblage. In this way both these regimes are responsive to, and reflective of, each other.

Sweetening the deal

As a traded commodity, the circulation of sugar has long been a feature of global geopolitical discourse. This is very much apparent in international trade agreements, where the production and mobility of sugar has – and continues to be – the source of

considerable debate, particularly under the auspices of the World Trade Organization. Here, for example, Grant (2015) and Hopewell (2013) highlight the historic prevalence of government subsidies and import tariffs across the industry, and how these regimes favour, for example, sugar beet growers (notably the European Union) or High Fructose Corn Syrup (the US). This in turn impacts upon the presence and practices of sugar refineries and distributors such as Redpath in Toronto, and upon the methods of sweetening employed by soft drink producers in different locations.

Historically soft drinks the world over were sweetened with sucrose derived from cane or sugar beet. This began to change from the 1970s onwards, when chemists in the US developed a process to extract glucose and fructose from corn using enzymes. The High Fructose Corn Syrup (HFCS) this biological process generated provided a new market opportunity for corn refiners: the food and drinks industry. Further impetus for this transformation came in 1981, when a US federal tax in the form of a minimum price for cane and beet sugar was introduced. Intended to support domestic sugar producers in the US, it had the (unintended) consequence of pushing prices up above international levels and – coupled with ongoing subsidies for corn growers in the US – rendered HFCS an even more attractive for soda makers. Coca-Cola, for example, authorized its bottlers to use corn sweeteners in approximately three quarters of its drinks. Pepsi took similar action, allowing the use of HFCS in half of its canned and bottled products (Nestle, 2015, p. 15). Taken together technological innovation, coupled with a shifting policy landscape were assimilated into the soft drinks industry, and the Fanta assemblage adapted and transformed accordingly.

The corollaries of this transformation were felt by North American sugar refiners like Redpath, and in ‘sugar towns’ like Toronto, which had to adapt to the

challenges wrought by the changeable conditions of international trade and shifting technological regimes. This is evident in the ‘official’ history of Redpath:

Redpath Sugars itself was suffering the effects of rising world sugar prices which increased the attractiveness of H.F.C.S. as an alternative sweetener to some of Redpath’s traditional customers. In the raw sugar trading department, the unpredictable fluctuations of the market reduced the profits from the facet below its previous levels. Despite this, however, the continued full-capacity usage of the refinery helped to maintain the financial viability of the company in the face of increased import competition. (Feltoe 1993, p. 225)

As this passage demonstrates, the emergence of HFCS had a profound impact on ‘traditional’ sugar mills and those localities where refineries were situated. The response for Redpath, for example, was to up-production, selling more at a cheaper rate. For plant workers, this entailed more shifts and longer hours. Along the harbourfront, lorries rumbled in and out of the Redpath gates with even greater frequency, and the air grew slightly thicker with diesel fumes. These efficiency gains ensured that Redpath’s manufacturing base at Sugar Beach would remain, but were not necessarily enough in their own right.

In 1959, Redpath Sugar had been acquired by Tate & Lyle, a British firm who had refineries across the world. This global footprint allowed the company to mitigate some of the risks brought about by price fluctuations and shifts in regional demand, but not all. With refineries in Europe they could take advantage of a subsidy regime which actively supported sugar beet production, and where manufacturers (including soft drinks producers) remained more dependent on sucrose. Nevertheless, Tate and Lyle were still driven to restructure their Canadian operations, shutting Redpath’s Montreal refinery in 1980. This fate was echoed elsewhere in the world, with other localities in Canada, America and the UK (among others) being pushed out of – and pulled into –

the sweetener assemblage as a consequence of the realignment of the industry away from cane sugar (see Chalmin, 1990; Hollander, 2010).

The transition from cane sugar to HFCS within soft drinks production generally, and Fanta specifically, was very much evident from the 1980s onwards but, as discussed, this process has been highly variable, geographically. It is almost certain that this basis for difference within the Fanta assemblage will continue to reciprocate and reshape itself according to economic, political and social forces; some known, some not. Health narratives are set to be expressly important, and the connection between sugar consumption, soft drinks, industrializing economies and global (ill) health has been made repeatedly (see for example Fraser, 2016; Richardson, 2015; and Smith, 2015). Collectively these texts address what Smith refers to as the ‘sugarization’ of all aspects of our diet, with sugars ‘hiding’ in processed foods ‘under a variety of names, including sucrose, glucose, dextrose, maltose, lactose, galactose, malt syrup, maltodextrin, corn syrup, high fructose corn syrup, molasses and corn sweetener, to name a few’ (Smith, 2015, p. 108). Elsewhere, Lang and Heasman (2015) emphasize the symbiotic relationship between food production, marketing and dietary transformation at a global scale. Rehearsing those accepted connections between sugar and disease in a demographically ageing population, they lay considerable blame at the door of global fast food brands. Soft drinks are afforded a prime role in this ascendant dietary landscape, with Coca Cola often being cast as the main offender by nature of brand recognition and market share.

It is at this level that the consumer comes to the fore as a (or rather the) key component of the soft drinks assemblage; although they are often (and, we would argue, inappropriately) reduced to a somewhat passive role. An important part of this relationship centres on physiology and the effect of sugars on the body. Soft drinks or

‘sodas’ provide a highly effective mechanism for delivering large quantities of sugar into the bloodstream. Evidence indicates that this activates reward systems in the human brain, giving us pleasure (at least in the short term) (Lustig, Schmidt, & Brindis, 2012). It has also been suggested that sugars are addictive and can induce dependency, especially when combined with caffeine, which is an extremely common co-constituent of soft drinks. Whether or not these foods are addictive, notes Marion Nestle, the fact remains that ‘people love the taste of sweetness, and the more the better, up to what the food industry calls the “bliss point” – the taste perceived as optimal by participants in sensory tests’ (Nestle, 2015, p. 50).

Placing the consumer

So combinations of sugar, water and acid are mixed with some flavouring, colourants and fizzed up to hit that ‘bliss point’, generating a multi-billion dollar industry constantly searching for new markets and maintaining existing ones. To return to the study site for our research project, Newtown, the collective market is fairly small yet the atomised consumer sits at the heart of the global Fanta assemblage, so much so that complex and translocal production, marketing, logistical and retail assemblages organise around them.

Newtown is a small town of some 12,000 people in Powys, Wales. In 2015 we surveyed the retail offer of different soft drink brands in the town (including fruit juice, water and energy drinks). In just this one fairly peripheral rural town we found 243 different brands of soft drink on sale in 54 shops and cafés, where a ‘brand’ was, for example, ‘Coke’ rather than its various permutations. Of these, 48 brands were of carbonated soft drinks (62 including carbonated ‘energy’ drinks). Much of this variety was accounted for by ‘own brands’, boutique brands and discount brands rather than globally marketed brands. Unsurprisingly, shelf space and visibility was dominated by a

small number of ‘global’ brands. Looking specifically at carbonated soft drinks, the most common brand on sale, as expected, was Coca Cola (in 35 out of 54 outlets). The second most commonly placed brand, in 28 different outlets, was Fanta. And it is this placing that we want to turn to here.

In terms of volume, locations and visibility, retail outlets promote (and are situated within an assemblage to promote) items that; sell, that come with marketing schema, that have brand recognition, and with simplified sourcing and distribution regimes. This results in a ubiquity of such global brands. Their location in lived and virtual worlds is ever-present and, yet – we would argue – marginal in the sense that we do not constantly ‘notice’ their presence. They are just ‘there’. Beyond its physical presence Fanta also exists as a virtual and imagined product.

As we have already identified, the product (Fanta) exists in an assemblage that maintains a ubiquitous coherence across space yet is spatially differentiated in its components (water, sugar, flavours, colourants, containers, factories, franchisees, marketing and cultural significance) within national spaces. This global assemblage is subject to ongoing maintenance work and realignment, for example as regulatory regimes change or competitors grab market share – exemplified by the HFCS / ‘real sugar’ branding observed in Toronto. Part of that maintenance is conducted via national and regional representations of the brand – vibrant marketing campaigns, tie-ins and promotions with cultural events (a movie premier), sports sponsorship – and part through work to ensure the product is located in spaces of casual consumption (vending machines, public houses, restaurants - where exclusivity contracts between regional chains and beverage distributors are highly contested). The cumulative impact of these transformations is evident in the evolution and realignment of the Fanta assemblage and the manner in which it is a constituent of place; being consistently there but

differentiated according to regional preferences and political discourse, at the national, local and personal level.

The anchor that holds the assemblage together is as much the atomised consumer as it is the legal and financial Fanta institutions that siphon and accumulate capital from mid Wales or downtown Toronto. Hence why the consumer is the subject of ubiquitous global branding. Those same consumers subsidise and maintain the assemblage; through waste collection and disposal, water licencing, healthcare, transportation and other infrastructures provided by the state to deal with environmental and social externalities associated with the product. Considering the Fanta assemblage without its essential and placed based components – socially and materially located consumers – generates a peculiarly polar reading of globalization as either located across space or generating impacts upon places.

Conclusions

September 15th 2015. Two un-lost British geographers wander along Broad Street, Newtown. We are visiting all the food premises in the town, recording the main items they sell and specifically the soft drinks they stock. We start at The Exchange, a grand 190 year old building central to the history of the town. Constructed as a flannel exchange during the heyday of a booming and globalizing industrial town it now hosts a cinema and The Exchange pub. It sells Pepsi, not Coke. The mid-Autumn drizzle is mildly oppressive, the streets fairly empty even though it is market day. A market has been held here on Tuesdays since 1282. Our ipads, brought along especially to record the data we want to capture are useless, the mobile phone network notoriously unreliable has gone down. Pen and paper it is, then.

We head towards The Cross, the traditional medieval heart of the 800 year old town. We pass The Silver Fish – a fish and chip shop (Fanta orange), The Black Boy –

another pub (Pepsi), the Spar – a mini-supermarket (a bank of four varieties of Fanta - orange, lemon, fruit twist, zero orange, three sizes and containers), the News Express – a corner shop (two Fanta's, orange and fruit twist - cans and bottles), Evan's Café (Pepsi), The Castle Vaults – another pub (Pepsi), The Sandwich and Salad Bar (Fanta orange). En route we pass The Bear Lanes – a small shopping centre that includes a specialist sweet shop that sells 'American soda', including Fanta (corn syrup sweetened, grape, mango, berry, grapefruit, strawberry and pineapple). Further perambulations would reveal a typical small market town, not quite a 'clone town' (Simms, Kjell, & Potts, 2005) but with a sufficient number of chainstores and products to mark it out as a regional centre; a place on a global map. Indeed the arrival of high street chains is greeted by many as a sign of success, for others it heralds a loss of identity.

Our brave heroes are newly arrived at the town, still navigating its routeways, green spaces, urban environs and landmarks. A little self-consciously we opt to covertly pop into the shops and cafes, quickly write down what is on sale and leave, one of us engaging the owner in small talk or a purchase if we feel particularly under scrutiny. We try not to think how much this feels like being shoplifter, surreptitiously stealing mundane data rather than Fanta. But why this reticence? Experience tells us that trying to talk about globalization, particularly as a thing that isn't real, the outcome of relations rather than a universal force shaping our world, is tricky. It engenders strange looks and "they pay you to study that?" questions. Throw in "really we're trying to uncover the multiple and mutable array of social relations that connect people here to other places and how these relations manifest in places like Newtown, producing the effects of what we commonly refer to as 'globalization'" and the eye brows raise beyond what is normally possible on a human face.

Yet connecting the place to the global, the ubiquitous object to a global assemblage, in which this place is an essential component is the purpose of this paper. Newtown is unique. It is a place like no other; historic, beautiful, ugly, peopled, industrial, consumptive, rural, peripheral, global. It is assembled in relation to other places. And it is embedded in processes that operate across space, connecting, transforming, sustaining, locating Newtown as a place in a global order. Part of the placing of Newtown is less about what makes it distinct from other places, and is as much about what it shares with them. If Newtown had no Fanta what sort of place would it be? This is not a question we often ask, preferring to focus on the small business selling wheel balances to Australia or the textile firm that conquered the world (Newtown was home of Laura Ashley). Yet this banal and ubiquitous object sits visibly in the social spaces of Newtown, consumed by some seeking the bliss point, piously ignored by others. Admittedly it hasn't always done so. But now that it does, and now that people know that when they visit another town, another city, or indeed another country the 'same' product is also present in their social space, what function does the ubiquitous but far from uniform play in the global sense of place of Newtown?

Word Count: 8457

Geolocations: Newtown, Powys, UK: 52.5132°N 3.3141°W , Redpath Sugar, Toronto, Canada:
43° 38' 33.26" N, 79° 22' 13.65" W

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Figure 1. USA (Grapefruit, Strawberry and Berry) and Mexican (Pineapple) Fanta, available in American sweetshop, Newtown, Wales (authors' image).

The Fanta-sy of Global Products: Soft-drinks, Counter Ubiquity and the Myth of Globalization

Jesse Heley (Email: eyh@aber.ac.uk ; Orcid: 0000-0001-7876-2337), Marc Welsh (Email: maw@aber.ac.uk; Orcid: 0000-0002-9482-9164), Samantha Saville (Email: sms10@aber.ac.uk; Orcid: 0000-0001-6307-0573, Twitter: @Samsaville)

All authors are affiliated with: Department of Geography and Earth Sciences, Aberystwyth University, UK

Project Twitter handle: @globalrural

Corresponding author: Jesse Heley eyh@aber.ac.uk Llandinam Building, Penglais Campus, Aberystwyth University, Aberystwyth, SY23 3DB

Authors Biographic details

Jesse Heley is a Senior Lecturer at Aberystwyth University. His research focuses on rural and regional politics and governance, and the geographies of volunteering. He is currently a Co-Investigator on the European Research Council funded GLOBAL-RURAL project, the ESRC funded WISERD Civil Society Research Centre, and the EU Horizon 2020 ROBUST project.

Marc Welsh is a Post-Doctoral Research Associate on the GLOBAL-RURAL project at Aberystwyth University. His research focuses include technologies of social regulation, resilience and environmental governance, processes of globalization and rural change with a focus on the UK and sub-Saharan Africa.

Samantha Saville is currently an ESRC Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Aberystwyth University. Her current work returns to her doctoral research on value practices and environmental politics in the Arctic archipelago of Svalbard. She has been part of the Global-Rural research team contributing to theoretical development and data collection, analysis and communication of everyday globalization in the project's Welsh case studies.

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Figure

