

Institution: London School of Economics and Political Science		
Unit of Assessment: 21 - Sociology		
Title of case study: Migrant Margins: street economies in urban peripheries		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2012-2018		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Suzanne Hall Nicolas Palominos; Sadiq Toffa; Adriana Valdez Young; Robin Finlay; Julia King	Associate Professor in Sociology Research Assistants (various projects)	2011-present 2012; 2012; 2012; 2015; 2015 /2017/ 2018
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2013-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>LSE research on “Migrant Margins” provides a uniquely comparative account of street economies in urban peripheries across UK cities with historically high migration flows. Its principal impacts are threefold: (1) challenging official planning discourse via the provision of new socio-economic analysis of high streets and new evidence of their value; (2) supporting the work of grassroots organisations lobbying against specific redevelopment challenges in London, including advocating against the loss of low-cost retail workspace and the displacement of ethnic minorities in regeneration processes; and (3) developing new public learning resources to challenge narrow debates on migration.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>A body of work on the “Migrant Margins”, led by Dr Suzanne Hall at LSE, introduces new perspectives on the socio-economic value of high street economies in urban peripheries shaped by global migration and urban marginalisation. It draws on face-to-face surveys with more than 500 shop proprietors on high streets across Birmingham, Bristol, Leicester, London, and Manchester; conversations with local authorities; and engagements with activist groups. The underpinning research comprises four distinct but connected projects, sustaining a substantial body of research relevant to planning policy, activism, and teaching and learning. The core research took place between 2012 and 2018 and incorporates insights into how the global financial crisis, the austerity governance that followed, and the ideological crisis of migration shape street economies.</p> <p>Ordinary Streets (2012-2014) examined Rye Lane in South London. It developed a face-to-face survey methodology generating detailed accounts and evidence of the crucial social and economic role of high streets in contexts of precarity. It revealed emerging employment patterns within the growing field of self-employed shop retail; identified new tenure arrangements and spatial subdivisions in relation to rising property values; and explored the role of trade associations in negotiating everyday contestations. Alongside well-cited academic outputs (e.g. [1]), the research generated public outputs such as podcasts and videos for wider audiences including Key Stage 3, 4, and 5 learners [2] [3].</p> <p>Super-diverse Streets (2015-2017) explored the street economies of independent shop proprietors across de-industrial peripheries in Birmingham, Bristol, Leicester, and Manchester. The research built on the Ordinary Streets methodology to produce additional insights into how histories of migration shape street livelihoods, identifying forms of socio-economic participation that challenge integrationist policy debates. It captured the multi-lingual proficiencies, occupational skills and educational levels of shop proprietors and trans-national circuits of trade. The work builds on the “diverse economies” approach in relation to precarious urban peripheries, highlighting form-filling economies that respond to everyday bordering fostered by the UK Immigration Acts, and economies of care established in response to austerity [4].</p> <p>In its second phase, Super-diverse Streets analysed the organisational models and support needs of trade associations in Birmingham and Leicester. This was carried out in collaboration</p>		

with [Social Life](#), a social enterprise created by the Young Foundation in 2012 to become a specialist centre of research and innovation about the social life of communities. The research team explored how different organisational models, differentially deployed by traders, affect communication with local authorities and convene differing interests amongst street proprietors. Key findings point to effective ways of supporting traders to strengthen their informal networks and existing social media platforms; and brokering new forms of partnership between local authorities and local trading groups, avoiding the “one-size-fits-all” approach of Business Improvement Districts.

High Streets for All (2017) was commissioned by the Greater London Authority (GLA) and carried out in collaboration with architectural firm We Made That and with Just Space, a large network of around 80 community groups, campaigners, and action groups formed in 2007 to provide a voice for Londoners at grassroots level during the formulation of London’s major planning strategy. In 2015, Just Space and its member groups began to prepare contributions for a completely new London Plan commissioned by the Mayor. The LSE researchers particularly contributed expertise in visual mapping, user experience, and measures of social value. The project’s key output, widely circulated as a publicly available report [5], clarified the social and economic values of streets in London undergoing pronounced change.

Socio-economic Value at the Elephant and Castle (2018) provided an evidence base for the role of micro-economies and ethnic minority trade to contest the displacement associated with regeneration at Elephant and Castle (E&C). Commissioned by the charity Latin Elephant, its final report [6] highlights the importance of protecting affordable workspace across London and provided additional evidence supporting Latin Elephant’s advocacy for the protection of the 130 independent, largely BAME traders operating at E&C.

Together, the Migrant Margins body of research has generated significant new evidence for the socio-economic value of urban high streets and evidenced the role of migration in sustaining street economies in de-industrial UK cities. The research continues, and has now extended beyond the UK to migrant street livelihoods in Cape Town, South Africa.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

[1] Hall, S. (2015). Super-diverse Street: A ‘trans-ethnography’ across migrant localities. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 38(1), pp. 22-37. DOI: 10.1080/01419870.2013.858175.

[2] Migration Matters (2016). Six Impossible Ideas after Brexit. Available at: <http://migrationmatters.me/course/six-ideas/>. For public use and Erasmus+ Virtual Exchanges.

[3] Royal Geographical Society (2017). Diverse places and the high street. Educational Podcast Series for Key Stages 3, 4, and 5. Available at: <https://www.rgs.org/schools/teaching-resources/diverse-places-and-the-high-street/>

[4] Hall, S., King, J., and Finlay, R. (2017). Migrant Infrastructure: Transaction economies in Birmingham and Leicester, UK. *Urban Studies*, 54(6), pp. 1311-1327. DOI: 10.1177/0042098016634586.

[5] We Made That and LSE Cities (2017). *High Streets for All*. Report commissioned by the Mayor of London, Greater London Authority. Available at: https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/high_streets_for_all_report_web_final.pdf

[6] King, J., Hall, S., Roman-Velazquez, P., Fernandez, A., Mallins, J., Peluffo-Soneyra, S., and Perez, N. (2018). *Socio-economic Value at the Elephant and Castle*. LSE Department of Sociology. Report commissioned by Latin Elephant. Available at: <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/90160/>

Evidence of research quality: This Migrant Margins work produced seven peer-reviewed journal articles including [1] and [4], the latter of which was shortlisted for the *Urban Studies Best Article Award*. Hall received an ESRC Future Research Leaders award to support Super-diverse Streets. She was the 2017 recipient of the Philip Leverhulme Prize in Sociology, allowing her to extend her research to Cape Town. The research supported her participation as Co-I on a 2018-2020 AHRC-funded project on the urban economies of Brick Lane (GBP565,583) and a 2017-2019 IGA-Rockefeller grant on cities of refuge (GBP160,044).

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The Migrant Margins research challenges official discourse on the urban margins and migration by providing detailed and comparative accounts of street livelihoods in relation to social change. Its translation to reports (e.g. [5] and [6]) and film and audio outputs (e.g. [2] and [3]) has engaged a wide non-academic audience with these important issues. The inclusion of intended users as partners in the research was also central to assuring its wider relevance. This has included commissioned work for state planning authorities [5], and activist collaboration in research [6]. Key impacts include:

- At metropolitan level: inputs to planning policy and practice, and the use of new research evidence by activists and community planning groups. Impacts described in this case study relate particularly to London, but are starting to be felt elsewhere, too.
- At national and international level: catalysing and helping to shape public debate and providing new teaching and learning resources.

Informing policy and planning in London

Changing understanding of the value of micro-economies: Many UK cities - including London - are trapped in models of economic development which prioritise GDP growth over broader social and economic well-being. By demonstrating the socio-economic value of overlooked street economies, the research has challenged conventional perspectives that tend to ignore the role of micro-scale independent retail and the class and cultural intermixtures this supports. In so doing, it has contributed to a shift in planning vocabulary, providing planning authorities in London with an alternative framework for understanding the socio-economic value of micro-economies. This framework shifts emphasis from high-value, high-rent retail floorspace and its performance as investment property, towards understanding of the breadth of values of high streets. These issues are analysed in depth in the 2017 "[High Streets for All](#)" report [5], and have important implications for policy and planning. This is acknowledged by the GLA Regeneration Manager, who states that [5] "*shaped the GLA's approach to high streets*" generally, as well as contributing to specific policy formation and investment decisions. That contribution is reflected in key strategies and planning outcomes:

"This report ([5]) has influenced the London Plan policy [the statutory spatial development strategy for Greater London] and the GLA's investment programmes such as the Good Growth Fund [which directs Mayor resources to support local economies such as high streets], which in turn have helped deliver significant outcomes across London." [A].

The GLA further acknowledged the influence of insights from Ordinary Streets [1] and Super-diverse Streets [4], which have:

"...helped sharpen the focus of our work towards identifying, protecting, and enhancing the social value of high streets. With your support we have developed our understanding of high streets as diverse and flexible places, able to adapt and change over time. We now also fully understand that they are also places where people live, socialise, work, access services, and for recent immigrants and other marginalised groups are often the locations best disposed to start and grow a business or enterprise." [A]

In combination with pressure from local and London-wide community organisations, this changed understanding has begun to deliver effects on the formulation of policy. The publication of [5] helped to ensure that Hall's work "*penetrated official thinking*", as explained by Just Space [B]. As a result:

"...we are beginning to see substantial change in the latest draft London Plan where the City Hall planners have accepted a lot of changes of wording and emphasis... [Hall's] work has been referred to and relied upon by many of the organisations making representations at the Examination in Public." [B]

Providing new evidence for the role of micro-economies and low-cost workspace: The research has been used by advocacy organisations to recognise the role of urban micro-economies and the need for affordable workspace in planning processes associated with regeneration. In September 2015, Just Space published "[London for All](#)", a handbook for community and small business groups fighting threats posed to workspaces by rising costs

and displacement. The handbook shows how low-cost workspace mitigates the impact of inequality “by providing opportunities for decent local jobs close to home for people on low-incomes, part-time workers, and those with caring responsibility”. The Ordinary Streets research [1] provided core evidence for one of the 10 case studies used here [C, p. 30].

In London, the coupling of rising property values with extensive regeneration has seen hundreds of thousands of people squeezed out of affordable living and workspaces each year since 2008. The Migrant Margins research revealed distinctive impacts on affordable workspace and on ethnic minority groups. Hall and her colleagues have collaborated with groups including Latin Elephant (which promotes alternative and innovative ways of engaging and incorporating migrant and ethnic groups in urban regeneration processes in London) and Just Space to provide new evidence to challenge discourses on town centre regeneration. A Just Space representative explains:

“The importance of Dr Hall’s work is that the old, narrow perspective on town centres is rapidly being exposed as partial and damaging. Her anthropological approach has been able to offer critiques of public policy and new evidence in a way which meets the crude official requirements for policy to be ‘evidence-based’ and we are thus beginning to see shifts in policy of great importance.” [B]

By providing socio-economic evidence and offering new critiques of established discourses, work including [5] has “changed the official discourse in the field”, an achievement described as “a huge undertaking” [B].

Fighting the displacement of ethnic and minority traders and businesses: The research has also been used by activists working to protect ethnic minority groups affected by regeneration-related displacement. Alongside its academic outputs, Super-diverse Streets produced an open-access report, [“Supporting ethnic minority traders and business in local high streets and centres”](#), developed in 2016 in partnership with Social Life [D]. The report provided evidence-based recommendations for local councils to better recognise and support street-based networks and initiatives. The LSE researchers and Social Life worked with traders from Narborough Road (Leicester) to strengthen their informal trade network and provide a forum for issues affecting traders [D, pp. 9-10].

In 2018, the LSE team collaborated with researchers from Loughborough University and Latin Elephant. The resulting report [6] supplemented existing work by Latin Elephant on the role of ethnic minority traders at the Elephant and Castle and their call for the GLA to protect the approximately 130 independent and largely BAME traders within the proposed redevelopment. The report highlighted the wider need to protect affordable workspace in the context of regeneration processes in London. It was supplied as additional evidence supporting Latin Elephant’s “Objection to Planning Application, Elephant and Castle Town Centre and LCC Campus at the EC” in July 2018 (ref: 16/AP/4458). The application was analysed by the GLA and final approval was granted on 10 December 2018. The Latin Elephant Chair of Trustees explains how they used [6]:

“We brought together a team of researchers in order to present and generate substantive data to support our claim. With this information we were able to: Argue for an extension of affordable work and trading spaces in the new development – from the current 5 years to 15 years. This gain was achieved at the final stage approval by the Greater London Authority (GLA).” [E]

In October 2020, Hall was invited to sit on the Mission Sounding Board for London’s High Streets. This is one of nine recovery missions approved by the GLA and London Councils to help build the city’s economy and society in the wake of Covid-19. Her appointment in part reflects the contribution of her research to policy and planning in London.

Challenging narrow debates on migration and borders: Narrating complex migration processes through the lens of the high street is core to addressing questions of borders in the context of a hostile immigration environment. The research described here has shown how migration is constitutive to the formation of UK cities and evidenced the significance of culturally diverse street economies in urban peripheries. The LSE team has worked with

educational public platforms to help them include research-based learning resources, showing how migration is located in the everyday life of UK cities.

The research has generated evidence that challenges prevailing notions of migration as unusual or problematic; this has been used in both national secondary school and international tertiary-level learning programmes. In 2017, the Ordinary Streets and Super-diverse Streets research was selected for inclusion in the Royal Geographical Society's (RGS) newly-formed Educational Podcast Series, which "aims to bring new research, debates, approaches, and methods to how geography is taught and learnt in schools". The resulting podcast, "[Diverse Places and the High Street](#)", was released on 19 April 2017. Aimed at Key Stages 3, 4, and 5 teachers and students, it was accompanied by an online lesson plan and teaching and learning resources (see [3]). This was based directly on the LSE research and included a film of the [Ordinary Streets](#) project. The film had previously been posted on YouTube (14,698 views at 20 November 2020) and has been screened nationally and internationally and incorporated into various teaching curricula. The RGS podcast has so far been listened to almost 1,000 times.

The RGS site has links to the [Ordinary Streets](#) and [Super-diverse Streets](#) websites, where all research reports and mappings are available. The mappings reveal how streets are historically composed by migration and how shop spaces respond to social and economic change. According to the Head of Research and Higher Education at RGS: "*The maps, promoted at A-Level study day events since 2016 (engaging around 600 students)... are an original and distinct resource for A-Level students that encourage pupils to connect how migration has changed high streets in diverse places (a core requirement of the A-Level specification)*" [F]. Presentations based on the research have been delivered for sixth form students in London (The Charter School, 2017; Harris Girls' and Harris Boys' Academies, and Harris Academies, 2015) and the Learning from Kilburn experimental university (2013).

Further public engagement activity has included participation in "Six Impossible Ideas after Brexit". This series of short films was curated by Migration Matters [2], a non-profit organisation founded in 2016 in response to media coverage of the "refugee crisis". Its mission is to provide a public platform for more evidence-based conversations about migration, prompted by bite-sized video courses. Hall contributed to three short educational videos offered free to the public on social media and via email subscription. These have been viewed some 10,000 times on the LSE Facebook page and another 8,500 times on Migration Matters social media platforms. All three: "*continue to be used in current Erasmus+ Virtual Exchanges, which enable youth with refugee and non-refugee backgrounds in Europe and the Southern Mediterranean to engage in meaningful intercultural experiences online*" [G].

The LSE research generated new evidence of the socio-economic value of urban high streets and the role of migration in sustaining street economies. Sharing this with planners, policy-makers, community and activist groups, and the public has made a distinctive contribution to new and ongoing debates about policy and planning in UK cities, and helped to challenge and develop new discourses about the so-called "migration crisis".

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

[A] Supporting statement from Regeneration Manager, Greater London Authority, 24 June 2019.

[B] Supporting statement from Co-founder, Just Space, 14 June 2019.

[C] Just Space Economy and Planning Group (2015). [London for All!](#) report. For references to Ordinary Streets see pp.15-17 and Case Study 6, pp.30-31.

[D] Social Life (November 2016). [Supporting ethnic minority traders and businesses in local high streets and centres](#).

[E] Supporting statement from Chair of Trustees, Latin Elephant, 25 June 2019.

[F] Supporting statement from Head of Research and Higher Education, RGS. 25 June 2019.

[G] Supporting statement from Co-founder, Migration Matters. 20 June 2019.