

The Clash In 2020: London's 'Videoconferenc'ing, Some Urbane Speculations



The covid-19 pandemic has dealt a severe blow to the economic proposition of large cities, i.e. increasing returns to scale due to density and intensity. London faces some tough decisions about its economic future, none of which are clear-cut. Professor Michael Mainelli has researched urban planning since the 1970's and his firm, Z/Yen, runs longitudinal research of cities worldwide based on its Global Financial Centres, Global Green Finance, and Smart Centres indices. He will explore some of the early, tentative thoughts that he and other researchers are exploring, and conclude with some thoughts on the strategic decisions London, particularly the City of London, faces today.

Alderman & Sheriff Professor Michael Mainelli
Executive Chairman, Z/Yen Group
27 November 2020 via Zoom

May I thank fellow Alderman Alison Gowman for asking me to participate in this City Livery Club Face2Face talk, though strictly it's not Face2Face, more Screen2Screen. During this talk I want to challenge us to face the realities of a dramatically changed City. It's rare that I share research that is incomplete, but I genuinely seek input and this is the perfect community with whom to share these early stage ideas; so I look forward to the discussion afterwards. One big disclaimer, these remarks are quite speculative, and are my thoughts made in a private capacity, not as Sheriff or Alderman.

Outline

- City of London
- Accelerating trends - business travel reduction & working from home
- Observations on the virtual world
- Impact on global financial centres
- From our history
- Change is coming
- We are alone, but not unique
- We need to talk about this...
- Global business coffeehouse



The City of London is the world's pre-eminent financial centre. Sure, it has vied with New York City for the past three decades, but as a truly international centre it shines. Small nations often have outside financial centres, think Singapore, Zurich, Geneva, Dublin, or Amsterdam, let alone offshore centres around the world from Jersey, Guernsey, and the Isle of Man, to Gibraltar, Luxembourg, Cayman Islands, or Mauritius.

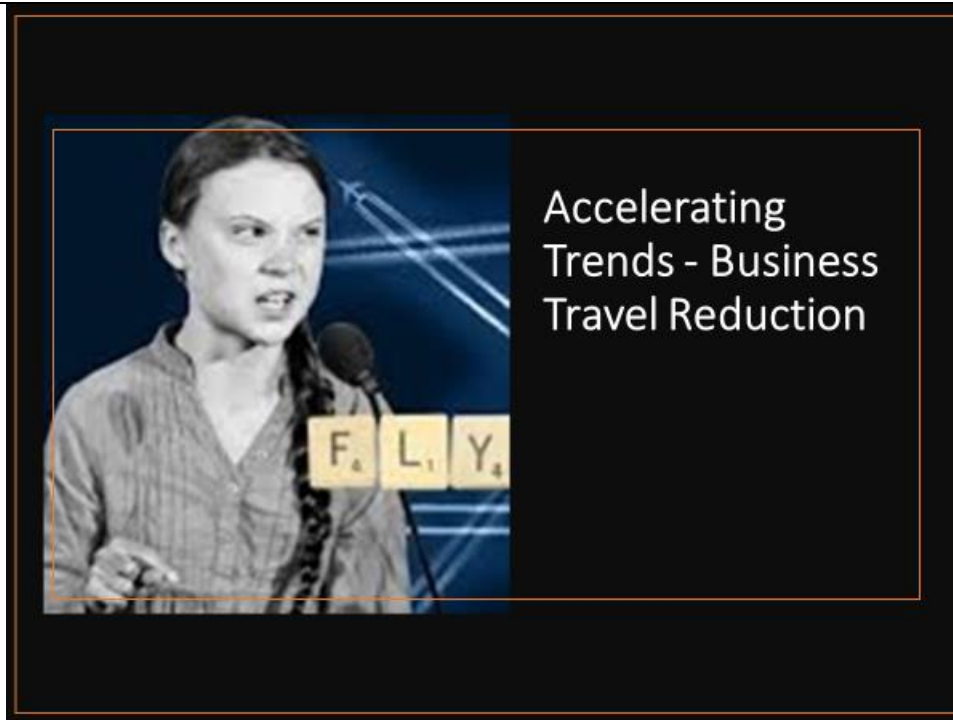
As someone who travels the world advising countries and cities on establishing financial centres, what people value is stability and tolerance. Multinationals frequently do their financial work in foreign cities despite having no operational work in the same country. A French pharmaceutical company and a Japanese pharmaceutical company can structure a deal over a Malaysian plant in London, not in France, Japan, or Malaysia. On the contrary, I've never seen a deal in New York City, Tokyo, or Beijing where there is no indigenous USA, Japanese, or Chinese local business.



The City of London is (or was?) one of the most intense meeting places for global workers, perhaps the most intense. We know the numbers, 522,000 commuting workers (January 2020) with 9,000 residents. The Square Mile may have a genuine claim to be most intense open (as opposed to tower block) urban working environment with a daytime density of 180,000/km² (Manhattan's density is about 27,000/ km², albeit that is an average).

Due to covid-19 forcing physical distancing, all cities have taken a direct hit to their core strength, the economies of scale that come with physical density and economic intensity.¹ Equally though, covid-19 has accelerated two unnoticed trends, business travel reduction and working from home.

¹ The importance of city intensity and density was a discussion topic in Fiona Woolf's 2014 Lord Mayor's Gresham Event - https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/content.gresham.ac.uk/data/binary/570/fionawoolf_measuringupcities_300114b.doc, and for further intellectual underpinnings, e.g. cities and power laws, I'd refer you to Geoffrey West's work at the Santa Fe Institute <https://www.santafe.edu/research/projects/cities-scaling-sustainability> or perhaps this lecture, "Our reality must rise to meet our rhetoric, but it was ever thus" - <https://www.mainelli.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Jeremy-Goford-Memorial-Lecture-London-Forever-Reality-or-Rhetoric-2017.09.20-v1.3.pdf>.



There were already very strong signs that international business travel patterns are changing. In Scandinavia, in a boom year, 2019, *flygskam*, translated as ‘flight shaming’, reduced business travel by about 8%. This is an unprecedented drop. By way of contrast, in 2010 Eyjafjallajökull’ eruption generated much more coverage but only half of the impact. Flygskam showed every sign of spreading across Europe, until covid-19 reduced all travel by approximately 80% this year.

As with business travel reductions, video-conferencing is not new. My firm installed a BT video-conferencing facility in the late 1990s to support one UK client with 30 locations, then on to several foreign clients. Jitsi, Skype, and Lifesize arrived in 2003, Cisco’s Telepresence and GoToWebinar in 2006, BigBlueButton in 2007, Bluejeans in 2009, Zoom in 2011, though Teams only in 2017.

Accelerating Trends - Working From Home



What is new has been the virtually instantaneous wholesale adoption of video-conferencing due to travel restrictions, thus leading to an enormous jump in working from home. People may be missing the important and subtle lesson from this great 'working from home' experiment. The big lesson is not that video-conferencing works; it has for decades. The big lesson might be that multi-modal operations don't work. A mix of video-conferencing and physical is awkward, implying that moving back to physical may not be simple unless everyone does it.

Working from home is no joy, 'flatscreening' with poor audio and video, constant distractions, poor socialising. The big advantages are a 15 foot commute and a few easier domestic arrangements, e.g. receiving deliveries.


There are many reasons to wish to put the working from home genie back in the bottle – workers want to socialise, younger staff need to be trained, you can't hire people you don't meet physically. Well, since March I've hired a young person I've never met, had staff request to stay in the country permanently to purchase larger homes than in London, and I personally don't feel we're having fewer ideas as a firm. I'm conscious that certain sectors, e.g. lawyers, are struggling with how to train solicitors without face-to-face engagement, but many sectors are working this out, starting with higher education.

Observations On The Virtual World



This great experiment has energised competition amongst the various offerings; they now have investment money to spend on new developments, and customers to compete for. Since March, machine-learning (AI) systems are now able to access hugely enlarged recorded libraries of human interactions in a controlled environment. They've never had this quantity of recorded person-to-person video and audio interaction. Anticipate large scale simulations of people in video-conferences, perhaps an automated note taker – “Alexa, this comment is not to be minuted” - and suites of software to support the real people among them.

Global Financial Centres Index 28 (September 2020)



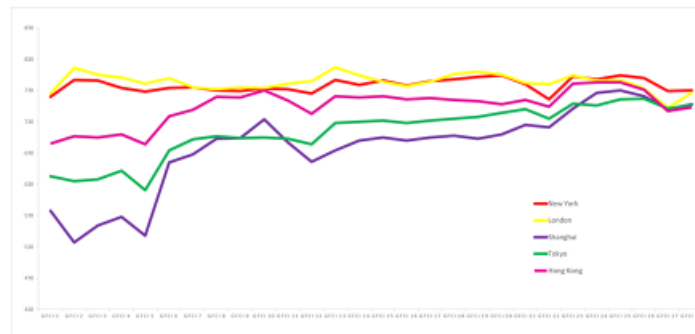
Centre	GFCI 28		GFCI 27		Change in	
	Rank	Rating	Rank	Rating	Rank	Rating
New York	1	770	1	769	0	▲1
London	2	766	2	742	0	▲24
Shanghai	3	748	4	740	▲1	▲8
Tokyo	4	747	3	741	▼1	▲6
Hong Kong	5	743	6	737	▲1	▲6
Singapore	6	742	5	738	▼1	▲4
Beijing	7	741	7	734	0	▲7
San Francisco	8	738	8	732	0	▲6
Shenzhen	9	732	11	722	▲2	▲10
Zurich	10	724	14	719	▲4	▲5
Los Angeles	11	720	10	723	▼1	▼3
Luxembourg	12	719	18	715	▲6	▲4
Edinburgh	13	718	17	716	▲4	▲2
Geneva	14	717	9	729	▼5	▼12
Boston	15	716	25	708	▲10	▲8
Frankfurt	16	715	13	720	▼3	▼5
Dubai	17	714	12	721	▼5	▼7
Paris	18	713	15	718	▼3	▼5
Washington DC	19	712	24	709	▲5	▲3
Chicago	20	711	16	717	▼4	▼6
Guangzhou	21	710	19	714	▼2	▼4
Amsterdam	22	701	27	703	▲5	▼2
Stockholm	23	700	28	702	▲5	▼2
Vancouver	24	698	22	711	▼2	▼13
Seoul	25	695	33	694	▲8	▲1

My firm compiles the Global Financial Centres Index, last published in September. I would highlight two trends from that 28th edition:

First, the average rating of centres in the index has dropped 41 points (6.25%) in just one edition. The enormous economic impact of the covid-19 pandemic is not the only reason. Before covid-19 uncertainty was already rising sharply about the future of international trade, technology, the future of workplaces, climate change, and geopolitical stability. These factors have led to significantly increased volatility in our last two editions of the index.

Second, while average ratings fell, all of the top ten centres in the index increased their ratings in GFCI 28, reversing recent trends. During the pandemic, financial services returned to big, safe, financial centre harbours. Yet the economic performance of cities with high commuter intensity, such as New York or London, has been extremely poor.

Top 5 Centres (2007-2020)



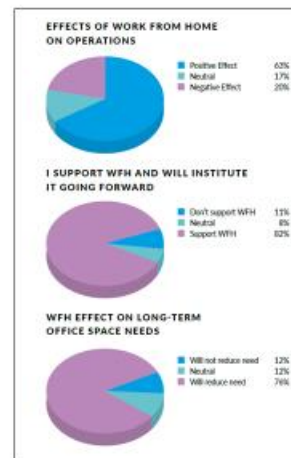
"GFCI 28 shows increased confidence in the leading financial centres, but a general reduction in confidence in other centres. Uncertainty about trade, political stability, and the economic impact of the covid-19 pandemic has injected more volatility into the index results. New ways of working are challenging the concept of a traditional financial centre. For example, the physical City of London has had an economically torrid covid-19, while financial services in SouthEast England have had a bumper year."

We asked people in the GFCI survey to assess their future working patterns in the light of covid-19. Our global community predicts a permanent 20 per cent increase in the time they spend working from home as opposed to the office. In Western Europe, the shift to working from home is even more pronounced. The importance of 'place', in terms of clusters of businesses and supporting services innovating together, is shifting. For example, the physical City of London has had an economically terrible covid-19 year, while the financial services cluster in Southeast England has had a bumper year. The same goes for New York City.

Large Firm Economic Impact



<https://www.zyen.com/publications/public-reports/covid-crisis-effects-financial-services-industry/>



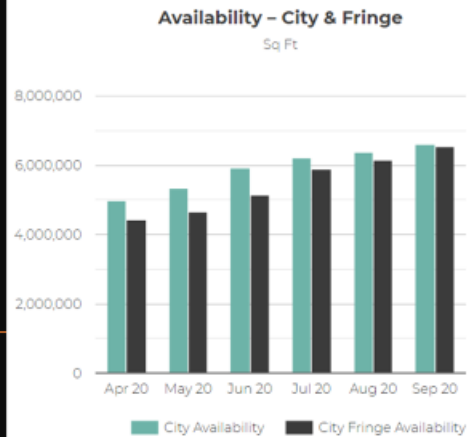
In August, Z/Yen’s FS Club published a financial services industry survey finding that the industry sees many silver linings amid the covid-19 crisis. The survey drew upon 130 global executives in banking, fintech, and consulting. Among the findings of “[The Covid Crisis: Effects On The Financial Services Industry](#)”:

- 51% of banking executives think the crisis has had a positive influence on their customer relationships; about half think there will only be a small amount of account switching as a result of the crisis.
- 59% think the crisis has had a positive effect on their employee relationships.
- 83% say they support work from home initiatives, and 76% predict that this will reduce their future need for office space.
- 60% think that the covid-19 crisis has had a positive effect on the market fit of their current products.
- 56% think there will be many changes to the financial services industry due to the crisis, with 27% predicting ‘dramatic’ changes.

Rising Voids

- Estimated vacancy rate in the City of London
- 9.0% in September
- 8.8% in August
- 8.6% in July
- 8.0% in June
- 7.2% in May
- 6.7% in April
- 6.8% in March

INGLEBY TRICE.



My Wapping flat has one roof terrace with a view of the entire city, another with a view of all of Canary Wharf (yes, we have a lot of roof terraces). Senior leaders must be saying after 35 weeks that if all this real estate is there so my workers can meet each other over coffee machines and water coolers to come up with some spivvy ideas, wouldn't it be cheaper to give everyone two paid networking weeks in Bali or such?

Current circumstances can support different narratives, but I will share one snippet - a trading client of mine with a City workforce of 300, £10bn under management, 18,500 client accounts, who, facing a lease renewal in April, decided to go wholly virtual and exercised its lease break. They now have no physical office, just a brass plate.

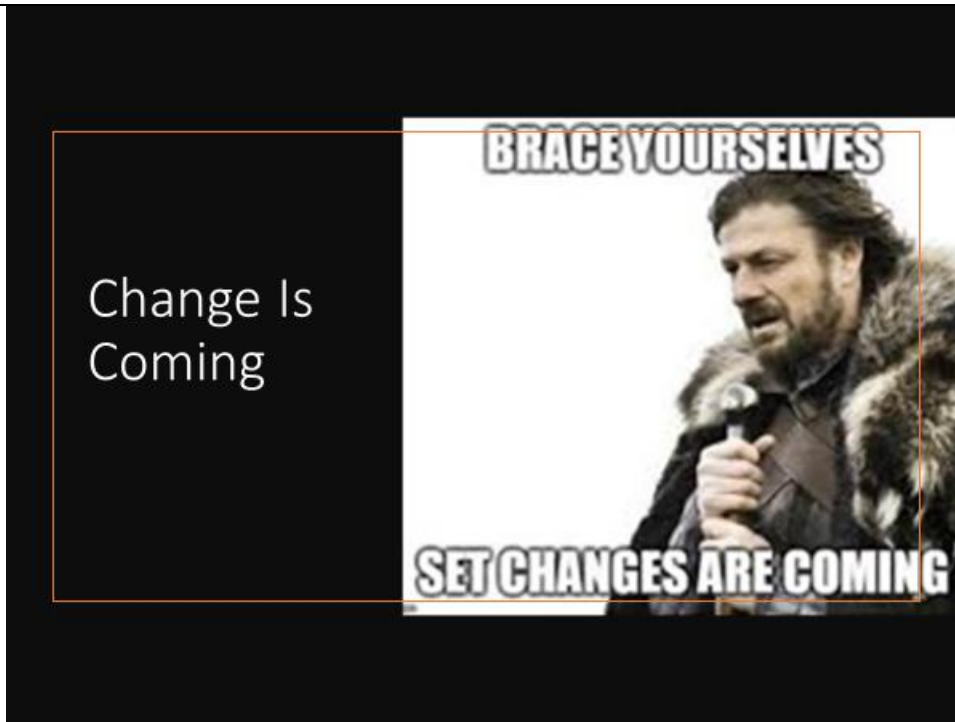
Cost-savings are so significant working from home won't be put back in the bottle easily or wholly. That same firm has nearly 25,000 square feet of space costing all-in about £120 per square foot (Lambert Smith Hampton Total Occupancy Cost Survey - <https://www.lsh.co.uk/-/media/files/lsh/research/2020/tocs%202020%20data>). That's about £3 million in property costs. Last year £70 million of turnover gave that firm a profit of £8 million. This year it will be about £11 million. Who will give up 27% of profit? Who can afford to give it up if competitors don't return to their premises too? Denying that large firms are considering going wholly virtual is denying reality.



The plague of 1665 or the fire of 1666 are often invoked as precedents for the City's resilience in the face of adversity, and pandemic. The Great Fire provided an opportunity for major civic space reform that was largely bypassed, though the circumstances are complex. The Black Death of 1348 shouldn't be forgotten, leading as it did to much more power for labourers, and the 1350 attempts by Aldermen to control a rising wage bill, with further events leading to the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 where Wat Tyler led the rebellion to the heart of the City, the Lord Mayor, and the Aldermen.

It might be more useful to consider the great 'depopulation' of the City which came from the introduction of the railway, starting with the London & Greenwich in 1836. This led to a commuter-based City and to a major repurposing of residential property over the next two generations.

Other examples of significant business change leading to repurposing of property include the introduction of the telegraph (telecommunications wave 1) with the Electric Telegraph Company's move to the finest ward in the City in 1848; destruction of the City's extensive manufacturing base (Barbican area) during World War II; the move to telephony (wave 2); the move to electronic trading from the 1980s (wave 3) changing the built environment substantially, think floor heights on building from the 1980s onwards needing to accommodate cabling; the symbiosis with Canary Wharf from the 1990s. Widespread video-conferencing constitutes telecommunications wave 4.



A *de minimis* assumption is that we face almost certainly another twelve months of restricted social engagement. That assumption is based on finding and rolling out a vaccine to billions with no hiccoughs. An *ad maximam* assumption is that we need to assume current circumstances are semi-permanent, perhaps even bracing for the next coronavirus.

Let's explore what could the City Of London do now that regardless of whether the end game is *de minimis* or *ad maximam*, so that our future City is better than the original? This is not meant to be defeatist or depressing. In fact, London might well emerge better from covid-19.

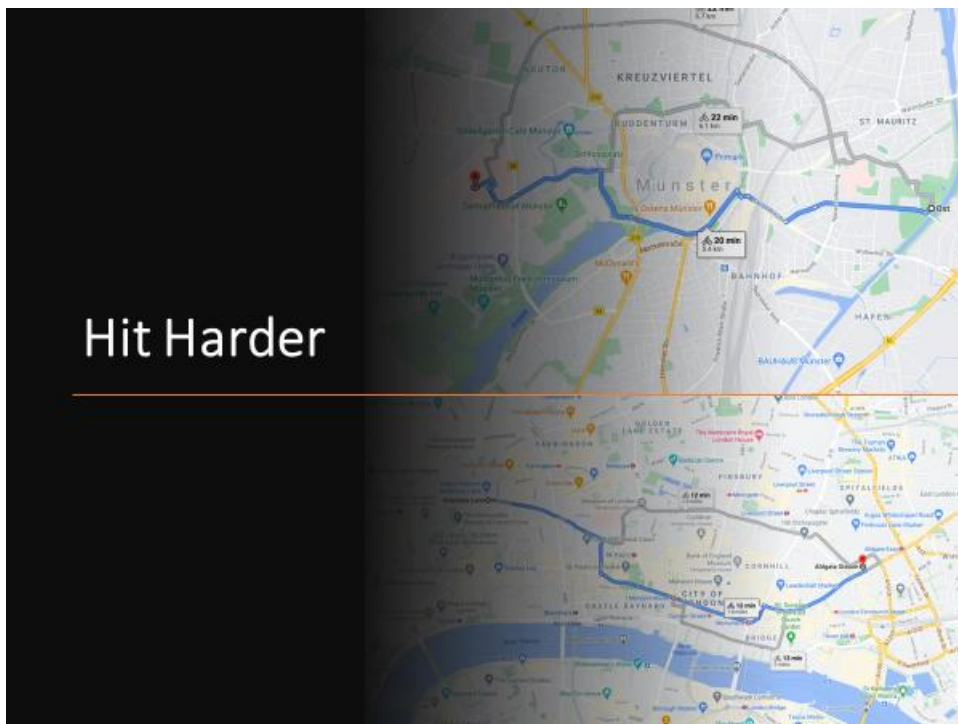
If business leaders decide that working from home is to their competitive benefit, then the City could find itself running 50%, 75%, or 80% below capacity. Many businesses require City capacity usage significantly above 20% to survive (remember weekends), and utilisation levels above 85% (most of our sandwich shops, etc.). A non-vibrant City can start a vicious spiral of too few professional workers for support businesses leading to too low utilisation leading to closures leading to lower utilisation from other businesses, etc. Never forget Detroit. Lower property prices will not achieve much if there is just not enough business to be had.

Thriving Centres

City	Population
Schweinfurt, DE	54,000
Giessen, DE	84,000
Venlo, NL	101,000
Bad Kissingen, DE	103,000
Würzburg, DE	128,000
Enschede, NL	159,000
Liege, BE	196,000
Fulda, DE	223,000
Aachen, DE	246,000
Münster, DE	310,000

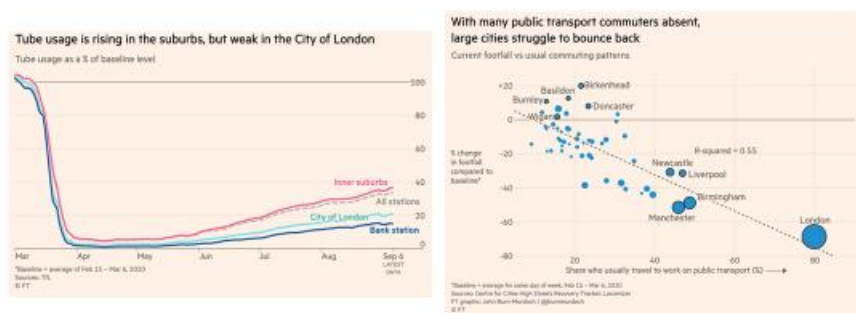


Every city worldwide has covid-19 problems. The centres hit hardest are those with heavy commuting - New York City, Tokyo, and London. Elisabeth and I took an August holiday in a range of cities from 54,000 to 310,000. All were thriving in comparison to London. The largest, Münster, is a 20 minute slow cycle ride across town. The City of London isn't even that, 12 minutes across perhaps.



However when I don't go to the office in Münster I have coffee at the coffee shop you used to use when you were at your office in our neighbourhood. In London by contrast, the central coffee shop has no business. Our relative advantage, physical intensity delivered by commuting infrastructure, may have changed permanently for the worse. Our very strength as a commuter centre is our downfall.

Specialised City – A Commuter City



These slides just highlight our dependence on commuting. First, we are the largest commuter City in the UK. Second, our commuting traffic is barely breathing. Current numbers appear to indicate running about 80% below capacity in terms of staff, but that many of those staff are security and cleaning, tending empty buildings.

Will Post-Covid-19 Financial Centres Commuting Collapse?



Globally, this slide contrasts the post-covid-19 economic outlook – better is to the right, with strength as a financial centre, stronger is up. The dot size is the commuter rail track per population. London’s cluster should do well post-covid-19, but perhaps not its commercial centre, nor New York, Tokyo, and Hong Kong.

15 Minute City

Arup survey of 5,000 residents across London, Paris, Madrid, Berlin and Milan based on the concept that city dwellers enjoy a better quality of life when essential facilities such as parks, grocery shops, schools, medical facilities, leisure centres, gyms, and cafes, are within a 15-minute walking or cycling distance from home:

Three in five (60%) of Londoners questioned said they have considered leaving the capital due to Covid-19, more than

- Paris - 41 per cent
- Milan - 39 per cent
- Madrid - 37 per cent
- Berlin - 30 per cent



	Total average time (without commute)	Total average time (with commute)	Access to green space	A shop that sells groceries	A medical facility	School	Restaurant or cafe	Leisure centre or gym
London	23.5	25.4	20.1	19.4	22.2	28.3	20.7	25.1
Berlin	16.0	19.5	10.8	12.7	13.9	20.1	12.3	18.4
Paris	15.5	19.65	11.1	10.3	14.2	16.4	11.3	16.8
Milan	13.1	15.9	9.3	8.7	13.3	15.0	8.4	13.3
Madrid	13.1	17.4	8.9	8.0	12.0	15.8	8.4	13.8

[Source: Arup – City Living Barometer, 2020]

Finally, Arup has looked at London in terms of its futuristic view ‘15 minute’ cities. We are a long way from being able to reconfigure ourselves. Perhaps we can’t, and perhaps we shouldn’t.

The five-year Corporate Plan (2018-2023) for the Corporation sets out our vision as three aims:

- Contribute to a flourishing society;
- Support a thriving economy;
- Shape outstanding environments.
-

We Are Not Alone, But We Are Unique



City Of London Corporate Plan 2018-2023

Over a millennium various versions of this strategy show a strange consistency. Supporting a thriving economy means making the property of the Square Mile valuable.

What rarely works is naïve boosterism’, *a la* Boris Johnson. “Have the confidence to get back to work”. We are all City of London optimists, but... boosters who get things wrong, e.g. a second wave comes, lose credibility. If the firm’s bosses are happy with working from home, boosterism isn’t helpful. It puts decision-making bosses in conflict with their staff. Staff don’t want to return for PR purposes. From one of mine, “why would I now put on a suit and tie and struggle with public transport for almost two hours so I can put myself at risk to buy a sandwich at Pret-a-Manger to save the economy?”

Strategy?



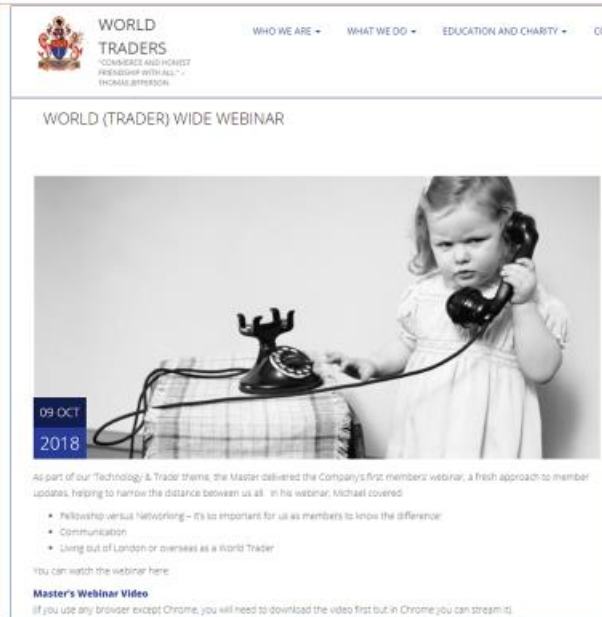
Support a thriving economy

- Businesses are trusted and socially and environmentally responsible
- We have the world's best legal framework and access to global markets
- We are a global hub for innovation in finance and professional services, commerce and culture
- We have access to skills and talent we need

Thus, I might outline three strategies to addressing our situation:

- return-to-normal, wait-and-see. It's early days. We might face a property crash of unimagined proportions, but people will come back if the price is low enough. We won't do much worse than any other heavy commuter centre, right?
- convert to residential, roll the clock back two centuries. This could mean missing out on an opportunity I'll outline below, but also do the nation irreparable economic harm by losing the unique intensity we have. Some residential conversion will happen, but commercial to residential conversion is normally a poor choice, due to plant, lifts, plumbing locations, and floor heights. With conversion to residential we would likely wind up a poor version of the City of Westminster.
- convert to campus, or global business coffeehouse – let's explore this.

We Need To Talk About This



The screenshot shows a webpage for 'WORLD TRADERS'. The header includes the logo and navigation links: 'WHO WE ARE', 'WHAT WE DO', 'EDUCATION AND CHARITY', and 'CONTACT'. Below the header, the main content area is titled 'WORLD (TRADER) WIDE WEBINAR'. It features a black and white photograph of a young child in a white dress talking on a rotary telephone. A date stamp '09 OCT 2018' is overlaid on the bottom left of the image. Below the image, there is a short paragraph of text and a bulleted list of topics covered in the webinar. At the bottom, there is a link to watch the webinar video and a note about browser compatibility.

WORLD TRADERS
"COMMERCE AND HONESTY
FELLOWSHIP WITH ALL"
- THOMAS BETHESDA

WHO WE ARE - WHAT WE DO - EDUCATION AND CHARITY - CONTACT

WORLD (TRADER) WIDE WEBINAR

09 OCT
2018

As part of our Technology & Trade theme, the Master delivered the Company's first members' webinar, a fresh approach to member updates, helping to narrow the distance between us all. In his webinar, Michael covered:

- Fellowship versus Networking – it's so important for us as members to know the difference
- Communication
- Living out of London or overseas as a World Trader

You can watch the webinar here

Master's Webinar Video
If you use any browser except Chrome, you will need to download the video first but in Chrome you can stream it!

I would point to three relevant limitations to online interaction:

- online interactions are poorer with those you haven't met physically first.
- online interactions are poorer for complex sales.
- online interactions are poorer for large, complex deals. Such deal-making is a mainstay of London. People coming to raise money can make 8 to 15 presentations in two days. Insurance alone sees CFOs making 8 to 15 presentations over a couple of days to renew policies, year in and year out.

These three limitations resoundingly apply to cross-border trade and cross-border investment. So, in a world where physical business interactions will decrease markedly, but are still essential, **the opportunity for the City of London may be to become the single global centre for all cross-border deal-making.**



Where's The Coffee?



My paradigm cross-border worker might be a fictional insurance broker in Perth. He makes two big 10 day trips each year to re-establish his international connections. In the spring he treks through Japan on his way to the USA, Milwaukee, then New York City. He might take an extra couple of days in New York City and environs to see friends and have a break. In the autumn he treks via Singapore to Munich, attends a Monte Carlo or Baden Baden conference, and winds up in London. He might take an extra couple of days in London and environs to see friends and have a break. His daughter was already pestering him heavily in 2019 to cut down on this travel, make a single trip with fewer climate damaging stops. He wants make one trip to one place, Beijing or New York City or Tokyo if he has a lot of business in North America or China or Japan. But for a truly 'international' city he has only Singapore or London, the Global Business Coffeehouse.

Global Business Coffeehouse – Global Business Campus

1. Ring of Health
2. Marketing Workations
3. Supporting Deal-makers
 - a. increase our public space
 - b. open meeting rooms
 - c. provide street-level pop-up micro-leases for businesses
 - d. invest in new conference facilities
 - e. promote convert to hotel, convert to shared office, and convert to internal bespoke hotel for businesses
 - f. providing an online social 'Directory' of the City
 - g. rethinking free, in-City transportation



<https://www.watp.com/London/nattisrael-park-city-avenue-liverpool>

Some thoughts on what taking this seriously might mean:

1. **Ring of Health** reinforces the Ring of Steel. The City of London becomes the safest business gathering place on the planet. We move vastly further towards physical safety than any centre in the world. Spray gates & ozone disinfectors, dry hydrogen peroxide emitters, face masks, sanitisers, and testing, at all City gates and commuter points, with free treatment if you contract covid-19 on your business trip to the City of London. Highly visible public cleaning and decontamination. Run architecture competitions and certifications for building biologically safe premises.
2. Marketing **workations**. The City of London becomes the world's workation nerve centre, working closely with airlines and tourist agencies to treble business tourism. Making it easy for business people to justify a trip to London over all other centres they could travel to. The paradigmatic Perthian is chatting with a US underwriter and they discuss their workation plans. The US colleague adjusts her trips timings to get some physical overlap for the two of them.
3. **Supporting deal-makers**. On the assumption of high availability and falling property prices, we might 'lean in hard' to the virtual world. Being so slick with flexible services, online media, video-conferencing, and directories, we make London the only sensible stop a road warrior needs.
 - a. increase our public space to increase physical distancing comfort.
 - b. use empty storefronts as open meeting rooms where you can be physically distant but meet strangers you (don't) bump into on the street, impromptu meeting areas or congregation points that help to recreate the buzz and rumour that fuels physical interactions. These

- congregation points could be networked (imagine 30 to 100 in empty ground floor premises of the City).
- provide street-level pop-up micro-leases for businesses, something in-between an office and a stand at a business conference, where they can arrange multiple visits but under their own brand. Alibaba has an 'Alibaba Workation Week' in London, complete with a storefront display in Cheapside.
 - invest in new conference facilities that conform to distancing, overcoming a long disadvantage of London against places like Amsterdam, Monaco, Geneva, or Frankfurt with their high-volume halls.
 - promote convert to hotel, convert to shared office, and convert to internal bespoke hotel for businesses. Converting our commercial space to residential might be wasting an opportunity to take advantage of our uniqueness.
 - providing an online social 'Directory' of the City, delineating who's in and who's out, albeit with very porous borders. Anyone can see who are truly members of our 'community'.
 - Rethinking our in-City transportation. Free electric bikes, scooters, perhaps autonomous hop-on hop-off open circular trams, Disney-style.

Postcards From The Future?



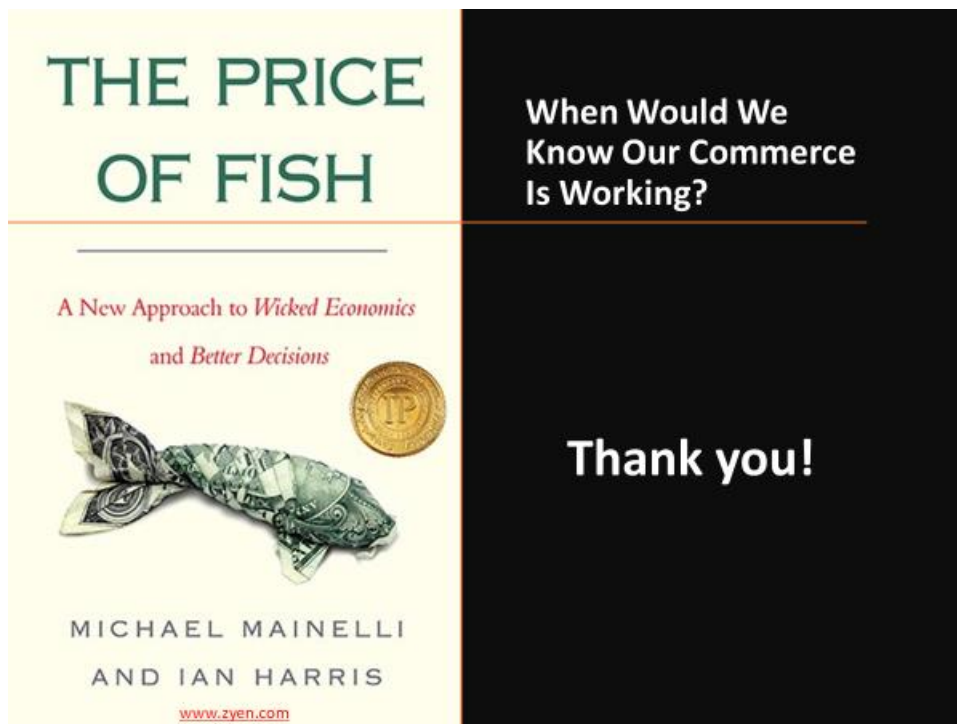
It needs a label, perhaps Global Business Coffeehouse. It plays well into other themes, such as our increasing emphasis on arbitration, mediation, and expert determination; connects well with our climate change agenda (done correctly



we should be reducing global travel emissions, and could even launch our own Chair Miles app - <https://www.longfinance.net/events/all-events/chair-miles/>); and fits circumstances, a large reduction in global air travel means Heathrow may no longer be the constraint it was.

Great changes lie ahead for all international business centres. While we will have to change, our unique position might actually allow us to expand our reach by grabbing a vastly larger share of a shrinking market, the need for physical interaction essential to cross-border trade and cross-border investment.

We've been here before, we'll be here again. The City of London is about continuity and change, conducting our rituals while seeking to renew our relevance. I believe we have a genuine opportunity to be the global centre for all deal-making, and I seek more discussion about that opportunity.



Thank you!

SME Economic Impact

- SMEs represent 23,610 firms or 99% of businesses in the Square Mile, employing an estimated 40% of the City's 522,000 workforce
- Businesses that directly support office workers are largely SMEs - City Planning estimates around 1,150 retail units, 300 restaurant and café units, 247 drinking establishments
- 59% of SMEs in London expect to see their turnover drop in the coming year, 70% considering departure if conditions persist over six months
- Approximately 75% of retail shops open (October)



What's The City Ever Done For Covid-19? City of London Economic Response



- **Covid-19 Financial Support**
 - Through the Small Business Grant Fund and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund, payments totalling £15.7M
 - Assisted 400 businesses by granting rent free periods to tenants of £3m, as well as additional rent deferrals of over £10m.
- **Property Advisory Team (CPAT)** - Reinstatement of Street Ambassador and promotion of services through the Privilege Card
- **Procurement** - temporary exemption code was set up to facilitate payments for goods and services as a response to the Covid-19 epidemic – 42 businesses paid through that exemption
- **Cultural & Visitor development and Culture Mile**
 - Our City Together digital campaign, advice on complying with restrictions, Al Fresco Winter Dining, Tourism Recovery Plan
 - Culture & Commerce taskforce, supporting "Culture at Risk" organisations with new homes
 - **Advisory services** – City Business Library, Innovation & Growth Department, Heart of the City, Markets & Consumer Protection Department
- **City Gift Card** – private-label, prepaid, paper-based Mastercard for employers to encourage staff spending in the City
- **Covid-19 Testing Centre** – Guildhall being used to increase capacity and reduce travel times for testing.



<https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/supporting-businesses/business-support-and-advice/supporting-small-businesses>