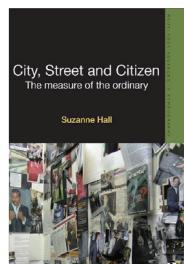# Re-recognition of Street from the Perspective of Globalization, Localization, and Marginality: A Review of *City, Street and Citizen: The Measure of the Ordinary*

Liu Jiayan

City, Street and Citizen: The Measure of the Ordinary

Author: Suzanne Hall
Year: 2012
Publisher: Routledge
ISBN: 978-0-415-68865-9 (176 pages, in English)

1. City streets from a marginal perspective

Streets are the most common space in a city. However, it is these countless streets that constitute the spatial stage for the social life of the general public in a city. Meanwhile, socially speaking, streets also act as an essential part that builds the public sphere of a city. Today, with the advancement of globalization, a complicated interweaving and gaming situation appears between transnational capital forces and local socio-economic activities, especially in world cities such as London. Streets become an important place in which people of different races, nationalities, and cultures show their respective identities, conduct interaction, and realize self-worth.

As a city of immigrants for hundreds of years, London has seen the stories of co-existence between immigrants and local residents throughout its streets. The issue of social isolation and integration has always been a hot topic in urban development. Traditionally, urban studies have focused on landmark sites, including the Big Ben, Oxford Street, and the City of London. However, when we look at immigrants who account for more than half of London's population, it's not difficult to find they are often isolated and hidden in the aforementioned places. Then, where is their living place? And how do they learn and integrate into this stranger society?

Scholars in the field of diversity and immigration studies focus on the issues of "urban marginality." Most of these marginal places are close in physical space to the famous sites that symbolize the city, but are isolated from those sites in a cultural sense. They are often closely related to poverty and ethnic minorities, and on the verge of socio-economic development for long. Moreover, they are inevitably involved in the global capital waves as well as in local place construction, but are often invisible or anonymous in the formal urban development agenda. How to make the invisible visible and re-recognize the vitality and value of these marginal places has become a key issue in the studies on urban justice and inclusiveness in recent years.

The book *City, Streets and Citizens: The Measure of the Ordinary* by Dr. Suanne Hall of the London School of Economics and Political Science uses the marginal perspective as an entry point to conduct a vivid study on city streets (Hall, 2012). The book selects the Walworth Road, an ordinary high street on the south bank of the Thames in London, as a lens to analyze the conflict, collision, and integration between globalization and local life.

The book has seven chapters in addition to an introduction. The first two chapters focus on the history and future of the "urban margin." Chapter One, "Making Practice Visible," mainly discusses the understanding of urban multiculturism. Chapter Two, "The Boundaries of Belonging," focuses on the historical formation process of streetscape of the Walworth Road, and analyzes how the formation of social and spatial boundaries is regulated, resisted, and transformed. In Chapter Three "The Art of Sitting" and Chapter Four "The Art of Attire," the author leads readers into two small shops on the high street: Nick's Caff and Reyd's Bespoke Tailor Shop, and explores how the happy daily life and local loyalty are created by the shared "gestures," "interests," and "social symbols" in the "sub-world" where these people get diversified and are far away from the power center. In Chapter Five "The Politics of Nearness" and Chapter Six "Street Measures," the topic turns to the importance of face-to-face contact in everyday social space, taking into consideration the influence of local loyalty and participation on the sense of belonging in today's highly mixed and mobile urban society, as well as how streets are re-recognized and valued in the context of politics and design. In Chapter Seven "Conclusions," the last chapter of this book, the author dialectically thinks about the complex nature of city streets as global-local spaces, placing the discussion framework in two bigger issues: the meaning of locality in the global world and the choice of people in urban transition, and then points out the importance of

understanding local values in the making of policies and plans.

2. Unique socio-spatial features of commercial streets

Why does the author choose a seemingly ordinary street in London to conduct research? The author explains it in the opening chapter: because it can be regarded as a typical epitome of the UK, especially London, when experiencing post-industrialization, economic crisis, globalization, and other transitional periods. It demonstrates the following three special socio-spatial characteristics.

Firstly, this is a typical "local" high street. Different from the famous commercial shopping areas such as the Oxford Street and the Regent Street, the supporting group of the retail industry in the local high street is the people who live and work within the surrounding walking range. Two thirds of London's residents are covered within 500 m of London's main commercial streets. The main behavior of people in the local streets is not shopping, but various exchanges and communications (the proportion reaches as high as 2/3) (Scott, 2010), which shows the important value of commercial streets in terms of cross-cultural communication and the diversification of social life.

Secondly, the particularity of the social population in this street makes it different from the commercial streets in the general sense. Located in the Southwark of London, the Walworth Road lies in one of the most deprived urban areas in the UK, with a large number of vulnerable groups such as the elderly, the young, the poor, and new immigrants being the most sensitive population to urban development and transformation. This leads to a meaningful point: regarding the small retail activities aimed at such groups, which can survive the large-scale expansion of chain shops and can even further promote the prosperity of the street?

Thirdly, the Walworth Road is also a typical multi-ethnic dwelling area. Residents of the Southwark come from all over the world, and 48% are non-White British, using more than 120 languages.[①] Therefore, unlike the retail places with a remarkable mono-ethnic feature such as China Town or Brick Lane, the Walworth Road becomes the best entry point for studying London's multicultural concentration and communication. According to the data from *A Profile of Londoners by Country of Birth* in 2006, London had become a typical international immigrant city, with about 40% of its residents born outside the UK. In addition, the transnational population migration had been more frequently, with more than half of the current international immigrants coming to London after 1990, and about a quarter coming after 2000 (Greater London Authority, 2008).

3. Overlap of globalization and localization

Like many other commercial streets in world cities, Walworth Road is a "global street." However, the author proposes that attention should be paid to its dual characteristics of being both global and local. Taking advantage of her own special identity as an architect and an anthropologist, the author leads readers into an ordinary micro public space like the Walworth Road, and ponders over how local practice crosses the gaps of nationality, belief, and culture to create a sense of identity and community belonging for local culture in the context of globalization.

On the one-mile-long Walworth Road, there are 227 building units, which are mainly retail shops except a few public buildings such as libraries, museums, and clinics. Among them, more than 60% of the retail shops are operated independently, and most of the shop-owners are directly involved in their business activities. Of the 128 independent shops, 93 of the shop-owners that accepted interviews came from more than 20 different countries or regions (Hall, 2012). Based on this, the author draws a very interesting map showing the origin of the retail shop-owners, which can be regarded as a highly superposed map between the layout of colonies of the former British Empire and the distribution of developing countries in the contemporary era in time and space.

The next question is, why do these individuals and groups choose to gather here and settle down? The author turns her attention to the intricate lines between the shops and the origin of their owners, thinking about that how these immigrants moved from the familiar birthplace to a strange world and earned a living in this globalized local place.

From the perspective of place, it can be seen in the street the spaces of "intersection" depicted by Saskia Sassen (2001), coping with the constant transformation of globalization, socio-economic development, and residents' needs. From the business operation of the shop, the division of the space, and the positioning of the customers to the use of the place, localized social production is continuously carried out in these places, such as the wholesale shops in the global production chain transformed from the shops featured by traditional handicraft manufacturing with London characteristics, the appearance of one-stop convenience shops and one-pound shops aimed to satisfy the needs of low-income residents, and the rising of combined shops with sub-divided rental units to respond to real estate risks.

From a cultural perspective, shop-owners, making use of the

operational art of "familiarity," "intimacy," and "skills," create various shops with distinctive features. In particular, through the establishment of social touch points such as shared tables in cafes and the consensus on clothing tastes in the tailor's shop, various forms of encounters and exchanges are evoked, which create a vigorous street place.

4. Future of local commercial streets

In the UK, urban retail spaces, especially the featured small shops and markets, not only carry a rich variety of social interactions, but also play an important coordination role in the communication between different classes and ethnic groups (Hall, 2011). However, since the end of the last century, under the impact of economic transformation, rising rents, and online sales, a large number of small independent shops have been eliminated from competition. Many studies have pointed out that retail enterprises and local commercial streets have faced a critical moment of life and death (Coca-Stefaniak, Hallsworth, Parker, et al., 2005; All-Party Parliamentary Small Shops Group, 2006). According to a research report by the New Economics Foundation (NEF) in 2002, the small-scale retail industry in the UK had experienced a sustained recession due to the impact of economic globalization. In the five years from 1995 to 2000, about 30,000 local shops and service enterprises disappeared in the whole country, accounting for as high as 1/5 (NEF, 2002).

This book, however, provides readers with an empirical picture of how small independent shops respond to these changes and develop short- and long-term survival strategies. The author suggests that in many ways, the Walworth Road may be regarded as a successful and flexible street, with 44% of the independent shops having operated here for more than 10 years. Although it may not meet most of the evaluation criteria for a "successful street" in formal specifications, it is at least, which is also the most important success, realizing the creation of "vitality" – meaning that a place not only integrates into the local economy, but also represents "an economics of nearness and human-scale in which people have more control over their lives" (NEF, 2002).

In the author's description, the Walworth Road has successfully become "the life-worlds and life-chances of local places." Its vitality and economic vigor are based on the small business units of the street, which is conducive to the realization of self-determination and high concentration. Meanwhile, the vitality and economic vigor are reflected by the juxtaposition and collage of various cultures and differentiated places, as well as the highly overlapped living

and working scenes in time and space (Sandhu, 2004), which thus bring about a rich and active social life. Nonetheless, on the other hand, it is also a "fragile" place, which is highly likely to be influenced by chain shops or social violence, and therefore requires measures to protect its social and cultural values.

5. Conclusion

This book is suitable for all types of readers that are interested in architecture, sociology, anthropology, and urban issues. Compared with other books that discuss the relationship between globalization and locality at the street level, the value of this book is demonstrated in the following aspects.

(1) Interdisciplinary research
The author has studied both architecture and anthropology, so she is able to well explore the characteristics of street space and social life and establish a connection between the two: by decomposing the "place" into the products superposed by a series of sub-worlds, she studies how people's daily practice shapes the place and how it is shaped by the place. This is the new trend of current urban research: physical space is no longer merely as a stage that is hidden behind social life, but actively participates in the production process of local social networks and spatial transformation. Using the case of this high street, the author verifies the views of Lefevere et al. on socio-spatial dialectic and places it in the current context where globalization and localization are in conflict with each other.

(2) Marginal perspective
Firstly, the urban society in the contemporary era is increasingly showing the post-modern characteristics of diversity, differentiation, and mobility. With the traditional single and mainstream-oriented research perspective, it has been difficult to provide a comprehensive interpretation, so the significance of a marginal perspective has become prominent. This book focuses on the marginalized group of immigrants, especially those from developing countries, who actively participate in and promote urban transformation as not only receptors but also subjects. Secondly, the Elephant and Castle area in the south of central London is chosen as the study area, which is separated from St. Paul's Cathedral and the City of London only by a river. A contrasting landscape is formed by the densely distributed low-rise small shops and a large area of concrete residential buildings with the bustling business district with concentrated high-rise buildings on the north bank of the river. In addition, as a scholar from the southern hemisphere, the author's status as an immigrant allows her to capture more acutely the excellent part of a

multicultural and social life on the street. It is worth mentioning that the author establishes a link between the current marginal status of the street in time-space and the power map of the British colonies a hundred years ago, reflecting the continuation of power production across time and space.

(3) Urban transformation research

The author gives full play to the imagination of sociology (Mills, 2005), and puts the development and evolution of a local commercial street and its shops into a discussion on the macroeconomic transformation such as economic globalization, financial crisis, urban transformation, and the international immigration wave. It thus leads to a number of valuable transformation issues, including the development prospects of small retail industry in economic globalization, the survival and integration of immigrants in urban society, the competition, conflict, and co-existence between local and global cultures, social and cultural values of local streets, source of street vitality and the reshaping of it in the economic transformation and Internet era, etc.

In view of studies on Chinese cities, they have long been focused on the grand narratives of emperors and elites, as well as the spatial forms of capitals and palaces as their carriers. While the civil society as a public domain and streets as a carrier of the citizens' living space have been ignored. The street space has developed from a "ritual channel" in the early Tang and Song dynasties, to an emphasis on traffic efficiency and local management in the construction of a modern state in the early 20th century, toward the "marginal spaces" between the "island-like" danwei compounds in the planned economy after the founding of the new China, and then in recent years to the featured commercial streets that are built with large sums of money in the process of urban renovation (Liu and Deng, 2012). Streets and the civic life that they carry have long existed in an "anonymous" way. At present, influenced by the planning mode led by functionalism and motor vehicle transportation, impacted by large-scale shopping centers, chain stores, and e-commerce, traditional street shops are quickly dying out. As depicted by Wang Di, featured streets, in which informal and daily neighborhood communications and trades, and even local dispute mediation occur, are becoming increasingly scarce (Wang, 2010). Due to over-commercialization, Nanluoguxiang, a historic and cultural district in Beijing, had to suspend the reception of tourist groups in 2016, and was cancelled the qualification as a 3A-level scenic spot (Xu, 2016).

Faced with the impact of global capital, consumerism, and population mobility, how to re-recognize the core values of street space in neighborhood communication, local economy, and daily consumption, and to explore the possibility of re-building its vitality, are the inevitable challenges faced by current urban policy makers and planners. Just as the author puts it: "How can we learn from a multicultural society if we don't know how to recognise it?" ⓒ

Translated by Li Caige
Proofread by Liang Sisi

Note:
① Available at: <http://www.southwark.gov.uk/>.

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Reviewer

Liu Jiayan, PhD, Associate Professor, Urban Planning Department, School of Architecture, Tsinghua University, Beijing, P. R. China.