

# **Migrant margins: The streetlife of discrimination**

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## **Abstract**

The streetlife of discrimination emerges in the intersections of global migration and urban marginalisation. Focusing on livelihoods forged by migrants on four peripheral streets in Birmingham, Bristol, Leicester and Manchester, this article draws on face-to-face surveys with over 350 self-employed proprietors. Despite significant variables amongst proprietors, these individuals had all become traders on streets in marginalised parts of UK cities, and the article addresses whether ‘race’ matters more than class for how certain groups become emplaced in the city. Narratives of inequality and racism feature prominently in the proprietors’ accounts of where they settled in the city and what limited forms of work are available in the urban margins. Yet as significant to proprietors’ experiences of trade are repertoires of entrepreneurial agility and cross-cultural exchange. Through the concept of the ‘migrant margins’ the article explores the overlap of human capacities and structural discrimination that spans global and urban space. It combines urban sociological understandings of ‘race’ and inequality with fluid understandings of makeshift city-making that have emerged in post-colonial urban studies. Such combinations encourage connections between the histories and geographies of how people and places become bordered, together with city-making practices that are both marginal and transgressive.

## **Keywords**

discrimination, migrant margins, migration, place, ‘race’, street

## **Introduction: The migrant margins**

City streets offer a distinctive vantage point to understand the social life of structural processes. I explore how urban marginalisation intersects with global migration, drawing on livelihoods forged by migrants in Rookery Road in Birmingham, Stapleton Road in Bristol, Narborough Road in Leicester and Cheetham Hill in Manchester. These are cities where migration figures are amongst the highest in the UK, and are concentrations of

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cultural diversity and inequality. We selected our respective streets in the urban peripheries of these cities in places where jobs are hard to come by and the historic impacts of state underinvestment are hard felt. In the first of our three-year study, we spoke with over 350 self-employed proprietors and our face-to-face street surveys focused on what account individuals gave of how they came to be proprietors on streets in marginalised urban areas. The majority of proprietors were individuals who had migrated to the UK over the past four decades but our sample also included proprietors who were born in the UK. The wide range of proprietors' journeys to these respective streets reflected connections to colonisation under the British Empire, to citizenship within the European Union, to impacts of the UK's interventionist politics, and to countries where a principal flow of migration has been through asylum.

Two empirical puzzles emerged in relation to our fieldwork findings. First, despite significant variation amongst proprietors, these individuals had all become traders on streets in marginalised parts of UK cities. Not only were there a wide range of countries of origin, routes and periods of entry into the UK across proprietors, but many had work experiences other than street trade prior to setting up shop. In Rookery Road and Narborough Road for example, 60% of proprietors reported to have done some other form of work prior to becoming proprietors. There were also notable convergences amongst proprietors in terms of tertiary education and multilingual proficiencies. In Cheetham Hill, 78% of proprietors reported having a tertiary education and across all four streets the majority of proprietors spoke up to three languages. Why had a heterogeneous range of individuals become seemingly homogenised in terms of work prospects and urban locality? More pointedly, was our research suggesting that 'race' matters more than class for how certain groups become emplaced in the city? The second puzzle was how to reconcile two apparently discordant narratives of street entrepreneurship amongst migrant and ethnic minority groups. Structures of inequality, discrimination and racism featured prominently in the proprietors' accounts of where certain individuals and groups are consigned to settle and the limited forms of work available in the urban margins. Yet descriptions of entrepreneurial agility and cross-cultural exchange were just as significant to proprietors' accounts of trade and social transactions. This discord was further described in the multiple border crossings many proprietors had taken before arriving in the UK, experiences which contributed to the development of a cosmopolitan repertoire and simultaneously led to a relegation of migrants' skills. Our survey revealed the increasing occurrence amongst more recent street proprietors of 'twice, thrice, plus migrations', where proprietors had lived in a number of countries and encountered numerous citizenship demands. Proprietors recounted their processes of upskilling en route by acquiring additional languages and qualifications. However, these protracted and difficult journeys also contributed to their relegation through a persistent inability to access the formal job market across various cities.

In order to engage with these empirical conundrums, I introduce the concept of the 'migrant margins', exploring how human capacities intersect with the asymmetrical impacts of global migration and urban marginalisation. Migrants both inhabit and contest durable borders of discrimination that reach into many aspects of everyday city life, including limited access to the urban labour market as well as societal prescriptions of where to live. Yet the margins are more than simply a space to which people are

designated, they are places that are appropriated and in the conditions of everyday life the margins 'have been both sites of repression and sites of resistance' (hooks, 1989, p. 208). Within this frame I combine urban sociological understandings of 'race' and inequality with fluid understandings of 'makeshift' (Vasudevan, 2015) and 'provisional' (Simone, 2017) city-making that have emerged in post-colonial urban studies. This writing combines underlying conditions of state under-provision in contexts of growing inequality, with adept responses to recalibrating urban conditions by those marginalised by gender, caste, class and racial status. Such combinations allow for more entangled engagements with how people and places become bordered, together with the kinds of city-making practices that are at once marginal and transgressive. A key direction for addressing the dual precarity and refusal of the migrant margins emanates from the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, particularly the 'new ethnicities paradigm' (Nayak, 2010). In multiple studies of sub-cultures, the violence of discrimination and the repertoires of resistance are explored as mutually present in the capricious life of evolving identities of people and place (for example, Hall & Jefferson, 1993).

A strong lineage in the urban sociology of UK cities and urban multiculturalism has followed where the persistence of racism and conviviality are explored together. In engaging with the everyday life of young adult migrants in London, Back and Sinah (2016, p. 517) refer to the 'paradoxical co-existence of both racism and conviviality in city life' while Valluvan (2016, p. 204) refers to 'the proximity of conflict to conviviality'. Much of the emerging work on urban multiculturalism in UK cities engages with Gilroy's (2006, p. 40) seminal idea of conviviality as a physical proximity of 'metropolitan groups' with prospects for a wide array of interactions. James (2015) expands on the non-conformist possibilities of exchange, revealing the duality of social detachment and nihilistic forms of re-attachment as explored from a diverse youth club in East London. His analysis captures how culture flows past the tight boundaries of ethnicity and neighbourhood, complicating our understandings of territoriality and urban space. The 'migrant margins' concept engages with a wider overlap of cultures and geographies in reconstituting the city, and with it, wider ways of knowing the urban. This requires thinking beyond the parochial analytic borders drawn around categories of a coherent 'community' such as the neighbourhood and the nation and categories of human competence which are frequently subsumed by official categories of deprivation. It also calls for an understanding of how inequalities and interactions that surface in the urban margins connect with forces and affiliations well beyond the limits of city and state.

Conceptualising the migrant margins is as much a substantive as a methodological pursuit, and the street provides a grounded footing. My analytic reach outwards to wider geographies and approaches to the urban margins is accompanied by a post-colonial attention to history. The extended traces between how peripheries are inhabited connect the patterns of power that displace people across the planet and subsequently emplace certain groups in certain parts of certain cities. In Doreen Massey's invaluable essay on 'A Global Sense of Place' (1994), she highlights how urban patterns of discrimination have long histories that exceed any single time and place. Massey (1994, p. 152) cannot write Kilburn High Road as 'a pretty ordinary place' without tracing its threads to the British political relationship with Northern Ireland and the years of conflict that surface on the North London street. Similarly, she cannot articulate its diverse streetlife 'without

bringing into play the world and a considerable amount of British imperialist history'. For Massey, place is both connected and inherently asymmetrical, implying that our view of urban multiculturalism must extend towards 'differentiated mobilities' that are actively shaped by 'power geometries' (1994, p. 149).

Street methodologies need to embrace an historic perspective that is essential to capturing the differentiated and diverse presence of street proprietors. Street methodologies also need to retrieve a full account of human agency in relation to structural violence. Wacquant's (2008) seminal frame of 'advanced marginality' asserts the compounded effects of racism and inequality particularly exemplified by the hyper-segregated landscape of the American ghetto. But without a fuller account of human agency, and moreover agency historically informed beyond the limits of the ghetto, the concept retrieves only a partial understanding of discrimination in the production of the urban margins. In situating each of the four streets studied in this article in their respective urban contexts, it is clear that structural violence is at play. The spatial nature of discrimination is underpinned by long histories of urban inequality and racism, compounded by more recent forms of dispossession under austerity governance and substantial cuts to public services. Birmingham, Bristol, Leicester and Manchester are all post-industrial cityscapes, and their urban peripheries have long been shaped by the global migrations integral to Britain's industrialisation. These mixed peripheries, as Rex and Moore (1967) have shown in the case of Birmingham, are shaped by historic state underinvestment and intensive competition over limited public resources. Drawing on the same context, Andrews (2015) and Phillimore and Goodson (2006) underscore how established ethnic minorities as well as newly arrived asylum seekers and refugees were and continue to be disproportionately affected by limited access to housing and work in the urban peripheries. The stark brutalities of racial and ethnic discrimination are embedded in the nature of urban place.

However, hooks (1989, p. 206) offers a more complex perspective of marginality as 'much more than a site of deprivation ... , it is also the site of radical politics, a space of resistance'. Street studies encompass a commitment not only to the space of the urban margins but an orientation to observing and writing about marginalisation in which human experience is given primacy. Everything matters: the time it takes for traders to negotiate with street-level bureaucrats in Mumbai tells us about the punitive hierarchies of an opaque state (Anjaria, 2016); the rudimentary materials required to set up and secure shop en route from Mogadishu to Cape Town invoke the durable xenophobia the migrant inhabits (Crush, Chikanda, & Skinner, 2016). Yet despite the structures of discrimination, there are no foregone conclusions; human relations and practices are innately capricious. Where there is a deficit of state provision, there is an adaptive 'provisioning of the provisional' that makes the margins simultaneously precarious and creative (Simone, 2017). Convivial urban multicultures emerge alongside deep racism, and street interiors shaped through rich multilingual and cross-national transactions sit adjacent to parochial concerns and practices (Hall, 2015).

Matters of livelihood are also core to my interpretation of the migrant margins. While I have argued for de-ghettoising the categories of ethnicity and neighbourhood in the urban peripheries, the challenge extends to how to describe varied practices of work and networks of exchange on the street. On the streets that are central to my account, proprietors

have travelled from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Canada, China, Ghana, India, Iran, Iraq, Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Kenya, Kurdistan, Lithuania, Malawi, Nepal, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestine, Poland, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tanzania, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, other areas of the UK, Vietnam, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Together they recalibrate the street, experimenting with forms of cross-cultural exchange integral to making do and getting by. Reflecting hooks' (1989, p. 204) engagement with the space of the margins, proprietors too forge 'a sense of place, of not just who I am in the present but where I am coming from, the multiple voices in me'. Practices of place-making therefore complicate the more singular claims of 'immigrant enclaves' and the 'ethnic niche' (Portes & Manning, 1986) as a means of securing an economic foothold in the city. The streets I have studied are comprised of proprietors from many countries of origin working within a shared margin. Cross-cultural practices from across our four streets reveal that the ethics of care and pragmatics of profit amongst proprietors on the street are forged through 'transaction economies'. These vary from sharing information about rights and resources, to feeding schemes run by civic and religious groups that then extend to the broader neighbourhood residents. Such street schemes related to forms of social care have expanded in a context of reduced welfare and public resources under austerity governance. Transactions also extend to 'form-filling economies' where favours are exchanged for expertise in dealing with ever-more complex bureaucratic processes in relation to migration and settlement (Hall, King, & Finlay, 2017).

In addressing how heterogeneity comes to be homogenised, I draw on the idea of 'mixed embeddedness' (Kloosterman, van der Leun, & Rath, 1999), which engages with how immigrant entrepreneurs are emplaced in certain parts of cities and in certain kinds of self-employment. I am mindful that this approach combines racial and ethnic exclusions within immigration systems and labour markets together with place-based marginalisation. However relations of gender appear as less visible and the vast majority of proprietors we spoke with were male. Visibility or a lack thereof connects the street to sexist and patriarchal structures, including immigration systems, labour markets and family arrangements (Anthias & Mehta, 2003). Men continue to make up the majority of migrants to Europe where flows are marked by labour migration, as well as conditioned by the vulnerability of women en route. Women remain less visible in the labour market as both undocumented workers and as unpaid participants in family businesses. However, it is also important to recognise the ways in which these streets accommodate a wide range of work and employment practices that are not only limited to ethnic and family compositions.

The starting point into each street was through our face-to-face surveys: designed to briefly interrupt the entrepreneurial rhythm, we focused on questions related to work practices, skill sets, connections to the street and the city, and connections beyond the street and across the globe. In many instances the surveys lasted a matter of minutes, but predetermined questions also opened out into more spontaneous conversations. Both the surveys and expanded conversations provided the cues for further archival and policy research, prompting connections between individual experiences, historic events and layers of immigration regulation. In the two sections that follow, I focus on how diverse individuals are consigned to place, and in the urban context of discrimination, who is likely to become self-employed. I begin by drawing on accounts from proprietors on

Rookery Road in Birmingham and Narborough Road in Leicester. Their narratives of how they came to be in those street are linked to immigration policies, economic crisis and political upheavals. I then turn to Stapleton Road in Bristol and Cheetham Hill in Manchester to explore the racialised process of becoming self-employed on the street. The experiences of proprietors are traced across urban and national boundaries to show the multiple scales of discrimination that relegate the migrant and against which the migrant resists.

## **The streetlife of policy and place**

You used to be able to count on one hand the places people were from, now you have no idea. There are people from so many places, there are so many different languages and nationalities. (Tariq, Proprietor on Rookery Road, 2015)

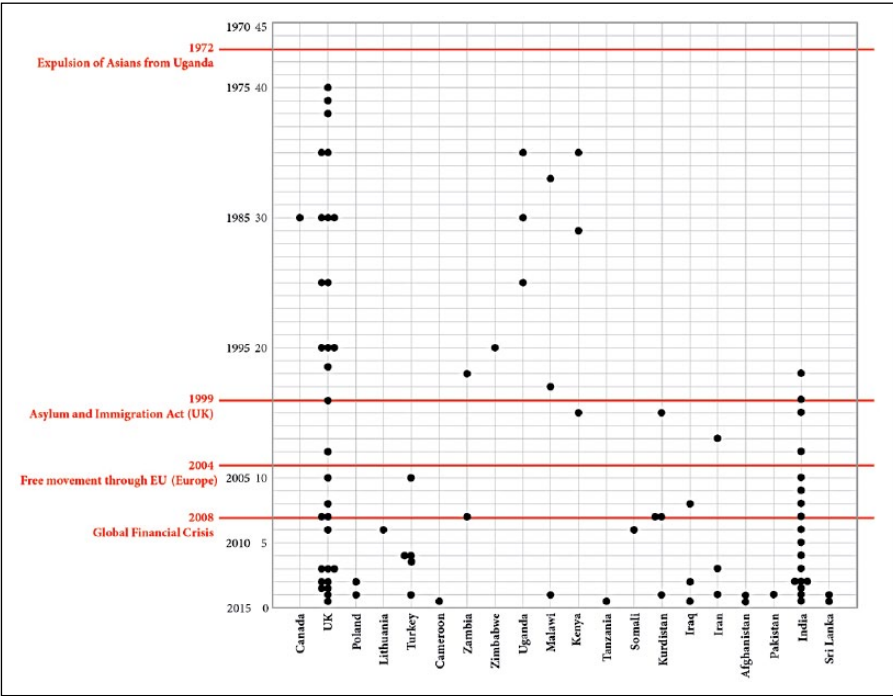
Rookery Road is located in Handsworth in the north-west margins of Birmingham, and much like Rex and Moore's (1967) seminal study in Sparkbrook to the south-east of the city, it emerged in the 'twilight zone' of a once industrial city sustained by migrant labour. Here peripheral places were and still are associated with limited levels of state investment and mixed population groupings competing for work and access to housing. Tariq, who is a proprietor on Rookery Road, describes his perceptions of the recent changes on the street through the arrival and settlement of what he perceives as new waves of migrants. For Tariq, the street's more established layers of migration, which were predominately South Asian and Caribbean as tied to Britain's colonial history, have been diversified by the recent arrivals of migrants from varied locations across the globe. In our street survey we recorded over 12 countries of origin amongst proprietors on Rookery Road, with 35% arriving in the last five years, and 32% having a shop on the street for 20 years or more. This simultaneously points to the long histories of migration in the configuration of Handsworth, as well as the more recent acceleration and variegation of migrants in the constitution of the street. Rex and Moore's study focused on relations between discriminatory policies and racial tensions in the industrial city, highlighting how national and urban distributions of public resources both formed and affected marginalised mixed neighbourhoods. The twilight zone endures in Handsworth and the limited availability of resources continues to exacerbate racial tensions, with one resident explaining that 'they throw us a few scraps, and we are left to fight over them'.

The local manifestations of diversity and deprivation further connect with the global production of the migrant margins. Migration policies and programmes that regulate international migration determine, frequently on the discriminatory grounds of income, gender and race, who enters the UK and where migrants settle. The recent elaboration of new border regimes across Europe aligns with the advance of punitive migrant laws in the UK Immigration Act of 2014 and 2016. New regimes of immigration control include the decentralised and privatised scrutiny of the everyday life of migrants (Anderson, 2013), significantly impacting on why certain people move or are consigned to certain urban locales above others. As highlighted throughout this article, the presence of proprietors on all four streets reflects an array of countries of origin over expansive time periods. What emerged as significant was how different proprietors narrated how they came to be on the

street. Proprietors pointed to specific events, ranging from the expulsion of Asians from Uganda in the late 1960s and early 1970s, to workplace retrenchments following the recession that followed the global financial crisis, and forms of regulation, such as the asylum dispersal programme, that were in some way significant for their process of migration and their entry into street-based livelihoods. An additional narrative was how these migrants had learnt to navigate across space, manoeuvring between national regulatory regimes connected to asylum and immigration, and city-level restrictions and vetting processes connected to setting up shop. Thus the migrant margins provide a lens into the materialisation of national and international politics, policy and regulations.

Of the four streets we studied, I particularly highlight the contemporary presence of migrant proprietors on Narborough Road in Leicester. Leicester too is a post-industrial city, and its former mills, factories and workshops demanded a large and skilled labour force. Leicester is also the UK's first so-called 'majority-minority' city attesting to its long histories of migration. From our street surveys proprietors' longevity on the street spanned from 1975 to 2015, reflecting how long proprietors had their businesses on the street. The street spatially convenes these proprietors along a shared urban space, bringing together a view of the complex intersections of people, places, events and regulations that shape Narborough Road. In order to capture Massey's 'global sense of place', it became important to both write about and draw these intersections as ways of bringing together the complexity of global and local interrelations. In what looks something akin to a Morse code drawing (Figure 1), the street appears as dotted correlations of time and space that connect proprietors on Narborough Road to political and economic events well beyond the boundary of Leicester. The figure prompts us to ask what mechanisms of social sorting filter people relative to place, and how we might understand the production of 'super-diversity' (Vertovec, 2007) in relation to racism, displacement and emplacement.

The graph (Figure 1) records the layering of present-day proprietors of the street, with their respective countries of origin set out on the 'x' axis, and the date when each respective proprietor set up shop on Narborough Road on the 'y' axis together with the number of years they have been in business on the street. Amongst the 22 countries of origin represented by the proprietors on Narborough Road, 43% of proprietors have had a comparatively recent presence on the street of five years or less. A representative of the local Labour Party office, whose headquarters are on Narborough Road, highlighted the significant population 'churn' in the area by explaining that, 'This is a rapidly changing area, with a lot of churn. Every time we do our door-to-door campaigning, there's a new face behind the door.' While some move on to more prestigious parts of the city over time, there is also a significant short-term resident population of university and college students. Narborough Road is in close proximity to De Montfort University, Leicester College and the University of Leicester, and on the street it is possible to buy cheap mattresses, kettles and varied paraphernalia associated with student accommodation. It is equally crucial to pay attention to the longer histories of migration in the formation of the street, where 24% of proprietors have had a presence on the street for 20 years or more. The first notable grouping of proprietors marked on the graph occur from 1975, highlighting proprietors who were either born in Uganda, Malawi or Kenya, or who came to Leicester via East Africa and have UK citizenship. This surfaces the presence on the street of the East African Asian refugee crisis that extended from 1968 to 1976 (Robinson,



**Figure 1.** Migrant proprietors on Narborough Road in Leicester, encompassing the period from 1975 to 2015 (Super-diverse Streets project, 2015).

1995). There is a continued but albeit diminishing presence of East African Asian born proprietors on the street, and our survey records 11% of the proprietors as East African born Asians. Of the 55,000 Asian refugees from East Africa, approximately half had British passports, and 11,000 reached and currently live in Leicester (Office for National Statistics [ONS], 2013). In combining our surveys and interviews with archival material, we relate national conflicts to subsequent policies by national and local governments that generated a distinctive layer of migration not only in Leicester, but also on Narborough Road.

In 1972 Leicester City Council issued an advertisement in the *Uganda Argus* stating:

An important announcement on behalf of the Council of the City of Leicester, England. ... In your own interests and those of your family you should accept the advice of the Ugandan Resettlement Board and not come to Leicester.

Marett (1993) asserts that the resettlement of Ugandan Asians in Leicester was in part connected to the Council’s discriminatory advertisements that backfired and unintentionally attracted refugees to the city. The unforeseen impacts of these advertisements were similarly narrated in a conversation with Jaffer, a proprietor who had formerly lived in Uganda. Jaffer inferred that the advertisement in the paper was why he and his family



selected Leicester as their site of refuge. In reflecting on the racist intentions of the advertisement, former Leicester City Councillor Brian Piper, elected in 1973, said:

I felt at the time that the advert was dishonourable. ... The excuse the city council leadership used was pressure on services, but the underlying reason was fear of more ethnic minority immigration ... what we describe today as racist. (BBC News, 2012)

It is evident that intersecting political policies, underscored by ethnic and racial discrimination in parts of East Africa and the UK and occurring at national and municipal levels, stimulated a layer of migrants in Leicester as evidenced on Narborough Road.

The contemporary diversification of Narborough Road, or what the Labour Party office referred to as 'churn', reflects additional layers of policy-led diversification including the government's asylum dispersal programme. The graph registers proprietors from Kurdistan, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Somalia from the period 2000 onwards, with 14% of proprietors born in countries where the principal flow of migration over the last 25 years has been in connection with asylum. It should also be noted that of these flows associated with conditions of political upheaval and violence are a lineage of Britain's interventionist politics in the Middle East. The dispersal programme for asylum seekers introduced in the Asylum and Immigration Act of 1999 is further enunciated in all four of our surveyed streets. Birmingham, Bristol, Leicester and Manchester are amongst 12 key urban areas that were designated as 'cities of sanctuary' for asylum seekers and refugees. Since its implementation in 2000, the UK has followed a policy that has relocated asylum seekers away from the South-East of England to 'dispersal zones' that identify relocation spaces in deprived urban areas where there is also a supply of available and comparatively inexpensive housing (Stewart, 2012). However, this Act simultaneously restricts choices about where and how asylum seekers are granted settlement and these comparatively deprived dispersal areas offer limited work opportunities (Griffiths, Sigona, & Zetter, 2006).

As recorded on the graph, proprietors from Poland and Lithuania represent another flow of migration that is symptomatic of international policy and legislation. In 2004 the supranational legislation to enlarge the European Union to include the A8 Eastern European countries (Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Slovakia, Slovenia) significantly expanded the numbers of those with the right to legally live and work in the UK. For example, the largest non-UK born population increase in the UK between 2001 and 2011 was the Polish born population, with a dramatic increase from 58,000 to 579,000 (ONS, 2015). The A8 accession legislation did not intentionally aim to diversify specific geographic areas, but the 2004 EU freedom of movement policy effectively stimulated large population movements, and streets such as Narborough Road in Leicester, as well as Rookery Road in Birmingham and Cheetham Hill in Manchester are a lens into the lived reality of the intersections of EU and national policy.

It is further notable from the graph that the diversity of proprietors peaks directly following the 2008 global financial crisis. Over this period, particularly from 2012, net migration into the UK increases. The Migration Quarterly Report (ONS, 2015) indicates that the largest increase relates to the growth in EU migration from the EU15 countries, and followed the aftershocks of both widespread unemployment and the enactment of

austerity governance across Europe. While these particular migratory populations did not significantly feature in our surveys, we did capture the flows of individuals already living in the UK who exited formal employment sectors after 2008. Proprietors recollected how they had formerly worked in public employment such as in the Post Office and in public transport as well as in private corporations and subsequently went into street retail after being retrenched. For example, Saadli had set up his computer shop five years ago, and had previously worked in the City Council where he was made redundant. Saadli also reported that one of the challenges he faced in running a shop in a comparatively deprived area was the general effect of recession.

The streetlife of policy and place reveals the intended and unintended processes through which the populations of places diversify in relation to social sorting on racial and ethnic grounds. Our research has underlined that streets in the urban margins are produced through intersecting political and economic turbulence across multiple national frameworks. The street provides a lens into the multiple layers of migration underscored across supranational, national and local policies, and how these cumulatively impact on how diverse individuals are emplaced in urban peripheries. Political policies are therefore implicit in the diversification of place. However, it is important to ask what types of urban streets are diversified and in which ways. The four streets in our research are all located in comparatively deprived urban areas, suggesting that policy-driven diversification is expressed in the migrant margins where urban diversity intersects with marginalisation. This becomes apparent in connecting our street surveys and conversations with archival and policy materials. The streetlife of discrimination thereby reveals how structural factors impact where the effects of policy-driven diversification are most spatialised.

## **The streetlife of self-employment**

I have recounted how proprietors narrated the impacts of the 2008 recession in terms of being retrenched from formal employment and subsequently shifting into street trade. Trade on the streets had also suffered from the reduced spending power of customers. I discussed the impacts of recession on marginal areas over a lunch with Pusan, who is an activist engaged in migrant heritage in Birmingham, and who directs a charity in proximity to Rookery Road. Pusan replied wryly, 'Our people have always been in recession.' Pusan's response to my question points less to a cyclical economic process, and more explicitly to the restricted access to forms of work and capital on the basis of racial and ethnic exclusion. The conversation with Pusan continues:

Why are our people in street business, is because the system failed us. I used to work in the system. You're different. In these systems you can't control your autonomy.

Aligning with Pusan's perceptions, scholars of ethnic minority entrepreneurship in Britain have drawn links between discriminatory practices in formal employment sectors and high percentages of self-employment amongst minorities (Jones, Ram, Li, Edwards, & Villares, 2015). This connects with research that shows how black and ethnic minority workers were disproportionately affected by retrenchment following de-industrialisation

(Ram, Jones, Abbas, & Sanghera, 2002), as well as a pattern of subsequent retrenchments after the global financial crisis.

Working within these discriminatory effects, proprietors develop alternative routes to accessing work and capital. Pusan and his friend Assif explain how local groups acquire start-up finance:

- Pusan: Businesses start off with a very low base. Bangladeshi catering businesses often came about by grouping together. We lend money together. There's no interest. It's expected, it's not a big deal, it's a code to survive.
- Assif: Some get formal loans with their good credit rating and loan on behalf of someone else. In some Pakistani communities they have committees, five or ten people will get together to save and borrow.
- Pusan: Also, look at what it takes to set up. (*He points to the space we are sitting in over plates of Eritrean food.*) We start with a few plastic chairs and tables. And we go from there.

While Jones et al. (2015, pp. 15–17) point to 'capital starvation', 'penurious returns' and 'over-qualification' as features of ethnic minority entrepreneurship, so too are the migrant margins a space of experimentation. Capital is bundled together over time, and spaces are fitted out gradually while additional resources are acquired. Much of the important research on ethnic minority entrepreneurship explores economic practices either from the vantage point of spatially discrete ethnic enclaves, or as ethnic performance by job sector. By contrast, the streets highlighted in this article are mixed compositions of varied proprietors and piecemeal practices, affording a complex view of the constraints and resources present in the migrant margins. Here I draw on the work of Thieme (2017) and Simone (2017), who engage across cities of the so-called Global North and Global South, to explore practices of place-making where limited public welfare is coupled with increasingly precarious forms of employment. Simone describes this structured and lived condition as persistent 'provisionality', while Thieme introduces the idea of the 'hustle economy' as work practices where uncertainty simultaneously restricts and requires high levels of experimentation.

I now move across to Stapleton Road in Bristol, which is located to the north-east of Bristol city centre, and falls within the Lawrence Hill ward, ranked amongst the most deprived 10% in England. I turn to Haaruun's account of how he struggled to access work in his journey from Somalia, to the Netherlands, to the UK, culminating in his internet, money remittance and travel shop on Stapleton Road. A quarter of the proprietors we surveyed on Stapleton Road were from Somalia, all of whom, other than Haaruun, had arrived in the last 10 years. Almost half of the proprietors had been on the street for five years or less. Haaruun has had his shop on Stapleton Road for 12 years. He originally qualified as a teacher in Somalia, and after the outbreak of civil war he claimed asylum in the Netherlands. Aspiring to continue his career as a teacher, Haaruun undertook additional studies to improve his teaching qualifications in line with the expected accreditation in the Netherlands. He was unable to find permanent work in the teaching sector and as a next step, Haaruun decided to set up a shop. He reported that the processes for initiating a shop were highly regulated at the neighbourhood level. Such

restrictive vetting processes in the Netherlands are well documented by Hagemans, Hendriks, Rath, and Zukin (2015), pointing to financial viability assessments as part of the application process, as well the aesthetic vetting of shop fronts and interiors by neighbourhood organisations.

Haaruun lived in the Netherlands for seven years and has retained a Dutch passport. However, he was eventually compelled to move to the UK in order to be able to work, by starting his own business. He reflects, 'We [Somali refugees] got our training in Holland and Denmark. People who came first, got training in a hard life.' Haaruun's story reflects the durable borders of the migrant margins that he has inhabited. Despite his qualifications, multilingual competency and efforts in further adult learning, his choices of where and how he settles remain restricted, underscoring Massey's (1994) 'differentiated mobilities' in the global formation of the street. Through fieldwork surveys and conversations we became aware of many Somali proprietors that had made more than one journey before settling in Bristol. Haaruun's explanation for his double migration was motivated by having to navigate through the complexities of national asylum legislation, as well as business regulations at a city scale. Van Liempt's (2011) research of secondary migrations of Dutch Somalis to the UK highlights the principal motivations to relocate to cities such as Leicester and Bristol as connected to perceived job opportunities, less restrictive legislation in self-employment, as well as the presence of already established Somali diasporas. The formation of diasporas on the street can therefore be enabled by intersections of policies in more than one national or sub-national sphere.

I now introduce a fourth street into the analysis, shifting to Cheetham Hill to the north-west of Manchester's city centre. Manchester too is a post-industrial landscape shaped by long histories of migration that intersect with marginalisation. The history of street trade in Cheetham Hill surfaces two key features, connecting access to low entry-level urban land markets outside of the city centre, and discriminatory limitations in employment and trade. Predating Rex and Moore's conceptualisation of the urban 'twilight zone', the 'Old Jewish Quarter' in Cheetham Hill that emerged at the turn of the twentieth century was characterised by peripheral urban space, low-entry rentals and low property prices:

[The Old Jewish Quarter] was a poor district of 'shelved streets' stretching down from Cheetham Hill Road to the railway and the River Irk. Badly built and heavily polluted, immigrants could find cheap accommodation for which there was no competition, near to the synagogue and other communal facilities established by earlier settlers. (Display cabinet, Manchester Jewish Museum, 2015)

The first Jewish travelling settlement in Manchester in the 1740s was oriented around a pedlar and hawking economy at a time when the Jewish population in Britain was denied political rights and the legal ability to purchase property or to participate in certain trades. Their itinerant mercantile practices ultimately transitioned into small shops initially rented and eventually purchased in marginalised parts of the city like Cheetham Hill.

Within the highly restrictive access to work and space, inventive repertoires emerge, but often in a piece by piece or 'makeshift' manner as resources are slowly and tenuously acquired (Vasudevan, 2015). Precarity is one core feature of street trade, and one of the

ways in which the street hosts adaptation is through a range of very small to large business spaces, all of which are available in the varied composition of the street. The smallest entry points with the lowest risk are important. On Cheetham Hill itinerant traders sit behind rudimentary desk-height boxes and sell pay-as-you-go mobile phone cards that allow customers to purchase low-cost calls to a wide number of cities across the planet. These traders are located on the pavements in front of the larger shops and benefit from passing trade as well as drawing customers into the more formal shops. Such pavement traders are either self-employed or work on a commission basis with the main store. By comparison, the average size shop is around 60 square metres, and at the time of our research in 2015, rentals in these units ranged from £1000 to £1300 per month. Retail activities generally filled these shops, but it is worth noting that 10% of ground floor street units were comprised of solicitors' offices, many of which clearly advertised their speciality in immigration law. A few large independent superstores are interspersed along Cheetham Hill where the spaces of former bingo halls and a cinema have been adapted for new uses. The superstores are notable for their size and range of goods, from the prized yellow mangos picked and packaged in Pakistan and stacked in piles along the pavement, to enamelware from a long-established British producer that now manufactures its products in China. By comparison, these superstores fill some 1000 square metres of space, and employ approximately 30 people per store. The range of street spaces reflects the precarious practices of low-paid and erratic work alongside substantial retail outlets. The street therefore evidences the co-presence of 'rags-to-rags' and 'rags-to-riches' scenarios within the same spatial stretch (Jones et al., 2015, p. 17).

The question of who is on the street and by what means their businesses grow or suffer demise is not simply reducible to questions of culture or ethnic essentialism but involves the interplay of economic and spatial structures. On the street limited and discriminatory access to formal employment and credit intersect with the nature of opportunities available to migrant proprietors in marginalised parts of the city where land values are generally lower and official scrutiny is often diminished. Rather than the more conventional analyses of 'ethnic minority entrepreneurship' by sector and ethnicity, the city street allows an analysis of the intersections between multiple processes of economic marginalisation that occur both across national borders and in peripheral neighbourhoods. Alongside the peripheralisation of people and place and the restrictive practices of trade and employment, crucial reconfigurations are made by migrants to the urban environment and skill sets are developed in order to maintain mobility beyond a singular place.

## **Why streetlife matters**

To be in the margin is to be part of the whole but outside of the main body. (hooks, 1984, p. ix)

By engaging with proprietors on four streets across Birmingham, Bristol, Leicester and Manchester, it is evident that who is on the street, and how they came to be there, connects with discriminatory borders that span global and urban spaces. On all four streets, racism and exclusions are apparent in where individuals locate or are located and the nature of work and self-employment that is available in peripheral places. From the grounded

vantage point of the street, the systems of migration regulation and employment structures are apparent, as are practices of resistance and reconfiguration to make life and livelihood in a different image outside of dominant culture. Streets in marginalised parts of cities provide an edge territory to explore how highly exclusionary systems of citizenship and employment intersect, and the spaces claimed for everyday transgressions. Crucial to unpacking the intersection of migration and marginalisation is tracing how histories and geographies connect. Both the historic and global constitution of the street reflect what Nayak calls 'a postcolonial present' (2010, p. 2370) and what Massey refers to as 'differentiated mobilities', reflecting how power both displaces and emplaces over time.

The migrant margins are a marginalised urban space in which marginal but not insignificant economies are forged by migrants. The migrant margins challenge simplistic notions of assimilation and community cohesion by paying attention to persistent discrimination and inequality across space. Migrant margins further complicate the urban sociology of marginality in which human capacities are substantively reduced. In seeking a less parochial approach I have combined urban sociological approaches to race and ethnicity with fluid understandings of 'provisional' circumstances (Simone, 2017), 'makeshift' city-making (Vasudevan, 2015) and 'the hustle economy' (Thieme, 2017) that have emerged in post-colonial urban studies. The street economies highlighted in this article incorporated survival tactics and strategies for growth, and alternative systems of credit and capital. These practices span across space and procure cross-cultural and in-group resources where migrants are able 'to assert a presence' (hooks, 1989, p. 205). The street economies made by migrants in deprived peripheries are therefore varied and complex, expanding the more singular descriptions of precarious ethnic minority enterprise. In this way, the migrant margins reveal a less culturalist perspective of economic practice, as well as bringing into the same frame the apparently discordant yet simultaneous aspects of discrimination and agility that are core to street entrepreneurship. My street methodology has therefore been informed by 'a global way of looking' that spans space and time (Nayak, 2010, p. 2375) and a differentiated view of economic practices afforded by the spatial and social make-up of the street.

Why is the streetlife of migration important for broader societal understanding of social change? In the first instance, both current immigration legislation in the UK and heated public debates about 'the migration problem' fail to recognise Britain's global histories of Empire and deep dependencies on labour and resources from outside the limited confines of the nation. Similarly, Britain's ongoing participation in political intervention across the globe and the economic and cultural interdependencies that are integral to an increasingly mobile world barely register in political debates about international migration or national identity. However, the life and livelihoods of streets in the urban margins of Birmingham, Bristol, Leicester and Manchester precisely reflect the historic and contemporary realities of how the city is inextricably part of a series of places beyond the confines of the nation. It is the everyday life of these streets that challenges us to expand our sense of place, tracing the wider forces of discrimination and practices of transgression that constitute 'streetlife'. In tandem with the narrow discourse of 'the migration problem' are public debates and policy interventions on how migrants integrate and contribute to UK society. Prevailing notions of managed community cohesion focus on cultural and social processes of assimilation as an alignment with 'British

values'. This orientation overlooks the lively and cross-cultural participations of migrants in cultural and economic life across UK societies. It also ignores the grotesque discriminations by which migrants are sorted in racialised, ethnicised and gendered ways extending from the border point to the city. The street reveals how political policies and employment structures embed certain migrants in peripheral parts of cities where life and livelihood must be forged. Through the street, we witness how the migrant comes to occupy a past, present and future in the making of marginalised urban places.

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