The Migrant's Paradox

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As the Fort of Desolation scaled down, Anjum’s tin shack scaled up. It grew first into a hut that could accommodate a bed, and then into a small house with a little kitchen. So as not to attract undue attention, she left the exterior walls rough and unfinished. The inside she plastered and painted an unusual shade of fuchsia.

The advantage of a guest house in the graveyard was that unlike every other neighborhood in the city, including the most exclusive ones, it suffered no power cuts. Not even in the summer. This was because Anjum stole her electricity from the mortuary, where the corpses required round-the-clock refrigeration. (The city’s paupers who lay there in air-conditioned splendor had never experienced anything of the kind while they were alive.) Anjum called her guest house Jannat. Paradise.

—Arundhati Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*

Storytellers like Arundhati Roy write about the expanding divisions and inequalities of the twenty-first century from the volatility of an edge citizenship. Being on the edge means living with a heightened precarity, requiring repertoires of recalibration to inhabit the intensity. In telling about those expelled by the marriage of nationalism and neoliberal fervor in India, Roy’s urban dimensions are not descriptors of everyday life; they are the very constitution of it. Life at the edge requires knowing how to remain undetected while rewiring the circuits to access otherwise unavailable infrastructures. It is a constant negotiation of interior to exterior, of scaling up, of repurposing. A choreography of side steps and subversions is the durable requirement of living at the edge, inhabiting a position surplus to the requirements of capital. Writing the urban in this way means the author cannot succumb to assigning the city to discrete groups and territories, coherent periods of power and intervention, and linear outcomes. Delhi’s manifestation of
citizens and denizens is deeply layered, just as the streets in this book cannot be fully comprehended through an analysis of migration or gentrification as a recent political economy of displacement.

Telling these stories as labyrinths—crisscrossing, deep, opaque, unstable, mutating, frictional, emotional—requires a commitment to understanding the city as unknowable, and citizenship as unfinished. Perhaps because novelists are not constrained by the requirements of academic justifications, they have more inclination to follow the convolutions of city-making and world-making, allowing enough room for protagonists, places, and processes to emerge through the erratic complexities of life at the edge. We might see Roy’s character Anjum as an oppressed denizen residing in the destitution of capitalism’s fringes. This is one piece of her story that needs telling. But the story cannot emerge without the collage of paraphernalia and intention that bring Anjum’s guesthouse into being: her transgender personhood, her tin shack, her religious status, her fuchsia walls, her capacity to turn a trick in more ways than one. Anjum is the quintessential traveler, constantly shifting shape, acclimatizing and recomposing in order to maintain a foothold. Multilingualism in speech and performance, scaling across intimate and global space, working light and deep affiliations, are the rudiments for occupying this unsettled position. It opens up the question “Who is the migrant?” beyond the limited logic of the border. Against the manipulations of populism pursued by avaricious interests, the question demands a more expansive engagement in the violent logics of dislocation as much as the promise of shared solidarities and capricious repertoires amongst the displaced.

WRITING THE STREET AS WORLD

A compulsion in making this book is how towrite the street as world, starting from the ground and an immersion in walking, looking, listening, and talking that is always a curious interplay of passing by and entering into. The presence of the edge as an outer limit of exclusion and invention emerges through a lineage of histories and geographies in which the orderings of centrality and marginality are the constant. This lineage ties the street to the ongoing global arrangement of centers as much as the planetary constellation of margins. Cheetham Hill, Narborough Road, Rookery Road, Rye Lane, and Stapleton Road are composed in the structural and aesthetic conditions of domination that imperialism, coloniality, and bordering procure, alongside the ever-
present refusal of these logics. To write the street as world is to see political economies through the everyday, connecting the multiple displacements so evident on the street in relation to sovereign constitutions of power.

From the street I have argued for unsettling the narrow construction of migration essentialized as an exceptional change process and regulated by the expedient (il)legalization of movement of people across national borders. This reductive logic secures the requirements of nation above the requirements of humanity. It establishes the nation as the preeminent regime of identity; it problematizes international migration and international migrants; and it detaches political and economic power from the global production of multiscalar displacements that transcend national space. Moreover, a border logic inherently based on social hierarchy and hostility is never limited to the exterior regulation of the outsider; it always maps onto internal configurations of social ranking, supporting the interior subordinations of the citizen. The formations of an edge citizenship are therefore indelibly connected to a system of multiple displacements and the brutality of its combined effects. Oren Yiftachel conceptualizes “displaceability” not simply as an act but “as a condition that marks the shifting foundations of citizenship and introduces new regimes of identity.”

Yiftachel critically invokes the wider colonial arc of domination, and with it a more intersectional comprehension of dispossession. In this book I have focused on how three relational forms of dispossession intersect: the displacement of citizenship status through a fracturing of legality; the displacement of work through the casualization of livelihoods; and the displacement of the margins through the regeneration of urban space.

From the street I have shown how the current accumulation of economic and political capital is inherently tied to the disaccumulation of people, a dispossession of citizenship on multiple and frequently intersecting fronts. The crucial emphasis of this paradoxical formulation is the profoundly acute nature of social sorting reliant on human residualization. An entire syntax for the detachment of responsibility grows in the ever-expanding lexicon of state-articulated partial citizenships and in market enunciations of part-time work prospects. The formation of marginal citizenships in the context of European liberal democracy has a longue durée, where “the grammar of ethnicity and race thinking” persists as a consistent vector in vocabularies of empire, colony, and nation. The street reveals “race” as an enduring system of categorization.
procured to authorize global displacements and secure urban emplace-
ments. Protracted journeys from world to street incorporate the com-
bined effects of immobility, dislocation, and unemployment, where the
postcolonial migrant condition reveals the discrepant racializations ex-
perienced in the kinds of journeys, arrivals, and settlements available to
the array of proprietors.

My entry point into this durable imperialism is the multiscalar stretch
across street, state, and globe through which established geographies
and ongoing recompositions of center and margin are apparent. In spa-
tial terms I have engaged with the nation’s entitlement to the expansive
mobility of power and capital as tied to the corresponding immobility
of people. Here it has been crucial to bring into view the highly pal-
pable interior life of bordering and debordering, from shops to confer-
ence halls to planning offices. These varied spaces capture the erratic
unfolding of official border talk and its overlaps with the mercurial for-
mations of citizenship in the everyday life on the street. Jane M. Jacobs
emphasizes the generative dimensions of a landscape of control and
circumvention through how the, “materiality of place; the imaginative
spatialities of desire and cultural politics of territory are fundamental
parts of colonial and postcolonial formations in the present.”

Echoing Jacobs’s inspirational perspectives in Edge of Empire, the edge serves to
relationally tie the inevitable coproduction of centrality and marginal-
ity through highly organized systems of domination and dispossession.
Street life and livelihoods in urban peripheries reveal the endurance of
an insular sovereign logic underpinned by racialized sorting that is used
to declare a coherent and controllable form of border that can never be.

While the imagination of a discrete national territory masks the
economic interdependencies and political interventions sustained be-
yond the limits of nation, new forms of highly orchestrated global ex-
traction occur through the impenetrable empires of financialization.
These multinational forms exceed the state but are effectively supported
by an extensive political compact of underregulation. To extend Jacobs’s
analogy, the edge of empire is a space saturated with heightened human
borders coupled with the active debordering of capital. In the context
of the streets I explored across UK cities, the edge serves to expose the
stressed nature of life pushed to its limits, further bringing into the ana-
lytic fold the dramatic impacts of austerity governance. On the street,
austerity is evident in the continued withdrawal of the state from public
services and welfare provision and the lack of political engagement in
how to act against rapidly growing inequalities. The evocation of a citizenship at the edge is intended to push at the fragilities of life as a marginal condition. The political economy that maintains the interrelation of center and edge is invested in maintaining the features of centrality and marginality, in which the constructed authority of nationalism and its permeations of “whiteness” prevails.

In writing the street as world I am compelled to explore the alternative resumptions to belonging that can only be formed at the edge, since they emerge through the realities of exclusion. A citizenship of the edge gives us an edge grammar that rearticulates citizenship as an adaptive and audacious constitution. On the street the contestation over the terms of belonging is frequently unheroic yet always persistent. The modalities of struggle are steeped in everyday life, enrolling the paraphernalia of busy pavements, subdivided shop interiors, form-filling economies, multilingual communications, and fragile trade associations. The scarcity of space, whether unaffordable in market terms or human terms, drives the improvisational imperative to retrieve space and to claim it by reconfiguring it. The streets central to this story show how difficult it is to make a livelihood within a structure geared at either keeping you out or keeping you in but always on restricted terms. As is evident across this book, hard work requires longer journeys and more border crossings, and with it more qualifications, more languages, more redundancies. Once on the street, hard work is required to contend with discriminatory job markets and discriminatory housing markets, prompting a figurative and literal subdivision of space in order to repurpose and redefine it. The hard work of hanging in there then requires juggling a vast repertoire of inventions and circumventions, much of which is about claiming a space on the street outside of the national, racial, and cultural limits of centrality. Invoking “the scale of the migrant,” I reflect on how the practices of imagining, inhabiting, and altering space straddle the imperial, national, and intimate productions of place. What is most often lost in sovereign articulations of the migrant is a human scale, and comprehensions of our shared humanity. In closing, my aim is to reflect on these three entwined and always unfinished practices of migration as “getting there,” “once there,” and “hanging in there.” Here the contested praxis of a citizenship of the edge allows me to rethink and reword the language of borders, outskirts, and interiors in our confined and divisive present.
GETTING THERE: BORDERS

In the case of the colonial and the post-colonial, what we are dealing with is not two successive regimes but the simultaneous presence of a regime and its after-effects. Colonialism persists, despite the cluster of illusory appearances to the contrary.

Though time has been called on colonialism’s earlier forms, you have only to read a daily newspaper or turn on the TV news to appreciate that the so-called colonial world is still unfolding—more accurately unravelling—inside the post-colonial, in the wake, in the devastating aftermath, of an untranscended colonialism: a disaster-littered, protracted, bloody and unfinished terrain which, in its globally transformed state, still occupies our world.

—Stuart Hall

If imperialism is the ideological and economic process of commandeering world resources through the sovereignty of the nation, then a border is an imagined and authorized delineation of entitlement and dispossession. By extension, the border is a regime to manage the differentiation of citizens and denizens, but in order to do so the nation must assume a system of regulatory power far beyond the physical limits of a territorial boundary. While European imperialism permitted a global expanse of its territory, and with it a proliferation of new borders under the edict of the colony, how does such an expansive border system exist today without a commensurate expanse of terrain? Throughout this book I have drawn extensively on the critical intervention of “illegality” conceptualized by Nicholas De Genova to reflect on how borders can effectively be physically deterritorialized yet legally reterritorialized through a highly discriminatory legal system fixed on the human body. The site of the body itself is where the border is most active, and in this migration system, movement is restricted to the privileged few. The global reach of the European border system, vetted within a world system of nations, reveals how it is possible—and indeed prevalent—to proclaim the potential international movement of the “vast majority” of the planet’s human population as illegal. At the same time, new formations of the legality of travel, migration, and citizenship are regularly advanced. In an increasingly mercurial milieu of border permissions and prohibitions, conditional liberties can be purchased at the right price. Access to travel visas, to foreign-national work permits, and to citizenship itself is regularly recoded to incorporate new inflections
such as investor visa and golden visa programs. As Nisha Kapoor and Kasia Narkowicz show in the context of UK immigration regulation, when citizenship is articulated as a privilege, a selective process of citizenship is foregrounded with the demarcation of the “bad character.” Selection resides alongside new restrictions on visa-free travel and forms of travel bans and second-class citizenships.

In tracing the journeys of migrants to the street, we are able to see the continuum of coloniality through a world-making reliant on maintaining highly punitive border systems immersed in social hierarchies. As was exemplified in the routes to Stapleton Road, following the practices of getting there is no straightforward task; the extended and interrupted nature of journeys has become an integral part of the contorted movements for many migrants having to make their way across the planet. The immense human cost of a journey diverted and suspended is captured in the proprietors’ accounts of how at each crossing the requirement is to skill up, with the near certainty that those same skills will be rendered as in some way unrequired. Their journeys to becoming a proprietor, when in many cases their working lives had not evolved around trade, are further indication of how the fragile nature of their citizenship status frequently conditions the journey and the landing. Following the processes of getting there allows us to see the European border system as a highly delineated system of legality and illegality. Its political imaginary is so thick with the formulation of insiders and outsiders that it leaves little room to reconsider the border through more varied crossings and circulations, and as a system for absorbing changing circumstances across scale.

For the current version of the border to exist in a world with amplified transnational communication circuits and affiliations that are physical, virtual, and emotional, the emphasis of a political imaginary that once coveted the globe must now reemphasize the constitutive strength of nationalism and nativism. In this process, the citizen is conscripted into a close order with the state, pulled inward toward the nation through highly bounded renditions of belonging. The intimacy is readily secured by the proclamation of being “one of us” and the declaration of the threat of infiltrators most readily portrayed in racialized and increasingly anti-Islamic terms. It is fostered in the fast space of the political digisphere and its requirements for abbreviation that sustain a politics of one-liners and one-click endorsements of likes, follows,
shares, and retweets. But it is, as Achille Mbembe suggests, a tyrannical intimacy, one that serves to increase social surveillance as much as it limits choice and movement for those who perceive themselves to be within.⁸

The border has become the most intensive mechanism to unevenly distribute unfreedom through illegality, sorting, and punishment. Migration, when understood as a system rather than as a complex and historical movement of people, has been procured to play a core role in the maintenance of this border. As explored at the start of this book, migration numbers and targets are a central part of delivering an intentionally “hostile immigration environment” adopted as a politically acceptable centrist policy in the UK. On the left, an alternative political imaginary of the border has not been substantiated, since the displacement of people on the basis of class inequalities has often been historically understood as essentially separate from the displacement of people on the basis of racial discrimination and citizenship status. In the political space of electoral politics in the UK, an overarticulated and punitive imaginary of the border sits alongside an underarticulated one that fails to speak to shared human solidarities, to the unremarkable process of human movement, and to the cross-border reciprocities of care needed in times of crisis. These registers of border talk have accommodated a system of border control that requires high levels of violence and resourcing, that can only be maintained if the political rhetoric of the insider/outsider prevails.⁹

Indeed, border enhancements have recently translated into numerous significant pieces of immigration legislation taken through Parliament since 2000, with particular stringency ushered in by the Immigration Acts of 2014 and 2016. This border legality has produced obscurity to due process, implemented case procedures that are no longer subject to judicial review, and introduced unmanageable and irregular processing within the Home Office. It has also procured a discriminatory and frequently outsourced implementation system profoundly damaging to existing let alone prospective citizens. This overinvested space of the border consumes vast reserves of state and civic capacity and produces a vast resonance of human violation and humiliation. The intentionally hostile arrangement further creates overburdened systems of control alongside systems of circumvention. These extend from the pernicious economies of border crossings, which become ripe when conventional border circuits are foreclosed, to local law centers struggling to keep
up with casework. On the street it has generated a diverse form-filling economy attuned to the bureaucratic density of both immigration law and access to social services.

How might we, from the street, imagine a different constitution of the border? We might start by imagining a world with a borderless geography, but this would require delving into an entirely different reality composed by an entirely different political economy. This is a crucial task, although beyond the capacities of this book, and evokes other orientations of human life to planetary life, nurtured in the principles of limited resources and the decommodification of space. Perhaps we could take another inroad by diverging from the border and focusing on the varied practices of movement, both historical and contemporary, and the possibilities these entail for a more varied comprehension of territory, authority, and citizenship. We could start by understanding that in the process of “getting there” the migrants whose journeys have made up the substance of this book must contend not only with the harsh reality of borders but also with the imagined prospects of crossing. Édouard Glissant contends that with movement we become multiple, requiring of us an expansion of our cultural vantage points to incorporate wider repertories of communication and understanding.10 Here we might view the border as a crossing, not only of the kind experienced over a physical journey, but of the kind of space that authorities might invest in to teach children and adults more languages, more histories, and more geographies. We might also view the border not as a cul-de-sac demanding clandestine entry and exploitation for many but as cognizant of multiple systems of migrancy that are about itinerant and circular migrations, including for seasonal work, education, trade, and cultural enrichment.11 Crucially, the border is also a potential mechanism for incorporating more attuned approaches to more varied visa formulations that reflect these everyday requirements, and how we might engage in the respite required from oppressive circumstances, whether they be political, ecological, or economic.

This would further mean taking innate human capacities more seriously by including the right to work within the stages of asylum and migratory processes. Such a mode of border thinking would require more robust systems of labor rights and stricter regulations around employment, including the adherence to a fair minimum wage. Here the scrutiny is turned on those who exploit rather than those who are exploited. It also extends beyond the state toward collectively organized politics
and new imaginings of work based in unions and collectives that recognize emergent labor precarities around multiple forms of displacement, be they through the casualization of work or the residualization of citizenship rights. Reimagining the border is therefore a social, political, and economic endeavor required within and beyond the state, demanding more encompassing comprehensions of precarity, participation, and membership. The border currently exists as an antagonistic construct dependent on punishment and violence and defined by the illusion of control. The expansive planetary histories of migrancy and movement—en masse or otherwise—including those within Europe and leaving Europe, have been written out of the script of nativist nationalism, leaving limited space to think about a world of shared risks and possibilities. In Glissant’s sense, the border could become a way of thinking about multiplicity. This refers not only to a multiplicity of associations and experiences but also to one of shared responsibilities and permissions in a present and a future in which far more varied ways of living and working will unfold, and in which new risks and requirements for refuge will emerge.

ONCE THERE: OUTSKIRTS

Social Europe has been offered as a counterweight to neoliberalism and racial biopolitics, on the grounds that the leanings and the learnings of the commons, when replenished, protected, and daily used, could foster a different attitude towards future risk and uncertainly, one without need for the uses of xenophobia.

—Ash Amin

For the expansive colonial arrangement of state and subject to exist under empire, a nation had to be evoked in relation to the scale of the world. Benedict Anderson refers to the map, the census, and the museum to show how the nation is made manifest through the expanse of territory, the stratification of population, and the aesthetic curation of culture. In the absence of empire but the presence of imperialism, how the nation calls itself into being in relation to the scale of the world is shifting. While in the preceding discussion I reflected on the over-articulated delineation of the border, here I reflect on the dominance of an imperial order of finance and its shaping of the margins. This expands on how citizenship and denizenship are spatialized through...
the organizational and aesthetic logics of centrality and marginality, as commandeered through the global market and supported by “regeneration” and planning frameworks. Scholars such as Raquel Rolnik and Loretta Lees, Hyun Bang Shin, and Ernesto López-Morales point to the imperial scale of the dispossession of inhabited city space. By drawing on comparative cases of property speculation and the financialization of urban space across the world, they provide detailed accounts of the large-scale, state-facilitation of redevelopment and its resultant displacements.\textsuperscript{15} The analysis of sociospatial dispossession reveals how the relatively unfettered flow of capital across national borders into urban land markets has come to profoundly exacerbate stark social inequalities in place. These scholars simultaneously show the scale of state collusions in the dismantling of affordable space and the reinscription of denizens residualized on the basis of class and “race.”

Rather than reducing our understanding of borders to an outward-facing demarcation of citizenship, this form of displacement helps us think about the border in two related ways. The first is how the border—never only an outer delineation of nationhood but always also an inner delineation of society—is a regime of denizenship adopting varied modalities and techniques of biopolitics from within society. Here the alignment between different but connected processes of displacement is key and is oriented around the intersecting ways in which the accumulation of capital is accompanied by the multiple disaccumulations of people. One form of expulsion may look like deportation centers and another like may look like the privatization of social housing, but both are endorsements of state programs in which certain groups are systematically devalued and outcast.\textsuperscript{16} The second is how the focus on the border, particularly in recent UK national elections and the Brexit referendum, has been used to obscure other delineations of denizenship which are inherently tied to the making of inequality and the expanding of poverty. This is nowhere more evident than in the hideous irony of individuals who have ridden the tide of economic exploitation, turning to politics through claims of representing the voice of the people. The reductive space of such contemporary democratic politics is that it is easier to win on the strapline of borders than on the deep commitment to deliver public services, resuscitate welfare provision, and secure affordable space. In this book I have therefore shown the intersection of the migrant and the margin not to tie these to a double minority status
but to reveal their central and constitutive position in how sovereignty and nativism are formed, maintained, and resisted.

Cheetham Hill, Narborough Road, Rookery Road, Rye Lane, and Stapleton Road are in different ways constituted by their marginal status as spaces of sustained underinvestment by the state. The active state disinvestment encapsulated by austerity governance has historically been repeated again and again across the landscapes of Manchester, Leicester, Birmingham, London, and Bristol. Although work and affordable space have always been hard to come by in these neighborhoods, a landscape of livelihoods is still emerging in the deindustrial aftermath. Livelihoods are more likely than ever to be defined through casualized contracts and variants of self-employment. In places like Rye Lane in London, where the property values have surged, an additional layer of precarity is added through the lack of affordable space accompanied by the planned processes of claiming the margin for a center. Recognizing the values of the margins as a space practiced in its everyday logics of city-making still remains outside of the conventional remits of professionalized planning. The street reveals the dire consequences of these varied forms of state disciplining and state underinvestment in parallel with entrepreneurial local planning initiatives. Regeneration has come to paradoxically endorse a revitalization model with significant human costs.

From what Cornel West points to as the “immoral circumstances” of billowing inequality that holds lives at the edge arise intense forms of friction in the margins.\(^\text{17}\) The streets in this book reveal the kinds of desperation and fear associated with the threat of losing a home or a livelihood, fears that have become endemic rather than exceptional. Within the margins the threat expands to the potential loss of citizenship status, exemplified in the discriminatory extensions of everyday bordering and the bizarre and brutal experiments of the Home Office. In this sense a “citizenship of the edge” is a highly volatile term, subject to intense forms of displacement. The durable threat of legal and cultural extradition is clarified in Monisha Das Gupta's qualification: “Yet in the lived sense, a person can be treated as an immigrant whether she or he is a naturalized citizen . . . on the understanding that she or he will leave after a specific period of time.”\(^\text{18}\) The sovereign comprehension of the migrant as an inherently unstable category, and therefore subject to the sporadic revoking of citizenship rights, is evident in the examples of the Windrush scandal and the “Go Home” experiment. It
is therefore crucial to pay attention to the explicit brutalities of degradation, deportation, and extradition attached to immigration law. However, I additionally argue that we need to think more about the congruences between different processes of displacement and how the biopolitics of these destabilize what we might assume as the innate security of citizenship.

The kinds of “apocalyptic imagination coursing through Anglo-American public culture” captured by the now common vocabulary of crisis has diverted attention from the deep structural crises within. This is the pervading sense of being about to lose one’s place and of living within an enduring timescape of uncertainty. It further means that systems of sustaining public resourcing are diverted from supporting a common good with progressively less public funds available for housing, health, and education. If we can assume that the work of governance is not to exacerbate inequality but to mitigate it, then more robust comprehensions of a common good are urgently required. A common good is not a moral qualification but a vital process of a sustained system of public resourcing. Public resourcing should attend to the inordinate inequalities procured by multiple displacements, as well as addressing the conditions of structural marginalization. A historical starting point for redistributive politics has been to establish a baseline of security through state-directed systems of protecting those most subjected to inequality. This baseline is about the right to secure and affordable tenure as much as the right to secure and fair conditions of work. If security is conceived of as the removal of the threat of losing one’s place, then what should this baseline look like today? This book has largely engaged with the question of securing one’s place through the world of work, positioned within what Chantal Mouffe describes as “the crisis of work and the exhaustion of the wage society.” Mouffe calls for a structural recognition of a “plural economy,” suggesting a threefold sociopolitical approach of reducing working hours, encouraging nonprofit economies, and introducing a minimum income. While these principles would redress growing societal inequalities, they require a politically emboldened and well-resourced state, one which appears to be increasingly thin on the ground across the varied UK landscape.

This brings me to thinking in more explicit terms about what affordable infrastructures are required to foster plural economies in a context of rising precarity. If labor precarity “requires attention to the social and material structures through which security and insecurity are mediated
and distributed,“ we need to consider not only how but where those who work in the growing reality of self-employment will be able to claim space. I’d like to hold onto the possibility that planning, albeit in another guise, might still productively connect to the emerging world of work in the margins. There is a paucity of formal systems of planning mindful of Teresa Caldeira’s “peripheral urbanization” and its practices of economic life. The planning systems that regulate space, support the production of certain kinds of jobs, and ultimately legitimate certain forms of work are still fundamentally aligned with the logics of centrality. The paradox lies in the commitment to a stable conception of work firmly lodged within the current instability of job provision. As we have learned from the streets, a common work trajectory is now from professional occupations to self-employed street retail, not the other way around. What we have also learned is how an entire world of work and tenure is invented and sustained in the subdivisions of the streets’ interiors in order to keep attuned with the realities of insecurity and the more varied spatial and temporal formats required to make a living. James Ferguson and Tania Murray Li underscore how the predominant norms of thinking about a “proper job” leave us with inadequate categories to capture the plethora of economic practices through which people actually make work:

Discussions of so-called “precarity” often rely on residual categories of analysis (“unemployment,” “informal economy,” “non-standard employment,” instability, insecurity) that render everything outside the world of “jobs” a kind of negative space, defined by that which it is not.

In the various meetings we held with planning officials in Birmingham, Leicester, and London, officials generally acknowledged the value of high streets in the urban margins, most usually in the more diminutive sense of “local” resources for “local” communities. They had explored what structures of support might be developed in dialogue with planning—usually by way of public realm improvement schemes or incentivizing forms of business improvement districts. Yet they had not always engaged in substantial understandings of how these street economies are composed: what the entry points are, how rates affect vulnerability particularly in the early years, why public transport (most notably bus infrastructure) is key to maintaining thresholds of support for retail activity. More often, the street was seen primarily as a social
and public asset, which is an important starting point. However, it is from the vantage point of public service provision and consumer experience that street planning and policy is most frequently oriented. This was apparent in how, for example, planners commissioned user surveys on Rye Lane, detaching how the street is shaped by residents and consumers from how it is shaped by those making work. In 2017 we were part of a team commissioned by the mayor’s office at the Greater London Authority to unpack the socioeconomic value of selected streets in London characterized by distinctive change. A qualitative study was undertaken to explore the simultaneous shaping of socioeconomic value through how the general public, proprietors, and public-service providers shaped the street. The High Streets for All report was able to show how these streets were crucial public spaces for a range of users, and explicitly for those out of work: the elderly, the young, and the unemployed. In tandem it revealed how proprietors provided regular forms of social exchange as part of their economic practice, generating an infrastructure of care and convenience precisely for those most in need. The consumer and “public” experience is core to a planning comprehension of how streets work. And it is the formatted models of corporate-oriented development that tend to stand in for economic progress and job provision. Across our streets, planners turned to the familiar vocabularies of tech parks, Chinatowns, and chain and franchise retail forged by global investors and multinationals. These spatial forms of harnessing jobs and growth are often credited with more significance than the aggregated microeconomies of the street, where the wide-ranging world of work is frequently poorly understood and undervalued.

The streets in this book suggest two directives for a different kind of state recognition via planning. The first gets us to what we might learn in place, from the margins. Writing from Bengaluru, Gautam Bhan urges for the expansion of a planning vocabulary informed by a “Southern urban practice.” Here I want to connect the streets in this book to the margins and the city-making practices that are part of AbdouMaliq Simone’s crucial conception of “the majority world,” calling out the misnomer that edge practices and edge spaces are fundamentally peripheral. Simone’s conception not only challenges the binary of center or margin but also establishes a more planetary connection across multiple margins, exploring the prevalence of diverse economies integral to making work in the peripheries. It is not inconceivable, despite
the particular histories of industrialization and deindustrialization in the UK, that the streets in this book connect with other lifeworlds of work elsewhere, where side steps, subdivisions, scrimping, and know-how are specific to the innate contingency of these spaces. A wider and more connected epistemology of work in the margins links these streets through a relational “Southernness.” It incorporates not only the shaping of precarious livelihoods through geohistorical processes of economic and cultural displacement but also a redress to planning that posits the makeshift or apparently “informal” as subsidiary to urban formation.

This perspective raises the potential of the state to engage directly with assets that are in place rather than to replace them with what is out of place. Bhan’s vocabulary of “repair” refers to an understanding of how spaces are adapted to meet changing conditions, by repurposing existing resources. Bhan compels us to see this not only as an everyday practice sustained through inhabitation but as a planning practice that actively seeks ways of working with the social, spatial, and material infrastructures that shape the lives and livelihoods of the margins. How might planning, for instance, work with the subdivisions on Rye Lane that contend with the force of rising rentals and the inventive repertoires of new systems of tenure that take heed of needs for low thresholds of entry into retail? A variety of forms of repair could emerge, building off the precedent of reducing or eliminating the heavy burden of property rates at street level, particularly in the first years of startup. It might actively support, through planning applications and processes, a contingency of subdivisions and tenures required for varied proprietors. This further acknowledges the need to move toward a more expansive range of tenure, engaging with how a world of microeconomies is shaped, delivered, and updated. It might also include, as is the case with Rye Lane, the state provision of itinerant and low-entry-point spaces such as markets, bazaars, and pavement trading. At its most rudimentary level, planning repair should be less about aesthetics—less of the tree plantings and signage and benches that epitomize street branding schemes—and more about the human and material infrastructures in place.

The second point of emphasis is how repair might additionally include understandings of what mediates between state and street, ranging from local authority officers who could be street-based and therefore up-close to the temperament of the street, to support for more varied
constitutions of trade associations. Rather than the formalist model of the business improvement district, traders across the streets we researched worked through other emergent or established forms of association. On Narborough Road, traders used various social media platforms to interact and communicate, while on Rye Lane it became necessary to forge a more formal and differentiated alliance beyond the remit of “business.” But above and beyond such details, repair requires working outside of the expertise of professionals to get a close look at how these economies—whether in the amits of retail, industrial, or domestic space—operate. Here the contributions of informal alliances of communities, activists, and academics working in collaboration to understand such economies have effectively challenged the rigid authority of plans and planning processes. Together they undertake grounded research to shape our knowledge, produce evidence to contest planning reviews and development appeals, and run campaigns to challenge and change vocabularies of regeneration and expand our comprehension of what constitutes diverse economies. Thinking within the margins is an inevitably proximate and necessarily collaborative approach to repair.

The streets in this book prompt us to consider a world of work in the margins and the kinds of alliances, institutions, and infrastructures that might recognize street capacities and precarities. The life of the margins is life at the edge, and reductions in secure and affordable spaces to work push the fragilities over the edge. The wide-ranging repertoires of street livelihoods need to be understood as an elemental process of claiming and hanging onto space. While it is clear that shops and streets are part of a compendium of capitalism and its unraveling of formal employment, the face-to-face infrastructure of these streets is primarily shaped outside of corporations and multinationals and is not vetted by the hour-to-hour contracts of the urban gig economy. Throughout the book I have probed the troublesome question of how to rethink the vocabulary of the entrepreneur. As Ferguson and Li suggest, the potential of this word is neither as a “liberatory category” nor as “a way of downloading responsibility to ordinary people.” Entrepreneurs of the edge require a quotidian infrastructure sufficiently malleable to absorb change through microadaptations to materials and tenure, as well as modes of communication that allow for their voices to register during processes of change. Above all else, these entrepreneurs fundamentally require a spatial infrastructure that is affordable and social. Despite the
large amounts of online activity now involved in the shaping of street retail, these streets host high densities of people and are sustained by requirements for contact in the making of interaction and transaction.

Street livelihoods continue to emerge in the global matrix of racial capitalism that assumes an acute economic resonance for the citizens of edge territories. “Race” and racism surface as elemental to the systemic nature of how work is allocated as much as how workers are located. Both the deindustrial reordering of the 1970s and contemporary neoliberal casualizations make visible how readily work can be retracted, who is most likely to be first in the line of fire, and who takes cover in the street. It is here that Satnam Virdee’s attention to “self-activity of racialized minorities” and collective and political antiracist agency productively intersects with Simone’s more prosaic alignments of everyday transactions through “people as infrastructure.”

Both comprehensions of making a world of work are acutely aware of the discriminatory and provisional settings of the urban margins, and both demand that the complex arrangement of collaborations matters. Streets in the edge territories emerge as intersections of class and “race” crucially composed in an amalgam of near and far worlds. Within the rough “anatomy and distribution of felt intensities” of urban conviviality, the convening power of the street lies in its shared proximity and precarity. Its loose associations of multiculture are organized through small cooperations that provide care, establish shared protocols, and resist regeneration processes, all the while attuned to the horizon of crisis. Its strength and vulnerability reside in its everyday microconstitutions: adaptive, not always transformative; invisible to power, susceptible to displacement.

**HANGING IN THERE: BEHIND, BELOW, BEYOND**

Existentially, then, the term “immigrant” encompasses conditions of migrancy—a constellation of risks, crossings, in-betweenness, fragmentations, otherness, insecurities, survivals, resistances and creativity—that characterize what the Chicana feminist Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) calls border consciousness.

—Monisha Das Gupta

To think about the practices of hanging in there that exceed survival and extend to an alternative sense of place, I engage with a citizenship of the edge as a space for unraveling the established logics of centrality
and “whiteness” and its limited constitutions of border, citizen, and place. The edge is about a spatial and cultural possibility that works at the interface with domination, but behind, below, or beyond it. This subliminal spatiality and its autonomous forms in part avoid excessive scrutiny, but more essentially they foster the claims to reshape and redefine the multidimensional realms of culture and experience. Streets in the margins are abundant in a series of reconfigured urban interiors invisible to the passerby, from the curated social sequence four rooms deep in Alimah’s place on Stapleton Road, to Ziyad’s amalgamated emporium of work and tenure on Rye Lane, keeping in time with cultural registers and just ahead of rises in property prices. The meaning-making within these spaces extends to the vocabularies of the “down low low down undercommons” evoked by Stefano Harney and Fred Moten as much as the elusive “underneath” of life and livelihoods in Johannesburg described by Sarah Nuttall and Achille Mbembe. These are the liminal spaces of making subterfuge where transformative energies are released through human and material encounter. A key part of the making is the visceral exposure to new practices and new questions, accommodating everyday forms of focused disobedience and impertinent curatorial endeavors that challenge the status quo.

Monisha Das Gupta’s term “border-crossing people,” which I discussed in the introduction, expands on how being wayward is a necessary position from which to disrupt structures of illegality and unfreedom. It is also a perspective that invites a different sense of encounter, one that requires crossing as contravention, in order to embrace the unknown. Here I refer to the term “unruly immigrants” defined in Das Gupta’s research as a standpoint from which to contest multiple discriminations and to forge new solidarities. Crossings, unlike assimilations, require multifarious practices of communication and translation, including the forging of new vocabularies to redefine circumstances and imagine alternative prospects. We might start with substitutions of the Europeanization of the term “immigration” and its inherited implications of unidirectional travel ensconced in the legal paradigm of restriction. Reclamations of “migrancy” as an unexceptional cultural disposition formed in the long-standing human paradigm of cross-border encounter evoke wider engagements. Activating and celebrating capricious, lyrical, and expansive comprehensions of the migrant is, to paraphrase McKittrick, a “rewording” to consciously disrupt and redefine
established sets of meanings. Rewordings happen in multiple forms—linguistic, musical, visceral, material, spatial—and McKittrick explores how “inequitable systems of knowledge can be, and are, breached by creative human aesthetics.” Thus the improvisations that have been so constitutive to the shaping of the street interiors explored in this book are a reforming of time and space, always connected to the pragmatics of making do and getting by, always connected to the desires of reconfiguration.

The rewiring of shop space we saw across the streets is in practical terms a prosaic attention to the limits of available space, but in human terms it is a redescription of surfaces, forms, and practices to affirm one’s place in the world. Rewiring is an assertion of the right to difference, a citizenship of the edge forged, rather than assigned, in the subdivisions of space that are sustained in everyday negotiations and alliances. Practices of reclamation are not always charged by moral imperatives, and the creative expressions of transgression we saw on the streets are lodged within the structures of capital. While the rewiring on Rye Lane is a rerouting of circuits of value in order to expand the availability of space in physical and tenure terms, it is practiced within realities of escalating land values, rentals, part-time employment, and partial rights. The inevitability of uncertainty is an enduring part of meaning-making in the margins. Crossing is an engagement with uncertainty that depends on improvisation, learning though an exposure to an array of experiences that are not necessarily familiar or predictable and therefore require unscripted and adaptive responses. In the street’s dense intersections of proximities in which people, objects, and spaces tightly overlap, the possibilities of crossing are manifold. This proximity suggests a kind of nearness in which encounter is facilitated, such as the pavements on Stapleton Road where a coffee culture from the Horn of Africa has spilled out of the shops, brokering causal meeting and greeting on the sidewalk. Proximity also facilitates the surfacing of disdain and distrust against street practices deemed unjust, as was the case of the heated protests on Rye Lane in 2012, which called out irregular trading practices on the street and prompted the formation of a traders association. Proximity further facilitated the lived expressions of rage on the street in August 2011, when urban uprisings in the margins of Birmingham, Bristol, London, and Manchester took force against the combined violations of police brutality and the first waves of austerity cuts.

Intense proximity in this sense is about a kind of nearness in which
there is still room to breathe. But there can be a thickness to urban density in the massing of overpriced spaces and overpoliced people that considerably increases the pressures on everyday life. The mutualisms on Rye Lane are a central part of combating these escalating pressures through the adjusted formats of thresholds, front, rear, and side space. But as Francesca reminds us, “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.” In order to retain room to breathe in the density of inequality and its stark reduction of available and affordable space, the range of adaptive repertoires and forms of alliance expand. On Rye Lane we saw an alliance of time, where it is possible to share tight space by devising temporal rhythms of who accesses space and when. The underlying basis of this alliance of time is how to make space available through the curtailment of time with respect to one another. An alliance of time must recognize the varied demands and needs of people to participate in work while juggling other responsibilities. This may be seen to fit within a far wider arrangement of emerging shared work space, such as the corporatization of sharing exemplified by WeWork. But real estate speculation is neither the ends nor the means to the mutualisms of the street; rather, it is the pervasive constraint of global property speculation that small operators must somehow contend with, combined with cultural understandings of how to curate overlapping practices. On Rye Lane the alliance of time of space—“the mandate of infrastructure” that Simone invokes—occurs through the quick-footed nature of makeshift city-making where urban inhabitants invest significant resources and energy to combat their displacement.

I began this book within the frame of “the migrant’s paradox,” placing our current conjuncture of crises alongside the consistent production of inconsistencies in the rhetorical and legal regulation of migration that sustains deep structural violence. From the street I have questioned what it is to inhabit this paradox: what it means to live within the relentless structure of borders, and what it means to make work in the margins. While migration and the migration system are at the forefront in this story, in the main this book engages with the demarcation of citizens and denizens with racism as the constitutive mark of discrimination. It has been critical to tell this story through space, allowing me to bring in the lived realities of the multiple displacements of citizenship status, work, and affordable place. The paradox cannot have
the last word. Although fragile, partial, insecure, and unresolved, the
street is also an inhabitation below, behind, and beyond the paradox. A
citizenship of the edge cannot but contend with what Jack Halberstam
underscores as the “brokenness” of the system. But the edge in the first
instance is not a place defined determinately by the center. It is a space
of refusal crafted in encounters with uncertainty. We could say that the
dge is most essentially about learning how to be unsettled—perhaps
the ultimate definition of a migrant. This space is not readily available:
it cannot be found; it has to be made.

Crossing, which ultimately demands a repertoire of rewording and
reforming, is a practice of meaning-making that operates through the
“aesthetics and ethics” of incompletion. This multiplicity of creativity
and connection is multifarious and open. Through the protracted jour-
ney of migrant proprietors, we have seen how crossing requires defense
and repair. Defense against border violence demands social and cul-
tural forms of inoculation, such as learning more languages and acquir-
ing more skills. These forms of defense can be rendered invalid by the
relentless brutality of borders. But because these practices of resistance
and affirmation are lively, because they are about making connections,
they remain vital by taking on new modes and forms appropriate to
new contexts. Similarly, repair against structural inequity and deep
racism on the street occurs through connections across individuals and
groups. As the impacts of austerity and new structures of inequality
grow in the margins, so a collaborative set of alliances emerge to con-
ceive of and deliver care and counsel to those in need. From the street,
it is important to demystify the notion of crossing as an encounter with
the proverbial “other” in a paradigmatic “public space.” The repertoires
and solidarities formed on the street are about the difficulties and poss-
sibilities of inhabiting shared fragile realities. “Behind, below, or be-
yond” therefore suggests a different comprehension of being public as
well as different arrangements of encounter and contestation. It is a
space of encounter that is neither politically overt nor symbolically vis-
ible in the way we might think of international solidarity movements or
tribunals that hold power to account, as invaluable as these are to the
ongoing struggles for social and racial justice. Its convening power is
the quotidian, and its insurgencies are forged through the banalities of
the commonplace. The power of the improvisations behind, below, or
beyond is in rewiring the circuits, claiming and redefining a space that
remains necessarily unfinished.