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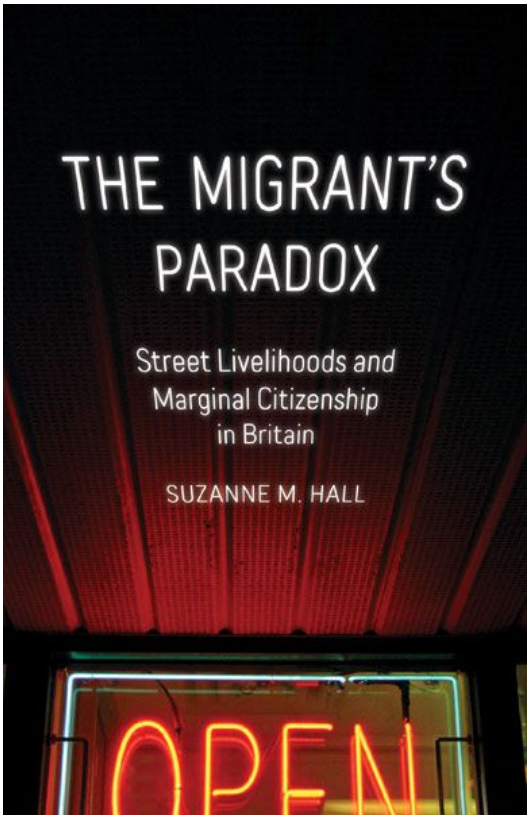
Book Review: The Migrant's Paradox

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***The Migrant's Paradox: Street Livelihoods and Marginal Citizenship in Britain* by Suzanne M. Hall (2021). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.**

In *The Migrant's Paradox: Street Livelihoods and Marginal Citizenship in Britain* (2021), Suzanne M. Hall and her team of researchers explore the political economy of displacements that impact migrant entrepreneurs' prolonged journeys to the United Kingdom (UK). Underpinned primarily by "racialized sorting" (p. 154) as a form of colonialist logic and rigidly controlled borders, these displacements have a variety of causes, as their protagonists' journeys usually consist of "multiple migrations": first from other continents to "fortress Europe" and then on to the UK. These journeys also connect to the history of colonial Britain and the forces of globalization, as well as the Iraq and Afghanistan wars and work redundancies in the wake of the 2008-09 global financial crisis. Furthermore, Hall relates migrants' difficult experiences to the past decade of "hostile environment" immigration policies, enforced via 2014 and 2016 immigration acts, and the 2016 Brexit referendum prompting the UK's eventual exit from the European Union in 2020. If this were not enough, (im)migrants entering the UK have also been subject to the country's 1999 Immigration Act, which places asylum seekers and refugees in "sanctuary cities," four of which are included in this study: Birmingham, Bristol, Leicester, and Manchester. London, the fifth locality, is the "glocturnal" city in Europe, with a long history of immigration and an exceptional status due to its demand for migrant workers 24 hours per day, seven days per week (MacQuarie 2018). In this context of "foul turbulence" (p. 4) for migrants, Hall foretells the "displacements that are still to come" (p. 57).

The book offers thick descriptions on the livelihoods of hundreds of migrant shopkeepers renting (or sub-renting) retail units on the "edge territories" of five High Streets: Rookery Road (Birmingham), Stapleton Road (Bristol), Narborough Road (Leicester), Rye Lane (London), and Cheetham Hill (Manchester). In doing so, Hall uncovers the meaning-making processes that these self-employed migrants employ as they struggle to make a living at the peripheries of these cities. Her observations, surveys, and interviews become the basis of a "street-level epistemology" (Gambetta and Hamill 2005) regarding the survival strategies adopted by streetwise migrant entrepreneurs.



Figure 1. In this photograph taken at the end of April 2022, Rye Lane appears as bustling as ever. The building on the left finished in Art Deco architectural style hosts a series of 'one pound' shops and a church at the back. Double decker buses hustle both ways every other minute. Cycle lanes begin after this segment of the street. Besides buses and other motor vehicles, and bicycles, busy day shoppers and night revelers hear the overground trains crossing above and stopping at Peckham Rye until late in the night. Photo credit: 2022 @ Julius-Cezar MacQuarie c/o Nightworkshop.

Theoretically rigorous, Hall's study re-assembles conceptual elements to make standard analytical categories work harder. For example, "territory" cannot be reduced to land, "margins … [not] reducible to ghetto" (p. 61), and "border logics" do not simplify migrants' experiences to numbers and categories. Without using jargon, she "foregrounds the figure of the human within the vast complex of border exclusions" (p. 39) via "narratives of the immediate" (Gay y Blasco and Wardle 2007, p. 76).

In chapter one, Hall highlights how mechanisms of "bordering" infiltrate not only the UK's political landscape, but also the psyche and livelihoods of these migrant shopkeepers on the periphery. Focusing on aspects that "ground and connect" these themes, the author enables readers to "notice precarity differently" (Precarity Lab 2019, p. 108). At other times, her street lens detects "multiscalar connections" across space and time (p. 48) to emphasize that these localities are constituted of multiple displacements.

In chapter two, Hall dons her "postcolonial" hat, as she roams through "edge territories" of Narborough Road (Leicester) and Stapleton Road (Bristol). This chapter connects "racialized patterns of work to morphologies of marginalization" (p. 89). These cities' "near and far margins" bring together an amalgam of shopkeepers who become very homogenized in terms of "work prospects and urban locality" (p. 60). Even as they are streetwise,

the proprietors' "entrepreneurialism" is shaped by "gendered and patriarchal structures of immigration systems, labor markets, and family arrangements." Here, men take the frontstage, "centered on struggles" (p. 86), and women the backstage, as they are rendered invisible in their positions within these family businesses (p. 61).

Chapter three makes sense of "practices of work and meaning-making" from the supposed chaos at the margins (p. 87). On Rookery Road (Birmingham) and Cheetham Hill (Manchester), peripheral migrant workers confront the precarity foisted on them by those in the center via "redundancies and casualized employment." The author innovatively links "race, place, and migration" (p. 88) to the "material aspects of the street [that] co-constitute economic relations …" (p. 89). In doing so, Hall illustrates how much more intricate "edge economies" are when compared to the "official economy" (p. 91). The "form-filling economy" section of chapter three explains how welfare and non-citizenship are built into the black-and-white paperwork (p. 117). This finding is consistent with scholarly work showing that "those who can afford to stay" are subject to constant immigration tactics that index their supposed (un)deservingness (Hall 2017, in Ratzmann and Shahroui 2021, p. 436) and "preemptively illegalize" them on a large scale (p. 199n5, in de Genova 2018, p. 17).

Chapter four spells out how "what counts" (power, prestige, and profit) matters more than who is affected by decisions taken at the center (p. 118), by those with privilege. The "kilometer stretch of Rye Lane" in south London is one of the five "ordinary streets" in this LSE-sponsored study that bring people and places together. Here too, small business entrepreneurs are forced to nickel-and-dime themselves and each other, alongside artists and creatives who have "differential access to power" (p. 123). The street becomes a space that "engages with wider claims of belonging, outside of … and in opposition to the prevailing logics of the center" (p. 149). Such streets are the frontline where migrant shopkeepers have "no single ethnonationalist affiliation but make claims for living with difference" (p. 149). Endorsed by way of the state, "large-scale regeneration projects" (p. 121) are legitimized mechanisms for "investments and evictions [and] regeneration and displacement[s]" (p. 125), thus dispossessing people of their homes and workplaces. This type of "urban gigantism" (p. 125) is challenged with "urban mutualism" by the streetwise shopkeepers, who rent out their sub-divided shop space, and through "[the] reinvention of tenure and formations of loose coalitions" (p. 139) – a repertoire of resistance that becomes their weapon against a "new age of inequalities" (p. 148).

In the last chapter of the book, the author walks the reader carefully "on [the] outer limit of exclusion and invention." Hall explains the kind of racialized sorting introduced earlier, which underpins "border logics," via nationalist and "whiteness" tropes – whereby migrants are in-between welcome insiders or rejected outsiders (p. 155) and are always being watched by the state apparatus.



Figure 2. Rye Lane meeting Peckham Rye Road, in South London. This street ends with a clothes and shoes shop at number 232 ("Hotel") and a Baptist Church at 232A. Photo credit: 2022 @ Julius-Cezar MacQuarie c/o Nightworkshop.

Hall's excellent book rewires the current and divisive logic around the UK and European migration systems. In a Glissantian sense, Hall proposes us to think of borders not as demarcations of cit-/denizens based on racial discrimination, but as a space of multiplicities marked by shared responsibilities and permissions for different ways of living and working across borders. In closing, she reflects on an inclusive approach to migration and its practices of "getting there, arriving, and hanging in" – which requires not "contemporary democratic politics" (p. 161) but rather a long-term political commitment to protect those burdened migrants at the edge.

If writing the "street as world" is "a curious interplay of passing by and entering into" a world (p. 152), Hall's analysis of border language and logics makes a call for urgently needed political backing to protect those migrants who run the "edge economy." As for the displacements that Halls tells us that are yet to come, the future is here: migrant shopkeepers at the peripheries of these five cities have been facing new challenges since the advent of the gig economy, "[which] trades off the 'entrepreneurialisms' required of marginalized cultures" (pp. 5-6).

In Hall's assessment, living the "migrant's paradox" means to embody the tension of being "half-in, half-out" (Macarie 2013) in a society in which their citizenship is on undetermined probation period, given its transitional or restricted status. This also extended to the citizens of the newly joined nations to the European

Union. Put differently, a paradoxical status for "multiple migrants," such as the entrepreneurs whom Hall interviews, means being "neither here, nor there" (Bojkov 2004) in terms of both contemporary British and EU societies. While Hall formulates eloquently this paradoxical existence and other related tensions, the concept is not fully articulated in the body of the book. The reader, thus, struggles to keep in mind its loose definition throughout the text, unable to see with precision the "paradoxes" that Hall spells out within chapters 1-4.

Staggered as the definition may appear throughout the text, however, Hall portrays these shopkeepers and their survival strategies in ways that lend to the fields of citizenship and race; precarious employment and the sociology of cooperation; as well as mobility and migration studies that situate precarious migrants, their bodies, and experiences at the core of analysis. For social scientists, this text is a fantastic investigation of treble-displacements and fragile-migrant status at the margins of world cities. Additionally, *The Migrant's Paradox* offers a wonderful read into the multiple journeys of migrant entrepreneurs determined to make-do in this brutal present, as well as a guide for five UK High Streets, which readers will never look at again with the same eyes.

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Author Bio

As a night ethnographer and migration scholar, Julius-Cezar MacQuarie has reached out for the past decade to people working around the clock in European cities. He is the founder of Nightworkshop, co-founder of Nightlaboratory, and campaigner for the Nightworker Charter. In this capacity, he specializes in embodied precarity, nightwork, migration, 24/7 capitalism, and health and social inequalities. In autumn 2022, he will join the Institute for Social Science for the 21st Century at University College Cork to research the precarity experienced by women nightworkers in Ireland.