The Migrant's Paradox

Hall, Suzanne M.

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INTRODUCTION

THE MIGRANT’S PARADOX

Every time you reach the edge, the edge move ahead of you like a shadow until the whole world is a ghetto, and you wait.

— Marlon James, *A Brief History of Seven Killings*

A conjuncture is a period during which the different social, political, economic and ideological contradictions that are at work in society come together to give it a specific and distinctive shape. . . . As I see it, history moves from one conjuncture to another rather than being an evolutionary flow. And what drives it forward is usually a crisis, when the contradictions that are always at play in any historical moment are condensed.

— Stuart Hall and Doreen Massey, “Interpreting the Crisis,” *Soundings*

A migrant is a person required and refuted by Western sovereignty. To inhabit this impossible dualism requires living with a steadfastly unstable status, readily questioned at the onset of national elections or economic crises, while tenuously embraced under the banners of celebratory multiculturalism. *The Migrant’s Paradox* is located in the brutal contradictions of border-preserving politics and border-expanding economics that increasingly constrict the life and space available to the migrant. This book is about the street life of the migrant’s paradox and what it means to make life and livelihood within a citizenship that is always called into question. It unfolds from streets located in the far-flung parts of deindustrialized UK cities, where jobs are hard to come by and the impacts of historic state underinvestment are deeply felt. Within these cracks of capitalism, I explore the diverse formations of street economies and how they reflect the limits and possibilities of migrant city-making. To tell this story of the migrant’s paradox through the commonplace banality of the street is to write with two footings. One rests on the connection of state and street and how a political economy of
displacement residualizes humanity. Here it is crucial to show how the asymmetries of global migration intersect with the ongoing ferocities of urban marginalization. This conjuncture allows us to understand the UK migration system as part of a larger condition of human displacement that not only unfolds across global, national, and urban space but also corresponds with related forms of dislocation and their colonial antecedents. The cumulative effect is to dislodge human prospect and citizenship by substituting it with precarity and denizenship. The other footing rests on writing the street as world, engaging with the experiences of encounter and exchange among shop proprietors on the urban margins of Birmingham, Bristol, Leicester, London, and Manchester. These proprietors talk about the hard work of navigating multiple border logics, and their claims to space contest the all-too-narrow questions of “What is a border?” and “Who is a migrant?”

The connection between state and street makes starkly visible multiple strands of displacement: how citizenship is eroded by the punitive legality of the border regime, how secure work is supplanted by casualized employment, and how affordable space is eroded by state-sanctioned regeneration. Oren Yiftachel writes about “displaceability” as “a systemic condition through which marginalizing power is exerted through policy and legal systems,” implicating the centrality of the state in orchestrated displacements. It is crucial to connect this with the accelerated force of dislodgement and the affective forms of its resurgent racisms that Brenna and Davina Bhandar capture as “cultures of dispossession.” In this book I highlight a combined political economy of displacement, exploring migration together with deindustrialization, together with urban regeneration. These overlapping processes of human residualization compel us to think with greater complexity about the lifeworld of work in the urban peripheries in which enduring borders, long working hours, and escalating rents prevail. An elemental challenge in writing this book through the street is therefore to problematize and confront the narrow definition of migration as an exceptional change process and with it the migrant as an exceptional human category. Via state categorizations the denizen emerges as the troublesome figure positioned outside of society, emplaced at the national border as much as the urban outskirts. “Race” and racism are central axes in this formation, establishing an “edge population” rendered as surplus to the requirements of capital, and always located in relation to peripheral space. Within this constitutive margin the state maintains
the migrant as a prefigurative racialized outsider, even once citizenship is legally conferred.

Writing the street as world requires tracing the proprietors’ varied journeys to the street, surfacing the connections between global displacements and urban emplacements and between histories of colonialism and current coloniality. Across these streets, proprietors have traveled from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Canada, China, Cyprus and Northern Cyprus, Eritrea, Ghana, India, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Kashmir, Kenya, Kurdistan, Lithuania, Malawi, Malaysia, Nepal, The Netherlands, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestine, Poland, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tanzania, Thailand, Trinidad, Turkey, Uganda, the UK, Vietnam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe. I explore how this spectrum of diverse individuals becomes positioned in terms of work prospects and urban locality, and how they reposition themselves through practices of claiming space. Many proprietors narrate their multiple border crossings through acquiring a cosmopolitan repertoire of global edges—learning more languages, gaining more accreditations, developing additional skills—all of which perversely grow alongside their experiences of redundancy. I therefore question how “race” maps onto place, exploring how migrant groups become embedded in the city. The production of “race” as a primary axis of subordination is instrumentalized through the homogenizing state logics of “whiteness” and its vocabularies of a “nonwhite” and “minority” condition. Yet the street is a multifarious composition that defies these flattening tropes, both in the discrepant racializations of a wide array of migrants and in the varied invocations of “blackness” and practices of refusal in the everyday life of the street.

A ten-minute walk down any of these streets evokes a capricious configuration of how goods, services, interiors, pavements, labor, care, and contestation are shaped and imagined. Writing the street as world brings into play the wider orderings of centrality and marginality, along with the perpetual spatial and human struggles over the relative meanings of core and edge. From the connection between street and world we learn of a different vocabulary of the migrant, one that Monisha Das Gupta invokes as “border-crossing people” as a necessarily unruly mode of activating citizenship and repurposing space. This prompts an understanding of human citizenship as deeply immersed in the cultural possibilities of mobility and multiplicity, and with it cultural and political reimaginations of the border. Further, it requires an engagement
with the margins as neither a peripheral nor minority condition but as a place from which to push back, refute, and reconfigure.

In thinking about the subjugation and subversion of edge territories I veer off-center to ask what we learn about the city and citizenship from the margins. To suggest that there are different possibilities of citizenship within the realm of being outcast is to work within an extremely delicate conceptual position. The brutality of bordering across contemporary Europe is so extreme, the fatalities and casualties so appalling, that it leaves little room to consider anything other than profound, systematic wreckage. I tread cautiously down the street, aware that I need to keep center and periphery in sight to understand marginalization without it obscuring the view of meaning-making at the edge. In evoking a citizenship of the edge I seek to open out the tight, highly localized conception of the ghetto, to explore more expansive makings of edge territories. Although I engage with streets in marginalized parts of UK cities, the extended nature of the international migration system emerges out of deep histories of domination and wide geographies of interdependence. By moving between the spaces of globe, state, and street I relate processes of colonization and political interventionism to the production of perilous and protracted human movements. The nature of migrant journeys to the street directs me toward understanding migration through the racially pejorative ideologies of mobility and immobility asserted by the European border regime within which the UK occupies a particular role. However, the interconnected spaces of world and street clarify that migration can never be abridged to the narrow lexicon of borders and crises. The quotidian life of the street reveals more worldly articulations of “border” and “migrant”: as crossings and not cliff edge; as traveler and not infiltrator. These vocabularies elicit a space and consciousness of change and encounter that has long been part of cultural and economic circulations prior to its curtailment through the reductive tropes of nation, insider, and outsider.

THE EDGE
My research on the everyday life of street economies forged by migrant proprietors in UK cities spanned the period from 2012 to 2017. It was and continues to be a period of foul turbulence, in which pronounced economic inequality and a political commitment to bordering overlap with punitive impact. In the UK, two immigration acts were passed in 2014 and 2016, focusing on illegalizing previously established migration
routes into the UK and devolving core aspects of border surveillance into the circuits of everyday life.\textsuperscript{7} The acts have fragmented and outsourced the management of borders and amplified the hostile scrutiny of the migrant across institutional, public, and domestic spheres. An anti-immigration virulence is an integral part of political volatility in the UK, marked by a rapid sequence of general elections in 2015, 2017, and 2019, anchored around the 2016 Brexit referendum. This politics has been galvanized around an enhanced commitment to sovereignty asserted by the electoral endorsement for the UK to exit the European Union. It is an ideology underwritten by the nativist mantra and referendum slogan “Take back control of our country.” In what has seemed like a broad political consensus, the issue of migration rather than substantial increases in societal inequality have been procured as a primary means to regain “control.” All this in the aftermath of the global financial crisis and the UK government’s adoption of an austerity program, which retracted some £30 billion from public services between 2010 and 2019, sanctioning a substantial increase in societal inequalities.\textsuperscript{8}

On city streets in the urban margins of Birmingham, Bristol, Leicester, London, and Manchester, the aftermath of the global financial crisis has laid bare the rise in inequalities and the punitive strike of austerity governance. Societal disparities permeate these edge territories with surges in childhood poverty, steep cuts to public services, and growing practices of displacement associated with “regeneration.” Street livelihoods in marginalized and ethnically diverse parts of UK cities also reveal the human dimensions of the splintering of an insecure labor market with its pronounced impacts on what is bureaucratically categorized as “Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic” groups. Rather than characterizing employment, redundancies, and casualization through ethnic essentialisms, it has been important to consider how the margins convene multiple histories of racialized work insecurity. My understanding of the margins pursues the specificities of violence, the details of struggle, and the varied convolutions of everyday transaction.\textsuperscript{9} The shift from an industrial to a deindustrial landscape is elemental to following the first redundancies of migrant labor in the late 1970s and the subsequent transfers into self-employment and, in particular, varied forms of street retail.\textsuperscript{10} In writing this book I have questioned whether street self-employment and its precarities is different from recent articulations of a casualized urban labor market, sustained by technological platforms
such as Uber and Deliveroo, that trades off the “entrepreneurialisms” required of marginalized multicultures. Does it matter that, for the most part, these street economies do not fall under the control of corporations, that they are in and not only of the margins? In this book I ask how street economies are organized and socialized and how alliances are formed in the absence of wage labor and union representation.

I conceptualize “edge economies” as formed in a constellation of global peripheries, where the accumulation of capital produces the dis-accumulation of people. This might seem an obtuse formulation, since capitalism has historically required an aggregation of people or a “masses formula” for large-scale production as well as social reproduction.\(^1\) The point is to emphasize how the sorting of humanity inherent to a capitalist order is underpinned by what Satnam Virdee articulates as “the plurality of racisms,” one that suspends, fragments, and discards rich human capacity to secure a subordinate and disposable labor force.\(^2\) This requires thinking about the different, if continuous, practices of exploitation that are now predicated on extracting labor value through ever smaller fragments of time and space and through ever decreasing increments of contractual and societal responsibility. The expanding edge population incorporates emergent forms of part-time, partial work where multiple jobs must be patched together to meet rising rents and eroding welfare. Edge economies include increasingly casualized, outsourced, and offshored formations of racialized work, and this book specifically addresses how migration, industrialization, and de-industrialization intersect, forming capricious street economies. Virdee’s important intervention encourages us to think about a wider constitution of a collective proletariat, one not bound by parochial claims to place. The street in the urban peripheries demands a further consideration, bringing self-employment and its structural discriminations into the analysis of precarious work, despite the notional optimism of the spirited entrepreneur. The margins provide a space from which to consider the simultaneous makings of centrality and marginality, and of insider and outsider, through the formations of “race” and place. But an elemental perspective of and from the margins is that the outcomes of this simultaneity are neither inevitable nor stable nor unidirectional.\(^3\) The margins make visible the role of the state in maintaining inequality and uncertainty. They are a space of the convergence of violence, what Patricia Hill Collins refers to as “saturated sites of intersecting power relations.”\(^4\) The margins therefore also prompt new arrangements of
citizenship and association. The city, as a concentrated coordinate in the global constellation of centers and margins, is a space in which prejudice, cultural intermixtures, and claims to difference emerge.\textsuperscript{15}

The research that forms the substance of this book draws on detailed, face-to-face surveys with over five hundred shop proprietors over the six-year period spanning 2012 to 2017. The possibilities and limits of these surveys were complemented with more extended engagements through interviews, conversations, observations, mappings, and drawings.\textsuperscript{16} This time-extensive, mixed methodology is compelled by Sharad Chari and Vinay Gidwani’s call for a grounded and spatial understanding of labor that seeks to expand our understanding of a world of work. It is about widening out “from the labor process to a consideration of the ways of belonging to places, nations, families, networks and other social institutions.”\textsuperscript{17} The idea of edge economies builds on the research findings that substantively complicate ideas of origins, journeys, and settlement and their relation to ideas of transaction and place-making. The respective street proprietors’ arrivals to Rookery Road in Birmingham, Stapleton Road in Bristol, Narborough Road in Leicester, Rye Lane in London, and Cheetham Hill in Manchester span approximately four decades and incorporate the varied geographies of cultural affiliation, migratory routes, and border crossings. Despite such immense variations in time and place, these migrants had all become traders on streets in the urban peripheries, irrespective of their former occupations. The streets bring together their extended journeys, their processes of arrival, and their practices of hanging in there, combining experiences of border and crossing, redundancy and agility, and casualization and recalibration. On the streets that form the substance of this book, transactions emerge from crossovers of proprietors, hustlers, shops, religious institutions, internet cafés, beauty salons, massage parlors, and the occasional library. They are constituted by modes of exchange that combine cultural resources from near and far, eluding the binaries of either a Global North or Global South. These edge economies are composed through multifarious forms of self-interest, labor and cooperation, and modalities of profit making, profiteering, subsisting, care, and counsel.\textsuperscript{18}

It is impossible to consider human life, no matter how abject, without paying attention to the human capacity to make, and this book expands on the notion of migrant city-making advanced so effectively by Ayse Çağlar and Nina Glick Schiller.\textsuperscript{19} Because I underscore how
migration is integral to the formations of societies and cities, city-making includes a wide consortium of people, places, and things. Migrant city-making incorporates the multitude of energies, side steps, scrimping, and know-how required to occupy the marginal spaces of unequal cities. These skills of mobility and circumvention are acquired along the routes of protracted migration journeys and become integral to the modus operandi of life and livelihoods in the edge territories of cities. Migrant city-making also emerges through the currencies of anti-migration punditry, the drudgery of municipal regulations, the volatility of local property markets, and the intricate networks of bureaucrats and fixers that bring a migration system to life. An underlying base for this book is how inequality and (im)mobility produce the world as increasingly shared and segregated. More people, more objects, more ideas, cumulatively circulating and reconfiguring ideas of self, home, and nation. More borders, more brutalities, more fear politics, cumulatively constricting ideas of difference and commonality. Through the street I explore the life of a brutal and erratic migration system. My aim is to animate the flows of people, goods, and ideas in ways that reveal the heightening of borders and the expanding of everyday refusal. My hope is that this book, above all else, is mindful of the place of the human in the enduring histories of migration.

THE PARADOX

The December 2019 UK general election yielded a majority for the Conservative Party and with it a mandate to “Get Brexit Done.” I situate Brexit in a much longer production of ideological contradictions and democratic struggles around questions of nationalism and borders. From 2015 to 2019 the UK faced three general elections within a five-year period, unprecedented in parliamentary history. Two of these ultimately resulted in the resignation of the respective prime minister. It remains to be seen how Parliament resolves questions of sovereignty in relation to its association with the European Union, and what rhetorical and legal mechanisms it will procure to address the relative conditions of hard and soft borders. It is crucial not only to place this particular milieu of democratic struggle within a much longer history of nationalism in which the reverence for empire is constitutive, but also to bring it into relation to the devastating impacts of the ongoing financial crisis for everyday life in the urban peripheries. To explore the migrant’s paradox is to engage with migration as a simultaneously indispensable
and resisted process of societal formation in advanced capitalist societies. Ensconced in unstable stability are liberal claims to openness and equality and sovereign commitments to heightened border maintenance. In the conjuncture of contradictions, migration makes apparent the extent to which liberal democracies are prepared to exercise discrimination and violence to secure “the national monopoly on questions of citizenship, status, and jurisdiction.”

The migrant has been placed at the center of the maelstrom of political, economic, and ideological crises that resonate more broadly across European liberal democracies, providing an emotive focal point for the resurgence of narrow conceptions of nationhood, as much as a deviation from alarming increases in inequality. In the context of Brexit, Sivamohan Valluvan and Virinder Kalra productively ask us to consider “what specifically renders this recourse to nation, nationalism.” They argue in the context of Brexit that while the nation encompasses a notion of community, emergent nationalism speaks essentially to exclusion. Here it is the racialized figure of the migrant that reveals the full extent of racecraft in the burgeoning of right-wing populism and central state practices of human bordering. Unstable stability—the current condensation of structural contradictions—is sustained by a shallow politics of fear and a deeply rooted ethos of subordination. The deep discrepancy of how Western sovereignties both require and refute migration is widely referred to as the “liberal paradox.” Through the street I engage with the consistent production of inconsistencies in public policy, discourse, and practice that maintain these contradictions. In tracing the histories of the UK’s industrial and imperial projects through migration flows across globe, state, and street it is evident how the paradoxical partnership of unfettered markets and human restrictions is long-lived. At the core of the contradiction is a sustained economic demand for resources and labor from elsewhere, on the one hand, and a political commitment to national authenticity in which hierarchical notions of “race” and ethnicity are central, on the other. Within the construction of modern sovereignties and economies are histories of a voracious appetite for labor and resources from outside the limited confines of the nation. This is a highly conflictual political economy, expansive in its entitlement to extend national borders to extract labor and resources from elsewhere to build and serve society, and simultaneously fortressed against the claims of migrant citizens.

Chantal Mouffe conceptualizes The Democratic Paradox as endemic
to liberal democracy, highlighting the friction between an ideology of rights extended across borders, and a commitment to a nationalism endorsed by a bounded citizenship. The outsider is thereby constituted as a prefigurative outside. Fear feeds this state of contradiction, never more so than in times of pronounced inequality. A prejudiced public consciousness has permeated recent election campaigns across Europe, circulated through conflicting atmospheres. Contrast, for example, the adopted multicultural stance that underpinned the bidding and hosting of the London 2012 Olympic Games as “A Celebration of Britain’s Diversity,” with the virulent anti-immigration sentiment that galvanized the Brexit referendum in 2016. Only a few years separate these prominent events, a short time for a seesaw in political and public consciousness, shifting from a celebration of symbolic diversity to the denigration of the outsider. Perched at the podium of British nationhood and the Brexit campaign is the figure of the Conservative member of Parliament, now prime minister, Boris Johnson. Cradled in Johnson’s arms is a red double-decker campaign bus, with the bogus claim: “We send the EU £350 million a week, let’s fund the NHS instead. Vote Leave. Let’s take back control.” The illusion and reality of border-making is pursued through a precarious orchestration of allegiance, deceit, and alienation.

The contemporary articulation of a migration “crisis” within Europe, identified as a period beginning in 2015 marked by a notable increase in immigration, is a dramatic rhetorical articulation of an exceptional condition requiring exceptional intervention. While not wanting to understate the real human and logistical challenges of engaging with refugee at scale, this conscious framing severs Europe from its ongoing substantial circularities of movement core to its cultural life and its commitments to offshore extractions integral to sustaining its productivity. It has casually disregarded the large-scale emigrations from its shores, including that of over sixty million people over the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries alongside its vast projects of colonial domination. It’s border regime sanctions a wider regime of discrimination that effectively renders a significant majority of the world’s population illegal by virtue of their international movement. This crisis makes visible our particular conjuncture that Stuart Hall refers to at the start of this introduction as “the different social, political, economic and ideological contradictions that are at work in society.” As the street life of the migrant’s paradox will reveal, a crisis is never singular in its composition
and effect: it may appear in a particular national or local form, but it also reverberates globally. While it may be partially explained through the categories of class or “the left behind,” it is experienced more widely and instrumentalized more divisively.

I therefore situate the migrant’s paradox in relation to a conjuncture in which at least three crises are condensed. In different ways all of these forces appear overtly on the street, and it is therefore crucial to briefly introduce here the “specific and distinctive shape” of these intersecting crises. The first is the reverberation of the global financial crisis of 2008 accompanied by the state-orchestrated retraction of public services that disproportionately affects the UK’s most marginalized groups. This has brought to the fore a deep ideological crisis in which the shift from “what matters” to “who matters” has meant that fundamental questions such as how to interpret our shared humanity, or how to mitigate the reckless damage to our environment are substituted with a politics saturated by fear. These crises culminate in a political crisis where it seems that to protect European rights of movement and the frictionless trade of capital, borders must be heightened. This endorses a logic that the mobility of some depends on the immobility of others.

The period following the 2008 global financial crisis is referred to as the Great Recession, reflecting the human and political fallouts that followed in its destructive aftermath. The brutalities of the financial crisis and its economic impacts have remained curiously suppressed in the mainstay of political rhetoric across Europe and further afield. Rather, the figure of the migrant as infiltrator and infidel has been hauled forward to a nationalist foreground on the right and left of what has at times seemed like a broadly conservative political spectrum. “Immigrants are a useful diversion from the actual causes of scarcity,” states the eminent writer on inequalities, Danny Dorling. An accountable redress of the gross economic distortions that became particularly visible following the Great Recession and the deluge of public cutbacks and private deregulations that ensued has been substituted with a popular appeal to nativism. The Rassemblement National’s 2017 campaign slogan “Au nom du peuple” (On behalf of the people), the Partij voor de Vrijheid 2017 slogan “Nederland weer van ons” (The Netherlands ours again) and the Lega’s 2018 slogan “Prima gli Italiani” (Italians first) all echo a call to a racial idea of national purity, attached to the promise that economic growth and local jobs for local workers will be reinforced via an enhanced border.
The voicing of the sentiments of a protective market and therefore a protective border, although articulated with different emphases, are not confined to far-right parties. Facing a leadership challenge in 2016, Len McCluskey, leader of the UK’s second-largest union, Unite, stated that of his three leadership commitments, he would seek to confront the “free movement of labour” amid Brexit negotiations: “Unions understand that workers have always done best when the labour supply is controlled and communities are stable. While we must reject any form of racism, and help refugees fleeing war, we must also listen to the concerns of working people.”

Unite is necessarily attuned to the hardships faced by workers across Britain, and since 2008 the casualization of work contracts and the real loss of wage earnings in relation to increased inflation are paramount concerns. Yet the narrow imaginings of “working people” as much as the illusion of “stable communities” does little to acknowledge a wider spectrum of workers and members of communities forged over Britain’s longue durée of global labor extractions. It further eludes a more diverse and mobile comprehension of long-standing participations, where, for example, 12 percent of workers in the National Health Service (NHS) are just one key arena of working people who are born outside of the UK.

As liberal democracies grapple within the instability of capitalism, the makings of insider and outsider status are at the core of the unsettled brokering of power within the UK. The strident inequality that followed the global financial crisis has generated an alarming and pervasive extent of income disparities:

For many years, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation–sponsored Minimum Income Standards research team has charted the cost of these essentials needed to live the most basic of lives in the UK. They uncovered a 20 per cent rise in the share of all households in Britain living below the generally accepted minimal standard of living between 2008/9 and 2011/12, as living standards deteriorated.

One key question is how the individual despair that followed the 2008 crisis built into a collective sense of alienation that came to influence why people voted as they did in the 2015 and 2019 UK general elections. The endorsement of a Conservative government and its explicit support of the wealthier sectors of society seems a perverse effect of inequality. Understanding the political setting of the migrant’s paradox requires linking the complexities of increasing inequality, emerging
forms of immigration control, and racial biopolitics. Is it that societal alienation gives license to the careless nature of migration talk on the part of politicians, or is it that the now commonplace pejorative framing of outsiders across political platforms feeds a pervasive border logic? Gurminder Bhambra challenges the “methodological whiteness” in understanding how “race” was manipulated in the political campaign in 2015 alongside the 2016 presidential election in the United States, both of which conjured the authenticity of white nationhood as much as a “left behind.” Bhambra challenges explanations of alienation, pointing to how neither the feelings of alienation nor impacts of inequality were confined to a white working class. In the 2017 UK general election, 77 percent of “minority ethnic” voters supported Labour, with an estimated 71 percent supporting Remain in the Brexit referendum.

It is also important to delve more into the particular kinds of impacts of the Great Recession and its social and spatial cleavages. In his singularly acute form, Aditya Chakrabortty relates economic instability to widespread human costs, asserting that “after socialising the banker’s debts we privatised despair”:

This will be the decade of workers on wages so low they are priced out of the lifestyle they once thought was safely theirs; of tenants struggling with soaring rents and crappy landlords; of severely disabled people kept awake by the prospect of their benefits being cut, while others on jobseeker’s allowance jump though hoop after hoop to avoid being sanctioned.

None of this everyday wretchedness fits what we have come to think of as a slump; yet this is the shape of the one we are grinding our way through. Defying the spectacular predictions that were made after 2008, this crisis is private, unequal and internalised.

Crucially, these inequalities do not simply reside within a national border or a “Global North.” The exacerbation of inequality that occurred after 2008 flows across “the contours of capitalism,” permeating the world and substantively rearranging the orderings of centers and margins. As we will see through the street, the entry of proprietors into street retail post-2008 reflects both these national and international reorderings. Within the UK it is evident that multiple forms of displacement are growing and spreading: rental evictions are at their highest, affecting 42,728 households in 2015 alone, including both private and social rental sectors. While the reach of inequality is pervasive, we
need to be mindful of its disproportionate effects on certain groups in certain localities. Jessica Perera traces how processes of regeneration across London’s housing estates not only displace low-income groups but that the impact on racialized minorities is pronounced.35

The scale of the loss of security at home is paralleled by a loss of security at work. The UK stands out among what are termed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development as “advanced countries” in having an increase in economic growth coupled with wage decline over the period from 2007 to 2015.36 In real terms wages have substantially contracted, with more people in work but on lower pay. The notable shift to part-time work and self-employment is an experience that is echoed by those on the street, with some proprietors reflecting on how, up until recently, they had worked for the local council, in the post office, or in public transport and had been made redundant following cuts to public services. It is not only that racialized groups are more likely to be represented in self-employment figures across the UK, but that in cities like Birmingham, Bristol, Leicester, and Manchester these same groups are significantly represented in public-sector work. Dorling’s “Great Recession” and Chakrabortty’s “everyday wretchedness” have procured and maintained alienation and discrimination, in a context with greater competition for worse jobs, with fewer forms of welfare and societal care.

Prefigured prejudices of “race” and religion are core to the antagonistic immigration atmosphere and have been accompanied by a marked stepping up in recent years in what Nicholas De Genova has described as the legal production of migrant “illegality.”37 A punitive set of immigration laws has been increasingly accompanied by fiery political performance. The recent enforcement of “burkini” restrictions on beaches and public swimming pools in France is part of how illegality saturates a public atmosphere, the ludicrous nature of which is made visible through images of armed officers standing over women on a beach demanding their shedding of apparel. Laïcité is now more publicly removed from the constitutional underpinnings of secularism and more directly focused on anti-Muslim sentiment toward the perceived foreign-citizen. In response to the flows of refugees from Syria, Austria, lurching backwards into a history of violent discrimination, endorsed the militarization of the Brenner Pass and the Frontex EU border agency, incorporating a state at war within the rhetoric of crisis. In the UK the Immigration Acts of 2014 and 2016 have firmly inserted illegality into
the panoptic management of migration, extending the social sorting of migrant lives well beyond the national border, into how health, education, and housing are accessed on a day-to-day basis. Authorized atmospheres of suspicion are captured by what Douglas Massey defines as a “new politics of fear,” surfacing the emotional and psychological ways in which migrant sorting penetrates everyday social life.\textsuperscript{38}

The durable conditions of paradox are inhabited by many migrants. The paradox is generated by a dense accumulation of crises and regulatory mechanisms that extends into the everyday life of moving borders, where racialized bodies are positioned as suspect. The period of pronounced inequalities and political upheavals that followed the 2008 financial crisis is not a distinctly brutal conjuncture that is separate from its colonial antecedents of economic expansion and human restriction. It demands a scrutiny of particular forms of border-making in a larger continuum of inequality and discrimination, and the emergent forms of resistance that ensue. I therefore connect the migrant’s paradox to an enduring ethos of subordination and displacement that is invested in the extension of the border into the everyday life of edge territories. Questions I am compelled by are how the fracturing of human capacities en route relates to ways in which migrants are emplaced in the urban margins, and how colonial and racial legacies mediate the space into which migrants arrive and claim space. Following from this, how do migrants enter into and sustain street microeconomies in the urban margins, and in what ways are their practices of exchange and association integral to making space and to making citizenship?

**CROSSINGS**

Migrant city-making is about the borders and crossings that are perceptible in place but formed through extended global and human connections across space. Part of writing this book in the acrid migration system of here and now requires knowing the urban margins outside of its political and academic ghettoization. From Doreen Massey we have the gift of her invaluable essay on how to conceive of a global sense of the local.\textsuperscript{39} Her essay is as much about drawing on relations across space as it is about relations across time. At the core of Massey’s essay is the geopolitics of power, which underscores that to understand everyday life through day-to-day experiences and localized structures of inequality is to reduce its complexity. Massey encourages us to connect everyday practices to the histories of globalism that seep across
streets, neighborhoods, and cities. Ingrained in the ordinary bricks and mortar of UK high streets is a material form of urban capitalism that emerged out of an industrial project. Endless repetitions of side-by-side street units provided a cheap and efficient way to house the substantial labor force required in a period of rapid industrialization and urbanization. And indeed, capitalism’s ongoing dependency on migrant labor has meant that the row houses that formed the housing stock and high streets of industrial cities came to be inhabited by people from across the planet over extended time periods. Today, some proprietors of these same streets trace their journeys to the high street through connections to the British Empire, others to warfare in Iraq and Afghanistan, and others still to their redundancies after the global financial crisis. These are extended streets, where it is impossible to separate what might appear as a recent flow of people, objects, and ideas into a local place, from the long line of circulations emanating out of the geopolitics of extraction and intervention.⁴₀

The idea of a multiscalar street that incorporates large expanses of time and place connects with a planetary understanding of worldwide flows in the context of subordination and exchange, as captured by Paul Gilroy in *The Black Atlantic*.⁴¹ In the midst of heightened commitments to insider status across neighborhoods and nations today, a further challenge is how to extend a view of cultural formations beyond the absolutism of national and ethnic essentialism and past strong colloquial claims to a contained sense of a local place and a local people. An evocative lexicon of ocean vocabularies has emerged to suggest the connected geographies of passages and crossings, and with it the subversions of piracy and mutiny alongside the deathly journeys of enslavement and refuge.⁴² Gilroy invokes the image of a ship crossing the Atlantic as

a living, micro-cultural, micro-political system in motion. . . . Ships immediately focus attention on the middle passage, on the various projects for a redemptive return to an African homeland, on the circulation of ideas and activists as well as the movement of key cultural and political artefacts: tracts, books, gramophones records and choirs.⁴³

In the lexicon of ocean vocabularies, the street is akin to the wharf, a part of a larger order of passage. The wharf is not simply a space to
study; it is also a point of perspective, a spur that is neither of the mainland nor the sea. Its corroded footings are submerged in the water and hence the liminal world, while tentatively connecting to land. It is a prosaic place, a mooring from which to dock, unload, and reload. In its innate ordinariness it accommodates a convergence of people and economies linked to global mobility, extraction, consumption, and distribution. Trading streets, like wharfs, are peculiar edge territories littered with the perfunctory paraphernalia of stuff: passageways, back rooms, boxes, goods, all arranged in legal and illicit activities often beyond bureaucratic view. Yet as transit zones between land and sea, wharves are spaces subject to a labyrinth of national and international laws regulating the types of cargo, terms of passage, and periods of stay. Transactions within these zones demand cross-cultural fluencies and subversions on the part of its world citizens of the edge—an aesthetic, aural, and verbal attention to exchange, akin to what Michael Ondaatje calls “a port accent”:

The talk in those ports would be not so much the language of a country but a language based on commerce and transport. It would be speedy and efficient, a casually invented Esperanto, a lingo that did not involve translation so much as a crashing together of nouns and phrases... a useful but non-existent language, a “connecting” language, the word “pidgin” deriving from the old Chinese pronunciation of the English word for “business.”

While Massey and Gilroy give us wider views of how flows form, and what in turn flows form, AbdouMaliq Simone gives us ways of thinking about the bits and pieces ensembled en route. In engaging with the daily multitude of investments and performances that the city dwellers of the urban margins make, Simone reveals city peripheries not as a fait accompli but as provisional. Street space forms incrementally, in relation to urban actors who live within areas with restricted access to officially established lines of capital and with prolonged withdrawals of state investment. The provisional persists through honed repertoires of countermoves and the nimble acts of rewiring the circuits of access. When we asked one resident in Birmingham how he thought street businesses had fared after the global financial crisis, he replied wryly, “Our people have always been in recession.” Persistent recession, a catchphrase for the effects of enduring exclusions, means that
capital and cash are hustled, loaned, and stored in a plethora of ways, and negotiations within kith, kin, and street networks have direct implications for the makeshift shapes and textures of the street.  

Credit is never simply procedural; it is ultimately a human and material contract, and the streets that form the basis of this book are layered with small parcels of investment over time, as one line of credit adds onto another, and another still. Some street spaces build up substantially in a piece-by-piece fashion, drawing on wider reserves of capital well beyond city limits, while others remain a partial or suspended work in progress. One way or another, they are all unfinished. When planners seek to intervene in the physical space of these streets, they frequently do so without comprehending their innate social and economic logics. Through the idea of “provisioning the provisional,” Simone connects the making of marginalized city space to systems of trading, borrowing, and building with the fragile-and-robust networks continually being formed to counteract exclusions of various kinds. He provincializes the urban margins, without confining the edge zone to the parochial.  

Throughout my study of streets, I have largely engaged with what kinds of economic practices and spaces emerge through a proximate overlap of proprietors from across the planet. Within these street intermixtures, what kind of politics is possible? What do street proprietors do when something goes wrong? These questions bring the world of work and the practices of making work more centrally into notions of belonging. Work practices sit oddly outside of conservative and policy-oriented insistencies on community cohesion. State endeavors to peg down the illusive qualities of “British values” and a prescriptive togetherness tend to assume that the vast array of human interactions can be narrowed into a reductive affiliation that demands a sameness. Typically, these are articulated by where people meet (frequently designated through limited notions of formal public space), and under what conditions (where tolerance and assimilation are privileged above contestation and experimentation). I explore work practices and street trade as prosaic modes of participation. I also reflect on how street proprietorship relates to wider practices of the deregulation of work under neoliberal capitalism. I am under no illusion that Uber, Deliveroo, and the like might offer a democratic injunction into the urban labor market, and I explore the complexity of street economies that incorporate profit and profiteering alongside forms of care and counsel.
I suggest that trading streets in the urban margins open up a theoretical and contextual space to explore how global migration, urban marginalization, and human capacities intersect. Streets across UK cities such as Birmingham, Bristol, Leicester, London, and Manchester are where migration flows have concentrated over an extensive period of time. There are issues that are specific to these deindustrial cityscapes inhabited by long histories of migration integral to Britain’s political and economic endeavors. But I also argue that there are approaches to understanding the ongoing recomposition of urban margins that transcend disciplines and geographies of knowing the urban.

I am compelled by intersecting sociological themes of “race,” ethnicity, and gender with more fluid understandings of city-making that have emerged in postcolonial urban studies. To expand on the possibilities of these intersections, I draw on ideas focused on making that include “worlding cities” as subaltern reconfigurations of power where urban citizens combine and reformulate near and far human connections.

I engage with a more volatile and unfinished notion of the city offered by incremental, uncanny, and makeshift urbanisms emerging through a loose grouping of imaginative urban writing.

My attempts to think about how “race” and class manifest in urban life reach out to different modes of revealing the city and how we as researchers are positioned in these processes. This connects with understanding precarious and creative cultural formations in the context of discrimination and with how urban multicultures form alongside deep racisms. A number of features mark out experimental work on racism and emerging ethnicities, not least of which are its reflexive commitments, its aesthetic and political combinations, and its “uncomfortable” interrogation of conviviality and multiculture.

This also is tied to my own migrant status, and to the undeserved privileges inherited in growing up in the white middle-class suburbs of apartheid Johannesburg. I studied architecture and then city planning and urban design, and was absorbed in how both the politics of subjection and the ambitions of transformation work through space. Making buildings requires intensive interactions with communities and with agents of the state, and this has undoubtedly influenced my street methodology. While a great deal of research time was spent on the street, it was also spent in local authority planning offices and community meeting rooms to understand how these streets are officially represented. This brings into the research process a “wider environment of ‘whiteness’” that overtly
permeates understandings of spatial value as much as covertly influencing comprehensions of social value. The structures of social and urban segregation are marked in territory and materiality as much as in minds.

How, then, can we reveal the social life of planning documents, property lines, and brick and mortar? Much of the work that has evolved over the period of my street research has emerged through collaborations with architects, planners, sociologists, anthropologists, geographers, and activists. Drawings have offered multiple and at times unfamiliar vantage points in the process of exploration. Making drawings has been an important avenue of engagement, and in the creating of maps, plans, and cross sections the drawings have become a way of finding out about how streets are structured and claimed beyond their illustrative conclusions. There are forms and methods of drawing as a research practice that are invested in layers of time, juxtapositions of scale, and the collage of urban and planetary fragments. I continue to refer to Sukhdev Sandhu’s book London Calling: How Black and Asian Writers Imagined a City, where narratives emerge in more circuitous forms of crisscrossing across time and place. The importance of understanding the social life of migration and multiculture is neither a reductive matter of macro or micro perspective, but a much more mutually constitutive notion of near and far. Here the rich repertoire of drawings advanced by, for example, Laura Kurgan in Close Up at a Distance and Huda Tayob in “Opaque Architectures” offers visual expressions of the multiple dimensions of structure and agency that shape human prospect and subordination. Similarly, Hiba Bou Akar’s evocation of planning and inhabitation in Beirut patches together the relations of war, religious divisions, and sectarian orders that are present in the fabric of thresholds, walls, and openings. Such minutiae are not distractions from structure. They are ingrained in what Neil Brenner, David Madden, and David Wachsmuth refer to as “the context of contexts” simultaneously reflecting and reconstituting capitalist conditions of emplacement and resistance to social sorting, as the context within context.

Cities provide a particular space of intersection to explore how measures to control contemporary migration and human mobility are experienced. Although my primary lens for engaging in the migrant’s paradox is the street, I will take the reader to a collection of urban rooms from shops, to local planning offices, to large conference halls where policy briefings on migration are performed. This is because migrant
city-making and the making of migration systems emerge in all of these settings, through everyday economic transactions, street-level regulations, and the endless political ruminations about migration numbers and what to do with them. The rub of this book is how migration and migration control are within the life of the city and of society. I trace how the political promise to reduce net migration figures makes it way to the street through additional layers of restriction and circumvention, and how the multiple networks forged among street proprietors, from trade circuits, remittances, and cross-cultural ideas, make their way out from the street to the city, and the world beyond. If the migrant’s paradox underscores how migration is a simultaneous process of mobility and immobility within and across societies, then by extension the migrant is not only the reductive spectacle of the foreigner attempting to scale the heavily secured fence at Melilla in Spain, or struggling to cross the Mediterranean at Lampedusa. As the compendium of the life of the street reveals, the migrant is also the border guard, the parliamentarian, the lawyer, the bus driver, the researcher, and the multitude of individuals who work within and reconfigure the varied aspects of our contemporary life.

Finally, the question of edge economies as explored through the commonplace stretch of the street brings together the centrality of migrant capital in the constitution of cities across Europe. My understanding of the political economies of displacement examines how capitalism shifts in its structures of power, morphs in its modalities of governance, and continually recalibrates the meanings of labor. Here I draw on Gargi Bhattacharyya’s invaluable book *Rethinking Racial Capitalism* for the ways it opens up understandings of the capitalist economy, not as a linear, but as an iterative production of labor as surplus. This means seeing the street as a palimpsest of colonization, industrialization, de-industrialization, accumulation, and disaccumulation. Through the lives of street proprietors and their trajectories of employment and redundancy, I trouble the all-too-static definitions of labor in the margins. This, then, is not the much-lauded story of the mom-and-pop corner store that supports a new generation of pharmacists, lawyers, and teachers. Instead it is frequently an account of the reverse of this social mobility. The proprietors of and at the edge embody the factory and public-sector employment as much as the taxi rank and the shop, where deployments of “race,” class, and gender are the constants in the rapidly shifting terrain of casualization and self-employment.
KEY IDEAS FROM THE STREET

The Migrant’s Paradox comprises this introduction and five chapters, spanning processes of displacement and emplacement across urban, national, and global spheres. The primary narrative is a critical exploration of the margin as a relation of power and an embodied edge from which to contest dominant cultural and racial orders. Each chapter is immersed in a distinctive space, allowing for an ethnographic unfolding of the varied places across which migration is produced, from the everyday shaping of statecraft and racecraft in policy forums and media outlets, to quotidian transactions on the street. This collage of the sociospatial modes of migration is intended to reveal the expansive workings of the migration system. The vantage point of the street remains a primary place from which to examine and conceptualize the capricious life of edge economies forged in the overlap of migration histories and the ongoing emergence of urban peripheries. My exploration of street proprietors, their journeys to the street, and their entry points to street trade prompts questions of how and why this array of migrants becomes embedded in these urban margins. In following the traces of the global histories of displacement I explore what kinds of socioeconomic exchange form on the street and how frictions and solidarities emerge. The street provides a tangible terrain to explore the overlaps of intermixture and segregation, and a conceptual space to imagine a citizenship of the edge.59

This introduction provides the substantive background to the book, locating global migration and urban marginalization in the intersecting crises of our time and place. By writing the relation between state and street I have asked what we learn about social crises and contradictions from the margins and then linked this milieu of turbulence to streets in deindustrial urban peripheries across the UK. Writing the connection between world and street, I engage with the global reach of power that procures a system of subordination and maintains a constellation of peripheries across space. However, this connection is not reducible to asymmetrical dependencies, and it incorporates generative cultural intermixtures and lively practices of exchange. In chapter 1, “The Scale of the Migrant,” I address how the state impetus of expanded borders and authorized aggressions infiltrates life on the street, and why the life of the street offers a crucial space from which to challenge the logics of sovereignty and segregation. While I explore how migration is represented and racialized in contemporary politics in this section, chapter
INTRODUCTION

1 builds a grounded perspective of how the figure of the human is submerged beneath a quantified and generalized system of migration numbers and targets. I explore why the understanding of the migrant has been incarcerated within the scale of the nation, confined to a political commitment to the abstraction of net migration figures. This obfuscates the human scale of how we relate to one another within and beyond national borders. It also sanctions the splintered legalities of partial and privileged citizenships where “highly skilled” migrants have come to be elemental to the rhetoric of the “good migrant.” The myopic fixation on migration targets has sustained a pernicious shift to migrant illegality and a regulatory environment of legitimized harassment. I link this intentionally hostile border regime to the everyday manifestation of a barrage of racist modes of immigration control orchestrated by the UK’s Home Office, showing how the pernicious processes of everyday bordering affect the cultural and economic compositions on the street.

I take the reader into the rooms in which politicians and policy experts discuss migration control. I did not begin my research in these spaces; nor did I anticipate the extent to which they would become formative to my understanding of migrant microeconomies on streets in urban peripheries across the UK. Yet in attending conferences and briefing sessions on migration for an array of politicians, policy advisers, activists, and practitioners, I became aware of how migration talk in expert and official circles grows to shape a migration problematic. I draw on the ideological and frequently erratic nature of these accounts and trace the emergence of the pathologies of the UK Immigration Acts of 2014 and 2016 to the everyday criminalization of migration. As an ethnographer by inclination and somewhat adverse to the scientific logic of numbers, I go on to discuss the challenges of engaging with quantities and categories in the research process itself. My research on five streets across the UK has included hundreds of face-to-face surveys. Rather than reproducing these surveys as a transparent set of facts or data, I aim to deploy and choreograph a more complex vocabulary of how proprietors move, settle, and participate in society. The street is conceived of as an exploratory space to retrieve a human scale into a set of migration debates that has become profoundly dehumanized. I therefore elaborate on “the scale of the migrant” as both a conceptual and methodological challenge.

In contrast to situating how migration discourse emerges through the performance and channels of expertise, chapters 2, 3, and 4 engage
with street repertoires of how migrant proprietors claim space. In these chapters, written through street life and street space, I expand on themes of transaction and discrimination, taking the reader to Rookery Road in Birmingham, Stapleton Road in Bristol, Narborough Road in Leicester, Rye Lane in London, and Cheetham Hill in Manchester. The “Edge Territories” I define in chapter 2 are conceived of in the wider political economy of displacement and its formations of centrality and marginality. I focus on the role of place as elemental to the structure and life of the urban margins. In unpacking the idea of place in the formation of the periphery, I seek to expand a parochial notion of the ghetto while defining the loose, overly ubiquitous notion of the entrepreneur. In locating Narborough Road in Leicester and Stapleton Road in Bristol, I start with how state policies and programs are implicated in establishing the street and incorporate how histories of colonization, political interventionism, and racialized immigration policy constitute the margins of Leicester and Bristol. I draw on Katherine McKittrick’s connections between “race, place, and violence” and her engagement with the enduring economy of racial servitude that keeps black life “in place” while revealing the contours of “a black sense of place” as formed but not fossilized by subjugation.61

In chapter 3, I focus on the question of what constitutes a world of work in the edge territories. The “Edge Economies” of the street are shaped by global know-how, racial exclusions, ethnic networks, cross-cultural exchange, rent dynamics, and ongoing reductions in public services. I start by tracing the lineage of discrimination that has shaped processes of work and redundancy in these deindustrial margins from the 1960s through to the present day, tracing the shift “from textile mills to taxi ranks” articulated by Virinder Kalra.62 Expanding on the restrictions and openings of edge economies requires agitating the more singular ascriptions of the economy as well as the entrepreneur. Additionally, these streets are constituted by transactions that intersect with varied cultural resources, thereby eluding the categorization of cities strictly associated with a Global North or Global South. The valuable postcolonial perspectives of Jane Pollard, Cheryl McEwan, Nina Laurie, and Alison Stenning decenter hierarchical assumptions of the primacy of “Western economies” by showing how transactions are mutually constituted through intersecting flows of economies and people from across the planet.63 Following the feminist geographers J. K. Gibson-Graham, the singular ascription of “the economic” is, in
practice, highly intricate and social. I explore the wide repertoires of hustle that emerge on Rookery Road in Birmingham and Cheetham Hill in Manchester. Through the particularities of street trade, I outline the practices of multilingual collaborations and “errantry” that draws on the legacy of Édouard Glissant and suggests lively modes of solidarity and subversive composites shaped among those immersed in movement and marginalization.

I am also interested in the discriminatory aspects of why and how varied groups of proprietors end up in certain sectors of the economy in marginalized parts of cities. In asking how heterogeneity comes to be homogenized, I draw on Robert Kloosterman, Joanne Van Der Leun, and Jan Rath’s seminal work on “mixed embeddedness,” which engages with how immigrant entrepreneurs are emplaced in certain parts of cities and in certain forms of employment. Multiple discriminations, including how borders are maintained beyond the border point, are a historical feature of how certain migrant groups are consigned to self-employed retail trades in marginalized parts of cities. Yet the street economies made by migrants in deprived peripheries amount to more than an analysis of precarious minority ethnic enterprise. In this chapter I expand the notion of the edge economies, intersecting with multiple modes of social sorting endemic to migration regulations, employment structures, and urban space. Within these systems of ranking and emplacement, I refer to ways that migrant proprietors make life and livelihood through forms and modes outside of dominant cultural registers. Edge economies are therefore marginalized urban spaces in which marginal—but not insignificant—economic and cultural exchange is forged. A key feature of this chapter is the impact of austerity governance and the marked withdrawal of state investment from areas already subjected to sustained state underinvestment. The perspective of edge economies therefore also challenges simplistic political notions of assimilation and community cohesion through recognizing durable borders and inequalities. These margins further complicate the Western-centric sociology of advanced marginality in which human capacities are substantively reduced. Through the street I highlight skills within the margins that procure global and local networks, incorporate survival tactics, reconfigure systems of credit and capital, and engage in expressions of cultural intermixture outside of expectations of community cohesion.

The question of whether everyday social practice on the street can
effectively contaminate political practice forms the core of chapter 4, “Unheroic Resistance.” I locate my exploration of resistance in the pronounced enthusiasm for urban regeneration fueled by a speculative economy, and coupled with planning initiatives that embrace the prospects of competitive cityscapes. Since the 2008 financial crisis, concerted redevelopment and speculation have taken on more aggressive forms of dispossession, and I explore how this revanchist city-making and its repository of “whiteness” adversely shape the relations of centers and margins. In global cities like London, planning has privileged multinational compositions of city space and its propensity for granite-clad profit and affluent citizens. Microplanetary compositions of the urban are pushed further into the urban margins, invisible to the lens of power. One such process I examine in detail is a state-led regeneration exercise on Rye Lane in Peckham, south London, where street traders are omitted from the planning imaginary of what constitutes a viable and imageable town center. I explore a variety of ways in which diverse street proprietors are active in the making of urban space and urban politics, from basic constitutions of WhatsApp groups to complex and difficult-to-sustain associations. The aim of my engagement with everyday modes of resistance is twofold. The first is to suggest a different avenue from the sociology of encounter as a mundane yet productive meeting between strangers, as insufficient for capturing the impacts of inequality and racism that put urban multiculture under stress. While I remain committed to understanding the everyday practices of cultural intermixture, my focus in this chapter is more on how conviviality connects with contestation. Patricia Hill Collins refers to the notion of “flexible solidarity” that is “grounded in ongoing relationships of compromise and contestation,” and from the street I explore how everyday resistance is mobilized and what possibilities emerge for a more plural and highly social politics.

I return in chapter 5 to the elemental frame of migrant city-making, where I explore “A Citizenship of the Edge” through the everyday practices of life and livelihoods in diverse and deprived peripheries. Through the street I explore the human compositions of encounter within the limits and possibilities of a citizenship of the edge. I engage with the complexities of what Edward Said called “filiation and affiliation,” reflecting on the forms of association that draw on in-group and cross-cultural resources, thereby making a city that is simultaneously parochial and planetary. By paying close attention to the spaces of
urban multiculture in which reconfiguration is a central practice of city-making, I engage with more differentiated compositions of what it means to be “public” in the stratified city. The migrant’s margins are learned as a transverse of experiences composed of global, national, and urban crossings. As migrants move across these constellations of centers and margins, the regulation of the human body is never detached from the process of learning. The street, composed of regular transactions, thin interactions, affirming engagements, and aggressive interruptions, incorporates the crucial combinations of being public that tie us to the city and at the same time alienate us from it. By placing the figure of the human at the center of the process of crossing, I imagine a different proposition of border, and a different articulation of the migrant.

*The Migrant’s Paradox* is a lively view of the peculiar tensions between migration systems and everyday transactions on the street. The street life of migration is important for nuanced as well as broader understandings of social change. In the first instance, heated public debates about the “migration problem” across the UK, Europe, and the United States fail to recognize global histories of expansion and intervention and deep dependencies on labor and resources from outside the limited confines of the nation. In public debates about international migration or national identity, cultural and economic interdependencies integral to capitalist formation as well as emerging contemporary cultures sustained by the possibilities of physical and virtual mobility barely register. However, the life and livelihoods of streets in the urban margins of Birmingham, Bristol, Leicester, London, and Manchester precisely reflect the historical and contemporary realities of how the city is inextricably part of a series of places beyond the confines of the nation.

It is the everyday life of these streets that challenges us to expand our sense of place and our interdependent humanity, tracing the wider forces of displacement and practices of transgression that constitute a citizenship of the edge. In tandem with the narrow discourse of the “migration problem” are public debates and policy interventions on how migrants integrate and contribute to “receiving” societies. Prevailing notions of managed community cohesion focus on cultural and social process of assimilation as an alignment with “host values.” This inward orientation overlooks the lively participations of migrants in cultural and economic life, and movement and circulation as integral to human
life. It ignores the brutal discriminations by which migrants are sorted in racialized, ethnicized, and gendered ways. The street reveals the extended logics of colonization and sovereignty that embed certain migrants in peripheral parts of cities where life and livelihoods must be forged. Through the street, we witness how the migrant comes to occupy the fault lines and possibilities of our shared planetary future.