



ST GEORGE'S HOUSE



The Future of Urban Living Post Pandemic Consultation

Background Paper

A St George's House consultation in partnership with Future iQ.

General Context

The future of urban living has been an increasingly critical issue given population trends which had shown more and more people becoming urban dwellers. Cities and their inhabitants were becoming one of the most influential factors shaping the future of the planet. On the previous current trajectory, by 2050 the urban population was estimated to be 6.3 billion (66% of the world's projected population).¹ In 2015, it was stated that 54% of the global population already lived in cities.²

However, in early 2020 the world met a crisis that couldn't have been envisioned. The pandemic has caused us to reassess basic assumptions about 'the future of urban living'. However, as we look to a potentially brighter future with the access to vaccinations, we need to ask ourselves:

- What has the impact of the pandemic been on the future of urban living and cities?
- What challenges face cities?
- What solutions are available to cities as we look out to the future?

Previous Future of Urban Living Consultations hosted by Future iQ and St George's House

In late December 2019, Future iQ and St George's House held 'The Future of Urban Living Consultation' at St George's House, in the grounds of Windsor Castle. The consultation took the form of a practical scenario driven and foresight orientated process with over 30 invited experts from relevant areas. The key features of the consultation included a deep exploration into future trends and emergent issues. Key drivers were identified, clustered and ranked in order to develop plausible scenarios for the future of urban living in 2050. To read the Future of Urban Living Consultation Report - <https://lab.future-iq.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/the-future-of-urban-living.pdf>

¹ World Urbanization Prospects Report 2014: United Nations (UN)

² World Migration Report 2015: International Organization for Migration (IOM)

This was then followed in early 2021, with a virtual session that explored the global impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on urban living. Using the scenarios and outcomes from the consultation two years ago, we explored:

- Are our assumptions still valid and consistent, or has the pandemic changed the trajectory and course of people moving to cities and of becoming an 'urban dwelling species'?
- With social distancing and face coverings becoming mandatory, how has this changed the experience of people living in close proximity to each other? Have people retreated into their insular bubbles?
- How has the pandemic redefined cities, and what will be the long term consequences and changes?

The event was very successful and was broken down into eight topic areas. Working groups explored the impacts of the pandemic on urban living, in each topic area. These topics and working groups were:

- Social Fabric and Structure
- Distribution of Power and Influence
- Geographic and Demographic Distribution
- Future of City Lifestyles – impact of automation
- The Built Environment
- Smart Cities and Application of Technology
- Resource Cycle (Food, Air and Water, etc)
- Movement and Mobility

Discussion Boards were set up after the event and these include the outcomes from the working groups and any follow up additional input that participants wished to add. To see the content of the working group's content for each topic, please go to <https://lab.future-iq.com/the-future-of-urban-living-consultation/post-pandemic-consultation/discussion-boards/discussion-boards-overview/>

NEXT STEP: Seeking solutions

Future iQ and St George's House are now organising the final Future of Urban Living Consultation, with a view to obtain solutions to the issues that were brought up in the January 2021 consultation. For more information <https://lab.future-iq.com/the-future-of-urban-living-consultation/>

