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LONDON LEAP: JUST TRANSITION VALUES

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London Leap

Recovering from the COVID-19 crisis and meeting the challenge of climate breakdown are two parts of the same strategy. For London, this will undoubtedly require us to transition away from its historical roots in extraction and exploitation, and move it towards equity and justice.

For this, we will need to uproot the logic that underpins our current economic system, and identify a more inclusive way to organise society. Right now plans are being drawn up, resources are being pooled and policies are being formulated by governments and corporations to respond to the outbreak.

Similarly to respond to climate breakdown, efforts will only succeed if we address the deep inequalities and imbalance of power that impacts this city. London can only hope to transition towards an equitable and sustainable future once these elements are recognised.

That is why Platform, through the London Leap project, has been working with community campaigners and organisers across London to map out and vision what a transition for all of us could look like, putting those most vulnerable at the heart of this process.

London is a city of both great possibility and struggle, it is ordinary people who live and work in the city, who feel the blunt impacts made by a few. We are the ones who make this city a place where hope can be nurtured and restored, that bring together over 250 different languages and thousands of cultures.

But London is also a place where local businesses are systematically being replaced by chain stores, and social housing replaced by luxury flats. We are dealing with incredibly high rents, tyrant landlords and many of us trapped in temporary accommodation. Our families are dying or becoming ill from air pollution.

We struggle through insecure work contracts and precarious tenancies. We live in food deserts, unable to access healthy foods and an increasing number of families are in in-work poverty. These realities are not inevitable; they are a consequence of political design.

The Covid-19 pandemic like climate breakdown has forced the world to see behind the veil of “profit at any cost”. A dysfunctional economic system has enabled the planet to burn in the pursuit of profits for oil barons and used marginalised communities as disposable byproducts of the economy. The exploitation of our essential workers that capitalism relies on has been a devastating reality lived by so many and yet invisible to those privileged few. But this pandemic has removed this veil around our economy

showing us that frontline workers are the backbone of society’s survival not CEOs.

For decades we have witnessed extractive economies put the political elite and corporations before people, and it is assumed this is the only way in which the economy can function. Nothing highlights this better than the Government’s unacceptably slow response to the COVID-19 crisis in order to safe-guard the economy at the expense of thousands of lives. And these lives are our lives.

They are the lives of working-class communities of colour, and the many other marginalised communities that exist in our beautiful city. Workers and communities that have been wrangled through the austerity machine, surviving through wage stagnation and seeking home in a hostile housing market are the same people that have kept London running. Without them, there is no London. This was true before COVID-19 and will continue to be the case in the face of economic and political challenges that present themselves through climate breakdown.

Service industry workers are risking their lives at the front line of the crisis, we are losing our most creative minds in the culture sector, sex workers are being left desitute from a loss of clients, people are being forced to self isolate with their abusers, incarcerated people face systemic medical neglect. This pandemic has only exacerbated this maltreatment.

Together, we are imagining a city that enables a healthy mind, body and environment for individuals and communities. We believe another London is possible, where people don’t just survive, but where communities and the environment can thrive. In building London back up, tackling climate breakdown cannot be put on the backburner and must be, with the lessons from the COVID-19 crisis, front and center in informing how we move forward. We see this as a chance to move our economy away from competition and towards cooperation, from hoarding of wealth towards redistribution and reparation.

London is a focal point for the global economy, having dictated and influenced economic priorities and practice for centuries. It must be a centre for systemic change influencing at the national and international level, leading with local change.

This document begins the work of identifying what values should underpin a just recovery, and provides a framework for this transition to emerge. In the coming months, aligned with the following values, we will be developing policies that could be adopted by London councils and the Greater London Authority.

London Leap: Just Transition Values

Transition and transform London through a just recovery

After the COVID-19 crisis, communities are going to need to recover, and this recovery needs investment from the financial wealth that exists in The City. Wealth inequality preys on our communities health on a daily basis. Unlike the response to the financial crisis of 2008, we will not accept a move towards bailing out corporations and enforcing austerity on public services.

The past decade has been responsible for increased inequalities and stalling life expectancy. We need new and alternative answers. We must find ways to build an economic democracy; one that centers communities and works towards the shared ownership of wealth and power that exists here.

A just recovery has to start by prioritising those who have been first and worst hit by the impacts of austerity, environmental racism and class oppression in London. We can do this by centering and enabling their collective vision.

Redefining and centering workers and communities most impacted

We must place workers and frontline communities at the center of how we redesign our future and that begins with asking them what their needs are, and how we can meet them. Let’s be clear, no worker, individual or family should be left behind in the post-COVID climate justice transition. To ensure this, we must also redefine what it means to be a worker by breaking down the separation of ‘work’ and ‘home’. This separation has enabled labour in our homes and our communities to be made invisible and consequently uncompensated. We must change this in the process of our just transition.

In transforming our economy we must recognise the work that happens when friends and family members act as carers, child care providers and social support. We know now through the need for Mutual-Aid networks during the COVID-crisis that care networks are a fundamental and valuable part of the ecosystem that keeps society moving.



Enabling self-determination through collective power

It's a myth that we all have choices in the current system. A wealthy few are offered true freedom and thereby have real civic agency, while many are left with the little access to it. Only through enabling spaces that create collective solutions, such as unions to citizens assemblies, will we ensure everyone is able to build ownership and control over their own lives.

These ideas live through community ownership models like co-ops, Community Land Trusts, local food ecosystems, and community run energy. Variations of these community models have existed for centuries, and bring democratic processes to life, enabling individuals and communities to build collective power and self-determine.

London for living

The infrastructure of London must be reconfigured in order to accommodate all people. Redevelopments are accelerating gentrification and environmental racism; locking and pushing low-income communities into polluted corners of our city. Many Londoners are disempowered and disabled because of the way the city is being designed. There is a responsibility to change this, by centering all infrastructure projects towards a purpose of community wealth and wellbeing.

We believe in a future where the wisdom of local communities is recognised, so that we may see co-designed local and City-wide plans. People and communities should have what they need available to them on their doorstep. A thriving local economy includes high streets which are busy with local businesses that provide all our needs, from fresh produce to health services to community centers, all whilst strengthening intergenerational social relationships.



Internationalism & solidarity

London has a historic responsibility to respond to the climate breakdown. The corporations housed in the City of London produce 14% of global emissions. They use our city's reputation to commit human rights abuses and plunge Global South communities into escalated and multiple crises.

This city is hailed for being a place of great diversity in people and cultures, bringing folks from around the world together. London's industrialisation was resourced through wealth built off the backs of generations of migrant communities such as the Windrush generation. Migrant communities who were invited here are the same people that built this city and run services such as the NHS.

Moreover, In any meaningful transition, the experience of undocumented migrants' in London must be considered in this historical context and therefore the impact of the hostile environment that they are often inhumanely forced into must be dismantled.

Reaching back to build forward

We've invisibilised the work of elders and previous generations. To know where we can go, we have to know where we have been. For cities, countries and the world's future generations to inherit healthy and full lives, we must honour the wisdom that has sustained the ecosystems of the planet for generations. Integrating ancestral knowledge has enabled indigenous communities to maintain 80% of the world's bio biodiversity. Knowledge from elders, indigenous folk and frontline communities hold the keys to organising a just economy that works harmoniously with the community and planet. In building for an economic democracy and undergoing a just transition, we must cite their work, and uplift their voices.



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