

Great River Cities and Covid-19

Responses, Resilience and Re-imagination

An intelligence snapshot for the Port of London Authority

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This snapshot



**Rapid global
intelligence scan**



**Interviews and
insights with river
city leaders in 10+
cities**

After Covid-19: River Cities captured in this snapshot



Rivers after Covid-19

Distributed urbanisation

Digitised jobs and reduced visitation

Polarised and unequal urban populations

Economic transition and the rise of the innovation economy

Exponential technology change

The rise of Asia

Disruption of supply chains and agile logistics

Resource scarcity and energy convergence

Intensifying climate change

Rising infrastructure and governance gaps

Covid-19 for city rivers means:

1. Re-think of balance of trade, leisure, lifestyle, housing, test beds, logistics
2. Momentum shift about river greening, blue infrastructure, waterfront placemaking
3. Even more at stake from innovation, demonstration and leadership

BUT ALSO

1. Challenges to escape 'lock-in'.
2. Frayed success models.
3. Greater reputational risks and exposure.
4. More tactical interventions and collaborations needed.

River Cities and Covid-19: three horizons



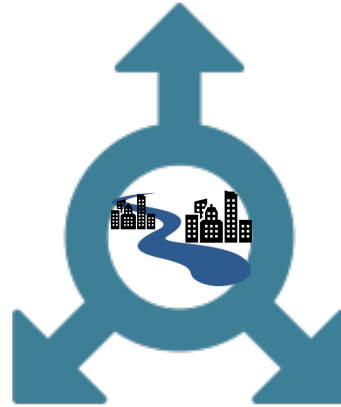
Pandemic Management and Mitigation

(short term, 6-12 month horizon)

Protect people

Maintain critical operations

Keep the river commerce afloat



Adaptation & Acceleration

(2-5 year horizon)

Towards net zero river

Fast-track agreements

Opening up the river



Reimagination

(5-20 year horizon)

The parts of the city the river will serve

Identity & Recreation.

Co-ordinating a 'whole river city' perspective

1	Mitigation and safety
2	Optimising rivers for city logistics and reworked supply chains
3	Agile city river mobility
4	Stepping up net zero commitments
5	Enhanced riverside placemaking
6	River city resilience
7	Future of river visitor economy and recreation locations
8	Spatial shifts and the re-balancing of land use and mix.
9	Re-connecting citizens to the river
10	Higher co-ordination equilibrium for the river

10 Common Threads

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- Securing public safety
- Stabilising demand
- Uninterrupted critical river waste and distribution functions
- Maintaining investment rate and delivery timetables

Examples

Port of **Montreal's** use of AI tools to create faster delivery routes for specific essential goods

Brisbane reorganising its cross-river ferry services.



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Expansion of river terminals and wharves

Improved links between ports, river distribution centres and final destinations of goods

Examples

New York's Freight NYC plan: new marine terminal hubs, regional barge council

Amsterdam's municipal electric boats and floating distribution centres

A **Paris'** grocery store using barges and local trucks to supply its stores



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Multimodal connections across and around the river

Digital connectivity to support flexible working waterfronts

Examples

London - eastwards network expansion to serve new riverside communities

Brisbane's 'Green Bridges' programme to connect North and South Brisbane

Hong Kong expectation for ferries to connect up more outer suburbs and New Towns



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Rivers for energy generation and district heating

Platforms & regulations to minimise emissions

Low emissions engines

Examples

New York now has three tidal turbines in the East River.

Glasgow using pumps to deliver heating and hot water, 3x more efficient than gas boilers

Philadelphia converting major inner-city refinery to sustainable multi-modal logistics.



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Providing waterfront access to pedestrians

Improved riverfront design standards

Towards swimmable rivers

Examples

Sydney's vision for an 80km river walkway

Vienna's residential development co-financing pedestrian bridge

Cape Town and **Hong Kong's** water clean-up programmes



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Innovative flood risk management (diversion, capture and storage, simulations)

Greening of port facilities, adaptation to sea level rise

Mega projects + small tactical interventions

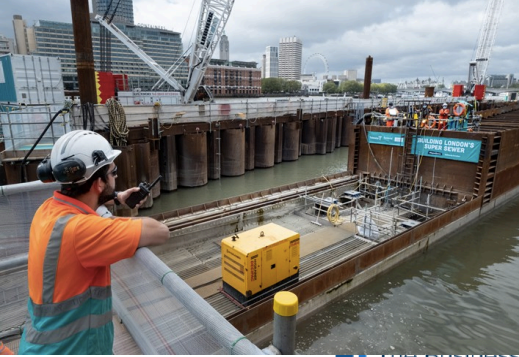


Examples

Progress of **London's** Thames Tideway Tunnel to manage storm water run off

Gothenburg's new terminal is being built using 350,000m² of dredge spoils

Tunnel development continued through Covid-19 © Tideway



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Diversification from low value added ‘transactional’ river visitor economy

Culture, innovation and educational assets along the river

Examples

Sydney – river precinct and swimmable options taking shape in 2nd CBD of Parramatta

Paris – “Reinventing the Seine” via access improvements and new cultural spaces and facilities

New York – 350,000m² mixed-use island development to anchor new climate change hub



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Higher calibre mixed use developments (light industrial + commercial + recreation)

Focus on unlocking more varied locations, including in disadvantaged areas.

Shift to providing river land for creative industries and advanced production

Examples

The port of **Vancouver** is updating its spatial plan to intensify riverside land use

Rotterdam expansion of sustainable principles in multiple river suburbs, experimenting with floating green buildings

Varied waterfront precincts in **Brisbane** to help city shift towards 18-hour economy.



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River cities are seizing on Covid-driven footfall to build attachment, identity and conviviality

Many cities looking to develop the river as an inclusive and educational space

Shift to engaging communities in decisions around river futures

Examples

In London, a refresh of the 20 year development framework, the Thames Vision, will be rooted in the net zero energy transition and involve substantial engagement with stakeholder communities.

Re-imagining Hong Kong to consider the role of the harbour in 'quality over quantity' positioning



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Growing recognition of:

- The imperative to shift to inclusive whole city visions and systems approaches
- Rivers as a catalyst for action on multiple agendas simultaneously
- The value of more comprehensive relationship-building



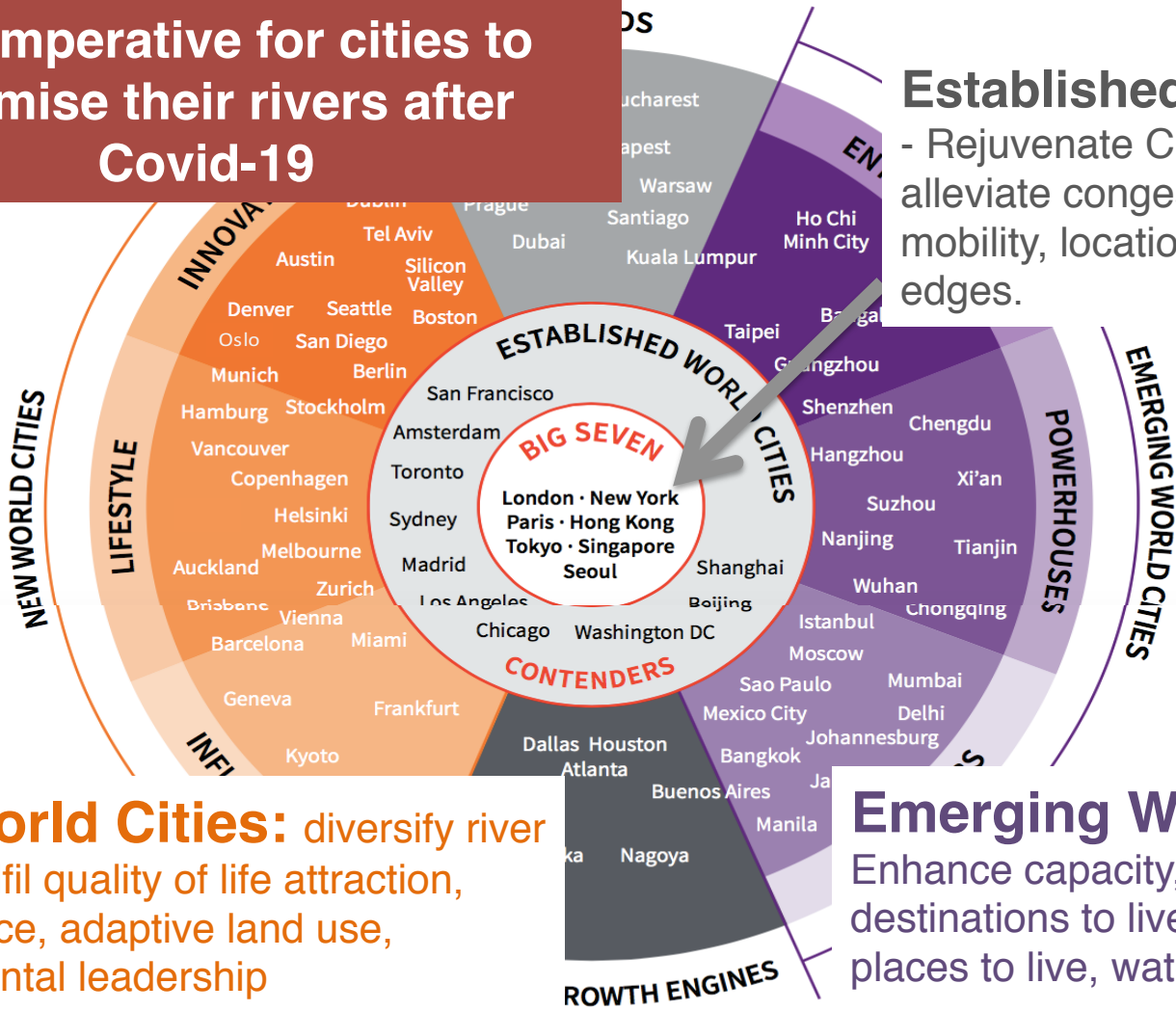
Examples

For **Vienna**, the Danube Commission is helping to improve coordination around maintenance, navigation and land use

Cape Town is convening a multi-stakeholder steering committee to coordinate regional water system efforts and improve relationships and decision making



The imperative for cities to optimise their rivers after Covid-19



Established World Cities:
 - Rejuvenate CBDs, tackle pollution, alleviate congestion, use river mobility, location variety, reveal new edges.

New World Cities: diversify river visitors, fulfil quality of life attraction, public space, adaptive land use, environmental leadership

Emerging World Cities:
 Enhance capacity, provide new destinations to live, new public goods, places to live, water resilience

Looking ahead

- **Identity.** Covid-19 has reminded cities of the importance and resilience of rivers, and their role as city catalysts for direction, reform and identity
- **Agility.** Many river leaders and authorities are demonstrating agility in mitigating the most severe impacts, often despite limited support
- **Shared value.** Building on newfound awareness of city rivers to become sustainable assets, recreational treasures, diversified commercial drivers, and a source of civic belonging in a digital world.
- **Stewardship.** Innovation, co-ordination and diplomacy is essential to ensure that rivers can achieve their goals in a context of low public investment