The Migrant's Paradox

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There is no large project of redistribution on the horizon. So how do we use the mandate of infrastructure to make adaptation, to make a different kind of politics?

The way a city is portrayed to the world, and hence to itself, is as a center. In the global imaginary centers are rendered as groupings of compatible spaces and people: galleries, business districts, tech hubs and cultural zones, for example. In this economic and cultural compact of what counts and who matters, centrality is constituted through the relation to power, prestige, and profit. Centrality requires its own forms of segregation secured through explicit and tacit regulations that encode privilege as much as enforce exclusion. In a milieu of the globalization of central space, urban centers command a preeminent status ranked in an international table of claims to competitive advantage. Their connection to the margin is rendered as subsidiary. Developers and planners look to the image and idea of the center to initiate or replicate what is regarded as success. They tend to look to the margins to contain or mitigate what they regard as failure, and, where possible and profitable, to make the margin more like the center. In this chapter I examine the process of a street in south London being pulled into the center, to explore the nature of planning powers that reshape the relation of state and street. In tandem, I focus on the unheroic repertoires of resistance forged through active subdivisions of space, reinventions of tenure, and formations of loose coalition.

Centrality is a form of economic and political domination with space as its constitutive medium. The political economy of centrality relies not only on economic but also cultural annexation through the elevation or relegation of what matters and who matters. Here I bring into
play “the wider environment of ‘whiteness’” in relation to the dominant values and practices that shape planning processes. Global processes of reassigning urban value through the reorganization of centers and margins is acutely revealed in David Harvey’s analysis of “accumulation by dispossession.” The phrase captures how the inordinate profit yielded in the buying and selling of inhabited urban space depends on an inordinate residualization of who is already there. In what has come to be understood as an imperial scale of dispossession, Raquel Rolnik extends the line of analysis to a “new colonial empire; a faceless, speculative process that imposes new cultures and ways of organizing life.” She captures how the financialization of the urban land market systematically reassigns value through the devaluing of certain people and places. While class is one key vector through which this devaluation is directed, Ananya Roy points to the virulent processes of “racial banishment” from the city through the racialized expulsion of populations rendered as problematic to regeneration. The disproportionate impacts of displacement occur through the discriminations of class, caste, “race,” gender, age, and citizenship status. Core to much of the analysis of accumulation by dispossession is a focus on the fundamental loss of security through the loss of home. I argue throughout this book that the processes of human residualization in the urban margins are multiple and occur simultaneously, compelling us to find ways of analyzing the combined dispossession of home, of work, and of citizenship.

In this chapter I focus on the street life of Rye Lane in south London in a period of an intensive regeneration agenda in Peckham. The growth agenda is embedded within the expansion of London’s speculative landscapes and is accompanied by an erosion of not only affordable living space but also affordable workspace. I engage with the lively struggles over the significance of centers and margins, starting with the collusion of the state in facilitating the dismantling of the margins. I go on to address how regeneration agendas are subject to an assertive professionalization of planning processes in which the lines between public and private interests are blurred. These range from how corporate profit is a central constitutor of regeneration value to how urban multicultures are frequently misrecognized by dominant cultural and economic values in planning processes. Despite the oppressive dominance of centrality and its segregating effects, it remains essential to recognize the everyday contestations that reinforce the significance of the margins as a vital space outside of centrality. Teresa Caldeira refers to peripheries
as “spaces that frequently unsettle official logics” and places that offer transformation without “erasing the gaps” forged by durable inequalities. It is from this space that I expand on the unheroic struggles of the margins.\textsuperscript{10} The kinds of coalitions forged in the margins in opposition to displacement are not detached from the longer formation of the sociopolitical fabric of Peckham and Rye Lane.\textsuperscript{11} The 2011 urban uprising that followed the police shooting of Mark Duggan, discussed in chapter 3 in relation to Rookery Road in Birmingham, also occurred on Rye Lane. These explosive tensions reflect the longer histories of racialized violence that shape the urban margins and the frictions and solidarities of everyday street life.

\textbf{In the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis, regeneration initiatives have surged across many UK cities. These have been supported by local authorities who are selling off public land and public housing to meet their growing deficits, the scale of which Guy Shrubsole has exposed: “Cash-strapped councils are being outgunned by corporate developers pressing to get their way.”}\textsuperscript{12} Under the edict of “spatial liberalism” in cities accredited with global attributes like London, the instrumental nature of the market–state compact has placed a different kind of pressure on the margins.\textsuperscript{13} Both market and policy have sought to bring the margins closer to the center by escalating their exchange value while permitting substantial human costs. The virulent repositioning of centers and margins across London over the past decade exemplifies that there is no relocation of place without the dislocation of people, with a record 292,000 people leaving London from mid-2015 to mid-2016.\textsuperscript{14}

The global sweep of speculation has found a route southward across the River Thames and down to Peckham in the London borough of Southwark. Here urban financialization intersects with the context of austerity governance and bureaucratic entrepreneurialism, and in recent years Southwark Council has led several large-scale regeneration projects. Of these the en masse displacement associated with state-facilitated regeneration is exemplified by the Heygate Estate at the Elephant and Castle, a strategic node south of the river. The decanting of approximately three thousand residents and the loss of affordable housing units from the estate was undertaken in favor of redevelopment by Lendlease, a multinational corporation based in Australia. The Labour leader Peter John claims that such initiatives create new houses and new jobs. We need to position this perspective adjacent to a surge in the House Price Index in Southwark since 2009, evidencing a near doubling of house
prices up until 2017, an incline that exceeded the London average.\textsuperscript{15} In the period from 2001 to 2015 the percentage of Southwark Local Authority housing stock reduced from 43 percent to 28.6 percent.\textsuperscript{16} We therefore need an entirely different comprehension of regeneration rhetoric and its vocabularies of mixed communities and revitalization. In the presumed socioeconomic arc of regeneration as progress, a core question is, “How is progress defined and who is elevated and relegated in these assumptions?”\textsuperscript{17} I position Southwark Council’s redevelopment plan for the Peckham Town Centre in the \textit{Revitalise: Peckham and Nunhead Area Action Plan} of 2014.\textsuperscript{18} The document’s cover proclaims the prospects for a “Fairer future,” and like many other area action plans (AAPs) across the city, it highlights “concentrations of large development opportunities.” The planning document identifies the reputation of Peckham town center as “a creative and cultural hub” and goes on to establish a key position:

Historically Peckham has had a negative reputation, focusing on high crime levels and feelings of the area not being safe. The AAP will help change this image, including through encouraging developers and landowners to bring forward sites for development. This includes developing the council’s many own sites.\textsuperscript{19}

How are we to view the renditions of change generally adopted in policy and planning documents when set alongside the dispossession of affordable homes and workplaces? The term “planetary gentrification” evolves out of significant comparative research that evidences the connections between large-scale, state-facilitated regeneration initiatives and growing urban inequalities.\textsuperscript{20} When we started our fieldwork on Rye Lane in 2012, it became apparent that although a substantial planned revitalization process for the Peckham Town Centre was under way, no detailed analysis of the street’s economies had been undertaken. The council had focused more explicitly on user needs and consumer preferences, identifying the aspirations for a wider retail offer. With such processes of visioning, the presence of an agile multicultural street trade is potentially overshadowed by a highly visible and familiar entertainment and retail cache that has come to compose many centers across London. In the retail combinations of chains and franchises, a “clone-town” rendition of an everywhere-and-nowhere retail landscape extends from the South Bank along the River Thames to the terminals at Heathrow.\textsuperscript{21} In what I term “ubiquiscapes” there is little room for what Stuart Hall

referred to as “the improvised ventures” of the street. Encapsulated in Hall’s description are a range of capricious practices inclusive of small-scale operators that highlight interrelations of people and place.

The layers of street life, gentrification, and regeneration that collide in the margins of the Peckham Town Centre have multiple international dimensions. On the ground floor of the kilometer stretch of Rye Lane, hundreds of formal units of retail are tightly packed, forming a dense linear assemblage of economic and cultural diversity. The majority of these units are occupied by independent proprietors, forming an intermixture of routes that intersect on the street, from Afghanistan, England, Eritrea, Ghana, India, Iran, Ireland, Jamaica, Kashmir, Kenya, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Uganda, Vietnam, and Yemen. Traders on Rye Lane locate alongside a grouping of artists and creatives who occupy the cliche of first-wave gentrifiers of the edge. They are attracted by cheap prices and the proximity to edgy multicutures, and they inhabit their dichotomy with immense flair and at times political engagement. They compose a Peckham through studios, rave scenes, outdoor cinemas, and rooftop bars, where Rye Lane’s hinterland has night worlds known in Berlin and art worlds that extend to the Venice Biennale. A local bar owner states, “There is a grunge, a cool factor, alcohol and art mixes well.”

Basements, back rooms, and decommissioned factories are alive with the creative endeavors of the now inevitable combinations of art students, artists, musicians, theater groups, yoga studios, and foodie havens. They live adjacent to and occasionally intersect with heritage and established residents’ groups that have honed their skills of resistance, often over very long periods of time, becoming fluent in the bureaucracy of planning processes and adept at interrupting its inequities. A number of evangelical churches rent out the large interiors to the rear of the street, while mosques and churches of varying scales and denominations find spaces above, below, and behind the street. At the northern end of Rye Lane, the first proposed tower block is backed by Tiger Developments and the global investment management corporation BlackRock. Further north, the proposed Peckham Coal Line and raised park is a riff on New York’s High Line, where the far reach of planetary gentrification unfolds through the adoption of transurban ideas, images, and strategies. In these adjacent inhabitations of the street, diversity is a profuse but often separate expression of groupings that have differential access to power.
More recently, the escalation of Peckham’s property values has been accompanied by a vertical extrusion of leisure activities that occupy large-format spaces such as former parking garages, factories, and warehouses. In a study of Peckham’s “vertical transformation,” a multistory articulation of classed and racialized spaces is observed through “the three-dimensional ways in which power and inequality are made.”

Yet the possibilities of cultural intermixtures exist, sometimes occurring through the unspectacular forms of interior subdivisions and multiple occupations of space, or the loose associations of protest. Here I am interested in the cultural politics within edge territories where rewirings of the circuits of value occur, often without the possibilities of substantial transformation. The suggestive possibilities of the “mandate of infrastructure” put forward by AbdouMaliq Simone, James Holston, James Scott, and others foreground the tangible stakes of place and the convening powers of territory in procuring everyday politics.

The importance of affordable homes and affordable workplaces is that these are elemental to life in the margins and are therefore the means of agency and the instruments of insurgency.

One could argue that the unheroic resistance I engage with in this chapter is too demure a form of the “right to the city” legacy proposed by Henri Lefebvre and expanded by David Harvey, as founded on the possibilities of collective resistance and substantive transformation. However, core to my positioning of edge territories and edge economies has been to show how splintered a composition these have become. Edge economies do not evoke the possibilities of working-class districts collectively politicized and culturalized by the infrastructures of employed work and union representation. Their self-employed and part-time workers and proprietors have no singular ethnonationalist affiliation, and their economic and cultural presence is increasingly questioned by burgeoning border politics and hierarchical comprehensions of value. Their unity is long working hours, falling wages, and rising rents. It is in this context that the comparably diminutive scale of shop and street are placed. I refer back to Myfanwy Taylor’s call for “re-connecting the economy with politics” and the street prospects of building “visions and propositions for alternative, more inclusive approaches to urban economic development.”

The pursuit of alternatives is explored through the unlikely affiliations that come together to resist displacement as well as the formats of bricks and mortar where material arrangements of socioeconomic experimentations are shaped.
THE PLANNED DISPLACEMENT OF THE MARGINS

Crises have a particular way of reverberating across cities, realigning the order of inequality and the relation of centers and margins. In the volatile conjuncture of our time and place, margins are susceptible to being pushed further out or pulled further in. Despite the erraticism that the word crisis implies, the distortion of the margins is an organized process of dislocation that rarely happens without the involvement of the state. Since 2008, the impacts of the Great Recession have bolstered a global displacement of a multitude of urban margins, as global capital seeks out less-volatile frontiers in which to speculate at vast magnitudes. Saskia Sassen captures the recent hyperfinancialization of urban land markets through tracing the inordinate sums of corporate capital that have ventured into cities, profoundly reordering the arrangements of centers and margins.\textsuperscript{28} Unlike people, frictionless capital is unconstrained by citizenship regulations and is permitted to filter through the borders of nations with comparative ease. Sassen reveals a trillion-dollar scale of speculation in the “top 100 recipient cities” of the globe from mid-2014 to mid-2015. The underregulated pursuit of acquiring and holding urban property—irrespective of occupying or inhabiting property—renders city space equivalent to a collection of stocks and shares. Over this same period in London, Sassen records that a staggering US$55,206,679,357 was spent on property acquisition, a figure including only major acquisitions.\textsuperscript{29} She argues that the full-throttle emergence of “urban gigantism” has resulted in “a reduction in public buildings and an escalation in large, corporate private ownership. The result is a thinning in the texture and scale of spaces previously accessible to the public.”\textsuperscript{30}

The financialization of the urban renders a city’s habitability secondary to the potential returns of profit and effectively legitimizes the separation of the idea of city from citizen. Such legitimations of investment-and-eviction, of regeneration-and-displacement, cannot be sustained by the market alone; it requires affirmation by way of the state. As the value of urban land becomes inflated, centers swell and spill into adjacent margins, amplifying the idea of the center as the terrain of economic growth and profit while engulfing the margins. Neil Smith identified the process of recentering and decentering in the context of the late twentieth century as a fundamental shift in the shape of a global political economy focused on “the new urban frontier.”\textsuperscript{31} Foretelling Sassen’s analysis, Smith identified the structural footing of urban reordering as
dependent on the recession of the late 1980s accompanied by large-scale investments into urban centers. Smith positions gentrification and the emergence of new “chic” urban lifestyles in urban centers over the 1990s as anything but an inevitable process of renewal. He records the underpinnings of gentrification as aided by the large-scale underregulation of property markets accompanied by entrepreneurial planning. Smith also highlights the concomitant process of devaluing, or stigma politics, as integral to the process of diminishing the value of the margins where processes of physical displacement depend on social displacement.

In the context of a dramatic scale and pace of change, residents and street proprietors in the urban margins of Peckham are keen to dispel the idea that they are somehow unwilling or unable to accommodate change. As will become apparent, makers within margins are adept at working with economic, cultural, and social change, but their modes and formats do not necessarily fit within planning strictures. Rather, these makers seek to resist a planning process that renders their value, their very presence, invisible. As Abdul, a proprietor of a large shop on Rye Lane in Peckham, articulates, “The problem is they don’t see us.” In a brilliant special issue on the sociology of stigma, Imogen Tyler and Tom Slater advance our understanding of the production of abjection in which the reordering of urban space and urban actors plays a key role. Thinking stigma in relation to planning “as a cultural and political economy” requires us to account for the structural and atmospheric entanglements in which relegation is produced and circulated.

I reflect on my interview in 2012 with a planner involved with Southwark Council’s redevelopment plan for the Peckham Town Centre. In the absence of a detailed analysis of the street’s socioeconomic value, I asked Tim to comment on how Rye Lane fits within the council’s broader notion of economic value. Tim clarifies:

The council has an economic development strategy: to articulate a strong and inclusive economy. There are tensions between large-scale developments versus supporting existing economies to grow. These two things don’t always meet well.

I went on to ask Tim what he felt was distinctive about Rye Lane:

We call it “the inside-out supermarket model.” There is a sensory aspect that is very distinctive—to some appealing, to others, less so. It is a street with very different business models, one being low-entry rents.
There is a split set of demands in Peckham in general terms. A large embedded middle class argue for a “tidying up” and for Rye Lane to sell more things. But “Rye Lane is a mess” is a general attitude together with a wish that Rye Lane has more to offer. There are complaints about the butchers, and yet in its own terms it’s thriving. Another pressure is the creative types who want to open bars and galleries.

Tim’s ambivalent response points to the contested values and fractured perceptions. It also raises questions about which voices are most readily recognized in planning processes. In her research on a middle-class invocation of place in Peckham, Emma Jackson refers to the particular framing of Rye Lane: “A concern with a proliferation of butchers, fishmongers and hair and nail bars is repeatedly voiced and imbued with disgust,”33 connecting how ethnicity, “race,” and class are core to the performance and assignment of place value in Peckham.34 Social hierarchies and differential access to power further shape the processes of representation and participation within regeneration. These internal divisions are reflected in how Peckham is placed in a wider London imaginary. In my conversation with Tim we talked about the growing trends of gentrification across Southwark and the increases in property values in Peckham. Tim went on to clarify how Rye Lane presented a “frontline” to the new urban frontier, suggesting: “There are still such high proportions of social housing [across Southwark] that even left alone, gentrification reaches a buffer. Peckham experiences a similar balance, the frontline being Rye Lane.” In the context of heightened contestations over value, Tim underscored how important social housing is for maintaining a protection against displacement, but it is a protection being rapidly undone by the “regeneration” of housing estates.

However, frontlines can be substantially repositioned through realignments of cultural perception and planning vocabularies as much as physical infrastructure. During our fieldwork on Rye Lane from 2012 to 2014, it became clear how Peckham was being pulled further in toward the center through combined processes of hipsterization, speculation, and large-scale shifts in transport infrastructure. Tim predicts the nature of the shift:

What is quite likely in Peckham is an East London–style shift. The East London overline now connects Dalston to Peckham extending “Hipster Heaven.” There is also the Bellenden Road Renewal Area
to the southwest of Rye Lane that includes a council public realm effort. There is a huge difference in the two-minute walk between these streets, and eventually the Bellenden Road model is going to seep into Rye Lane.

Over the period of fieldwork in Peckham I engaged with different council members on a few occasions. At one key meeting in 2013, it was apparent that there were differing understandings of the street among council members. What remained core to their varied narratives was that Rye Lane and the Peckham Town Centre was imagined as a margin that needed realignment. Peckham’s proper place was not primarily conceived of through Peckham itself but rather in closer proximity to East London and its hipster heaven, or to Bellenden Road as imagined in relation to its organic butcher, independent bookshop, bistros, and award-winning public art and street furniture scheme. By contrast with Rye Lane, Bellenden Road is smaller, its retail offer is less varied, and its pavements are far less busy. Phil Hubbard refers to such claims to high street value as a form of “retail gentrification” that favors boutiques and cafés and is often captured by a creative economy discourse that aligns with conventional planning ambitions. However, the transformation of Bellenden Road is gradual. Differing transitional phases of gentrification that are expressed through a wide array of cultural and spatial experimentation are ultimately followed by increases in property values, reassignments of cultural value, and apportioning of stigma.

The narrative of Peckham’s spatial proximities and perceived cultural distanciations has served to depict a pejorative urban juxtaposition, with The Telegraph coarsely portraying social distinctions through the reductive stand-ins of Rye Lane and Bellenden Road:

This is the tale of two Peckhams. There is north Peckham, between the High Street and the Old Kent Road, notorious for the sink estates, where Damilola Taylor was murdered in a stairwell after leaving the award-winning, futuristic library designed by Alsop and Stormer. And then there is Georgian and Victorian Peckham, the conservation area around Bellenden Road and Peckham Rye Common where William Blake claimed he had a vision of angels in the trees.

The telling of these apparent juxtapositions in this way resorts to flippant caricature, particularly heinous in its casual mention of the murder
of ten-year-old Damilola Taylor in 2000 and how this is used to portray the perceived notoriety and failure of a “sink” area. There remains a prevalent public discourse that valorizes aesthetic configurations of place and shapes debates on urban redevelopment, often in highly discriminatory ways. Wendy Shaw articulates this dual modality of empowerment and disempowerment invoked in the discourse of planning processes as “whiteness,” where matters of taste and lifestyle are core to the recognition of dominant group interests. She also shows how residents of the margins come to be essentialized through coarse understandings of ethnic categorization and the establishment of a diminutive minority condition.37

Questions of representation are core to writing the street, and one of the ways this emerged during our research was in meetings with planning officers and elected officials over 2013 and 2014, where we presented some of our findings on the socioeconomic life of Rye Lane. How to communicate the multiple cultural, social, and economic values of Rye Lane connects with thinking about ways of telling that might be comprehended by power. In these earlier days of what evolved into a much longer research process across many streets, we framed this as a question of “evidence.” We relied on the narrative and visualizations of our surveys and observations. It was only later, in a larger research arc, that we began to explore making “evidence” through a process of coalition building.38 In 2018 we started working with an activist group to conduct research and to give impetus to how it might be heard.39 During our research on Rye Lane we explored what research and representational tactics we could compile to disrupt the presumptions of value in planning processes. Admittedly, our material seemed only to go so far, without notable impact on planning. However, it did provide an alternative evidence base for local groups and activists to contest the AAP process as well as activist groups challenging the lack of protection for affordable workspace at the metropolitan scale in the statutory plan for Greater London’s development, the London Plan.40 Our first core tactic was to work with but stretch the elemental format of the survey. While we were aware of the “veracity” of numbers and how these might speak to the familiar lexicons of policy, this was not about affirming what Iain Chambers importantly identifies as “an uninterrupted language of conformity.”41

We relied on the face-to-face nature of our survey exchanges to complicate and occasionally alter the apparently straightforward questions
of the survey format. On Rye Lane in 2012 we recorded 199 formal units of retail. To begin with, 65 percent of retailers on Rye Lane operated in independent, non-affiliated retail. Among the proprietors, one-fifth had occupied their shops for twenty years or more, with just under half occupying the street for five years or less, indicating a condensed period of transformation. The spectrum of retail trade included clothing (18 percent); food (17 percent), with specialties in fish and halal meat; beauty products, largely comprising hair and nail bars (13 percent); money remittances (12 percent); and mobile-phone products and services (11 percent). Ground-floor space was at a premium, testified by the limited number of vacancies (less than 10 percent) and the limited number of charity shops. The shops on the street are adjacent to one roofed market and a bazaar and many smaller market stalls, which we did not survey. Comparatively high residential densities in Peckham (more than double London’s average), combined with numerous bus routes and a well-connected overground rail station, all contribute to the high thresholds of footfall on Rye Lane crucial for the survival of independent retail.

A subsequent tactic was to develop a parody of sorts. By taking a well-known spatial and/or organizational form recognized as having value in conventional planning terms, we could set this adjacent with the street. One such drawing we made was a side-by-side comparison with the plan of Peckham Town Centre above and the plan of the newly completed Westfield Stratford City below (Figure 14). The Westfield Stratford City Shopping Centre sits adjacent to the London Olympic Park and opened in 2011. It has been hailed as one of the largest shopping centers in Europe, a retail success story, and a significant generator of local jobs. From 2010 to 2018 it was variously owned by combinations of multinational property and commercial real estate corporations, and investors of state pension funds in Canada and the Netherlands. Drawing on secondary data and predictive data available at the time, we recorded that the shopping center would contain 300 retail units and generate 8,500 permanent jobs, with the Stratford Metropolitan Masterplan document predicting that Zone 1 of the development would generate 9,840 jobs.42 We compared this with data from the High Street London report of 2010, which worked with the Peckham Town Centre boundaries to estimate an approximation of 2,100 businesses and 13,400 employees.

The comparison is illustrative and is based on estimates at a fixed
point in time. In juxtaposing Peckham’s Town Centre with the familiar and valued form of a shopping center we aimed to point to the substantial role of high streets and the significance of their individual and collective microeconomies. We never ran a comparative rates analysis of the two different systems of street and shopping center, but this would be a further means of thinking about the public tax base generated off
these differing socioeconomic arrangements. In this comparison it is also crucial to recognize organizational arrangements and how they do or do not speak to power. The street is a loose cohesion of hundreds of proprietors, as opposed to the apparent professional coherence of a large retail corporation with its teams of planners, legal experts, lobbyists, and PR agents. The composition of the street means that it is less legible to the lens of power and less able to pursue direct avenues to communicate with power.

As with our story of Rookery Road in Birmingham, streets are often recognized in planning terms but very much in terms of their perceived “local” value. They are accorded neither the same stature nor the same public infrastructural investment and support as large-format corporate retail. The loose cohesion of the street also means that it is a highly adaptive spatial and social system that incrementally responds to change. Located outside of corporate formats, independent shops are often able to rapidly alter their interior compositions on a regular basis. This quick-footed temporal pace is frequently out of sync with the slower pace of bureaucracies. When we presented our research findings on Rye Lane to the council, Fred, who works at the council as a street-level bureaucrat, responded: “There is difficulty in defining the role of the local authority. We are well versed in compliance issues, like health and safety and fire risks. But what you are describing is a city that invents itself overnight, quickly. In planning we work in much longer time periods.”

The street lacks visibility partly because power is already looking elsewhere to validate more corporate systems of value, and partly because the individual composition of the street means that it is difficult to establish forms of collective representation. Development corporations have teams of experts who can and do meet with local authorities to present and advance their view. In the absence of a trade association or designated town center officer, the loose cohesion of hundreds of proprietors on Rye Lane struggles to communicate to power. However, it is not simply that the street is invisible because it is overlooked. Its invisibility, or what Huda Tayob calls “opacity,” serves to provide a complex infrastructure of adaptability that offers forms of circumvention and refusal within the logics of capital.  

SHAKING THE TREE
How do makers within the margins—those living and working within an edge territory in Peckham in south London—resist the ambitions of state
and market to replace their margin with a center? Crucial to Smith’s formulation of the “new urban frontier” is the role of people living and working in places subject to large-scale organized change, and the possibilities of resistance within dispossession. Smith’s key questions remain acute for our understanding of the takeover of margins by centers: “What does this mean for the people who live there? Can they do anything about it?” Turning to the street, I focus more closely on the repertoires of resistance adopted by the traders together with a wider consortium of residents, thinking through their edge status captured by bell hooks as simultaneously looking “from the outside in and the inside out.” I explore what kind of politics is possible within the loose multiculture of the street, with its varied migratory journeys, multilingualisms, extended shop hours, and hiked rentals. On the street, forms of relegation and refusal emerge in practices of meaning-making that are deeply spatial. The street activates and is activated by resistance to domination and racism through its territorial and cultural forms; it is proximate to everyday troubles, and its sociability emerges through contact and exchange. The “streetness of the street” and its spatial configuration fundamentally matter for who is able to participate in the recalibration of the city and under what conditions that participation is brokered.

Within the realities of inequality that permeate everyday life in Peckham, a range of cultural fluencies and competencies allow individuals to participate in a landscape of cultural intermixtures. In our street survey we asked independent proprietors how many languages they spoke in order to understand how proprietors communicate and maintain trade across wide-spanning networks, as well as how they attend to the needs of a diverse clientele: 11 percent of street proprietors spoke one language, 61 percent spoke two or three languages, and 28 percent spoke four or more languages. The language proficiencies of proprietors on Rye Lane are significant, and forms of a multilingual citizenship have emerged where the repertoires of communication are structural, strategic, and sociable. However, these are not simply smooth participations. As Anoop Nayak suggests, they require paying attention to the, “atonal infractions, scratches, bumps, crackles and hisses” in the convivial turn. Key questions extend to what resources are necessary to cope with multiple crises, and how the everyday life of urban multicultures absorbs and addresses internal and external stresses.

During our study we became aware of three particular crises that had a major impact on the everyday life of the street, requiring responses
on the parts of traders, customers, and residents beyond “business as usual.” The first connects with the global financial crisis, which had significant reverberations across the UK high street retail economies, as shown with Stapleton Road, Rookery Road, Narborough Road, and Cheetham Hill. While Rye Lane exhibited comparatively minimal levels of vacancy at the time of our survey, traders noticed the effect of customers simply having less to spend. When we met with Frank in 2012 in his Western Union agency on Rye Lane, he commented, “My business depends on the person having a job. Over the last year it has decreased around 50 percent less business this year than last.” Abdul, who runs a large convenience store on Rye Lane, confirms, “We are busy not because we are making money, but because we are struggling.” At the same time that customers simply had less to spend, the increase in property values in Peckham continued across both residential and retail sectors, mirroring the speculative trends of many well-located inner-city areas in London. Omar, who has been in clothing retail on Rye Lane since 1984 and who owns his shop, comments with a level of cynicism that it might be more profitable to rent out his shop rather than run his business within it: “I may just rent my property, sit back, and collect the money and enjoy life.” The majority of proprietors on Rye Lane do not own their premises, and the impacts of the recession, rising rental costs, and high property taxes require more agile responses to engaging with the parallel realities of reduced spending power on the street.

While the first crisis is economic in its origin and impact on the street, two additional crises have had political implications for how actors on the street view their individual and collective future. In the planning and regeneration initiative coordinated by the London borough of Southwark for the Revitalise action plan of 2014, varied local groups said that their interests and needs were underrepresented in the regeneration process. Harry, who grew up in Peckham and runs a local café, suggests, “They’ve turned regeneration into redevelopment. We could do with a clean-up and maintenance; people would like that on its own. . . . Now we have people sleeping rough. All the money they’re getting they’re spending on rent. I don’t know what’s going to happen really.” Local groups working to understand and communicate the redevelopment processes identify a sharp disconnect between those who plan and those who inhabit the street. Ethel, an activist and leader of an established community engagement initiative that facilitates discussion about the future of Peckham Town Centre, clarifies how she views her contribution:
I have dedicated myself, because it is for a higher, a deeper and a wider cause than simply investing in physical infrastructure in Peckham. It’s because I passionately believe that the human race actually needs a different way of organizing itself at neighborhood level, which works differently with the policy makers—we need a different way of doing it. We’ve got a huge, dreadful disconnect with people in their ordinary lives and the people who take policy decisions in the professional, technical, and managerial world.

Traders, too, have felt underrepresented in both day-to-day and concerted regeneration initiatives. Abdul comments that a lack of collective organization on the part of the traders had previously limited their mode of engaging with the council: “Back in 2009 I feel for it because we had a problem with the council doing their job in Rye Lane. We had no voice, no one could hear us, if we have any problem, serious or small, no one would take any notice if we don’t take care ourselves.”

An incident on the street in September 2012 brought a third crisis to the fore, one that invoked racialized tensions and prompted the necessity of forming a traders association. The incident emerged out of the sale of a mobile phone to a young man in a shop on Rye Lane that was subsequently found to malfunction. The phone had been bought without receipt, and the young man was allegedly offered no compensation when he confronted the proprietor. A heated street protest representing the party who had brought the phone grew, and expressions of racial and religious differences entered into the dispute. Dialogue between key community representatives served to mediate, as did the formation of a trade association that was compelled to outline key protocols around street trade. A short film released on YouTube captures an important moment of mediation, where varied parties met on the street in October 2012 to underscore their commitment to showing respect and working together. The traders’ representative addressed the street public:

The retailers of Rye Lane deeply value the support of the local community. We recognize that working together we try to make [sic] and improve Rye Lane. The incident involving Mrs. Brown and her son Simon should never have been allowed to happen the way that it did, and we regret it, and we offer our apologies to Mrs Brown and Simon, but most importantly, our commitment to work with her and her group to ensure that such an incident never happens again and to improve the relationship.
The traders’ representative went on to detail key steps to address questions that had been raised by the protestors, from establishing a customer service policy where complaints can be addressed, to commencing more-inclusive employment practices for those who live in the area, to the establishment of a traders association. The pulling of the margins toward the center is an additional pressure on Rye Lane, with varied groups on the street articulating differing aspirations and occupying varied positionalities. As Faith, a trader on the street, underscores, “What we are really after is improving quality of life. What are the connections between those who are well off and those who are struggling?”

This street mediation involved active dialogue, a clarification of the terms of the dispute, an establishment of protocols to uphold an agreement, and a public endorsement of a resolution. Following from and running alongside this mediation are additional initiatives that are sustained for the purpose of “moving forward together.” These incorporate small gatherings arranged around everyday practices, as Eddie, a local vicar, comments:

This is a lively and multicultural area. In the wider community setting multi-faith platforms are harder to engage with, there are different leadership structures for a start. . . . We have had small success in Peckham. It grew out of some tensions in Rye Lane, of racial and religious elements. This brought the secretary of the mosque into the same forum as I was as a vicar. We had a multi-faith walk, and we entered into each other’s religious spaces. We had about seventy participants, and we were showing a respect in practical ways beyond a false mystique. . . . Beyond the crisis, initiatives are time-consuming and slow processes. I’ve twice attended main Friday prayers and been invited to speak about solidarity between Christians and Muslims, and was warmly received.

Eddie later added: “There are very few places where people can engage in civil society, engage in careful listening.” The traders association is potentially one forum where people can participate in “careful listening” as well as proactive efforts to engage in change. The engagement itself is made both possible and fragile by the rhythm of everyday life, but because of time constraints it is not always easy to sustain the momentum of such associations, as Abdul comments a few months later: “It is not easy. Everyone on this street is struggling with their business. People
have no time. After working long hours, they just want to go home, and if you ask them to stay for a meeting they are sometimes too tired.”

The everyday politics of diverse interest groups on Rye Lane are constituted through lively political forms and modest everyday modes. An unheroic yet significant political set of practices persists that Ash Amin reflects on as “a politics of small gains and fragile truces” in the pursuit of plurality and difference. Here, the street is a common public platform and a space in which individuals and groups are highly invested. For some it is a place close to home, for others the means of making a living. For all those invested it is on and through the street that friction erupts and where forms of dialogue are explored. In the overlap of crises on the street a loose cohesion of interests gathers. Active intersections across different interests occur through organized protests, workshops, cultural expressions, and coordinated events, all of which require leadership, questioning, and protocol. Sporadic and organized resistance on the street emerges through high stakes and is sustained by small gains. It is in the vital and intense space of the street that social and cultural intermixtures shape the platforms of an everyday solidarity. A significant fragility is the lack of time and the unequal pressures of living in the margins. What this solidarity is for extends to the basic right to the making of the margins and the struggles it entails.

REWIRING

The everyday practices of meaning-making and of making oneself at home are connected to the possibilities of reconfiguration within a larger structure of centrality, as Marshall Berman evokes:

I’m writing more about the environments and public spaces that are available to modern people, and the ones that they create, and the ways they act and interact in these spaces in the attempt to make themselves at home. I’m emphasising those modes of modernism that seek to take over or to remake public space, to appropriate and transform it in the name of the people who are its public. On the street, space becomes available through practices of translation without having to conform to dominant conventions. In making oneself at home one must be able to see and act on the possibilities of rewiring established circuits of value and representation. Swati Chattopadhyay’s exploration of street space in Indian cities shows how the appropriation
of existing infrastructure is an elemental way of shifting the intended meanings to create new vocabularies.\textsuperscript{51} Space is not readily available on Rye Lane, so creating space fundamentally requires engaging with its limited availability. Working within the limits generates new spatial

\textbf{FIGURE 15.} A drawing of the range of “urban mutualisms” on Rye Lane in London in 2012. Drawn by Nicolas Palominos.
practices and struggles for alternatives. When we conducted our street survey in 2012 we noticed a number of the ground-floor shops practiced what we called an “urban mutualism” (Figure 15). Mutualisms emerges in the intense subdivision of shop space in which multiple activities and tenures are co-located and in the process are reconfigured.52

We explored the rewiring of space through drawing the multiple and infinitely varied subdivisions of shops along Rye Lane (Figure 16). Rewiring of shop interiors creates spatial and social realignments that extend to include the reformation of multiple tenure arrangements that are responsive to the differing needs of varied working lives. The interior reconfigurations are deeply lodged within the logic of the market and dramatic increases in property values, all of which reduce the space available for appropriation. But practices of rewiring the circuits of value are lodged in more than market impositions. They evoke an improvisational understanding of the possibilities of shared space within the fragilities and ambitions of a highly differentiated array of street proprietors.
These practices are effectively multipliers of space and delivery mechanisms attending to those who fall outside of but adjacent to a formalized and increasingly unaffordable market with limited rental paradigms. In peripheries across the world, these practices of sharing space through simultaneous modes of subdivision and reinventions of rental in the context of underprovision are an integral part of both a “fragile submarket” and a “city-building tool.” As Margot Rubin has observed in the context of “backyarding” in South Africa, this is a prominent form of providing rental accommodation of various kinds, one that is poorly understood and all too readily caricatured as problematic in policy terms.

Entering into the interior of these reconfigured spaces reveals a dense palimpsest of multiple activities and spaces that have arisen in response to escalating property values and limited access to formal circuits of capital. Mutualism reflects the necessary creativities or “transversal logics” required to partially circumvent these limits. Looking beyond the street facade into these interiors reveals multiple modifications that are ways of claiming and holding on to available street space. In our mapping of a large corner unit on Rye Lane, we marked its outer boundaries with a dark outline that signifies the shop unit as a whole (Figure 18). Within this unit are eleven internal subdivisions—a carving up and parceling out of space according to emergent economic practices on the street. We spoke with Ziyad, who had the head lease for the whole unit. Ziyad had left Afghanistan with his brother in 2004, and in 2009 he had secured the lease for the shop. He explains that the largest unit of the shop is configured around groceries, which he considers the most stable business type on Rye Lane.

Five of the units are occupied by hair and/or nail salons, most of which face onto a side street off Rye Lane that has become an intensive hub of economies and sociabilities around hair styling. It is an economy sustained by regular clients and their ongoing commitments to investments of time and money. The salons are highly sociable spaces, accommodating customers, friends, and family. Mary, who works in one of these units, points to a sophisticated headpiece and explains, “This is about £300, it would cost me about £20 in Lagos. It takes two days for me to weave this hair. It can last about three months. The simplest is a weave-in for £30, and takes about an hour and a half.” The smallest of these salons is two-and-a-half by two-and-a-half meters, with just enough room for one stylist. In the larger units with sufficient room for more stylists, chairs are rented out at between £50 and £80 per week.
The chair rental arrangement is part of the viability of the expanding hair and nail sector occupied largely by female stylists. While the stylists are working in a rapidly growing retail sector, they are largely without job security. Flexibility is an essential aspect of the fine balance of their precarity, and stylists spoke about their requirements for flexible working hours connected to responsive tenure arrangements. Dalu underscores how important it is “for me to be able to work and look after my kids” and goes on to say, “and what if we also need to study, how are we going to make that all work?”

At the front end of Ziyad’s grocery store, closest to Rye Lane, is a small table, no more than two meters wide by one meter deep, offering phone paraphernalia and phone repairs. Here rentals are at their highest, at £400 per month. The rental premium is fixed on the understanding that this is the optimal space for trade, as well as the knowledge that there is a high demand for phone repairs and contract unlocking. Right at the back of the grocery store is a money-remittance franchise. Umesh set up his remittance service on the basis that “there is no charge to

1. Fruit and veg stall
2. Mobile phones
3. General convenience goods
4. Nails Salon
5. Money transfer
6. Beauty supplies
7. Hair Salon
start with, you take a percentage of the commission, and what you need to start with is a landline and internet connection.” He tells us he pays £800 per month as a rental and that having a remittance service within a main store generally increased trade because “regulars come in every week, but also when they get paid. The smallest amount sent is around £5 to go towards the needs of a family somewhere else.” This regular flow of customers is generally beneficial for shop sales where the interior reconfigurations form out of sociocultural and economic co-relations.

Together, proprietors of shared shop interiors must agree on how the protocols of serving, buying, and selling overlap. The practices of interior mutualisms allow proprietors to respond on a regular basis to the nuances of the market and emerging trends. However, in the context of increasing land values and rentals, the hybrid model has a central economic imperative. When we asked Ziyad what the most profitable part of his business was, he replied, “Renting out parts of our store to other people.” Francesca who has traded on Rye Lane for many years, defines this as a practice of defense against tough times: “These days it’s getting tough with us. Customers are putting less in their bags. The shops are divided by little, little, little. It’s hard to make even a £100 in a day.” Ziyad’s shop and its encrusted creativity and lively interior was closed down in 2018. Its closure, together with that of a number of shops in the immediate vicinity of the station, is to accommodate the plan for a new public space and mix of retail. The redevelopment is connected to the restoration of the Victorian historic legacy of the Peckham Rye station, built in 1846, and its Grade II listing. The interior improvisations of the shops adjacent to the station remain overshadowed by the pronounced value of the station building. Historic England provides the following explanation:

In the period between 1938 and 1951 much of the ironwork was removed and the rear courtyard to the H-shaped building was filled in with a staircase and corridor giving alternative access to the platforms. At around the same time shops were built in the immediate vicinity of the principal elevation to the north, hemming in the station and diminishing the impact of its architecture on the streetscape.55

Whom the street belongs to and how belonging is rendered in terms of historic restoration or contemporary inhabitation are highly contested. Matters of history and legacy are overtly articulated in planning processes and vocabularies, and their prominence is maintained through
an established and professionalized field of expertise assiduous in recording the minutiae of certain historic values. The interior subdivisions of Ziyad’s shop, by contrast, are maintained through an everyday archival practice that eludes formal records of cultural and social value. Moving past the station to the northern end of the street we enter into Barbara and Kofi’s shop (Figure 19). Here the subdivisions are also deeply immersed in arrangements of sociability as expanded in Thomas’s field notes in 2014:

The upper room is spacious and subdivided between several micro-enterprises: a hairdresser, tailors and a travel agent, who each pay weekly rent. Barbara and Kofi take this rent and also run an overflow transfer cashpoint whilst selling Ghanaian goods, such as cosmetic products, patterned silks and CD copies. The salon, run by a single hairdresser, is separated from the shop by hanging garments on a clothes rail. The three tailors, each with their own table and sewing machine, have a large sofa to distinguish their end of the room. The travel agent’s room is constructed of a lightweight partition, made mostly of glass, in a strange L-shape. Whilst each individual attends to their own business they assiduously listen to each other’s conversations across the shop floor.

The logic of adaptation through subdivisions also provides the first point of entry onto the street through minimized overheads as captured in Abdul’s fieldwork conversation with Hamza, a researcher on our project, in 2013 where he describes arriving on Rye Lane:

I had to start from zero here. When I left Kabul, the property in Afghanistan was really down. I started by setting up a store the size of a table. I started with something new in this area then; mobile repairing and accessories. I was the only one on Rye Lane doing mobile repairs at the time. Back home we had no mobiles. I had to learn how to operate it. I had to buy mobiles and open them up to see how they worked. One of the customers told me that they went to Nokia store to get their mobile fixed but they told him that the phone was water damaged and couldn’t be repaired. But I fixed it. People would ask me where I learned this skill. I would tell them I learned at university, which isn’t true. I have learned everything on this street. I didn’t speak English before coming to London but I learned it here. I worked very hard, twelve to sixteen hours, you have to work really
hard. I started with the first unit, then it became two units and today I have the whole shop.

Abdul’s premises now accommodate an overlap of his own large convenience store; a portion of ongoing building works by the local heritage society to uncover an unusual 1930’s vaulted ceiling; and a mosque. On most Fridays those attending the mosque above Abdul’s shop filter largely unnoticed down one side of his space. But in intensive periods of worship and celebration such as Ramadan, there is more crossover between customers and worshippers. When I met with Abdul again in 2014, I asked about how these activities are all convened, and he said, laughing, “You need an understanding landlord.” Precisely because these rewired spaces are not organized in the conventional strictures and predictable formats of chains and franchises, an improvisational overlap of retail, religion, and heritage can be pieced together in a loose cohesion of interests. These horizontal and vertical subdivisions are the “creative worlds” that make space for the biography and improvisation of home-making. They sit within and in opposition to the “overarching worlds” of professionalized expertise through which dominant value systems and prescriptions on the terms of urban belonging are canonized.56
The processes of rewiring outside of the dominant structures of valuing, auditing, and regulating are therefore also deeply precarious, and may have punitive consequences. Here I return to the conversation between Hamza and Abdul in 2013:

Hamza: How do you manage this shop with so many different products?

Abdul: I manage through my experience. I don’t have the touchscreen systems in my shop, which tell you how much stock you have. I check if something is in the stock by looking at the shelves.

Hamza: Where do your goods come from?

Abdul: I buy things from suppliers. We do imports as well, but it only started last year and it is expensive. When I went to China, I visited a market which had five thousand stores. It took me a week to get through the market. Sometimes it is not useful to import things from China because of different requirements in the UK. We have to make sure our products meet the health and safety standards in the UK, which may be different in case of Chinese products.

When I met with Abdul again, he spoke about how difficult it was to keep up to date with the multiple changes in regulations, especially around the regulation of goods. Tim, too, had mentioned that the resources required on the part of the council to monitor trading standards, environment standards, and enforcement were “stretched to say the least.” Abdul comments: “They think we don’t know our rights, and most of us, we don’t know our rights . . . but why don’t they work with us? That is why I am learning my rights, and we are learning our rights together.” In 2015 Abdul was convicted of breaking the law and fined £20,000 in relation to stocking and selling a pesticide containing Dichlorvos, a substance that had been banned in the UK in 2002 and in Europe in 2012. The prosecution was led by Southwark Council. Officers from Southwark’s Trading Standards enforcement team reportedly found illegal pesticides stocked in numerous shops across the area. The process of learning rights together happens within individual and collective arrangements but requires organized communication flows between state and street. In the context of Rye Lane, the loose associations of the street and practices of rewiring sit adjacent to but often separate from the overstretched capacities of the state and its
ever-increasing distance from street life. Cuts to council budgets have meant that the position of a local trading officer who would have been in regular communication with shops on markets on Rye Lane no longer exists.

The street level of Rye Lane endures as a margin not so much in the sense of a location but of a contestation, a set of daily struggles and experiments connected to claiming space and holding on to it in the face of change. The hybrid shop interiors combine a mix of precarity, economic dexterity, opportunism, and a litmus-like response to the less affluent urban population that it communicates with. The shops also incorporate the spatial textures of streets and markets in Ahvaz, Jammu, Morogoro, Hanoi, and Tiazz with their affinities for highly social modes of trade. The margin is therefore a space for rewiring the circuits of value, the interior elaborations of near and far worlds, and the circumventions around property and planning systems from which most of the street is excluded. The densely invested interiors are less visible from the pavement, and much of the emerging life and value of the street is opaque to the passerby and the lens of power. In my conversation with Tim he suggested, “Where larger retail units exist the planning consent will prohibit subdivision.”

UNHEROIC RESISTANCE
At a presentation to elected officials at the Southwark Council and Overview Committee on May 7, 2013, Elizabeth Cox from the New Economics Foundation pointed to how local planning tends to adopt “a narrow policy focus to large, structural problems.” She reflected on what a “radical vision” for high streets might encompass. This included using social well-being as a frame; living within limits in response to climate change limits; and exploring economic justice through economic space that is socially just. The elemental question of economic space that is socially just is a crucial key principle, one that is not only malleable to a wide array of interpretations but also rarely reaches everyday experience of making livelihoods in the margins. The inhabitants of the edge invest in what Jack Halberstam evokes as the possibilities of “fugitive” practices of planning that are “mostly about reaching out to find connection, they are about making common cause with the brokenness of being.” In a global city like London, where property speculation has substantially escalated since 2008, gentrification encapsulates the waves of cultural and economic takeover of edgy urban
areas as frontiers of hipsterization. However, a far more systemic orga-
nization of cultural and economic annexation, of brokenness, is at play
through the combination of the financialization of the urban and the
regeneration maxim adopted by the state. The banishment of people
from place and its racialized and classed effects is occurring apace.
The recomposition of a margin into a center is not the kind of prob-
lem articulated through the planned restoration of historic buildings,
the expansion of a new retail mix, or the policy commitment to “mixed
communities.” It is the kind of problem of large-scale displacements of
people, and with it the stark, irrevocable increase in urban inequalities
and discrimination.

The street is a front line, but it can only exist as such if space is made
and kept available for people to “make themselves at home.” This re-
quires a far more assertive public commitment to retaining and provid-
ing public resources, the first and most elemental of which is affordable
and secure social housing.\(^{59}\) We cannot think about a secure homeplace
in a context of the rapidly changing nature of work and its partial and
part-time makeup without also thinking about what genuinely afford-
able and secure workplaces might be composed of.\(^{60}\) Edge territories
offer and also constrain a particular convening power, an emergence of
unheroic struggles in which marginalization, procured through the cate-
gories of “race,” class, and citizenship status, are core to the forms and
outcomes of these struggles. Our turbulent urban century has ushered
a new age of resistance in response to a new age of inequalities.\(^{61}\) But
within the substantial “right to the city” protests from Zuccotti Park to
Paternoster Square to Taksim Gezi Park, we need to recognize that the
encompassing nature of this solidarity sits alongside more fragmented
and fragmenting claims to space. In places that have little symbolic cap-
ture, inhabited by citizens who are overcategorized, and overpoliced,
what forms of protest are available? In the intersecting dispossessions
of home, of work, and of citizenship status, these overlapping displace-
ments are advanced though the techniques that “stratify and essential-
ize” differences, underscoring the pejorative baseline of “whiteness.”\(^{62}\)
We therefore need to think about how the combined effects of multiple
displacements serve to limit the possibilities of street resistance and its
transformative economic, social, and spatial potentials. On Rye Lane,
protest is often anchored around the substantive conditions of inequal-
ity and of struggling to keep a place. The loose multiculture of the street
straddles the divergent claims for space and recognition, from hiked
rentals and extended shop hours, to the need for trading standards demanded from above and below, to varied aesthetic practices of making space.

While cultural coalitions reside in the quotidian life of the street, everyday street politics evolves through crises, and on Rye Lane these have economic, political, and civic dimensions. Street protest and association therefore involve both friction and vulnerability, where protesters, activists, and traders on Rye Lane are focused around basic—if not always consensual—claims for living with difference. “Values” are expressed in numerous dimensions: as the need for agreed protocols (as basic as a customer services policy); as the need for shared platforms (expressed through multilingual communication, trade associations, and multi-faith forums); and as the need for individual and group expression, articulated in the spatial and temporal dimensions of shop subdivisions. The street politics on Rye Lane also suggests how associative forms adapt to crises in ways that are spatial and material. At times these associative forms deal with collective issues ranging from the rights to trade, to securing recognition with planning and regeneration initiatives advanced by local authorities. Forming such associations is frequently a fragile endeavor, and overstretched resources mean these associations are hard to maintain. In this sense, the unheroic struggles of the street are about constituting space for a locally emergent politics that engages with wider claims of belonging, outside of the center. It is expressive of the need and right for contestation and circumvention, encouraging an understanding of the postcolonial geographies of urban multiculture as fraught and creative. Unheroic resistance figures its way through crises by making space outside of the ideological limits of cosmopolitan tolerance and in opposition to the prevailing logics of the center. It remains crucial to explore how these everyday refusals connect with the energy and insights of larger planetary protests and their translocal solidarities of social justice.
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