



The Elephant and Castle Railway Arches: A research into how the Latin American Community created successful cultural hubs

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Abstract

This study aims to establish the relationship between the Latin Community and the railway arches located in the area of the Elephant and Castle. The research conducted explores the factors that were considered by the Latin traders when deciding to rent the railway arches, and if these factors are still valid. Primary and secondary research was undertaken to understand both historical and personal aspects of the Latin Community and the railway arches. An interview was carried out with Cesar Quintero, owner of DistriAndina, a Colombian store located in Arch 6 Elephant Road. This was to understand the triumphs and struggles a trader has faced personally within their working space. This essay explores the definition of ‘cultural identity’ and aims to decipher how the Latin Community have successfully managed to adapt and maintain their qualities and culture within the arches and its surroundings. This will be done by delving into three key areas: finance, design and community.

Introduction

Being a second generation British-Latina, the significance of our presence and culture has always been explained by the older generations. In spite of being born in London and the motherland being light years away, I have still managed to experience first-hand what it means to be Latin American and why it is important to be proud to be a Latina. Although London is considered a modern city with everchanging trends, within the backwaters of this busy city, hidden gems can be found where the Latin American culture and presence is omnipresent. From hosting football tournaments every weekend at Burgess Park to being able to taste traditional dishes at Seven Sisters, the essence of home can be discovered all across London. Barrios hidden within a metropolis. Creating the essence of home is important as *'61% of the UK Latin American population resides in London.'*¹ Whether migrating from the motherland, migrating from Spain, having been born in London or just visiting, these Latin hotspots are known due to the effective methods the Latin Community have used throughout the years to make their presence evident. Amongst all these hidden gems, the Elephant and Castle has always been the protagonist.

As a consequence of the global pandemic, maintaining these hidden gems is heightened as many cannot go visit their motherland due to health reasons or financial issues. Their importance is further supported through new redevelopments threatening their existence- the Elephant and Castle shopping centre being the perfect example. After the demolition of the shopping centre in September 2020, the traders, many being Latin American, were either transferred into neighbouring buildings or had nowhere to go and left jobless. More than ten Latin American traders resided in the shopping centre, but only two and one can be found residing in Elephant Arcade and Castle Square respectively. With this concerning change, the amount of Latin American traders in the area decreased and it was no longer the shopping centre having the highest number of Latin traders, it is now the railway arches. This has led to the decision to focus on the relationship between the Latin Community and the railway arches. The importance and power of informal cultural spaces helps explain how the Latin Community has survived through the arches and how they have left their cultural imprint onto the overall community.

¹ Cathy McIlwaine, Juan Camilo Cock and Brian Linneker, 'No Longer Invisible: the Latin Community in London', *Queen Mary University of London, LAWRS and Trust for London*, 2011

<https://trustforlondon.fra1.cdn.digitaloceanspaces.com/media/documents/No-longer-invisible-report.pdf>

Latin American presence at the Elephant and Castle

For historians the Elephant and Castle is formerly known as the ‘Piccadilly of the South’ and figures such as Charlie Chaplin are praised for bringing entertainment to the area and helping create such a title. But for locals it is known as ‘Little Colombia’ due to having easy access to a plate of *arepas* or *empanadas*. Similarly, to Seven Sisters, which is known as ‘Pueblito Paisa’. Or Brick Lane being recognised as ‘Banglatown’. The people that actually reside in such areas create these beautiful, bespoke titles, clearly showing who are the beating heart of the community, and for the Elephant and Castle, it is the Latin American community that keeps the blood pumping. (Figure 1)

Latin American immigration to the UK dates back to the 1960s, with London being the desired destination, but it was only until the 1980s where their presence became more obvious.² They grabbed every opportunity that came their way in order to establish a source of employment and income, for if it were not for the construction of the Elephant and Castle shopping centre in 1965 or the economic recession at the end of the 1980s, informal cultural hotspots for Latin Americans may not have existed. The 1980s economic recession had strongly impacted the shopping centre. The economic decline created a domino effect within the traders as a vast majority of the shops were closing and by 1991, the first floor of the shopping centre became a ghost town as hardly any shops were surviving or open.³ The recession provided possibilities for those who would have struggled economically to build their business. In 1992, Lucy Villamizar was the first Latin American to open a business on the first floor- Lucy’s Hairdressing Salon.⁴ (Figure 2) Shortly after, La Fogata also opened on the first floor and by 1994 there were ten shops within the shopping centre that were Latin American owned.⁵ (Figure 3) Since Latin businesses began establishing themselves in the shopping centre, not only has the number of Latin traders increased in the area but also the number of Latin residents and visitors.

The Elephant and Castle is made of residents with different origins and ethnicities, but in a sample of 505, 68% are of Latin American and Caribbean origin.⁶ However these statistics were threatened from the moment demolition was mentioned regarding the shopping centre in 2003. From 2003 and onwards, changes were happening within the area, with the Strata building being constructed in 2007 and Heygate Estate being demolished in 2011, fear grew within Latin traders as new developments and demolitions were becoming more frequent. The charity Latin Elephant was founded in 2012 in order to help local traders remain in their workspaces and fight for their human rights. The development company Delancey brought the shopping centre for £80m in 2013 but it was not till 2020 when demolish began. During those 7 years, the traders worked with Latin Elephant in order to enforce Southwark Council to reject the design proposals presented by

Delancey. Research, protests and campaigns were conducted but Delancey’s third proposal was accepted in 2018 where they only ‘considered’ making a cultural hub for 26 independent traders when the shopping centre was home to more than 80.⁷ (Figure 4) This particular process of ‘decanting’ has reduced the number of Latin traders, but some traders still work in the area. For example, Lucy’s Hairdressing Salon can be found in Elephant Arcade, a building adjacent to the former shopping centre, and comfort is brought knowing loyal traders such as Lucy can still make a living within an area of regeneration.

Many can confidently say that Lucy being the first Latin American to open their business in the shopping centre was the catalyst for other Latin traders to follow and begin to use other sites in the area such as Walworth Road and the railway arches. Only one site still manages to proudly maintain a high concentration of Latin traders- the railway arches.

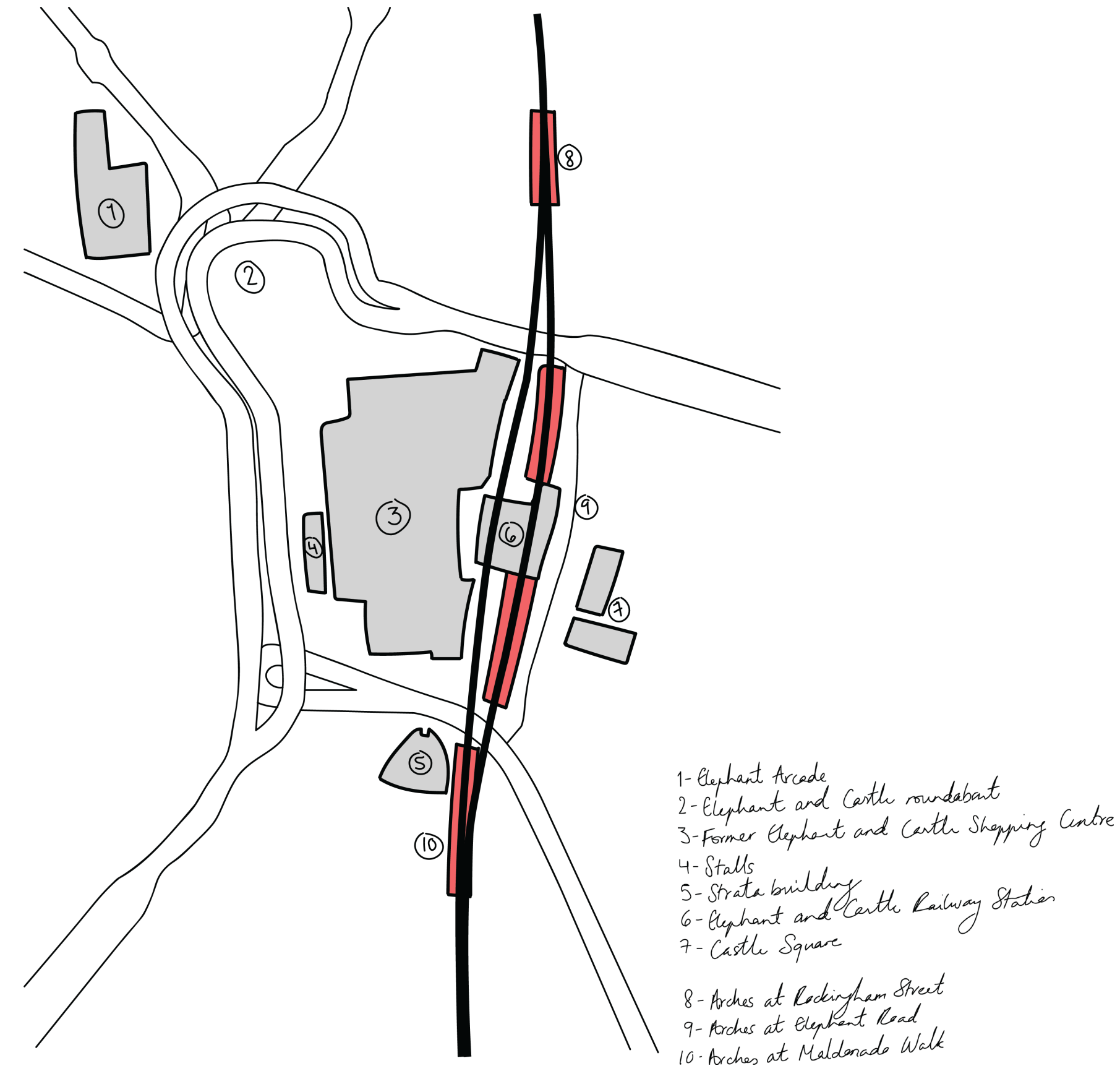


Figure 1- Site Plan indicating the buildings associated with the Latin Community



Figure 2- Lucy's Hairdressing Salon in the Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre, 2006



Figure 3- La Fogata in the Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre, 1994



Figure 4- Locals protesting against the redevelopment of the shopping centre, 2018

² Wenqi Gu, Michele Katzler, Viola Petrella, Chloe Treger and Qianhui Wei, ‘Migrant and ethnic businesses in the elephant & castle and Walworth area’, *issuu.com*, 2015, pg. 14 https://issuu.com/chloetregger/docs/final_report_on_mebfs_for_ewnf_by_uc

³ Patria Román-Velázquez, *The Making of Latin London: Salsa Music, Place and Identity*, Ashgate Publishing, 1999, pg. 53

⁴ Damien Gayle, ‘We’re going to miss the community’: Elephant and Castle shopping centre closes after 55 years’, *The Guardian*, Thursday 24 September 2020 <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/sep/24/were-going-to-miss-the-community-elephant-and-castle-shopping-centre-closes-after-55-years>

⁵ Román-Velázquez, *The Making of Latin London: Salsa Music, Place and Identity*, 1999, pg. 53

⁶ Gu, Michele Katzler, Viola Petrella, Chloe Treger and Qianhui Wei, ‘Migrant and ethnic businesses in the elephant & castle and Walworth area’, 2015, pg. 23 https://issuu.com/chloetregger/docs/final_report_on_mebfs_for_ewnf_by_uc

⁷ Owen Sheppard, ‘More cheap homes pledged to save £3bn Elephant and Castle regeneration scheme’, *Evening Standard*, Thursday 1 February 2018 <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/more-cheap-homes-pledged-to-save-ps3bn-elephant-and-castle-regeneration-scheme-a3755216.html>

Victorian Railway Arches at Maldonado Walk, Elephant Road and Rockingham Street

The demolition of the shopping centre and its displacement of its Latin traders caused a stir within the Latin Community. Fear and worry were and still is in the air due to surrounding redevelopments. Amidst all the tension, the Latin American community have managed to keep their cultural identity intact. The railway arches are aligned and cut through Southwark, Walworth and Camberwell. Although many tenants of different ethnicities use the arch space, there are three roads where the railway arches are primarily rented by Latin American traders- Maldonado Walk, Elephant Road and Rockingham Street.

The Elephant and Castle Railway Station, formerly known as the London Chatham and Dover Railway Station, was built on viaducts in 1862. It was first a temporary station, but a permanent structure for the station was introduced in 1863. Through the 19th and 20th century, the arches maintained an industrial position where they were let and used by 'smithies, marine stores, stables, mortar mills and other low-cost trades.'⁸ (Figure 4) It was not until the 1980s where the perception of these spaces changed. In the 1980s, a large program of refurbishment was proposed by the British Rail Property Board where their aim was to improve the condition and state of the arches, whilst simultaneously creating competition with modern adjacent buildings.⁹ The change of dynamic within the spaces opened doors to new communities and large-scale cultural shifts. The spaces became more community friendly as it allowed focus to be shifted on community needs, such as: leisure, entertainment and lifestyle.

The refurbishment proposal, along with the cheap prices for people to set up businesses within the arches, allowed many migrants to make a living without being affected by normal commercial price pressures. However, it was not until the late 2000s that the arches at the Elephant and Castle were Latin American dominated, as the nature and space of the shops were more suited for businesses involving heavy and large-scale products. As the presence of Latin Americans in the area increased, the carpet and bedding business decreased. The arches were then adapted to the new wave of people and their needs of a social space. Arches 3 and 7 at Elephant Road were a carpet and shipping company respectively, but once encountered with new arrivals and business depleting, they subdivided the arches and created stalls with short-term leases, allowing them to become favourable spaces for traders to establish their own small businesses. (Figure 5) Arches 3 and 7 are still subdivided and offer services such as photocopying, cafes, money transfers and more. They are now known as El Arco del Centro and Elephant Central respectively. Elephant Central still maintain their old signage that displays the name of their past occupation- Beset International Ltd Shipping and Air Freighting. (Figure 6)

Maldonado Walk, Elephant Road and Rockingham Street clearly prove that the Latin American community benefitted from the change of usage within the railway arches. Latin American traders have been present in these arches since the early 2000s and have maintained their culture and presence in the area throughout the years, clearly indicating the power and importance of cultural identity.



Figure 5- Victorian Railway Arches located on Elephant Road, 1940



Figure 6- El Arco del Centro, Arch 3, once known as a business that stored carpets



Figure 7- Elephant Central, Arch 7, still maintains their original sign of their past occupation

⁸ John R. Kellett, *The Impact of Railways on Victorian Cities*, Routledge, 1969, pg. 17

⁹ Talia Clarick, 'A Little Elephant Among The Big One: Elephant Road, Railway Arches and 'Regeneration' in Focus', *Southwark Notes*, Monday 9 December 2019 <https://southwarknotes.wordpress.com/2019/12/09/a-little-elfeant-amongst-the-big-one-elephant-road-railway-arches-and-regeneration-in-focus/>

Cultural Identity through Informal Cultural Spaces

*'the shared characteristics of a group of people, which encompasses, place of birth, religion, language, cuisine, social behaviours, art, literature and music.'*¹⁰

As mentioned before, the facilities, activities and people that reside and work within the area, are the beating heart of the community, with the city of London being a strong case in proving this. London is known to be a multicultural and diverse city, where people of different ethnicities and upbringings share their cultures and traditions. Within the city, due to its diversity, small and concentrated groups can be pinpointed, and they define that certain area. Good examples are, Elephant and Castle, known as Little Colombia, and Brick Lane, known as Banglatown. These communities have embedded their cultural identity onto London by creating informal cultural spaces. In this case, the railway arches were not intended nor built for Latin American traders to establish their businesses, but the Latin community have managed to adapt and create cultural hubs where visitors of all backgrounds are welcome to try *un cafecito con buñuelos*, a Colombian delicacy. (Figure 8)

Many factors contribute to what constitutes an informal cultural space, but there are three main factors that provide the foundation and stability for a cluster of communities to establish their cultural identity within unknown territory: finance, design and community. All three factors work together and are important, but one factor can be described as the catalyst for the inhabitation of the Latin community in the Elephant and Castle railway arches- finance.

Finance

The economic recession in the 1980s provided opportunities for those who would not have the economic capital for investment. The number of Latin traders in the Elephant and Castle area increased as they could afford renting a space to build their business. Figure 9 shows that during the economic recession the number of Latin Americans arriving in the UK and the number of Latin American shops opening increased by a small portion compared to previous years. Latin traders began to rent the Elephant and Castle railway arches in the early 2000s, and the graph clearly indicates this social change. The number of traders increased by 30 during the years 1981-2010.

The rent in the railway arches was affordable as the parallel renting market established at the time by the British Rail Property Board offered cheap prices to rent the arches.¹¹ Their aim was to refine the condition of the spaces and create healthy local competition by providing access to recreation

and convenience services. In order for the transformation of the arches to be successful, low rent needed to be attractive to traders as they were to be the catalysts for the wanted healthy competition. With the arch spaces being available economically, they also became available creatively.



Figure 8- Panaderia inside the arches of Maldonado Walk

Time Lag

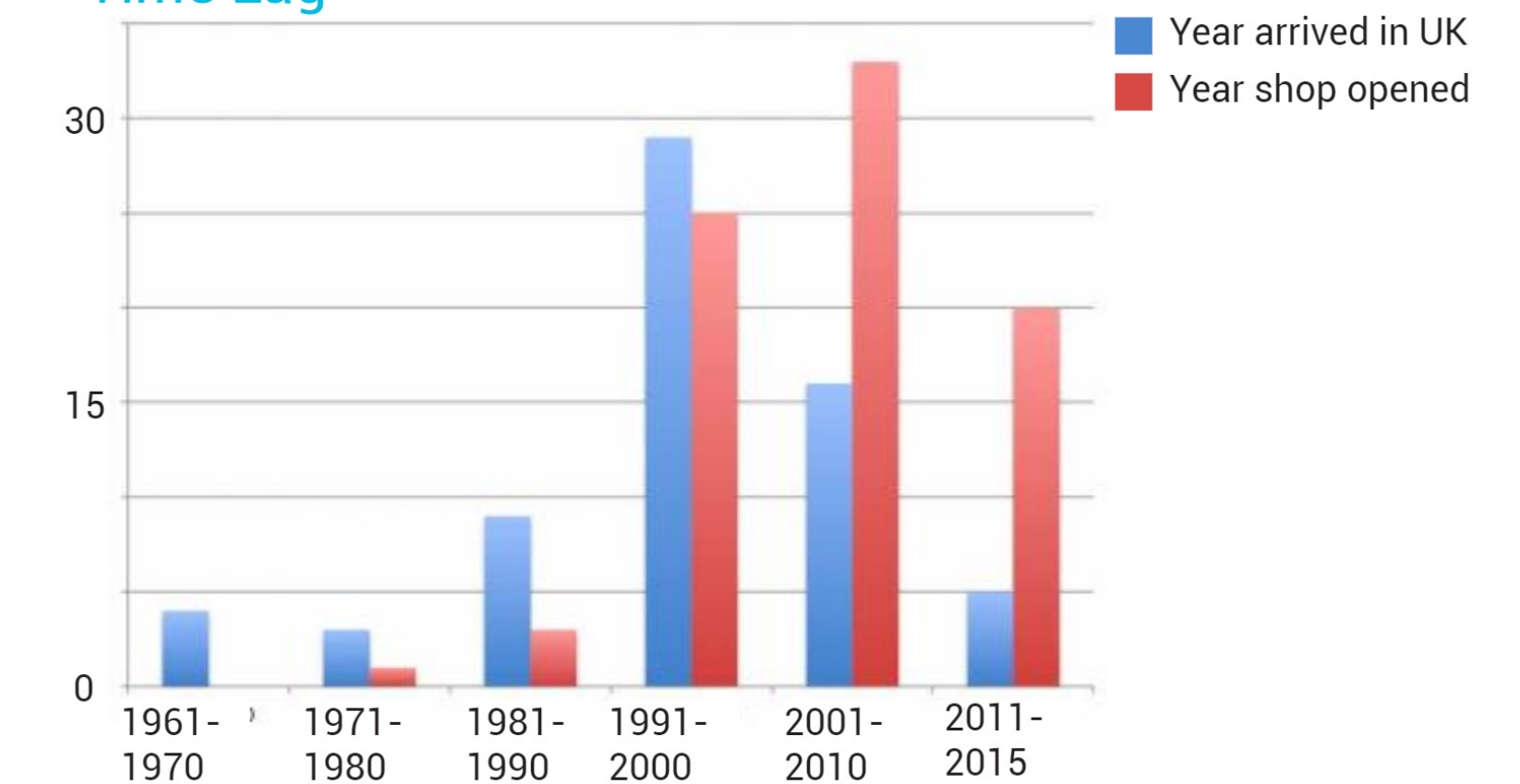


Figure 9- Bar chart indicating the relationship between newly arrived Latin Americans and newly established Latin American shops in the UK

¹⁰ National Geographic, "Resource Library: Cultural Identity", *National Geographic* [website] https://www.nationalgeographic.org/topics/resource-library-cultural-identity/?q=&page=1&per_page=25

¹¹ Clarick, "A Little Elephant Among The Big One: Elephant Road, Railway Arches and 'Regeneration' in Focus", Monday 9 December 2019 <https://southwarknotes.wordpress.com/2019/12/09/a-little-elephant-amongst-the-big-one-elephant-road-railway-arches-and-regeneration-in-focus/>

Design

The structure of each railway arch is an open plan, creating a vast amount of space to use as storage or factory workspace, explaining why Arch 3 and Arch 7 were once a carpet and shipping company respectively and why some arches remain to be used by mechanics. There was no intention behind these open plans to create a space where restaurants, social hubs and convenience stores could inhabit. However, with creative freedom, the Latin American traders made the impossible possible. They had repaired and continue to repair these spaces by adding life to them through choice of colour, purpose and sentiment. They created spaces where the Latin Community could identify themselves with.¹²

Each arch has a different origin and a different purpose, but all have one aspect in common- being patriotic. Whether it is successfully done through the layout of the arch or through signage added onto the walls, each arch is bespoke and specifically designed to represent the motherland.

Some arches found along Elephant Road and Maldonado Walk are divided into sub units. Even though this layout decision was mainly done due to financial reasons and supporting many businesses as possible, there is still sentiment behind it. The layout replicates the *almazen* or *mercado de ropa* atmosphere experienced in Latin American countries, though at a much smaller scale. The narrow paths that seem never-ending and the display units being completely clustered with products beautifully transports visitors to Latin America (Figure 10). Whether products are enclosed in a glass box or openly exposed, each item boldly represents a piece of the motherland. Jewellery made out of *colores de la tri*, *recuerdos* to hand out at parties, snacks such as *dulce de guayaba* and more can be found across all arches. (Figure 11) Chatica, Arch 1 on Elephant Road ensures that visitors know their imported goods are on display by treating their arch space as a glass box. By changing their façade to glass panels, their Colombian goods become hard to miss as they can be found densely packed all over the arch, with their bright packaging colours hypnotising visitors. (Figure 12)

Warm, freshly made and ready-to-eat delicacies can be discovered from Rockingham Street to Maldonado Walk, each arch offering a taste from a different country. The Ecuadorian restaurant Costa Azul, located on Rockingham street, not only serves traditional dishes such as *guatita* but also serves food in a traditional manner. During lunch, *almuerzo* can be ordered, where a plate of soup and rice is served- a typical menu option found in Ecuador and other Latin American

countries. Additionally, plates such as *colada morada* are only served during Winter as that is the only time period the dish will be made in Ecuador. Small traits and traditions are respected, continued and shared so customers can experience the motherland.

All the features from each store showcase Latin American pride, even aspects that are just for display. Los Chamos located at Maldonado Walk has images of their home, Venezuela, throughout the walls of their unit. (Figure 13) Pride is also portrayed in the exterior façade of each shop, whether it be the name of the store or advertising what the arch offers. The name 'Los Chamos' clearly shows Venezuelan pride as 'chamo' is a term used between close friends to greet each other. The arches that are divided into subunits have a façade different to the single unit arches. Much like the products being clustered together, the concept of layering and exposing everything that can be found inside is typically found in Latin storefronts. (Figure 14) And this does not only apply to the Latin shops found within the railway arches. Figure 15 shows a Latin American shop located in Camberwell having the distinctive storefront that can be recognised immediately.

Having delved into different design aspects produced by the traders, only one is the most important and the most vital feature to have- *la bandera*. Most arches have at least one flag displayed on their exterior façade, whether it be a small print or the actual flag, patriotism is shared within the traders. Maldonado Walk especially is extremely patriotic as when walking by or having a small glimpse of it from afar, the flags are prominent and ready to welcome visitors to a different world full of colours, culture and cuisine. (Figure 16)



Figure 10- Arch 3 divided into subunits, portraying the *mercado* atmosphere



Figure 11- Patriotic jewellery with the colours of *la tri* (yellow, blue and red)



Figure 12- Chatica, Arch 2, Elephant Road



Figure 13- Los Chamos, Maldonado Walk



Figure 14- Arch storefront, Maldonado Walk



Figure 15- Susitas Shop Limited, Camberwell



Figure 16- Sketched representation of flags present on Maldonado Walk

¹² Román-Velázquez, *The Making of Latin London: Salsa Music, Place and Identity*, 1999, pg. 56

Community

With the economic recession allowing Latin traders to establish their businesses, along with the ability to freely design the railway arches to share their cultures, a strong foundation for the community was built- both the Latin Community and the Elephant and Castle Community.

By the late 1990s, the Elephant and Castle area became known as a cultural hotspot for the Latin Community due to all the Latin shops and restaurants that could be discovered. The area became a desired destination, receiving regular visitors, whether it was people just arriving to the UK or already residing in London. It became popular internationally as new arrivals would immediately make their way to the Elephant and Castle directly from the airport, luggage in hand as they knew they could find a place to stay, a job and the comfort of home with the little English skill they presented.¹³ Loyal customers such as Jay from Ilford commute to the area for certain goods that are not available anywhere else.¹⁴ Throughout the years, the nickname ‘Little Colombia’ flourished as majority of the shops were owned by Colombians, and their presence is still powering as in a sample of 90 Latin traders, more than 60% were of Colombian origin.¹⁵ As the Latin American presence in the area was well known, more restaurants and stores began to reside in the area. Costa Azul was previously residing in Old Kent Road but moved to the Elephant and Castle in 2018. Los Chamos moved into the area in 2020 right before the beginning of the global pandemic but yet they have managed to survive due to the fact that they find themselves right in the centre of the Latin Community.

With the increasing and everlasting presence of the Latin American Community within the Elephant and Castle, their influence can be found imprinted onto the general public, Maldonado Walk being a perfect example. Maldonado Walk was previously known as Eagle’s Yard until it was renamed in 2018 to not only respect the Ecuadorian Scientist Pedro Vicente Maldonado but also the Latin Community present in the arches. (Figure 17) In September 2021, the local and independent gallery Flat 70 dedicated an exhibition to the Latin traders- My Elephant Story. Having been a year since the demolition of the shopping centre, Flat 70 gave them a platform to share their stories along with images of their journey. (Figure 18)

Events hosted by the local council are clearly influenced as the Latin culture can be seen as the catalyst, the driving force for these events. In October 2021 a Walking Tour was hosted at Castle Square, directly opposite the arches at Elephant Road. Visitors were given a tour of the Elephant

and Castle and were exposed to the rich and diverse history of the community. Dance groups such as Yurupari Grupo Folklorico, a Colombian folklore dance group, were invited to share their culture. (Figure 19) The elegant mixture of folklore, salsa, merengue and cumbia, along with the traditional dance wear and dishes, has always created a vibrant atmosphere and ensured that these events be successful for the local council.

The local council has also portrayed Latin culture through government buildings. Southwark Heritage Centre and Walworth Library has majority of its information signs with Spanish translations underneath. (Figure 20) The council recognises the Latin Community’s presence in the area and helps them as one third of Latinos residing in the UK do not speak English.¹⁶ The library is currently working with locals to produce an exhibition dedicated to Southwark’s Latin Community. The exhibition is to take place in early 2022 and display images of the Latin traders, the football tournaments held at Burgess Park and more.



Figure 17 - Unveiling ceremony of Maldonado Walk, 2018



Figure 19 - Yurupari Grupo Folklorico dancing at the Walking Tour, 2021



Figure 18 - My Elephant Story exhibition by Flat 70, 2021

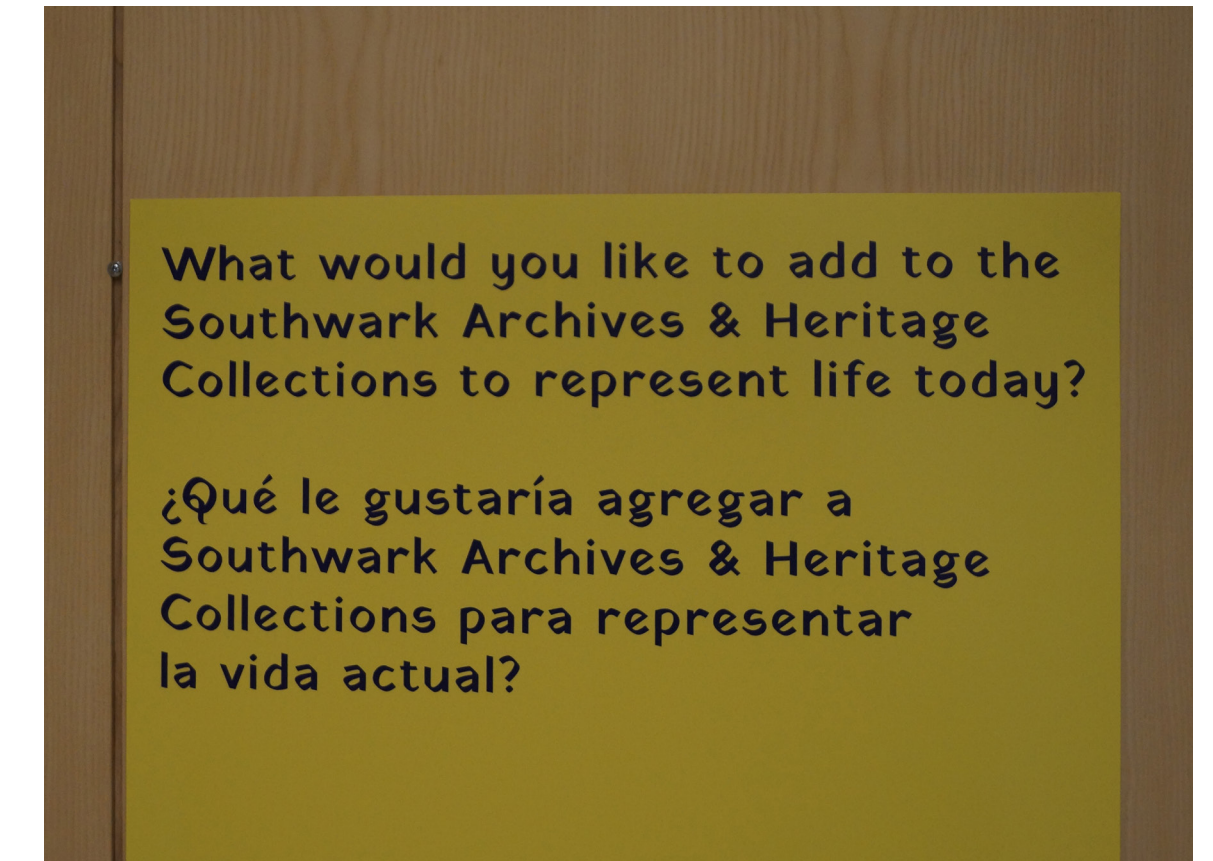


Figure 20 - Southwark Heritage Centre and Walworth Library sign

¹³ Gayle, “We’re going to miss the community’: Elephant and Castle shopping centre closes after 55 years’, Thursday 24 September 2020 <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/sep/24/were-going-to-miss-the-community-elephant-and-castle-shopping-centre-closes-after-55-years>

¹⁴ Gayle, “We’re going to miss the community’: Elephant and Castle shopping centre closes after 55 years’, Thursday 24 September 2020 <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/sep/24/were-going-to-miss-the-community-elephant-and-castle-shopping-centre-closes-after-55-years>

¹⁵ Gu, Michele Katzler, Viola Petrella, Chloe Treger and Qianhui Wei, ‘Migrant and ethnic businesses in the elephant & castle and Walworth area’, 2015, pg. 12 https://issuu.com/chloetreger/docs/final_report_on_mebfs_for_ewnf_by_uc

¹⁶ McLwaine, Juan Camilo Cock and Brian Linneker, ‘No Longer Invisible: the Latin Community in London’, 2011 <https://trustforlondon.fra1.cdn.digitaloceanspaces.com/media/documents/No-Longer-Invisible-report.pdf>

DistriAndina- Arch 6 Elephant Road

Much like its neighbouring Latin businesses, DistriAndina moved into the Elephant and Castle due to the fact that majority of London's Latin American Community resided in the area. And DistriAndina has always had the Latin Community's needs as their focal point.

Having met DistriAndina owner, Cesar Quintero, information that cannot be found online was discovered in person.¹⁷ Before coming to the Elephant and Castle, DistriAndina was located in Holloway, North of London, and they were named Llamadas Rapias. Before selling Latin American goods, they ensured that Latinos residing in London could have access to a telephone card and be able to call their loved ones back home at an affordable price. When Quintero arrived in London from Colombia 27 years ago, the cost to call home was too expensive, especially for those who just arrived and were barely making a living. Therefore Quintero, along with his business partner who just arrived from Ecuador, decided to no longer make this a problem for the Latin Community.

The transformation from Llamadas Rapias in Holloway to DistriAndina in the Elephant and Castle has many reasons but a *Club Colombia* bottle was the catalyst for everything. Quintero noticed some places using the bottles as candle holders and coming across a product from the motherland was extremely rare as they were expensive at the time. The analogy of a 2L *Postobón* bottle was used, during the time Quintero just arrived, 2 litre bottle was £4, whereas now it is £2.50, DistriAndina price. In 2006, Llamadas Rapias became DistriAndina, with the goal to ensure the Latin Community have access to goods from the motherland at an affordable price.

DistriAndina established in Arch 6, located on Elephant Road. (Figure 21) Quintero emphasised that the move to the Elephant and Castle was influenced by the growing presence of the Latin American community within the area. Even though the rent of the arch was an affordable price, and the design was ideal – storage space to store and distribute products – *la gente* was the true reason to why Arch 6 was chosen.

DistriAndina- Warehouse

During the 16 years DistriAndina has resided in Arch 6, it has been through a rollercoaster of transformations in order to provide what the Latin Community needs. At first, the arch space was treated the way it was designed for- warehouse space. (Figure 22) Motherland goods would be exported from Holland to Distriandina as direct exportation from countries such as Colombia or Ecuador were not yet possible. The products were stored within the arch and DistriAndina would

redistribute it to clients, it was not a store where visitors can walk in and purchase a single individual item. With the business being successful, Quintero admits being consumed with the idea of making the business bigger, leading him to involve new business partners into DistriAndina. As a result, he found himself starting from zero, but he still wanted to be a service to the Latin Community.

Andina Limited – Subunits

DistriAndina was renamed to Andina Limited, and the arch was divided into subunits in order for the business to survive and still contribute to the community. (Figure 23) Even though the arch no longer provided mass amounts of goods, it provided other needs that were in high demand by the Latin Community. Factors such as, making calls abroad, being able to send money back home and having the simple pleasure of watching telenovelas was provided in Andina Limited. A subtenant had a business called VideoClips where the community could buy or rent cassettes in Spanish and soon after CDs were introduced.¹⁸ With the arch being divided into subunits, this was the first indication of the arch space being manipulated and changed into a hub for the needs of the Latin Community.

Arch 6 became an informal cultural space as it created a cultural hub within a space that was not intended for that purpose. Andina Limited only lasted roughly a year and a half as the business was still struggling financially. The company soon declared bankruptcy and in order to survive again, had to change their social needs but still stay loyal to the needs and wants of the Latin Community.

DistriAndina – Cafeteria and Dance Floor

By 2010, Arch 6 returned to be DistriAndina, however with the aim to provide a different service to the Latin Community- a cafeteria and a dance floor. (Figure 24) With the help of Colombian architect Pedro Gil, the true potential of the arch space was revealed. Not only did Gil help DistriAndina obtain an A3 licence to be able to play live music until 6am but also helped transform the warehouse space into a more appealing social area.

A mezzanine was added to divide the space into two, where a kitchen and bakery was added on the mezzanine level to provide the warm and freshly food to clients. A statement piece of bright, vibrant yellow panels was added onto the south wall in order to attract the eyes of people walking by. (Figure 25) The side at which the cafeteria was located, the very entrance of Distriandina, was



Figure 21- DistriAndina, Arch 6, Elephant Road, 2021

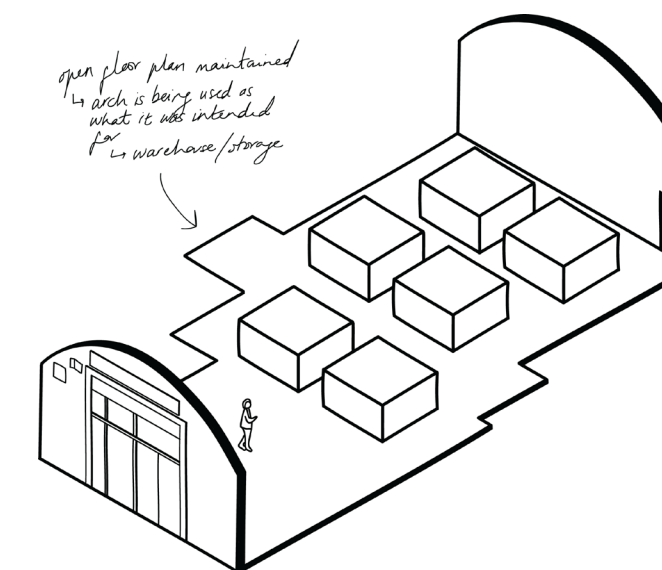


Figure 22- Axo sketch of DistriAndina in 2006

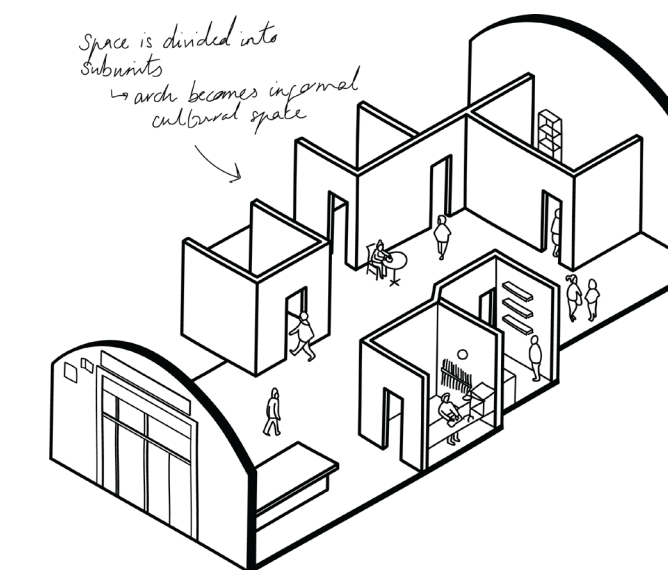


Figure 23- Axo sketch of Andina Limited in 2008



Figure 24- Exploded axo of proposed DistriAndina in 2010 by Pedro Gil

¹⁷ Interview conducted with Cesar Quintero, owner of DistriAndina, Wednesday 12 January 2022 [voice recording] https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1sywh8_IV0MyHAMpYpdgwLz4B5bKM5ir?usp=sharing

¹⁸ DistriAndina, 'Welcome to the OLD Distriandina', YouTube, Monday 13 February 2012, 00:18 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2WX79msGYBo>

painted white to emphasis the open plan and allow natural light to travel through the glass entrance, bounce off the white surroundings and emphasise the space. Towards the dance floor, grey tiles were placed, along with sudden appearances of yellow, red and orange tiles. (Figure 26) The colours yellow, red and orange, along with the random placement of these tiles across the floor and walls, were inspired by ‘colloquial Latin American pattern language’.¹⁹

DistriAndina has always put the needs of their clients first and understand the importance of making the environment warm and home-like, therefore they found themselves covering the yellow statement piece with flags, posters and more. (Figure 27) By 2016 the panels were removed and a new design was introduced. Quintero is of Colombian origin, therefore details specifically portraying the Colombian culture were introduced. Images can be found on edge of ceiling, portraying aspects of Colombia such as carnival, salsa and traditional dance wear consisting of the three colours: yellow, blue and red. Warm-tone colours were introduced to provide the home-like perspective. (Figure 28)

The new refurbished DistriAndina, with the initial help of Gil, provided a vibrant cultural space where the Latin Community were able to sit down, enjoy a small gossip and then later dance salsa all night long. In 2014 and 2018, DistriAndina was the place to be when a Colombian football match was playing as the match would be projected onto the wall and there was more than enough space to cheer together. (Figure 29) Viejoteca Dominguera was an event hosted every Sunday night by DistriAndina that was well known within the community. Sunday is seen to be a rest day, a day to conserve energy for the next working day, but DistriAndina received vast amounts of customers on Sunday nights that would stay till 2am, 6am if it were a bank holiday.

DistriAndina – Store

The global pandemic hit during the end of 2020 and forced businesses such as DistriAndina to pause. During the first lockdown, DistriAndina found itself closed for 2 months. With no profit coming in and knowing lockdown rules will make it harder to host events such as Viejoteca Dominguera, Arch 6 had to again reconsider its social purpose and change its design layout to fit the needs of the Latin Community. (Figure 30)

DistriAndina went back to its origin, the reason why it started in the first place and why the name DistriAndina was chosen. Distri – the distribution, Andina – of Andean products. Arch 6 changed

into a convenient store where the Latin Community could purchase goods from the motherland at affordable prices. (Figure 31 & 32) The aspect of affordability and having access to these products was vital, especially during a global pandemic as some might be struggling financially and might not be able to visit loved ones in their home countries. Even though the products overshadow the design process DistriAndina has gone through, and the dance floor is now used as a storage back room, DistriAndina have used their own techniques to still ensure the space portrays home. The products sold pay tribute to Colombia as most products are exported directly from there and when walking in the store, salsa music is immediately heard through the speakers.²⁰ Even though the shelving covers the arch’s design, the vibrant and colourful packaging of the products make up for it. (Figure 33) Small details can be found throughout the shop that show patriotism, such as the images of Colombia being kept from their previous design and the lettering being the colours of the flag. (Figure 34 & 35)

However, Quintero made one fact crystal clear- DistriAndina is not about Colombian pride, but Latin American pride. The name itself pays tribute to the Andean countries of Latin American, and even though most products sold are Colombian, a vast amount of Venezuelan and Peruvian products can be found. DistriAndina aims to include products from all Latin American countries. The logo also shows respect to all the countries’ flags: the green represents countries such as Peru and Bolivia, the light blue represents countries such as Argentine and Uruguay, and the general use of yellow, blue and red represents Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela. (Figure 36)

All three factors used to define an informal cultural space in this research were the reasons to which DistriAndina established in Arch 6: the rent was an affordable price, the arches were designed to portray the purpose of the business, and the Elephant and Castle area was where the presence of the Latin Community was growing.

DistriAndina is to be moved in Castle Square in the Summer 2022, directly opposite Arch 6. Less space is available in the Castle Square unit and the rent is higher compared to the arch, but DistriAndina have no alternative. Arch 6 and 7 are under the new development plans and are planned to be turned into walkways for the new town centre.²¹ Even though Arch 6 will no longer be a cultural hub by late 2022, DistriAndina will create a new hub within Castle Square and help those still working in the arches to maintain their hubs.



Figure 25- DistriAndina, Arch 6, Elephant Road, 2010



Figure 26- DistriAndina, Arch 6, Elephant Road, 2010



Figure 27- DistriAndina, Arch 6, Elephant Road, 2013



Figure 28- DistriAndina, Arch 6, Elephant Road, 2016



Figure 29- DistriAndina, Arch 6, Elephant Road, World Cup 2018

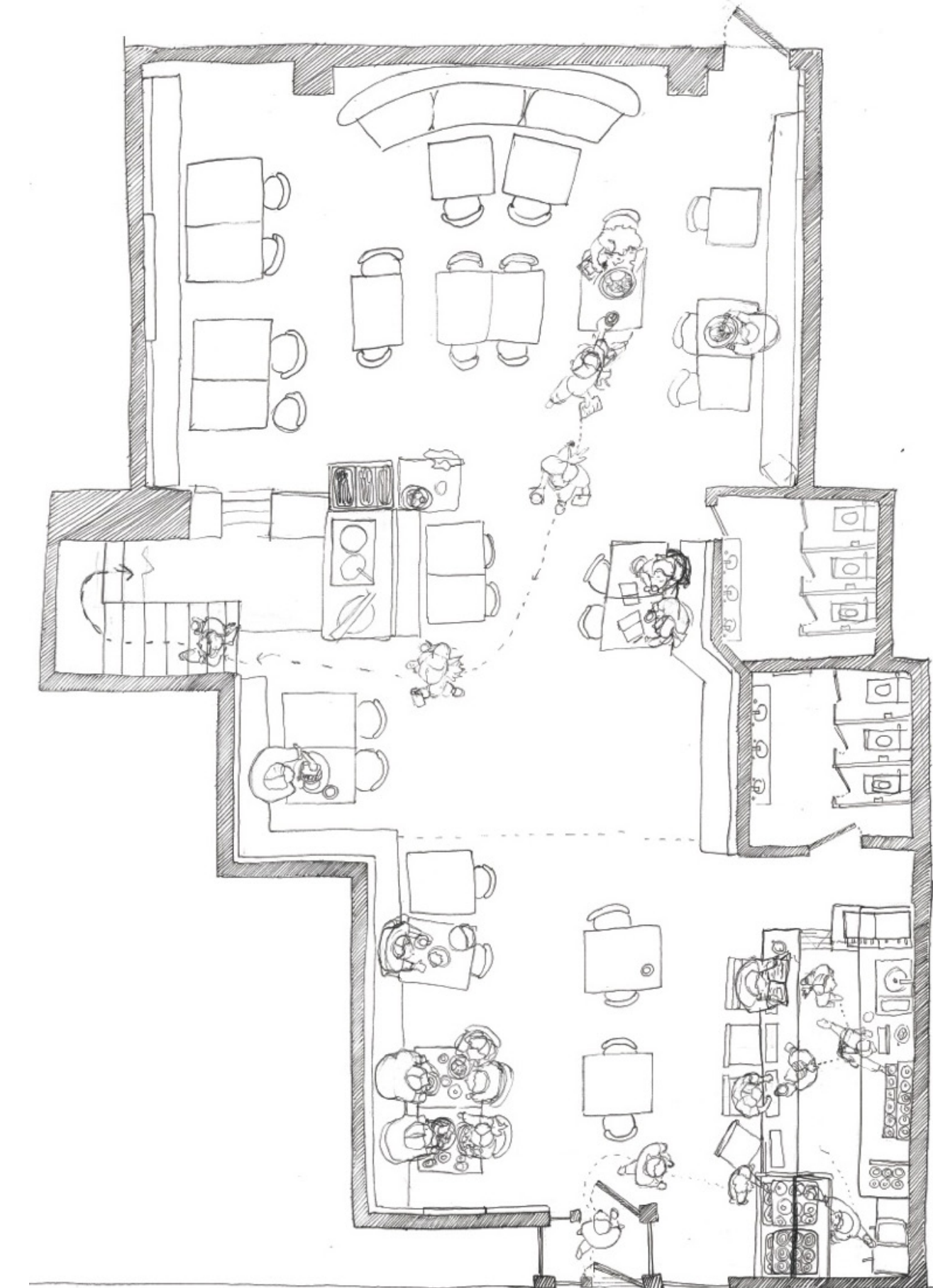


Figure 30- Sketch of DistriAndina by Talia Clarick, 2019

¹⁹ Studio Gil, ‘DistriAndina’, *Studio Gil* [website] <http://studiogil.org/portfolio/distriandina/>

²⁰ Shop atmosphere, Wednesday 12 January 2022 [voice recording] https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1sywh8_V0MyHAMpYpdgwLz4B5bkM5ir?usp=sharing

²¹ Clarick, ‘A Little Elephant Among The Big One: Elephant Road, Railway Arches and ‘Regeneration’ in Focus’, Monday 9 December 2019 <https://southwarknotes.wordpress.com/2019/12/09/a-little-elephant-amongst-the-big-one-elephant-road-railway-arches-and-regeneration-in-focus/>



Figure 31- DistriAndina's current layout

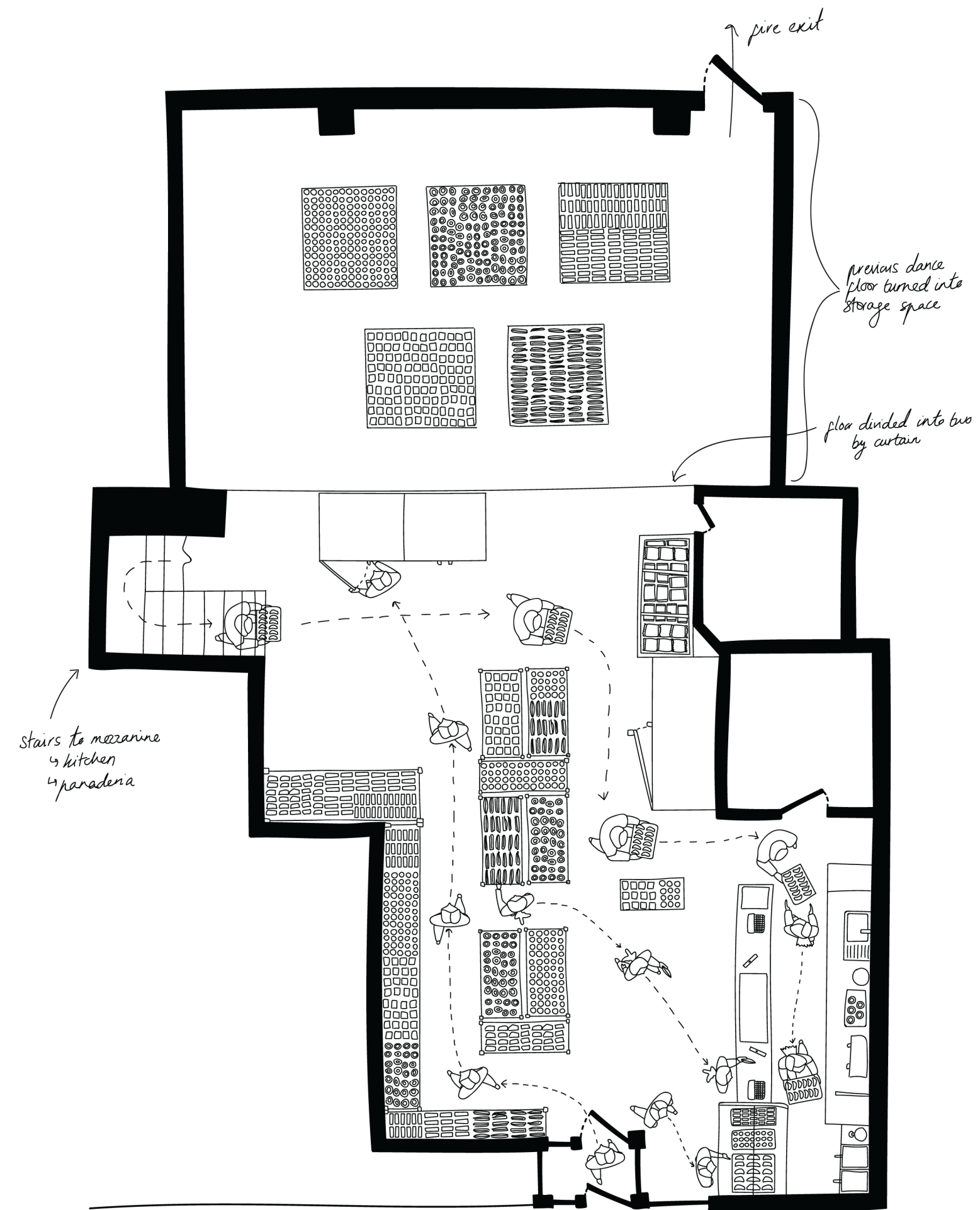


Figure 32- Plan sketch of DistriAndina in 2022



Figure 33- Colourful products present at DistriAndina



Figure 34- Images of the Colombian culture are kept from previous design



Figure 35- Lettering in the colours of la tri



Figure 36- DistriAndina Logo

Conclusion

The destruction of the shopping centre has displaced a few of the Latin traders, but those working in the railway arches continue steadily, and aim to maintain the foundation the Latin American Community have built themselves throughout the years. The foundation, the Latin American imprint onto the Elephant and Castle is and will continue to be maintained through the informal cultural hubs within the arches.

The Latino traders have successfully used the three factors in order to create these cultural hubs: finance, design and community. The same manner the arches were affordable, they ensure their products are affordable too. Each trader has creative freedom with the arch space and each one decided to proudly display and share their culture, whether it is done through the products they sell or through small details such as colour choices. Latin American presence in the area has been increasing since the 1980s, making it a perfect location for Latin American businesses. Though an ideal place to make profit and have a consistent flux of customers, the arches become a second home to them as it provides a comfortable space where they can be amongst brothers and sisters.

Having had the honour and privilege to meet Cesar Quintero, the sentimental side and the story behind the trader was highlighted. As mentioned at the beginning of this research, the financial side of the arches was the catalyst to create these informal cultural hubs as it gave Latin traders the opportunity to have a capital to start their businesses. However, after having spoken to Quintero, the community, *la gente*, is the most important factor. Even though Quintero will have to move DistriAndina into Castle Square, knowing that there is less space to work with and a higher rent to pay, he would not want to move anywhere else. Traders such as Quintero not only rely on their usual customers but also the younger generations. As young professionals we might find ourselves overlooking sites such as the railway arches and focusing more on large scale developments, but our focus should be the community that reside in the area because it is them who make London diverse and unique. The beating heart of the Latin Community is the Elephant and Castle, and Quintero beautifully summarises why these informal cultural hubs are important:

‘You will not find this variety in cities like Quito or Bogota, you just will not, but in London you will. There is now that variety of Latin American countries, all working together, and it is thanks to these arches in which we find ourselves in today.’²²

²² Interview conducted with Cesar Quintero, owner of DistriAndina, Wednesday 12 January 2022 [voice recording] 32:32 https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1sywh8__jV0MyHAMpYpdgwIz4B5bkM5ir?usp=sharing

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Interviews

Interview conducted with Cesar Quintero, owner of DistriAndina, Wednesday 12 January 2022 [voice recording]
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1sywh8_jVOMyHAMpYpdgwIz4B5bkM5ir?usp=sharing

Figures

Figure 1- Plan drawing indicating the buildings associated with the Latin Community

Figure 2- Lucy’s Hairdressing Salon in the Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre, 2006
<https://southwarknotes.wordpress.com/latin-american-elephant/>
[accessed 11 November 2021]

Figure 3- La Fogota in the Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre, 1994
<https://southwarknotes.wordpress.com/latin-american-elephant/>
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Figure 4- Local protesting against the redevelopment of the shopping centre, 2018
<https://www.change.org/p/sadiq-khan-sadiq-say-no-to-the-displacement-of-bame-communities-from-elephant-castle/c/737719839>
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Figure 5- Victorian Railway Arches located on Elephant Road, 1940
<https://southwarknotes.wordpress.com/2019/12/09/a-little-elephant-amongst-the-big-one-elephant-road-railway-arches-and-regeneration-in-focus/>
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Figure 6- El Arco del Centro, Arch 3, once known as a business that stored carpets
[picture taken on site visit 20 October 2021]

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[picture taken on site visit 20 October 2021]

Figure 8- *Panaderia* inside the arches of Maldonado Walk
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https://issuu.com/chloetreger/docs/final_report_on_mebs_for_ewnf_by_uc
[accessed 17 November 2021]

Figure 10- Arch 3 divided into subunits, portraying the *mercado* atmosphere
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Figure 13- Los Chamos, Maldonado Walk
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Figure 16- Sketched representation of flags present on Maldonado Walk

Figure 17- Unveiling ceremony of Maldonado Walk, 2018
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Google Maps street view
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Yurupari Grupo Folklórico dancing at the Walking Tour, 2021
Figure 19- <https://www.instagram.com/p/CVKdmmRxx7k/>
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Southwark Heritage Centre and Walworth Library sign
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Figure 21- DistriAndina, Arch 6, Elephant Road, 2021
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Figure 22- Axo sketch of DistriAndina in 2006

Figure 23- Axo sketch of DistriAndina in 2008

Figure 24- Exploded axo of proposed DistriAndina in 2010
<https://luco162.wordpress.com/ccs2-mini-block-3/studio-gil/>
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Figure 25- DistriAndina, Arch 6, Elephant Road, 2010
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Figure 26- DistriAndina, Arch 6, Elephant Road, 2010
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Figure 27- DistriAndina, Arch 6, Elephant Road, 2013
<https://myelephantstory.latinelephant.org/photos/latin-corner/>
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Figure 28- DistriAndina, Arch 6, Elephant Road, 2016
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Figure 29- DistriAndina, Arch 6, Elephant Road, World Cup 2018
https://www.instagram.com/p/BIG-sQkAzD_/
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Figure 30- Sketch of DistriAndina by Talia Clarick, 2019
<https://myelephantstory.latinelephant.org/artwork/>
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Figure 31- DistriAndina's current layout
[picture taken on site visit 12 January 2022]

Figure 32- Plan sketch of DistriAndina 2022

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Figure 35- Lettering in the colours of la tri
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Figure 36- DistriAndina logo
<https://distriandina.co.uk/>
[accessed on 14 January 2022]

Addendum

Extra Images - all pictures taken on site visits

20 October and 16 November 2021

Elephant Road



Chatica, Arch 2, Elephant Road



El Arco Del Centro, Arch 3, Elephant Road



DistriAndina, Arch 6, Elephant Road



Elephant Central, Arch 7, Elephant Road



Latin American businesses residing in Elephant Road Railway Arches



Maldonado Walk



Arch 145, Maldonado Walk

Rockingham Street



Costa Azul, Arch 102A, Rockingham Street



Latin American businesses residing in Maldonado Walk Railway Arches



Latin American businesses residing in Rockingham Street Railway Arches

Original Interview Transcript with Cesar Quintero 12/01/2022

Duration 33:10

0:00 [recording interrupted and asked to be paused by Quintero]

Aim and purpose of the dissertation was explained offline and a conversation was carried out after to allow DistriAndina owner Cesar Quintero to understand my intentions and be comfortable with the entire process.

0:07 [recording interrupted and asked to be paused by Quintero]

The interview was conducted in a conversation-like manner and in Spanish. Cesar Quintero gave permission for the interview to be recorded and transcribed.

0:14 [recording interrupted and asked to be paused by Quintero]

Alison Carrillo 0:00

La primera pregunta es sobre su historia, entonces ¿cómo empezó usted aquí en Londres y como empezó DistriAndina?

0:07 [recording interrupted and asked to be paused by Quintero]

0:07 [recording interrupted and asked to be paused by Quintero]

Cesar Quintero 0:07
Bueno, DistriAndina empezó ya hace bastante, bastante tiempo. En... Hace mucho tiempo recién llegado a Londres, pues yo note que en los pocos sitios que habían que- esté historia lo he contado muchas veces – encontré que había botellas vacías de Club Colombia pero que eran usadas como veleros donde ponían las velas y, pero nunca vendían el producto. Entonces me incline y investigue un poquito y la gente decía si existiera el producto lo comprarían, entonces yo, por, empeze inicialmente con un socio, precisamente de Ecuador, para la época era muy, había mucho demanda sobre, o la necesidad de comunicarse con nuestros países y era muy costoso.

0:14 [recording interrupted and asked to be paused by Quintero]

Entonces con este socio empezamos a vender una especie de códigos para llamar a cada uno de nuestros países, Ecuador, Colombia, Bolivia, Perú, que era mucho más económico que usar los servicios de la, de British Telephone, la BT, que para la época tenía un monopolio absoluto sobre las comunicaciones en el Reino Unido, era la unica compania. Entonces era un buen negocio, empezamos por ese, ofreciendo ese servicio, llevaba alrededor de unos, de tres a tres años y medio en el Reino Unido y luego pasamos a vender tarjetas telefónicas también, precisamente porque era muy costoso llamar a cada uno de nuestros países, y fue también muy exitoso, para luego empezar con el negocio de las importaciones, y empezamos a traer productos, inicialmente desde Holanda, a través de Holanda pues es que allá ya una compañía de un señor holandes que importaba, y desde Holanda el re-exportaba a otros países, incluido el Reino Unido.

0:21 [recording interrupted and asked to be paused by Quintero]

Para la época todo estos productos que quizás puedes alcanzar a ver ahora eran muy muy costosísimo. Era un lujo comprar o poder comprar, para consumir cualquier producto, ya sea una bebida o cualquier otro tipo de alimento de nuestros países. Entonces eso fue el otro, como el otro hueco que encontramos, el otro, que eran que vendían demasiado costoso porque era muy limitada la llegada del producto aquí al Reino Unido.

[recording interrupted and asked to be paused by Quintero]

0:28 [recording interrupted and asked to be paused by Quintero]

Cesar Quintero 3:24

Esos fueron nuestros inicios, ya existían negocios funcionando en, para la época, en esa época había algunos restaurantes en London Bridge, había un restaurante, Los Arrieros se llamaba, existía también una discoteca acá, hacia el sur de Londres, en el área de Peckham existe también una discoteca. Ya existía algunos negocios en el área de Elephant, una tienda dentro del shopping center que también, llamaba La Bodeguita, asistían ventas de comida. Había uno que se llamaba La Fogata, para la epoca todavía recuerdo, y habian, había una agencia de giro que todavía se mantiene que era Inara, que está sobre esta calle, se mudo después de que el shopping center fue demolido y tiene un nuevo local en esta calle donde estamos nosotros.

0:35 [recording interrupted and asked to be paused by Quintero]

Entonces eso fue más o menos el inicio de lo que ahora se conoce como DistriAndina. Yo llegué hace 27 años a este país, 27 años, tengo dos hijos nacidos acá. En esa panorama también se creó la compañía en una época en que la demanda existía pero no era igual a las que existe en este momento, el número es mucho mayor de latinos y ya no solo de Colombianos y Ecuatorianos que en la época encontraba uno, si no que también empezaron a llegar Bolivianos y ahora para la época encuentra uno, Dominicanos y están llegando también de sur america mucho Venezolanos, que digamos es como la nueva oleada de latinos hacia acá, es la de los Venezolanos por los problemas políticos que sufre Venezuela.

0:42 [recording interrupted and asked to be paused by Quintero]

Entonces se ha extendido para la época ese mercado, que en su época o en la época en la que remontamos hace unos 18 o 20 años atrás, era muy pequeña, era mas difícil tambien para nosotros mantenernos pero existía una tienda, la primera que yo conocí, en el área de Paddington, pero hacia el sur de londres siempre habido, existido una presencia mayor o numerosa de habitantes de origen latino. La razón real, no se, algunos, hay versiones distintas el por qué-

0:49 [recording interrupted and asked to be paused by Quintero]

Alison Carrillo 6:27

¿Por qué el sur de Londres?

0:56 [recording interrupted and asked to be paused by Quintero]

Cesar Quintero 6:28

El por qué el sur de Londres, porque muchos de los primeros Colombianos llegaron al área de Chelsea, en la área de Chelsea llegaron muchos, y luego los reubicaron hacia acá, pero también está asociado por la sertacion que tuvieron por las autoridades locales de esta área, que es la área de Southwark y el área de Lambeth que la sertacion fue mayor hacia los inmigrantes o había una alta presencia de inmigrantes también no? Caribeños y Africanos en estas áreas, y entonces había como más familiaridad hacia las personas que llegaban de otros países.

Tonces, eso es más o menos el inicio de nuestra compañía que ha tenido evoluciones, en, porque la primera oficina de abrimos, el de las llamadas, existió fue por la área de Holloway, en donde está ahora el estadio de Arsenal, en un edificio que desapareció porque ya en ese oficina existía las oficinas de un periodico que también desapareció que se llamaba Noticias Latinoamérica. El dueño y fundador Mario Tesama nos ofreció hablar con el dueño del edificio y nos rentó una oficina muy económica, semanalmente, para la época era muy económica y era fácil mantenerle incluso si nos iba mal en el negocio.

0:53 [recording interrupted and asked to be paused by Quintero]

Esos uno de los razones por la que llegamos allá, pero luego de allá nos trasladamos a esta área de Elephant por las razones que quizás son muy obvias, por aca estaba casi que el 100% de los clientes-Latinos. Y llegamos a este sitio que es en la Elephant Road, en el número 6, aquí empezamos y esto inicialmente era, eran bodegas, desde, a donde llegaban los pedidos a través de España y a través de Holanda, y los contenedores, los primero contenedores que venían directamente de Colombia.

1:00 [recording interrupted and asked to be paused by Quintero]

Cuando importamos, por el afán mío de crecer más rápido, yo incorpore al negocio a unos socios y la compañía fracaso, Distri como compañía fracaso, incluso creamos una nueva razón social cuando nos asociamos, pasamos de ser DistriAndina, que DistriAndina es la unión, es la descomposición de distribuidor andina, que buscaba en su objetivo así grande, era incorporar productos de los países andinos que es más o menos Colombia, Perú, Venezuela, Ecuador y Bolivia, más o menos esos son los países que te menciono. De ahí pasamos de llamarnos DistriAndina a crear una nueva compañía porque al comienzo era, yo funcionaba como solo que era como sole trader, como autónomo le llaman en España, y pasamos hacer una compañía limitada que le cambiamos el nombre a Andina Limited. Esa sociedad desapareció, duro por ahí un año, año y medio, fracasamos, quedamos en unas condiciones muy malas para luego rebautizar como originalmente nos llamábamos que era DistriAndina.

1:07 [recording interrupted and asked to be paused by Quintero]

DistriAndina vuelve y nace, seguimos vendiendo productos como una pequeña tienda en esa época pero comprabamos ya otro importadores porque nosotros de verdad quedamos en una situacion muy difícil, y a rentar pequeños unidades en este espacio, que lo habíamos dividido, que era diferente a como está ahora.

1:14 [recording interrupted and asked to be paused by Quintero]

Alison Carrillo 10:50

Entonces este espacio era dividido antes?

1:21 [recording interrupted and asked to be paused by Quintero]

Cesar Quintero 10:52

Si, teníamos unidades, entonces teníamos un agencia de giros, teníamos una tienda, teníamos un video club, video, Video Clips se llamaba pero era renta de videos, de peliculas en espanol que

también había una alta demanda hace, quizá no habías nacido no, que eran los casetes, grandes, después llegaron los CDs, ya todo eso se desapareció, mira como va, el mundo fue cambiando y la llegada de nueva tecnología, la telefonía móvil, la masificación de la telefonía móvil a pesar que existía, no existía como existe ahora. BT dejó de ser el, manejar el monopolio de las comunicaciones y aparecieron otras compañías que también llevaron a que los precios bajarán, aprecio el internet masificado. Al comienzo el internet tocaba pagarlo, ahora eso es gratis, ya, no existía los wifis y todo esto que existe ahora.

1:28 [recording interrupted and asked to be paused by Quintero]

Entonces DistriAndina tiene ese cambio por un fracaso que tenga en cuenta tuvimos, entonces nos tocó para poder sobrevivir hacer eso y luego terminar, nos tocó declararnos en quiebra, cambiamos la razón social y convertimos esto también en un, no sé si sabía es que conseguimos licencia A3 de restaurante y conseguimos también la licencia para bailar y escuchar música en vivo, y recording music en este sitio, aquí quedaba la cabina del DJ ahí donde, en esta parte.

1:35 [recording interrupted and asked to be paused by Quintero]

Alison Carrillo 12:44

Si, si, por línea vi unas fotos donde esa pared con los cuadritos, había bastante personas bailando acá y tomando fotos.

1:42 [recording interrupted and asked to be paused by Quintero]

Cesar Quintero 12:51

Eso hizo parte del nuevo diseño cuando aplicamos por restaurante y construimos este mezzanine, precisamente, tu que estudias arquitectura o diseños de interiores, nos ayudó mucho un arquitecto de origen colombiano. Se llama Pedro Gil, el fue que diseñó con la idea de estas baldosas así, a coloridas, el piso, el techo debía ir también así, con este diseño, pero creo que se caían los tiles, se caian, pero era mas o menos, las paredes eran de amarillas forradas como en una paneles, eso era el diseño original, incluido la entrada y la parte de atrás. Pedro Gil en esto, para la época, fue el tercer, se ganó como el tercer puesto de la, del ‘Youngest Architect’ en unos premios que daba, sus diseños compitieron y llegaron hacer, los tercer mejores diseños, y aparecieron en revistas y libros. El mismo Pedro Gil que hoy en día creo que dirige la facultad de arquitectura en la UCL, y llegó a ser también profesor en la South Bank University, era catedrático y en una universidad en Brighton, profesor de arquitectura. Él es de origen colombiano, nos ayudó tremendamente para conseguir la licencia y el diseño del sitio.

1:49 [recording interrupted and asked to be paused by Quintero]

Alison Carrillo 14:42

Y en qué año era eso?

1:56 [recording interrupted and asked to be paused by Quintero]

Cesar Quintero 14:44

Eso estamos hablando, eso hace unos 8 años atrás, 8.

Alison Carrillo 14:51

A tonces si esta medio reciente.

Cesar Quintero 14:53

Si, si es. Entonces se hizo este diseño, desocupamos, duraron 2,3 meses, Los trabajos reinauguramos con un concierto que si buscas debe estar en YouTube.

Alison Carrillo 15:07

Si, hay videos, fotos y todo.

Cesar Quintero 15:08

El video de la reinauguración de, hicimos una tarima al fondo porque este era la pista de baile, tú has estado antes no, este era la pista de baile, todavía se mantiene, la extracción, aqui bailaba la gente, salida de emergencia, alla colocamos tarima y esto fue un-

Alison Carrillo 15:27

Espacio grande si es.

Cesar Quintero 15:28

Si, si, buen espacio. Bueno entonces eso es más o menos, nos fue muy bien en el proyecto restaurante y dance, no discoteca porque no teníamos licencia.

Alison Carrillo 15:40

No tenia licencia, si.

Cesar Quintero 15:42

Pero si teníamos una licencia para la época, gracias a Pedro Gil vuelvo y mencionó nos ayudó en la obtención de la licencia que ya no las dan, nosotros alcanzamos a obtener una licencia esta las 6 de la mañana, y se volvió un sitio, un referente dentro de la comunidad nivel de Londres. Sus fiestas fueron muy conocidas, hacíamos una fiesta los domingos, la Viejoteca Dominguera, creo que la más exitosa discotecas que han tenido también en el Reino Unido, porque los domingos no salía la gente, los domingos los cogia la gente para descansar, aquí bailaba la gente esta las 2, 3 de la mañana, y los Lunes de bank holiday, bailaban esta las 8 de la manana. Que también fue un proyecto exitoso, tuvimos problemas, obviamente este tipo de negocio tiene sus problemas sobre todo lo que tiene que ver con el, cómo se llamaría, con actitudes, sociales no muy aplaudidas por parte de algunos clientes por las peleas, la llegada de la policía.

Eso es más o menos esta que llegó la pandemia, está que llegó el covid. El covid nos, en el primer lockdown cerramos por cerca de, más de 2 meses cerramos, hasta que con mi hijo menor y mi hija pues que estaba también encerrados, decidimos volver abrir con el en proyecto nuevo que ahora puedes ver. Entonces la barra, sacamos todo lo que tenía que ver con la barra larga para la venta de, y atencion al publico y la venta de bebidas sobre todo de cervezas y trago, todo lo que es trago no, y abrimos sin estantes, sin nada de eso, obviamente ya nosotros habíamos incorporado en la parte de arriba tener un cocina y una panaderia, abrimos para venderle a, vender al público panadería y, pero sacamos todas las sillas y mesas, desaparecieron y estamos atendiendo con este modelo y poco a poco fuimos creciendo, volvimos a retomar como empezamos, volvimos a la tema de la importaciones y hoy en dia estamos importando directamente desde de Colombia, desde de Holanda, desde España, también desde Italia y de Estados Unidos.

Pasaremos en el transcurso del año importar también directamente desde el Perú, sobre todo los productos congelados peruanos de este tipo, son muy populares (el choclo). También traemos productos ya congelados desde de Colombia directamente, tu mira las arepas que es allá, y estos congelados bajo nuestra propia marca no, marca DistriAndina, ya tenemos la marca DistriAndina en varios productos, en varias líneas.

Alison Carrillo 19:07

Y cuándo, en qué año empezó su propia marca?

Cesar Quintero 19:10

Este año, no el año pasado (2021), perdón, empezamos. Esto llegó el año pasado, el contenedor, tenemos nuestra propia marca en dulce de leche, este es nuestra marca de dulce de leche, tenemos la panela, no se si conoce lo que es una panela, tenemos los bocadillos de guayaba, tenemos la marca nuestra también en chontaduros y en las brevas. Y esto es nuevo, el de la yuca y de la papa criolla que la llaman es la marca nuestra en esta nueva fase que estamos, inauguramos, ya vamos para, que nos llevó la pandemia. Hemos, reinventamos, volvimos a lo que éramos en un inicio con la incorporación de la ayuda pues, digámoslo, la ayuda profesional de mi hijo que estudió ciencias políticas y relaciones internacionales y de mi hija que nos ayuda también, pero sobre todo mu hijo si está más, y creamos una segunda compañía que se llama Quintero Foods Limited, que es el apellido nuestro.

Tonces bajo ese nombre, Quintero Foods Limited, estamos importando pero con la marca DistriAndina vale. Este es el, Quintero Foods Limited, y esta es la dirección de nuestra nueva, no una unidad sino una bodega donde llegan los contenedores. Entonces ese es como la parte, volvimos a nuestro inicio de una manera muy exitosa y para este año, hacia el verano de este año

abriremos un nuevo local que está aquí-

Alison Carrillo 21:11

En Castle Square cierto?

Cesar Quintero 21:12

Castle Square en la parte de atrás puedes, si quieres te llevo ahorita.

Alison Carrillo 21:16

Es conjunto con este o nuevito allá?

Cesar Quintero 21:20

Vamos abrir allá porque este toca devolver, este, aquí dentro del proyecto generación esto desaparece.

Alison Carrillo 21:24

El arco 6 y 7 se desaparecen.

Cesar Quintero 21:27

Desaparecen. No sabemos hasta cuando pero igual allá tenemos que abrir hacia el verano.

Alison Carrillo 21:31

Y usted qué piensa eso, osea, está bien, se siente cómodo en eso o no?

Cesar Quintero 21:37

Bueno, yo, es un reto, es un gran reto, no es fácil.

Alison Carrillo 21:47

Si porque arco 7 todavía no creo que tienen un lugar para moverse.

Cesar Quintero 21:50

No tienen, nosotros tenemos ese pero obviamente nosotros preferiríamos seguir aquí donde prácticamente nacimos y hemos estado más de 15 años. Tu sabes que al moverse de un sitio al otro, incluso cuando uno se muda de una habitación a otra es traumático, se pierden clientes, la renta va ser mucho más costosa, y estar 15 casi, digámosle así a la segura, casi dos décadas en el mismo sitio y moverte así es, si creo que va ser traumático, no va ser fácil.

Alison Carrillo 22:29

Y si usted sabe que es el mismo espacio o tienen más, menos?

Cesar Quintero 22:33

Es menos, porque allá nos vamos a contar por ejemplo esta bodega, ya no podemos tener bodega porque el espacio no da, y al construir por ejemplo la parte que tiene que ver con cocina, panadería y cafetería, pues se va reducir el espacio donde se le va poner, todo esto. Pero esperamos seguir contando no, con la ayuda y la presencia de los clientes que por todos estos años nos hayan acompañado, también hay una nueva generación de latinos nacidos y hechos en este país que esperamos que sigan visitando y no se pierda las raíces y no se pierda esa continuidad que hemos mantenido y hemos tenido, y esperamos seguir sobreviviendo no en medio de toda, de todo lo que hemo mencionado, no ha sido fácil, la comunidad ha crecido, nosotros de hecho estamos enviando productos a otras ciudades en Inglaterra, mandamos a Manchester, mandamos a Liverpool, Portsmouth, Jersey tenemos pedidos también de estas otra ciudades, en donde la comunidad también ha ido creciendo que hace, digámoslo hace 5 años atrás uno no tenía noticias de que existiera como existen ahora en estos momentos.

Y en Londres ha crecido, ya hay presencia de productos Latinos, yo, tenemos clientes por ejemplo Venezolanos que tienen, tienen la venta de las arepas venezolanas en sitios que antes eran impensables, tienen en Spitalfields Market, tienen en Mercato Metropolitano, estuvieron también en Winter Wonderland, estuvo un sitio de comida venezolano, en este sitio, le fue muy exitoso, fue nuestro cliente también, nosotros lo proveíamos con la materia prima de lo que ellos preparaban en este sitio para venderle a todo la gente que visitaba Winter Wonderland. En Croydon también hay sitios, entonces el, digamoslo en este caso que la arepa sea vuelto como decía alguien como en casi todo los festivales encuentras, SouthBank, vas a SouthBank y hay puestos de venta de arepas rellenas al estilo venezolano. En la esquina se va abrir un quiosco con, si miras en la esquina hay un quiosco, ese quiosco es nuestro, le rentamos con un permiso y logramos conseguir pues pensando que no íbamos, como tener ha si sea algo-

Alison Carrillo 25:31

Si, si, si, algo por si acaso.

Cesar Quintero 25:33

Si, conseguimos eso. Ahí vamos a compartir con, vamos a ofrecer productos venezolanos, para variar un poco la oferta de comida, pongámoslo, en la área porque ya existe una alta presencia como con lo mismo no, mismos menús, la misma comida, empanadas, con las papas rellenas, se ha vuelto ya repetitivo entonces podemos, que esto es como traer algo nuevo a la área y

ofrecerle a no solo a los latinos sino a los, gente de otras comunidades, otras etnias. Aquí nos visitan igualmente ingleses, esperamos en el nuevo sitio esa presencia aumente y podamos saber cómo compensar un poco, o ayudarnos bastante en lo que tiene que ver con la nueva renta y el nuevo reto en Elephant Park, que un proyecto muy bonito, de verdad esta quedando muy bello el área y esperamos que podamos ver, dice que duro unos 5 años la construcción del nuevo town centre que es como el fin del todo el proyecto de regeneración con los túneles que van a ver aca no.

Alison Carrillo 26:57
Si

[recording interrupted by staff member]

Cesar Quintero 27:08
A vea, esto es nuestro uniforme, DistriAndina, con su camiseta.

Alison Carrillo 27:14
La camiseta amarilla.

Cesar Quintero 27:15
Si, camiseta y su-

Staff Member 27:17
La camiseta tiene el logo de la compañía.

Cesar Quintero 27:20
Si ve el simbolo, el simbolo busca que no solo, ojo que no buscamos que nos identifiquen solo como una compañía por decir algo de Colombia sino que el logo y su colores, si vez?

Alison Carrillo 27:34
Si

Cesar Quintero 27:35
No ves ahi solo amarillo, azul sino que, ese azulito es mas tirando como la bandera Argentina y ese verde de pronto lo encuentras en la bandera de Bolivia, de Peru, y obviamente el amarillo, azul y rojo esta en la bandera, en los simbolos de Venezuela, Colombia y Ecuador, que compartimos casi la misma bandera no.

Pero queremos eso no, que, identificarnos más que un sitio colombiano, sitio latinoamericano-

Alison Carrillo 28:01
Para todos, si.

Cesar Quintero 28:02
Eso es nuestro objetivo, desarrollando nuestra marca, trayendo directo, comprando a los mejores precios para poder vender también a los mejores precios a los residentes del Reino Unido.

Entonces eso es más o menos, en breve palabras señorita la historia nuestra y esperamos seguir escribiéndola no, no, que no termine, que sea mucho más bonita así como tu que estas estudiando, las nuevas generaciones ojalá sea unas generaciones de jóvenes profesionales que nos ayuden hacer presencia y como decía un político, dejemos de ser una comunidad invisible en la casa del poder, ya, y una manera de dejar de ser invisible es creando una generación de profesionales, de buenos profesionales, trabajando y ofreciendo a grandes compañías y nosotros también construyendo este tipo de emprendimientos, ya, que podamos mostrarlo y dejemos de ser invisibles, vale.

[recording interrupted by delivery]

Cesar Quintero 29:52
Y aquí encuentras no, de Venezuela, de Colombia, de Ecuador, de Perú, de Brasil, tenemos productos brasileños también, Argentina, mira todo los mates se venden muy bien, todo se vende muy bien.

Alison Carrillo 30:06
Y también he notado que son, osea usted está atento a lo que está pasando, por ejemplo ahí vi la copa del Love Football, el mundialito.

Cesar Quintero 30:15
Si, del mundialito, mira que eso es muy bonito, por ejemplo uno a veces, bueno, trata de ayudar a los proyectos como de ese tipo, deportivo, comunitario, y en respuesta amablemente ellos pues traen sus trofeos a que, al menos aquí porque lo guardan en la casa, nadie los aprecia entonces aquí lo hemos ido guardando, después se lo lleva lo ponen en otro sitio y ahí tenemos. Un día ayudamos a un equipo que ellos habían hecho un equipo de baseball, aquí existe una liga de baseball en, creo que es profesional, en esa liga de baseball apoyamos una vez un equipo latino conformada casi el 100% por Dominicanos. Y en ese torneo ellos quedaron de subcampeones en

el Reino Unido, ahí esta, así como en el fútbol ahí están los de baseball, que uno pensaba que no pero si es, existe, y nos trajeron la bola que se usó, o unas de las tantas bolas que se usó en ese partido que ganaron, nos arreglaron autografiada, una de las camisetas autografiada y los trofeos sobre todo de fútbol a los equipos que hemos, le hemos colaborado, hemos apoyado.

Alison Carrillo 31:42
Wow, la comunidad le apoyó a usted y usted también apoya a la comunidad.

Cesar Quintero 31:47
Si, hay un intercambio, hay un encuentro de países también, nuestros, que aca te puedes encontrar que no ocurre en Ecuador o Colombia, pero aquí en Madrid, en Miami, en París y en Londres encuentras ese intercambio de países, nos encontramos Peruanos, Ecuatorianos, Bolivianos, Dominicanos, Venezolanos y se crea no, una gran hermandad de, dentro de países, de todo los países.

Alison Carrillo 32:30
Si, una gran comunidad, si.

Cesar Quintero 32:32
Incluso tu vas a Quito y no vas a encontrar esa variedad, vas a Bogota no le encuentras, pero lo encuentras en Madrid, lo encuentras en Nueva York, en Miami, en París, creo que en Holanda también ya se ve y se encuentra aquí también en Londres. Ya hay esa variedad de países latinoamericanos, todos juntos, y eso pues, gracias a que existen estos sitios también, en el que nos encontramos hoy.

Alison Carrillo 33:07
Bueno, muchísimas gracias por esta entrevista.

Cesar Quintero 33:10
Gracias.

Translated Interview Transcript with Cesar Quintero 12/01/2022

Duration 33:10

Aim and purpose of the dissertation was explained offline and a conversation was carried out after to allow DistriAndina owner Cesar Quintero to understand my intentions and be comfortable with the entire process.

The interview was conducted in a conversation-like manner and in Spanish. Cesar Quintero gave permission for the interview to be recorded and transcribed.

Alison Carrillo 0:00

The first question is about your story, so how did you start here in London and how did DistriAndina start?

Cesar Quintero 0:07

Well, DistriAndina started quite a long time ago. In... A long time ago I just arrived in London, well, I noticed that in the few places that there were- I've told this story many times- I found that there were empty bottles of Club Colombia but they were used as candle holders where they put the candles, but they never sold the product. So I was intrigued and did a little research and people said if the product existed they would buy it, so I initially started with a partner, precisely from Ecuador, at the time there was a lot of demand for, or the need to communicate with our countries and it was very expensive.

So with this partner we began to sell specific telephone codes to call each of our countries, Ecuador, Colombia, Bolivia, Peru, which was much cheaper than using the services of British Telephone, BT, that at the time had an absolute monopoly on communications in the UK, it was the only company. So it was a good business, we started with that, offering that service, it had been around three to three and a half years in the United Kingdom and then we started selling phone cards too, precisely because it was very expensive to call each of our countries, and it was also very successful, and then we started with the importing business, and we began to bring products, initially from Holland, through Holland, since there was already a company owned by a Dutch man who imported, and from Holland he re-exported to other countries, including the United Kingdom.

At the time, all these products that you can perhaps see now were very, very expensive. It was a luxury to buy or be able to buy, to consume any product, be it a drink or any other type of food from our countries. So that was the other, like the other gap that we found, that they were selling products too expensive because the arrival of the product here in the United Kingdom was very limited.

[recording interrupted and asked to be paused by Quintero]

Cesar Quintero 3:24

Those were our beginnings, there were already businesses operating in, at the time, at that time there were some restaurants on London Bridge, there was a restaurant, Los Arrieros it was called. There was also a nightclub here, to the south of London, in the Peckham area. There were already some businesses in the Elephant area, a store inside the shopping centre that also, called La Bodeguita, attended food sales. There was one called La Fogata, at the time I still remember, and there was a money transfer agency that is still maintained, which was Inara, which is on this street, it moved after the shopping centre was demolished and it has a new shop on this street where we are.

So that was more or less the beginning of what is now known as DistriAndina. I arrived in this country 27 years ago. I have two children born here. In this scenario, the company was also created at a time when the demand existed but it was not the same as what exists at the moment, the number is much greater of Latinos and not only of Colombians and Ecuadorians who one at the time would come across but because Bolivians also began to arrive and now for this era one would find, Dominicans and many Venezuelans are also arriving from South America, which we say is like the new wave of Latinos towards here is the Venezuelans because of the political problems they Venezuela suffers.

So through the year this markets has expanded which at the time or if we go back some 18 or 20 years ago, was very small, it was also more difficult for us to maintain ourselves but there was a store, the first that I came across, in the Paddington area, but towards the south of London there has always been a greater or numerous presence of inhabitants of Latin origin. The real reason, I don't know, some, there are different versions why-

Alison Carrillo 6:27

Why South London?

Cesar Quintero 6:28

Why South London, because many of the first Colombians arrived in the Chelsea area and then they relocated them here, but it is also associated with the connection they had with the local authorities in this area, which is the Southwark area and the Lambeth area that the interest was greater towards immigrants or there was a high presence of immigrants too, right? Caribbeans and Africans in these areas, and so there was more familiarity towards people who came from other countries.

So, that is more or less the beginning of our company that has had evolutions because the first office we opened, the one for calls, was in the Holloway area, where the Arsenal stadium is now, in a building that disappeared because in that office there were already the offices of a newspaper that also disappeared called Latin American News. The owner and founder Mario Tesama offered to the owner of the building for us and he rented us a very cheap office, on a weekly basis, for the time it was very cheap and it was easy to maintain even if our business was going badly.

That's one of the reasons why we got there, but then from there we moved to this area of Elephant for the reasons that are perhaps very obvious, that's where almost 100% of the clients were - Latinos. And we arrived at this place that is on Elephant Road, at number 6, here we started and this was initially, they were warehouses, from where the orders arrived through Spain and through Holland, and the containers, the first containers, they came directly from Colombia.

When we imported, due to my desire to grow faster, I incorporated some partners into the business and the company failed. Distri as a company failed, we even created a new company name to be associated with. We went from being DistriAndina, DistriAndina is the union, it is the decomposition of the Andean distributor, who sought in its objective was to incorporate products from the Andean countries that are more or less Colombia, Peru, Venezuela, Ecuador and Bolivia, more or less those are the countries that I mention. From there we went from calling ourselves DistriAndina to creating a new company because at the beginning it was, I worked as a sole trader, they call it self-employed in Spain, and we went on to create a limited company and we changed the name to Andina Limited. That society disappeared, it lasted for a year, a year and a half, we failed, we were left in very bad conditions and then we renamed ourselves as we originally called ourselves, which was DistriAndina.

DistriAndina returns and is born, we continue to sell products as a small store at that time but we already bought other importers because we really were left in a very difficult situation, and we began to rent small units in this space, which we had divided, which was different from how it is now.

Alison Carrillo 10:50

So this space was divided before?

Cesar Quintero 10:52

Yes, we had units, so we had a money transfer agency, we had a store, we had a video club, Video Clips it was called but it was to rent videos, movies in Spanish that were also in high demand a time ago, maybe you weren't born yet, it was the cassettes, big ones, then the CDs came, and all

that disappeared, look how it goes, the world was changing and the arrival of new technology, mobile telephone, the massification of mobile telephones. Although it existed, it did not exist as it exists now. BT stopped being the one, managing the communications monopoly and other companies appeared that also led to lower prices. At the beginning the internet had to be paid for, now it's free, already, there were no wifis and all this that exists now.

So DistriAndina has that change due to a failure that bare in mind we had, so what we had to do in order to still make a living was declare ourselves in bankruptcy. We changed the company's name and we also turned this into a, I don't know if you knew but we managed to get a A3 restaurant license and we also got the license to dance and listen to live music, and record music in this place, here was the DJ booth, in this part.

Alison Carrillo 12:44

Yes, yes, online I saw some photos where that wall with the squares, there were quite a few people dancing here and taking photos.

Cesar Quintero 12:51

That was part of the new design when we applied for a restaurant and built this mezzanine, precisely, you who study architecture or interior design, an architect of Colombian origin helped us a lot. His name is Pedro Gil, he was the one who designed with the idea of these tiles like this, colorful, the floor, the ceiling should also go like this with this design, but I think the tiles fell but it was more or less , the walls were yellow paneled, that was the original design, including the entrance and the back. Pedro Gil was, for the time, the third, he won the third place of the 'Youngest Architect' in some awards that he participated in, his designs competed and came to make the third best designs, and appeared in magazines and books. The same Pedro Gil who today I think heads the faculty of architecture at UCL, and also became a professor at South Bank University, was a professor at a university in Brighton, a professor of architecture. He is of Colombian origin, he helped us tremendously to get the license and the design of the site.

Alison Carrillo 14:42

And what year was that?

Cesar Quintero 14:44

We're talking about 8 years ago, 8.

Alison Carrillo 14:51

So it's fairly recent.

Cesar Quintero 14:53

Yes, yes it is. So this design was made, we vacated, they lasted 2.3 months, we reopened the arch with a concert that should be on YouTube if you look for it.

Alison Carrillo 15:07

Yes, there are videos, photos and everything.

Cesar Quintero 15:08

The video of the reopening of, we made a platform in the back because this was the dance floor, you haven't been before, this was the dance floor, it's still there, the extraction, people danced here, emergency exit, there we placed a platform and this was a-

Alison Carrillo 15:27

It's a large space.

Cesar Quintero 15:28

Yes, yes, good space. Well then that's more or less, we did very well in the restaurant and dance floor, not a disco because we didn't have a license for that.

Alison Carrillo 15:40

You didn't have a license, yes.

Cesar Quintero 15:42

But we did have a license for the time, thanks to Pedro Gil, as I've mentioned before that he helped us obtain the license that they no longer give out, we managed to obtain a license for 6 in the morning, and it became a site, a benchmark within the community on a London level. Our parties were very well known, we had a party on Sundays, the Old Sunday nightclub, I think one of the most successful nightclubs in the United Kingdom, because on Sundays people didn't go out, on Sundays people took them to rest, here they danced. People would stay still 2, 3 in the morning, and on bank holiday Mondays, they danced till 8 in the morning. That was also a successful project, we had problems. Obviously this type of business has its problems especially what has to do with it, what would it be called, with attitudes, social aspects not being supported by some clients due to the fights, the arrival from the police.

That was it more or less, until the pandemic arrived, until covid arrived. During covid, in the first lockdown we closed for about, more than 2 months we closed, until with my youngest son and my daughter who were also locked up, we decided to reopen with the new project that you can now

see. The bar, we took out everything that had to do with the bar relating to the selling of drinks, especially beers and alcohol, everything related to alcohol right, and we opened without shelves, without anything of that. Obviously we had already incorporated in the upper part a kitchen and a bakery, we opened to sell to the bakery goods to the public but we removed all the chairs and tables, they disappeared and we are serving with this layout and little by little we grew, we went back to how we started, we returned to the industry of imports and today we are importing directly from Colombia, from the Netherlands, from Spain, also from Italy and the United States.

In the course of the year we will also import directly from Peru, especially Peruvian frozen products of this type, they are very popular (corn). We also bring already frozen products from Colombia directly, you look at the arepas that are there, and these frozen ones are under our own brand, the DistriAndina brand, we already have the DistriAndina brand in several products, in several lines.

Alison Carrillo 19:07

And when, in what year did you start your own brand?

Cesar Quintero 19:10

This year, no last year (2021), sorry. This came last year, the container, we have our own brand of dulce de leche, this is our brand of dulce de leche, we have panela, I don't know if you know what a panela is, we have guava snacks, we have our brand ours also on chontaduros and in las brevas. And this is new, that of the cassava and the potatoes that are under our brand in this new phase that we are in, we are inaugurating, we are recovering what the pandemic took from us. We have reinvented, we returned to what we were at the beginning with the incorporation of my son's professional help who studied political science and international relations and my daughter who also helps us, but above all my son is more involved, and we created a second company called Quintero Foods Limited, which is our last name.

So under that name, Quintero Foods Limited, we are importing but with the DistriAndina brand. This is the, Quintero Foods Limited, and this is the address of our new, not a unit but a warehouse where the containers arrive. So that's like the story, we went back to our beginning in a very successful way and for this year, towards the summer of this year we will move a new location which is here-

Alison Carrillo 21:11

In Castle Square right?

Cesar Quintero 21:12

Castle Square at the back, you can, if you want I'll take you right now.

Alison Carrillo 21:16

Is it together with this one or a new one there?

Cesar Quintero 21:20

We are going to open it there because it is time to give this arch back as within the generation project this arch disappears.

Alison Carrillo 21:24

Arch 6 and 7 disappear.

Cesar Quintero 21:27

They disappear. We don't know when but maybe we have to open in the new location towards the summer.

Alison Carrillo 21:31

And what do you think about that, I mean, is it fine, do you feel comfortable with that or not?

Cesar Quintero 21:37

Well, me, it's a challenge, it's a great challenge, it's not easy.

Alison Carrillo 21:47

Yes because Arch 7 I think still doesn't have a place to move to.

Cesar Quintero 21:50

They don't, we have the place but obviously we would prefer to continue here where we were practically born and have been for more than 15 years. You know that when you move from one place to another, even when you move from one room to another, it's traumatic, you lose customers, the rent is going to be much more expensive, and we've been almost 15, let's say safely, almost two decades in the same place and then moving, I think it's going to be traumatic, it's not going to be easy.

Alison Carrillo 22:29

And do you know if it has the same amount of space or does it have more, less?

Cesar Quintero 22:33

It's less, because there we're going to find ourselves with less space. For example this warehouse, we can no longer have a storage space because there is no space, and when we built the part that has to do with the kitchen, bakery and cafeteria, well it will be reduced at the new place, all of it.

But we hope to continue counting on the help and presence of the clients who have accompanied us for all these years, there is also a new generation of Latinos born and made in this country that we hope will continue to visit and not lose their roots and not lose the continuity that we have maintained and kept, and we hope to continue surviving. Amidst everything, everything that we have mentioned, it has not been easy, the community continues to grow, in fact we are sending products to other cities in England, we send to Manchester, we send to Liverpool, Portsmouth, we also have orders from Jersey, where the community has also been growing, let's say 5 years ago no one knew regarding our presence, nothing compared to how it exists now at this time.

And in London it has grown, there is already a presence of Latin products, I, we have clients, for example, Venezuelans who have, they have the sale of Venezuelan arepas in places that were previously unthinkable, they have spots in Spitalfields Market, they have one in Mercato Metropolitano, they were also in Winter Wonderland. There was a Venezuelan food place. It was very successful, they were our client too, we provided them with the raw material of what they prepared in the place to sell to all the people who visited Winter Wonderland. In Croydon there are also places, so, in this case, people are saying that the arepa has returned, they'll be found in almost all the festivals. SouthBank, you go to SouthBank and there are stalls selling Venezuelan-style stuffed arepas. A kiosk is going to open on the corner with, if you look at the corner there is a kiosk, that kiosk is ours, we rent it with a permit and we managed to get it, thinking that we were not going to Castle Square, we had to have something-

Alison Carrillo 25:31

Yes, yes, yes, something just in case.

Cesar Quintero 25:33

Yes, we got that. There we are going to share with, we are going to offer Venezuelan products, to vary the food offer a little because in the area there is already a high presence of the same menus, the same food, empanadas, with potatoes stuffed, it has already become repetitive so we can, similar to bringing something new to the area and offering it to not only Latinos but people from other communities, other ethnicities. English people also visit us here. We hope that presence increases in the new site, that way we can compensate a little, or help ourselves with the new rent and the new challenge in Elephant Park, which is a very nice project. Truly, the area is becoming

very beautiful and we hope that we can see it. They say that the construction of the new town centre will last about 5 years, which will be the end of the entire regeneration project and the tunnels that we see here.

Alison Carrillo 26:57

Yes

[recording interrupted by staff member]

Cesar Quintero 27:08

Look, this is our uniform, DistriAndina, with the shirt.

Alison Carrillo 27:14

The yellow shirt.

Cesar Quintero 27:15

Yes, the shirt and his-

Staff Member 27:17

The shirt has the company logo.

Cesar Quintero 27:20

If you see the symbol, the symbol seeks not only, be careful, we do not seek to be identified only as a company from Colombia lets say, but rather the logo and its colours, do you see?

Alison Carrillo 27:34

Yes

Cesar Quintero 27:35do

You not only see yellow, blue, but that little blue is more leaning towards the blue of the Argentine flag and that green, you'll find it in the flag of Bolivia, Peru. And obviously the yellow, blue and red are in the flag of Venezuela, Colombia and Ecuador, which share almost the same flag no. But we want that, we want to be identified as more than a Colombian site, we want to be identified as a Latin American site.

Alison Carrillo 28:01

For everyone, yes.

Cesar Quintero 28:02

That is our goal, developing our brand, importing directly, buying at the best prices to be able to sell at the best prices to UK residents as well.

So that's more or less, in a few words, Miss, our story and we hope to continue writing it, no, no, that it doesn't end, that it will be much prettier just like the way you are studying. The new generation, hopefully it will be some generations of young professionals who help make a presence and as a politician once said, let's stop being an invisible community in the house of power and one way to stop being invisible is by creating a generation of professionals, of good professionals, working and offering what they can to big companies and us also building this type of enterprise, now, to show that we can and stop being invisible, okay.

[recording interrupted by delivery]

Cesar Quintero 29:52

And here you find products from Venezuela, from Colombia, from Ecuador, from Peru, from Brazil, we have Brazilian products too, Argentina, look at all the mates, they sell very well, everything sells very well.

Alison Carrillo 30:06

And I have also noticed that they are, I mean, you are attentive to what is happening, for example, there I saw the Love Football Cup, el mundialito.

Cesar Quintero 30:15

Yes, from el mundialito, look that's very nice, for example one sometimes, well, tries to help projects like that, sports, community, and in response they kindly share their trophies, at least here because they keep it in the house where nobody appreciates it so here we have been displaying it, then they take it they put it in another place and there we have it. One day we helped a baseball team, here there is a baseball league in, I think it is professional, in that baseball league we once supported a Latino team made up almost 100% of Dominicans. And in that tournament they were runners-up in the United Kingdom, as well as football tournaments, there are the baseball ones, which one thought not, but there is, it exists. They brought us the ball that was used, or one of the many balls that were used in that game that they won, they gave it to us autographed, along with an autographed jersey. The trophies are brought in, especially football, by the teams that we have collaborated with and supported.

Alison Carrillo 31:42

Wow, the community supports you and you also support the community.

Cesar Quintero 31:47

Yes, there is an exchange, there is a meeting of countries too, ours, that you'll find here that you won't find in Ecuador or Colombia, but in Madrid, in Miami, in Paris and in London you find that exchange of countries, we find ourselves Peruvians, Ecuadorians, Bolivians, Dominicans, Venezuelans and a great brotherhood is created within countries, of all countries.

Alison Carrillo 32:30

Yes, a great community, yes.

Cesar Quintero 32:32

You will not find this variety in cities like Quito or Bogota, you just will not, but in London you will. There is now that variety of Latin American countries, all working together, and it's thanks to these arches in which we find ourselves in today.

Alison Carrillo 33:07

Well, thank you very much for this interview.

Cesar Quintero 33:10

Thank you.