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Impact of migration on architecture and urban landscape:
The case of Leicester

In the last five decades, Leicester has been a destination for communities of migrants coming from different parts of the world, becoming one of the most significant examples of a plural city in Europe. The current multicultural nature of the town is one of the elements that have gradually contributed to redefining its urban landscape, enriching the lexicon of shapes, forms and signs of a built environment traditionally associated with its industries and manufacturing plants. Two main events have been crucial for the development of this process: the first one was the arrival, in the '50s of the Caribbean population from Antigua and Jamaica. The second was the migratory phenomenon of the late 1960s and early 70s, which involved Asian families fleeing from Kenya, Uganda and Malawi. In the following years, diversity and openness progressively became a distinctive sign of the city image, often defined as one of the capitals of Asia in Britain by local stakeholders. Through historical and contemporary visual materials, this paper investigates and documents the impact of cultural diversity on the urban landscape of Leicester. In particular, the investigation aims at revealing some of the most exemplary case studies present in the city, describing the contributions made to the architectural and urban features by those who have made Leicester their hometown.

1 INTRODUCTION

The process of knowledge of a city combines, simultaneously, the pleasure of discovering with the possibility of understanding a logical organisation of its elements. These parts, initially confused with each other as words of a new language, become gradually recognisable when their sum starts revealing the rationale behind them.

This idea of a city conceived as a text, to be studied by trial and error, often recurs in the thought of the urban theorists (Kostof & Tobias, 2001), inviting us to reflect about messages and signs which represent the different modes in which human groups have transformed the natural environment. These messages are preserved in the form of stratified *words* that generate different meanings, decipherable as signs of culture and represented by formal urban aspects, traditional skills, individual and collective aspirations, and creative occupation of places.

In our exploration of the physical and formal aspects of the built environment, we find the most direct expressions of people who produced them, recognise their cultural characteristics, and determine the relationships between physical spaces and attributes associated with their functions.

This variety of facets influence the development of our knowledge and produce a unitary vision in which the term "city" at the same time refers to the physical space and the human community that occupy it. The more we recognise the progression that generated a specific language of a city or a part of it, the more we understand its continually changing structure, in which dwelling, working, walking, praying, are activities inseparably connected with the places in which they occur. The space of human living is, therefore, a product of the cultural aspects of the community, which inhabits it.

Describing these features and the role of different cultures on the image of Leicester is the goal of our investigation. In particular, we aim to represent how the different migration processes occurred after the second part of the twentieth century and contributed to renovating some areas once abandoned. Equally important, for our exploration, is to define the examples of adaptation and creative reuse of some public and private built space implemented by the new communities. To do so, we will combine existing literature, visual sources, and field observations in the awareness that this subject has been explored widely and a renewed attitude towards migration has transformed Leicester as a model for other British cities (Virdee, 2009).

Several scholars have produced a wide range of studies describing the town from historical and sociological angles, documenting local and global stories, and the interaction among different communities. A large group of investigations have examined how Leicester has become a model of multiculturalism, for example, Singh (2003) and Clayton (2012) thoroughly focus on political integration, community cohesion and local economy; Hassen and Giovanardi (2017) emphasised the connection between city branding and place "offerings".

The relationships between ethnic and religious diversity have been explored by Richard Bonney (2003), and partially by Andrew Moore (2008). The latter has provided a broad list of religious buildings that includes some example adaptation of existing properties into places of worship in a small book titled *Where Leicester has Worshipped*. Of particular interest for our discussion are the research projects carried out by (Hall et al., 2015), which examine the area of Narborough Road with a focus on defining the connections between the built environment, social diversity and economic adaptations generated by people movements and migration.

A set of studies carried out by the Leicester City Council are also useful to trace the socio-cultural and demographic characteristics (Leicester City Council, 2008) of the people living in the area and understanding the relationships with the heritage assets within the city that the Council has identified as worthy of protection (Leicester City Council, 2016).
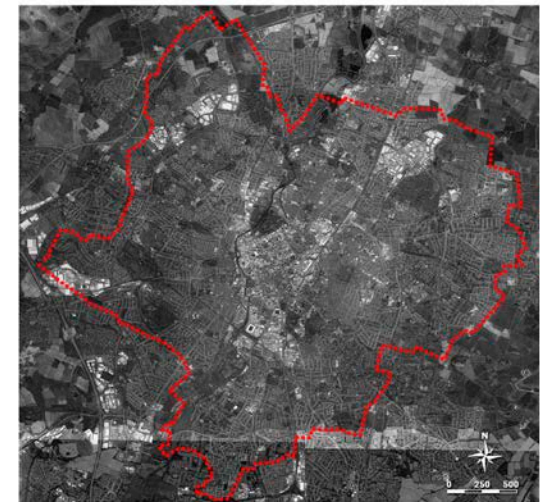

Fig. 1 - (Left) The wards of Leicester. (Right) Administrative boundaries of the city. Microsoft Bing Maps screenshot reprinted with permission from Microsoft Corporation.

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Finally, it is critical to stress the importance of the authors' direct experience of the architectural examples homogeneously distributed in the city's territory: a learning journey based on daily observations, fieldwork and comparative studies of other cases.

2 MIGRATION STORIES

The exploration of places invites us, almost inevitably, to discover their histories, highlighting the aspects that connect the urban reality and its different layers with the characteristics of its culture and organisation. Therefore, our desire to know is twofold: on the one hand, it is related to the "built objects" of the city and its materiality, on the other hand, it is connected to the "subjects" and the relationship between communities and the peculiar way in which they settled. Analysing these relationships is essential to celebrate cities as

Fig. 2 - Spinney Hill in the Eastern Part of the City is one of the zones of "transitions" for migrants coming from different parts of the world.
Fig. 3 - Spinney Hill Masjid Usman Mosque.
Fig. 4 - Spinney Hill in the Eastern Part of the City. Microsoft Bing Maps screenshot reprinted with permission from Microsoft Corporation.

continually evolving realities, representing examples of intercultural contact as integral and vital to the city's identity (Herbert, 2016). These cultural exchanges are part of the modern history characterised by continuous movements, which started in the nineteenth century with the arrival of the Jewish communities and a small group of Belgian refugees after the First World War Conflict. The newcomers settled in the area of Highfields and Spinney Hill (figures 2-4). Similarly, migrants from Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Ukraine moved to Leicester and settled in the same areas as a consequence of the Second World War.
The industrial growth of the early-twentieth centuries based on a broad range of manufacturing attracted migrants from Ireland who settled in a large block of terraced houses not far from the railway station until the 1960's and later moved to residential areas in the urban outskirts (King &

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O'Connor,1996). The inter-war period was particularly flourishing with the growing manufacturing industry and Leicester being globally known as the city that 'clothes the world' (Hassen & Giovanardi 2018). This economic success and the British National Act 1948 encouraged the first significant wave of migration coming from the Caribbean and the sub-Indian continent. As happened with the previous communities, newcomers established in the inner city and in the area of Highfields, which became a zone of transition, where affordable private housing was available (Herbert, 2016).

The recession of the 1970s and the decay of the historical manufacturing centres transformed the economy of the city. The expansion of the tertiary sector and a diverse range of small businesses started to reconfigure the occupational structure with a shift to managerial and administrative occupations and a general increase of unemployment. While Leicester's local authorities were dealing with this new condition, another migration flux of Gujaratis fleeing the 'Africanisation' of Uganda and Kenya occurred between 1968 and 1972. More than 20,000 displaced East African Asians settled in the city, having a significant effect on its economy and diverse urban culture (Singh, 2003). The Ugandan Asian established themselves in the northern wards of the town, in the centre, and in the area of Evington and some parts of Narborough Road.

The consequence of this second wave was extremely significant if compared with the previous phenomena. As pointed out by Singh (2003), East African Asians were "twice migrants" who arrived with considerable entrepreneurial skills and good education. These characteristics were crucial for a smooth adaptation to the local economy. The paradigm of this adaptation is the transformation of neglected shops of the old city into successful entrepreneurial hubs: a good example is Belgrave Road or the "Golden Mile", which became a noteworthy retail and commercial area. Similar transformations happened in Narborough and Evington Road as the result of a process in which local economies and new culture reshaped the images of the city.

It should also be emphasised that the spatial pat-

Ethnic Group	Population-based on 2011 Census
Total Population	329,839
White: Total	166,636
White: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	148,629
White: Irish	2,524
White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	417
White: Other White	15,066
Mixed/multiple ethnic group: Total	11,580
Mixed/multiple ethnic group: White and Black Caribbean	4,691
Mixed/multiple ethnic group: White and Black African	1,161
Mixed/multiple ethnic group: White and Asian	3,388
Mixed/multiple ethnic group: Other Mixed	2,340
Asian/Asian British: Total	122,470
Asian/Asian British: Indian	93,335
Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	8,067
Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi	3,642
Asian/Asian British: Chinese	4,245
Asian/Asian British: Other Asian	13,181
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Total	20,585
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: African	12,480
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Caribbean	4,790
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Other Black	3,315
Other ethnic group: Arab	3,311
Other ethnic group: Any other ethnic group	5,257

Table 1: Ethnic groups in Leicester. Source: Office for National Statistics, 2011 Census. Official Labour Market Statistics. DC2201EW - Ethnic Group. Retrieved from: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

terns of Asian populations have changed over time according to economic transformation and interaction with other minorities, following convergent and divergent processes. For example, Hindus from East Africa were settled initially in various areas and later concentrated in the northern part

of Leicester, while the Sikh community remained scattered across the city. Muslims communities from South Asia became more diffused in the inner city and the wards of Stoney Gates and Spinney Hills (Fig. 3), where they created religious spaces and schools (Herbert, 2016).

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Novel migrations included a small number of people from Vietnam and the former Yugoslavia and asylum seekers from Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan. Finally, a small community of Somali people is also present in the area of St Matthews (Fig. 5). Their presence is related to the internal European migration that occurred in the early 2000s when almost 20,000 Somalis left the Netherlands and headed to the UK (Liempt Van, 2007). This secondary movement was part of a complex process originated by diverse causes at various moments in time, but mainly related to the desire of Somali's to find better career opportunities in the UK, a country that they considered more welcoming compared to the Netherlands. The prospect of joining a wider Somali community was another migration driver, which oriented this substantial movement (Liempt Van, 2009).

Finally, a large population of students coming from various parts of the world to study in the two Universities of the city had an effect on the development of accommodations, local shops and restaurants, mainly in the city centre.

The permanent or temporary movements of people described in the narratives above had a tangible impact on the urban character of Leicester, giving birth to a unique environment in which diverse groups have been free to express and represent their cultures. In 2011, according to the UK census, roughly a quarter of the foreign-born population of the East Midlands lived in Leicester. The city was also the area with the highest population percentage of non-UK born residents (33.6%) with a substantial increase of the inhabitants of this segment between 2001 and 2010 (Krausova, and Vargas-Silva, 2013). Migration has influenced the ethnic, linguistic and religious composition of the city, as shown in Tables 1, 2, and 3. This phenomenon generates a multicultural environment that characterises its image and has slowly redefined its traditional post-industrial identity. In this process of cultural redefinition, a significant role has been played by the transformation of the built environment, and the adaptive reuse of buildings converted into cultural centres or places of worship. This process has occurred with Asian temples and mosques, which replaced the original functions of existing buildings, including industrial premises, banks, schools and public houses (Moore, 2008). Examples of this transition for different architectural types will be discussed in the following sections using visual sources and pictures to highlight and analyse the signs of this transformation.

Fig. 5 - The St Matthews estate, an area of inner-city Leicester.

Religion	All categories: Ethnic group
All categories: Religion	329,839
Christian	106,872
Buddhist	1,224
Hindu	50,087
Jewish	295
Muslim	61,440
Sikh	14,457
Other religion	1,839
No religion	75,280
Religion not stated	18,345

Table 2. Religion in Leicester. Source: Office for National Statistics, 2011 Census. Official Labour Market Statistics. QS208EW - Religion. Retrieved from: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

Language	2011
English	228,295
Gujarati	36,347
Punjabi	7,560
Polish	6,192
Urdu	3,376
Somali	3,331
Arabic	2,516
Bengali (with Sylheti and Chatgaya)	1,808
Portuguese	1,750
Kurdish	1,520
Tamil	1,498
Hindi	1,095
Persian	1,021
Slovak	878
French	849
Shona	801
Turkish	584
Greek	546
Swahili	533
Tagalog/Filipino	496
Other	14,015

Table 3. Main Languages in Leicester. Source: Office for National Statistics, 2011 Census. Official Labour Market Statistics. QS204EW. Main Language. Retrieved from: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

3 METHODOLOGY

Creating an initial framework to understand the impact of migration and cultural diversity on the built environment of Leicester has been the primary goal of our experience. To do so, we have observed the city and read its stories in different scales: sometimes considering a portion of urban fabrics in which architecture stands, while at other times considering single buildings as examples of places in which communities have created their sense of belonging. The first phase of our exploration consisted both of a general analysis of the existing literature data, and a series of visits to the different wards. During these initial stages, we developed our initial hypothesis guided by the experiential observations of the place. In a second stage, the analysis of the existing literature, maps, visual sources and the data coming from the 2011 census has been used to enhance the richness of information collected by discovering additional layers of meaning. This process has led us to the selection of some relevant architectural and urban examples.

For the urban scale, Balgrave and Narborough Road have been chosen as the most substantial experiences of interrelation between the image of the city and small local intervention. Both of these areas are characterised by a vibrant presence of sign colours and codes which transformed the previous environment into a "Super-diverse street" (Hall et al., 2015) - in the case of Narborough Road - and varied array of Asian shops and commercial activities in Belgrave Road.

Religious buildings have been chosen as representative architectural types to describe the city's multiculturalism and the process of its transformation. The Jain Centre, the ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness) Temple and the Shree Sanatan Mandir are the best examples of this process.

Fig. 6 - (Left) The Ward of Belgrave. (Right) Belgrave Road. Microsoft Bing Maps screenshot reprinted with permission from Microsoft Corporation.

4 CASE STUDIES

Belgrave Road

As pointed out in the previous sections, Migrants arriving from Africa in Leicester in the seventies were entrepreneurs with specific skills in trading, textile manufacturing and handicraft (Virdee, 2009). These commercial skills played a crucial role in bolstering the local post-industrial economy of the northern areas in which the buildings of the old factories had been closed.

Ugandan Asians and, more broadly, the Hindu community became prevalent around Belgrave and Melton Road and were able to establish a network of sari shops, jewellers and restaurants, creating significant commercial partnerships with Asian subcontinent. As these streets thrived, the Belgrave Road became the Golden Mile, and the whole district's physical image started to change its with new religious and civic spaces that replaced the functions of the pre-existent constructions (Fig. 6 and 7). The consequence of this process of adaptation is evident in the coloured building façades, in shop signs, and in the architectural elements used to redefine the language of old houses or former industrial buildings. Of particular interest for the specific character of this ward is the celebration of the Diwali-the biggest outside India- with participants from and outside Leicester for the two-week-long festival (Fig. 8).

Although some aspects of this process had been considered initially as controversial, as new shops replaced many pre-existing leading local stores the renowned identity of Belgrave has become a central aspect in branding Leicester as a multicultural city (Hassen & Giovanardi 2018). Furthermore, from an urban perspective, the area is a significant case study useful to analyse how a vast repertoire of buildings have been adapted for new uses while retaining some of their original characteristics.

Fig. 7 - Belgrave Road, Leicester (2020).

Fig. 8 - (Left) Light Decorations in Belgrave Road during Diwali. (Right) Façade of the Belgrave Neighbourhood Centre during Diwali.

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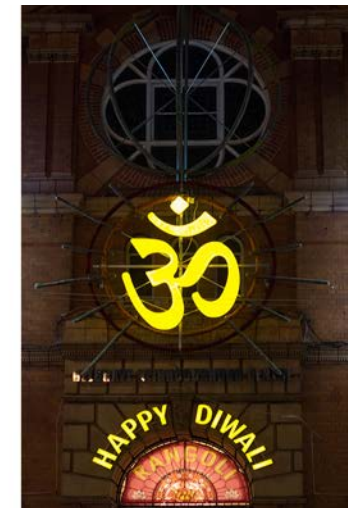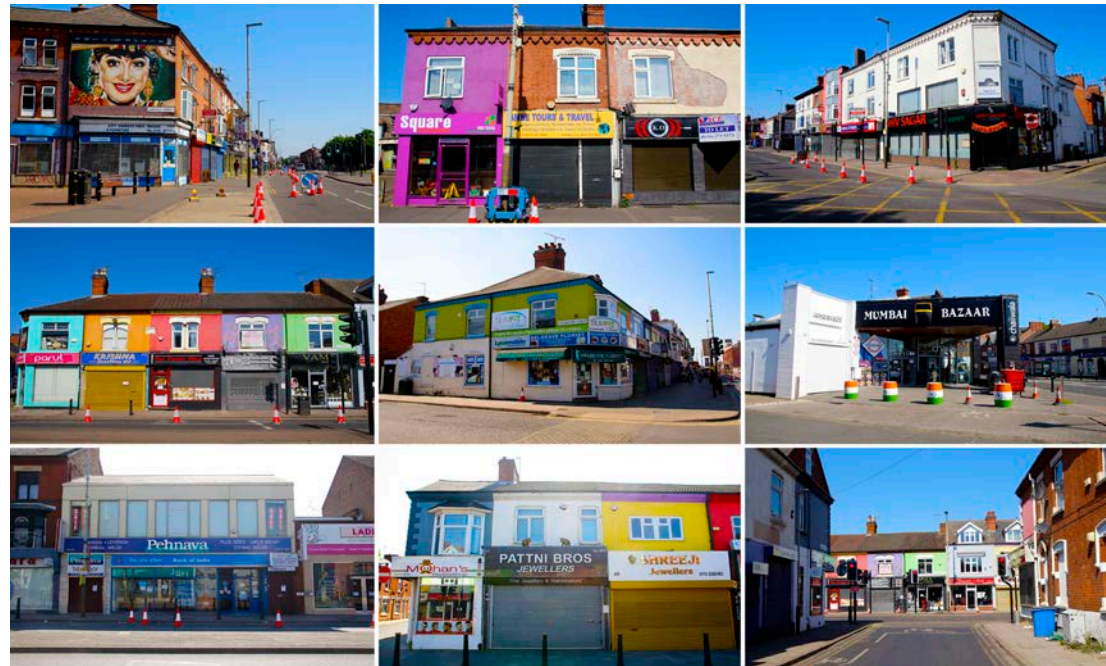

Fig. 9 - (Left) The Ward of Westcotes. (Right) Narborough Road. Microsoft Bing Maps screenshot reprinted with permission from Microsoft Corporation.

Fig. 10 - Narborough Road, Leicester, 2020.

Narborough Road

If Belgrave Road has been characterised by distinguished Asian uniqueness, Narborough road, located mostly within the Westcotes Ward, is an example of infrastructure in which diverse migrant groups developed, in different phases, a transaction economy (Hall et al., 2016). The street is mostly a combination of small retail shops in which twenty-two countries of birth are represented among the one hundred and eight property owners surveyed by Hall et al. (2015), as part of a study entitled "Super Diverse Streets".

The highest representation of countries of birth amongst the landlords includes the UK, India, and Turkey, although European, African and Middle Eastern countries are also present. As in the other parts of the city, long-established retailers are the migrants from Uganda, Malawi and Kenya who fled from the "Africanisation" policies of eastern African countries (Hall et al., 2015).

This variety of cultures is evident in the shop signs, bright and vivacious and often, in contrast, one to another, which generates a peculiar landscape at the street levels in which brands and logos are proportioned to the dimension of the retail unit as shown in Figure 10. The same diversity of languages present outside can be found in the different informal arrangement of the interior and the outside area, characterised by household products, foods and second-hand items often displayed in the internal part of the sidewalk.

Jain Centre

The recent history of the Jain Centre building, located in Oxford Street (Fig. 11-13), is a good example of a transformation of an edifice that fell into disuse because of the displacement of people from the inner city to the suburbs, and its adaptation initiated by the external influx of migrants coming from East Africa and Asia.

The former Christian Congregational Chapel shown in Figure 12, was built in 1863 (Leicester City Council, 2016) and was bought in 1978 for £41,000, becoming the first Jain Centre of the town (Pogačnik, 2018). The transformation of the old structure took place in different stages in the following decade, thanks to the donation of the followers of Jainism in the city and Jain members in India and Belgium. The original internal layout was entirely rearranged: the ground floor was re-designed to accommodate social activities; the first floor was organised for its use as a worship area. The pre-existing glass windows were replaced with new ones portraying scenes from the life of Mahāvīra, and sandstone carved structural elements were added into the interior space. The façade (Fig. 13) was decorated with grey marble imported from India. The 'first Jain temple in the

Fig. 11 - (Left) The Castle Ward. (Right) The Jain Centre. Microsoft Bing Maps screenshot reprinted with permission from Microsoft Corporation.

Fig. 12 - The former Congregational Chapel, constructed in 1863. Source: Image retrieved from Story of Leicester, https://storyofleicester.info

Fig. 13 - The Façade of the Jain Centre in 2020.

Fig. 14 - Interior of the Chapel before the transformation. Source: Image retrieved from Story of Leicester, https://storyofleicester.info

Fig. 15 - Carved columns in the interior of the temple. Source: Image retrieved from Story of Leicester, https://storyofleicester.info

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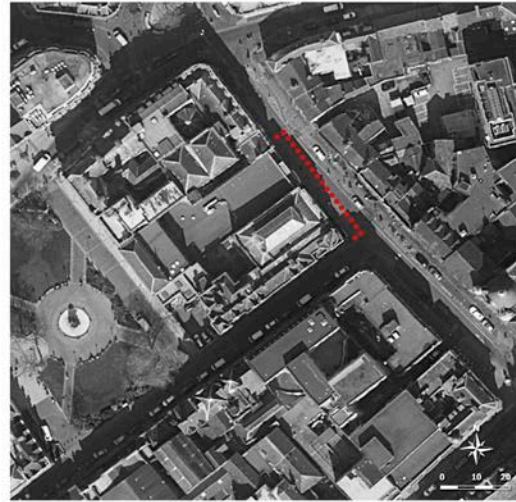ISSN 1828-5961   Impact of migration on architecture and urban landscape:The case of Leicester

Fig. 16 - (Left) The Castle Ward. (Right) The ISKCON Temple. Microsoft Bing Maps screenshot reprinted with permission from Microsoft Corporation.

Fig. 17 - Granby Street in 1910 circa. The original building can be seen on the left part of the picture. Source: Image retrieved from Story of Leicester, https://storyofleicester.info

Western world' was consecrated as a temple in 1988, becoming the focal point of a community of more than 1,000 Jains living in Leicester and other small towns in the East Midlands. As the vast majority were Gujarati arriving in Leicester from East Africa, with many of them tracing their origin to the city of Jamnagar, this new religious building represented a way to re-establish shared practices and create new networks and a sense of belonging in a new city (Pogačnik, 2018).

ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness) Temple
The conversion of the building commissioned by the Leicestershire Banking Company into a religious temple is another representative example of transformation generated by the cultural milieu of the city (Fig. 17-20). The original construction, commissioned by Harry Simpson Gee, a successful Leicester boot and shoe manufacturer, was realised through the collaborative work of Joseph Goddard and the Victorian firm of Henry Herbert & Sons in 1872. Joseph Goddard designed this building in French Gothic Revival style after his success in the Leicester clock tower competition (Brandwood, 2004). The construction was built in red bricks and Portland stone with details carved by Samuel Barfield and with the interior characterised by a full-height vast hall divided by a series of square pillars. In the first decade of the 20th century, the building became part of the Midland

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Fig. 18 - The former HSBC building in 2020.

Fig. 19 - An interior of the Midland Bank in 1957. Source: Image retrieved from Story of Leicester https://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/news/leicester-news/grade-ii-listed-former-city-1445314

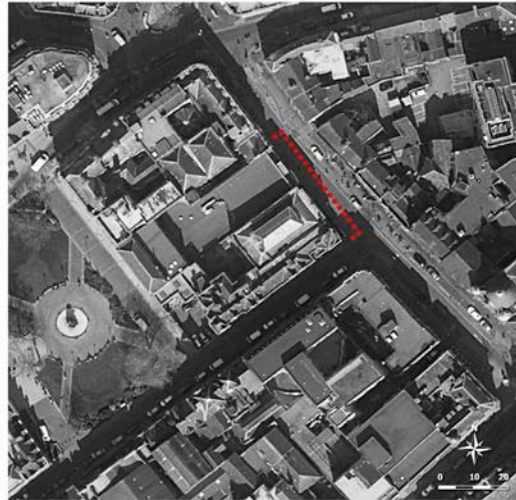Fig. 20 - The interior of the building in 2020.

Fig. 21 - (Left) The Ward of Belgrave. (Right) The Shree Sanatan Mandir. Microsoft Bing Maps screenshot reprinted with permission from Microsoft Corporation.

Fig. 22 - The Shree Sanatan Mandir. The small façade at the intersection of Weymouth Street and Catherine Street.

Bank premises, and later a branch of HSBC. After being unused for a short period, this grade II* listed building was bought by private individuals and donated to the ISKCON organisation. The renovation project will transform this architecture into a community hub open to the public that will include a big prayer room in the main hall; a heritage room in which a unique archive of the drawings of Joseph and Henry Goddard's Architectural practice will be preserved; a restaurant; a café and a venue for civic gatherings.

Shree Sanatan Mandir
The research of a spatial dimension for the migrants arriving from East Africa and the creation of specific social networks of people coming to the city to join their family in different phases was a specific trend of the 1970s and 1980s (Bonney, 2003). The adaptations of a Baptist Church in 1971 to the Shree Sanatan Mandir and the conversion of a Catholic Church to the Shree Shakti Mandir temple in 1975 are part of this trend, which integrates signs of new cultural identities in the traditionally built landscape (Figures 21-23). In particular, the Sanatan Mandir temple in the residential area of Belgrave and the additions made to the original structure are an example of the

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Fig. 23 - The Shree Sanatan Mandir. The façade on Weymouth Street.

Fig. 24 - The Shree Sanatan Mandir. Interior in 2020. Picture of Dikran Messerlian.

Fig. 25 - The Shree Sanatan Mandir. The main shrine flanked by two small structures. Picture of Dikran Messerlian.

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integration of new architectural languages in the urban tissue. The temple is recognisable from outside by a series of domes added in both the pre-existing red bricks structure and a contiguous construction added lately. In the work of transformation, the original configuration of the old building has been slightly modified: benches were removed to create an open space, and the holy table was replaced by the main shrine flanked by two small structures.

The building is two storeys high and contained on the ground floor are the shrines, a dining hall, a kitchen and central office. The wedding hall and a small gallery, from which the shrines below can be observed, are located on the first floor (Dwyer, 1987).

5 CONCLUSION

The urban and architectural examples of transformation presented in this paper represent some of the possible existing interrelations between social heritage and the built environment as parts of a unitary system. In this structure, large and small scale movement of individuals, and all the associated challenges, are crucial to architecture and urbanism, and primary gener-

ators of particular urban landscapes, in which different variables played a significant part in shaping the city.

In a scenario in which different communities and groups are becoming more heterogeneous, multifaceted levels of diversity are evolving in the UK. Anthropologist Steven Vertovec (2007) introduced and described this phenomenon in a paper titled "Super-diversity and its implications" introducing the concept of Super-Diversity as a complex combination of factors such as ages and gender and legal status, route of migrations, religion, language socio-economic status, and level of education which has characterised migration flows over the last thirty years. The more multifaceted is the social traits, which characterise migration flows and the architects and urban planners and policymaker should carefully consider their effects on urban programmes. As international migration is predominately a growing urban phenomenon, cities are becoming centres of opportunities, education, social development and welfare. These aspects are marked by features of urban governance such as equal access to social services, integration and inclusion policies and promotion of diversities.

The two urban areas and buildings presented in this paper have highlighted how migration, either voluntary or forced, could generate peculiar examples of adaptive reuse and, on a larger scale, urban regeneration.

Further explorations and studies, which include all the wards of the city, could enrich this initial analysis taking into consideration additional historical visual sources and the combined data analysis and visualisations to help architects and planners to identify patterns and connection between social characteristics immediately. Additional investigations could also explore and map the different modes in which various types of buildings have been transformed to allow diverse groups to rebuild a sense of belonging and connection to a broader community after moving to novel locations.

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