

## LONDON IS A GREAT CITY – AND MUCH OF IT COULD BE ON YOUR DOORSTEP

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**We live in cities because we want to be in the heart of the action. We are often willing to overlook the daily downfalls – expensive rent and overpriced pints to name a few – simply because there is no better place in the world to work, socialise and embrace opportunities than in this city.**

However, this year the relationship with the cities we live in has changed drastically. London has transformed – the stark images of an empty Piccadilly Circus and Covent Garden are still clear in our minds.

Many are speaking about a societal “reset” globally due to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic – re-shaping our routines and business landscape around the urgency of climate change. As part of this, how we plan our cities could benefit from a shake-up, and this time should be used to envision and plan for what a better urban landscape could look like.

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In times of great change and upheaval, we often can see what action should be taken with the most clarity. For example, the Centre for London has this week launched a major new report to set out long-term recommendations for the city for the first time since 1991. This is a pivotal moment to remap London's structure to support diverse business communities across all its boroughs – not just those congregated in the city centre.

A polycentric, sustainable London is a very real development we could see emerging, and should encourage, centring around local boroughs and neighbourhoods to a greater extent.

Many people have realised their lengthy commutes to global HQs in central London locations were negatively contributing to their quality of life – why don't we look at the boroughs around us and what they can offer?

The Mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo's "ville du quart d'heure" looks like a great place to start – essentially, everything you need on a daily basis is within a 15-minute walk, cycle or journey on public transport. This reinvents the idea of what urban proximity is. It's better for our and the planet's wellbeing if we can have access to shopping, leisure and services close by.

London communities from Waltham Forest to Southall are starting to see the benefits of putting the needs of local residents first, and it is time that businesses thought hard about their future presence in the capital. For decades, the hustle of Zone 1 has been considered the premium location, but innovation can be found closer to people's doorsteps.

From the ability to connect with local communities and residents, to freed up resources to invest back into R&D and staff, and a closer proximity to where the younger demographic live, in areas such as Hackney and Peckham – creating hubs and satellite offices outside the city centre could be just what we need to accommodate the new hybrid way of working, and succeed in bringing people together to work in a way that accommodates our new reality.

Let's reimagine what a thriving London could look like, and turn to the neighbourhoods we live in, to really create a London for everyone.