Changing Landscapes: Gipton & Harehills (Leeds): A Superdiverse Inner City Ward

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Please reference as:
1 Gipton & Harehills

The most distinctive feature of Gipton & Harehills—an electoral ward lying 1.5 kilometres NE of Leeds city centre—is that it binds together two urban areas which could hardly be more different, except in their levels of deprivation. As is apparent from the map or even the most cursory visit to the ward, the two areas represent utterly antithetical approaches to the creation of built environments for working class communities. Harehills, the older neighbourhood, contains the greatest expanses of densely packed back-to-back and through terraced housing in the city, which grew piecemeal, largely as a result of speculative investment. Today it is a bustling place, its main roads full of traffic, its pavements of people, and its narrow side streets choked with parked cars. Gipton, by contrast, often seems empty and silent. A housing project conceived in 1930’s reaction to the industrial overcrowding and squalor of places like Harehills, Gipton’s low-rise tower blocks and semis of sand-faced brick and clay tile stretch tenuously across the former green belt in a use of space as profligate as Harehills’ is miserly (see Figure 1). Where Harehills’ red brick and quarried slate terraces infill the spaces between roads with the grid-pattern regularity of the industrial age, Gipton’s grand boulevards, tree-lined dual carriageways (empty of traffic, going nowhere), its circuses, crescents, and meandering roads track the contours of the rural features which predate them by centuries and after which they are named—South Farm Road, Oak Grove, Greenview Mount, Foundry Approach.

However, whilst Gipton and Harehills remain distinctive in their difference, and in terms of physical access are all but segregated, socially the boundaries between the two areas are beginning to blur as the population of Gipton, often perceived as being homogeneously white and ‘hard-pressed’, takes on features of its ethnically and culturally superdiverse neighbour.
2 History

2.1 Harehills: the built environment

At the turn of the 19th century there seem to have been less than a dozen dwellings in what is now the electoral ward of Gipton & Harehills. But in 1817 the wool merchant, James Brown, wishing—like other prosperous residents—to escape the increasing noise, pollution, congestion, and crime of the town centre, and enabled by recent improvements to the turnpikes (Burt & Grady, 2002 [1994]), built a detached villa with stables and gatehouse on the higher ground to the north of the town, calling it ‘Harehills Grove’. It was also around this time that George Wright, the proprietor of the Leeds Intelligencer (one of the first regional newspapers in the country, later The Yorkshire Post), sited his estate, ‘Harehills’, a little further to the east. These seem to be the first appearances of the name Harehills in the built environment of NE Leeds.

Figure 2. OS Map of 1820 (Ralph Thoresby Society, Leeds) with our approximation of current ward boundaries
At this time much of the land to the north east of Leeds was owned by Earl Cowper and John Savile, Earl of Mexborough. In 1820 Cowper built Newton House on a portion of his own land on Squire Pastures Farm (Figure 5). This was followed in 1828 by the creation of the speculatively financed ‘New Leeds’ estate on Cowper’s land—large and elegant terraced houses with ample, well-planted gardens.
Figure 5. Newton House is unoccupied today. In the late 1990s it was used by a private accommodation provider as a hostel for asylum seekers.

Figure 6.

By the 1900s, building and the industrialisation which gave rise to it had moved on apace. Tramlines were laid along Harehills’ major roads, meaning that workers no longer had to live close to their places of work in the centre of town but could be accommodated in healthier environments on the outskirts. Hence, the rapid infilling of available space between and adjacent to Roundhay Road (red, Figure 7) and Harehills Lane (blue) not only with congested rows of back-to-backs but with larger terraces, thus enabling the lower middle classes and better-off members of the working classes to join the more affluent in the suburbs (Burt & Grady, 2002 [1994] 200). Improved transport infrastructure also meant that workshops and factories too could be located further from the town centre as the OS maps from this period clearly show. Along with the pre-existing coalmine and brickyards, new clothing factories, a dye works, a printing works, a woollen mill, and an optical and
scientific instrument works appear, as well as new schools, churches, public gardens, and a public library.

By the late 1900s the structural character of Harehills had been established, and little has changed since this time.

2.2 Harehills: the people

As we have seen, at the beginning of the 19th century, the area which is now called Gipton & Harehills was almost empty. Today it is the site of the second most populous ward in the city. The reason behind this relatively rapid change is immigration. Indeed, from the turn of the 19th century onwards, immigration—underpinned by the combination of cheap housing and available employment—was the defining feature of these two neighbourhoods. Of Harehills, one might say, it was and is its raison d’être.

The first people to move into the area were the ‘native’ ‘country folk…looking for a better way of life’ in exchange for their ‘cheap labour’ (Mitchell, 2000:107), soon to be followed by Irish labourers and weavers, whose numbers increased dramatically during the Great Potato Famine of 1845-1850. Later, in the 1880s, following the assassination of the Russian Tsar, and then again in the early 1900s, fleeing government-inspired pogroms in Eastern Europe, came large numbers of Jews, the majority originating from one Russian town,
Mariempol (now in Lithuania). Leeds was on the railway line from Hull to Liverpool and many Jews, USA bound, would stop here temporarily, often apparently, ‘because they had run out of money’ (Freedman, 1998: 166). Indeed, there were tales of ‘immigrants being tricked by unscrupulous shipping agents and being led to believe they had landed in America when they had only actually landed in Grimsby or Hull’ (p. 166). A contemporary article in the Lancet, however, claims that the majority of migrants ‘at starting are often acquainted with but one word of English and that word is Leeds…and to the Jew, in dread of military obligatory service, and suffering from religious persecution, the name of Leeds was but a modern term for an El Dorado” (Mitchell, 2000). According to Freedman, ‘Leeds specifically attracted Jews because of its clothing industry’ (p. 166).

In 1945 the outbreak of the Second World War bought a new range of migrants to the area—among them Poles, Latvians, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Hungarians, Italians, and Serbs from the former Yugoslavia. Subsequently, like elsewhere in the UK, as the twentieth century progressed, industry declined; but as older housing in other parts in the city was demolished to make way for high-rise flats, the Victorian terraces and back-to-backs of Harehills remained largely unchanged. And throughout the 50s and 60s these low-rent private properties continued to attract migrant populations not entitled to council housing—though now these people originated from the ex-colonies and Commonwealth countries, principally India, Pakistan, Bangladesh (East Pakistan until 1971), the Caribbean, and Hong Kong. And in the following decade the majority of newcomers to the two neighbourhoods arrived as dependents of these newly settled migrants.

Subsequently, however, there has been an increased inflow of people, largely as a result of the accession of the EU A8 countries, the subsequent enlargement of the EU, and forced
migration—Yorkshire and Humber being recipient of the largest number of dispersed asylum seekers after London (Lewis et al., 2008). The result has been rapid growth in ethnic and country-of-origin diversity, the population of Harehills now being made up of people of over 80 different nationalities and ethnicities, among them Eastern Europeans, including Roma peoples, mainly from the Czech Republic, Slovakia and, more recently, Romania.

2.3 Gipton

The creation of the Gipton estate must be traced back to work of Charles Jenkinson, the vicar of a poor city-centre parish, who, familiar with the bad housing conditions of his parishioners, determined to alleviate them, even though at that time he had no training in housing matters (Yelland, 1990: 15). His chance arose when, in 1933, the Labour Party won the municipal elections and set up a Housing Committee to oversee Jenkinson’s programme and appointed him chair. Work began on the Gipton estate in April 1934 and involved the construction of 2,750 houses with accommodation for around 13,000 people.

The intention was to develop the estate on modern lines with wide roads to meet the present and future demands of transport. These would include two roads 150 and 125 feet wide with tram tracks in the centre and grass verges at the side. The tracks were to link the estate to the city and other centres. There would be a large shopping centre with 40 shops at the heart of the estate and secondary shopping centres at other points. In addition, sites would be reserved for churches, schools, playing fields, medical practitioners, dentists, and other public facilities (but not public houses). One of the great features of the estate would be the open spaces. The project was to take two years.

Figure 9. Broad carriageways constructed for trams

When, in 1972, Alison Ravetz wrote her piece ‘Gipton under the microscope’ for the Royal Institute of Architects, however, she was obliged to catalogue the many unrealised plans—unlaid tramlines, roads still unconnected to the city, the handful of shops built rather than
the forty proposed, the unbuilt cinema. However, Ravetz also reminded readers of the context of the estate’s foundation (‘slum clearance, poverty, disease, infestation’), and commended the ambitiousness of the Council’s original plans, which included, for example, the designation of five percent of dwellings as ‘sunshine houses’ for TB patients (Ravetz, see Yelland, 1990: 116). Its shortcomings notwithstanding, the estate was, Ravetz claimed, ‘one of the best designed’ in the city (p.117).

As for the residents, who included people of Irish, Jewish, and Italian heritage, they were relocated from the inner city’s worst slums, the conditions of which can be inferred from one resident’s recollections of moving into his new home before the family furniture, which didn’t come ‘till the next day as it had to go in the bug van to be fumigated. Everybody’s stuff had to be done that way because the places they came from generally had plenty of vermin of one sort or another. There weren’t any clean houses where we came from’ (Randerson, 1990: 46).

With the completion of the Gipton estate the built environment of the ward took on a structural character which, if not final, remains fundamentally unchanged.

2.4 Conclusion

Architecturally and socially Gipton & Harehills is a ward of two halves, both halves the products of migration, though created in different phases of the migration process: one primary, from beyond the city (Harehills); the other secondary, from within (Gipton). However, in the second half of the 20th century Harehills saw the arrival of increasing numbers of migrants, this time from much more diverse countries of origin and backgrounds. Now, in the first decades of the 21st century, the process intensifies, exerting even greater pressure on space. As a result the once predominantly white working class estate of Gipton is also exhibiting all the signs of superdiversity.

3 Gipton & Harehills Today

3.1 The People

Gipton & Harehills ward has a population of 27,078 (Census 2011)\(^1\) making it the second most populous in Leeds, with the highest proportion of people from BME communities (64.2%) and the highest proportion of non-white residents (57.6%). Of these 10,036 (37% of the ward population) describe themselves as Asian/Asian British. People of Pakistani origin form the largest single ethnic group within this category (20.9%), with Bangladeshis the second largest (16.4%). In contrast to these two groups, people identifying themselves as Indian, once numerous in the ward, now account for only 3.4% of the ward population. The majority, it seems, have followed the historical trajectories of earlier Irish and Jewish migrants, moving north to the more affluent suburbs of Roundhay, Moortown, and Alwoodly. It would be a mistake, however, to think that there is no longer an influential Indian presence in Gipton & Harehills, for whilst Pakistanis and Bangladeshis have chosen in large numbers to settle and buy homes in the ward, Indians, like these other two groups,

\(^1\) All Census 2011 data in this report is downloaded from [http://infuse.ukdataservice.ac.uk](http://infuse.ukdataservice.ac.uk).
are very much in evidence—as providers of professional services, business owners, and, less visibly, as landlords.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>5764</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladeshi</td>
<td>4432</td>
<td>16.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
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<td>1.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roma</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovak</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Asian</td>
<td>1308</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghani</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurdish</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>954</td>
<td>3.52</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean &amp; White</td>
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<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Black</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>2.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Any Other Ethnic Group</td>
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<td>1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>361</td>
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<tr>
<td>Irish</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian &amp; White</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black African &amp; White</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>0.69</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arab</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>0.61</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gypsy/ Irish Traveller</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table 1 (data from Census 2011)

### 3.1.1 Housing

There has been considerable change in patterns of residence and tenure in Harehills over time. While some ethnic groups have become dispersed to the suburbs, the pattern of Pakistani and Bangladeshi population change is very largely one of increases in already settled locations through the addition of children, reunification of family members, and marriage, with a greater percentage of Pakistanis than whites being owner occupiers (Rees et al., 1995). Today many properties in the private rented sector are owned by members of the longer established communities, who serve as landlords to more recent arrivals, sometimes providing housing for asylum seekers, directly or through agents to the UKBA. However, much private rented sector housing, whatever the ownership, is of poor quality, with many A8 migrants in particular living in accommodation characterised by poor, unsafe standards, overcrowding, and high rent (Lewis et al., 2008: 5).

It is a feature of Harehills that denseness of habitation expresses itself everywhere in maximal exploitation of space, just as in the early 19th century, where ‘[t]hey not only let out rooms, they let corners of rooms and in some rooms there were four couples each with a blanket spread over the corner’ (Saperia, n.d.).
In terms of applications for local-authority owned rented property Harehills is now, according to the local council housing office, the second most desirable neighbourhood in the city, with eighty percent of people who use the office speaking English as a non-expert language and representing ‘the whole range of ethnic groups already living in the area’ (Simpson et al., 2011).

Figure 10. Harehills from the city centre, with St James Hospital on the right and the Bilal Mosque on the left

Figure 11. Many business premises have been extended to the limits of their property lines.
3.1.2 Employment

In Gipton and Harehills the bulk of working people (21.3%) had ‘elementary occupations’, while only 5.2% reported being managers, directors, or senior officials. The ward had the highest number of people claiming unemployment in the city.

3.1.3 Deprivation

Based on three measures of deprivation—claimant proportions, proportion of households claiming council related benefits, and the percentage of Super Output Areas in the worst 10% nationally (Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2010)—Gipton & Harehills emerged as the most deprived ward in Leeds. The ward also had the highest numbers of children in poverty (40.6% of children under 16 and 41.5% of dependent children under 20). According to the 2009 Acorn Profile, 38.8% of the population of Gipton & Harehills were ‘hard pressed’ and 26% were in struggling families (CACI, 2010).

The situation in Gipton & Harehills ward is summed up in a report by The Oastler Centre, which describes the living environment as ‘extremely alarming’, education as ‘concerning’, and income deprivation ‘affecting children and affecting older people... with worsening ranking’ (The Oastler Centre, 2011: 9). The most acute deprivation is focused in the north-west tip of the ward, a predominantly Bangladeshi neighbourhood, and in central and south Gipton which are around 80% white.

3.1.4 Health

According to Leeds City Council, ‘Health inequalities continue to exist for ... black and minority ethnic communities, with large variations in health both between and within black and minority ethnic groups in Leeds, with Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities experiencing some of the poorest health ... The Pakistani community has higher rates of infant mortality and heart disease than the general population. Analysis of A&E data shows higher use of A&E services by some BME groups and suggests a link to language barriers’ (Leeds City Council, 2012: 9).

In the same report, asylum seekers are identified as a group which often has complex health and social care needs. This is particularly so for failed asylum seekers who have no recourse to public funds and often remain invisible (Leeds City Council, 2012).

3.1.5 Crime

Gipton & Harehills has been ‘discontinued’ as a neighbourhood for the purposes of crime data collection and has been incorporated into Leeds ‘Inner East’. Nevertheless, it remains clear that the ward has the highest crime figures in the city (July 2014), with Harehills being the site of the majority of crimes (Figure 12).
The league table below looks at the total crimes for July 2014 that occurred in all neighbourhoods within 5 miles of North East Leeds – Gipton & Harehills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Neighbourhood</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Outer North East</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Outer East</td>
<td>494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Inner North East</td>
<td>531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Inner West</td>
<td>592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Inner North West</td>
<td>693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>696</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Inner South</td>
<td>841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Inner East</td>
<td>1,082</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. http://www.ukcrimestats.com/Neighbourhood/West_Yorkshire_Police/Inner_East
By far the most common crime is antisocial behaviour (3,242 cases in July 2014), followed by violent crime (1,248 cases), criminal damage and arson (1,248), shoplifting (918), and burglary (901).

### 3.2 The ward and its neighbourhoods

Information based on whole ward data is of undoubted value. However, in the case of Gipton & Harehills, which is not only composed of two highly contrasting areas but of highly contrasting neighbourhoods within these areas, such data can also be misleading. Looking at these neighbourhoods more closely not only allows us to identify interesting phenomena lost in aggregated data but to view communities at different stages in the migration and settlement process and, indeed, broader trends in migration as they impact on inner cities today. We can illustrate this by looking at three contrasting neighbourhoods.

![Gipton & Harehills Ward: neighbourhoods or 'community areas'.](https://edina.ac.uk/census)

**3.2.1 The Harehills Triangle (North)**

The Harehills Triangle is the most densely populated neighbourhood in the ward with 9,562 residents. It is also the most diverse, as within this small triangle of ground (1.2km by 1.4km) can be found residents identifying with over 60 nationalities and ethnicities—though the data is limited by the Census 2011 categories and the true figure is certainly higher.
If the Harehills Triangle is the heart of Harehills, then Roundhay Road (Figure 14) is the face it presents to the world. For many migrants and the descendants of migrants who live outside the area, Rounday Road and the stretches of Harehills Lane and Harehills Road adjacent to it are Harehills, and though ethnic minority faces are much more visible now in ‘downtown’ Leeds than they were ten years ago (Stillwell & Phillips, 2006) for many Roundhay Road is the city centre.

Harehills has ‘gravitational pull’ for migrants, with those who can’t or don’t wish to live here coming to eat out, socialise, send and receive money, take driving lessons and tests, buy insurance, consult doctors, dentists, and solicitors, tax advisors, have a hairdo or shave, make travel or marriage arrangements, attend religious, educational, and cultural centres, buy food, jewellery, DIY goods, or engage in any of the practices their personal and cultural histories (adapted to their new, local, globally-connected contexts of existence) have disposed them to and for which some group or individual has provided the means.

The processes which led to this situation have, over the years, left their mark on the neighbourhood in the obvious changes in ownership of commercial properties as individuals or families take advantage of the demand for ethnic goods or forms of service among their own or, increasingly, interdependent communities, many deploying personal savings accrued over years of employment in the city’s now-defunct industries. These histories are traceable in the semiotics of shop facades, and display evidence of a growing professional class, as well as increasing affluence, leisure, and diversity (Figure 10). In Harehills, as one superstore announces, there is now ‘something for everyone’.
Figure 3. Some of the professional services on offer on Roundhay Road.
3.2.2 *The Harehills Triangle (South)*

In the south of the Harehills Triangle, in contrast to the north, we see a migrant area at a much earlier stage of development. Walking along the high street here one has a sense of being on the ‘down market’ periphery of the neighbourhood, with shopkeepers catering to the needs of much more recent arrivals, among them A8 migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees—people struggling to equip themselves with the basics for survival (Figure 17). These newer communities are much smaller, more numerous, and therefore less cohesive than those which arrived in the last century, though like the first Asian migrants, they are in many cases single and male. In contrast to their predecessors, some are educated and have professional qualifications, though these are often unexploitable in the new environment.
Individuals are therefore drawn into entrepreneurial activities. Lacking local knowledge, necessary skills, and in some cases capital, and/or to gain access to potential customers from other ethnic groups, new alignments are made and new partnerships formed, the particular configurations often determined by the need for a shared language. In the
Harehills Triangle South, for example, a Caribbean hairdresser employs English speaking youths from Ghana and Tanzania, a Punjabi speaking Afghan goes into partnership with a Mirpuri builder to help finance an internet café. And an Iranian with a Polish wife opens a shop selling products from Eastern Europe and, since he can't read the labels on his goods and his Polish customers have a clear preference for buying from Poles, he hires his wife’s Polish friends as shop assistants and adopts a ‘Christian’ name.

Many of the businesses along this stretch of road are owned by Kurds, who’s arrival—generally from Iraq—in the 90s, gave them time enough to amass sufficient capital to take advantage of the new population of consumers who arrived from Eastern European after the accession of the A8 countries in 2004 and the subsequent enlargement of the EU in 2007. Not only do these men own all the shops selling second-hand white goods on the Lane, they also own all but one of the eight shops selling Eastern European goods.

### 3.2.3 Gipton North and South

The population of Gipton (North and South) is around 15,000, of which 8,872 are UK whites (59%) and though there are now—contrary to common perceptions—individuals from 93 different ethnic groups living in the area, the only other groups of significant size are the Pakistanis (1,480, 10%) and Black Africans (1,035, 7%).

Looking at these groups in terms of the space they occupy, we see that UK Whites are still found in all parts of Gipton, though in much greater numbers in the east. The data also suggests that, no doubt due to shortage of space in Harehills, Pakistanis and other minority groups have begun to occupy residential areas which were once the almost exclusive preserve of UK Whites and Irish, the Pakistanis choosing to live principally in the north west on the periphery of the existing Asian neighbourhood and, in effect, extending it into Gipton rather than plunging in to the middle and south of the estate as some other individuals have done, or been obliged to do—for example black African asylum seekers.
4 Language Communities

According to the 2011 Census, English was the main language for 92.9% of the population of Leeds. In Gipton & Harehills, however, 41% of the population did not cite English as their main language, and in 1,747 households no residents at all spoke English as a main language. Of the ethnic minority languages, South Asian languages predominate in Gipton & Harehills in all but Gipton South, where African languages predominate.

It should also be noted, however, that many members of ethnic minority populations speak English as a main language. In Harehills North it is 55.3%, in the Harehills Triangle 41%, Gipton North 53%, and—somewhat surprisingly—Gipton South 84%. This last figure may be explained by a Council preference for sending English speakers, largely Africans, to a council estate where the majority of residents (69.6%) are UK White.

Perhaps the most striking thing to come out of the Census data is the fact that, outside of the major language groups (English, Pakistani, and Bengali), the majority of the remaining individuals belong to language groups of very small numbers. Indeed, in all neighbourhoods there are quite large numbers of people whose main language is spoken by less than 5 people and quite many sole speakers of main languages.

It seems then that linguistic—and presumably social—isolation of many ethnic minority residents is a key feature of urban superdiversity, though no doubt much use is made of digital technologies in maintaining contact with dispersed communities.

5 The Linguistic Landscape

It is clear from our observations of the commercial properties in Gipton and Harehills over several years that the more diverse the population becomes the more monolingual the linguistic landscape (public signs). We assume this resorting to English as a lingua franca results from pragmatic adaptation. However, the accelerating disappearance of minority languages from the linguistic landscape should not be taken as an indication of their disappearance from the population (as the census data clearly shows), or, on the other hand, that English is being spoken in places bearing English signs. In Gipton & Harehills, contrary to appearances, minority languages are alive and well.

(4,581 words)
6 References


