

# London identities

Nicolas Bosetti  
and Tom Colthorpe

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## Summary

Identity is a hot topic. National identities are widely contested, not least in the United Kingdom, with intense debate around what it means to be English and British in the modern world.

There has been less consideration of how London fits into this debate. As the capital's economy and culture has boomed, London's population is changing rapidly, and becoming much more diverse. Some commentators see London as the epitome of rootlessness and weak integration. But Londoners seem as keen to identify as Londoners as they were 40 years ago, with much less variation by class, age or politics compared to national identities.

However civic identity is also informed by and intersects with many other identities and characteristics, and there may be fundamental differences in the way London identities are understood in different communities. Ethnicity and religion are stronger elements of identity than locality in the UK as a whole, but we do not know how they affect the understanding of the London identity.

London identities encompass many unifying features, from landmarks to experiences, to a celebration of the city's cosmopolitanism itself. London's mayors should continue to engage widely and to celebrate that diversity, and the positive and inclusive elements of London identity. But, while a strong sense of identity can help unify the city, define its brand, and promote social solidarity, seeking to rigidly define and strengthen London identities from the top-down risks being counter-productive and widening gaps between London and the rest of the UK.

## Introduction

We are living in an age of resurgent interest in nationality. Everywhere, it seems, politicians who defend internationalist principles find themselves on the back foot, while anti-migrant, anti-globalisation movements make the waves.

Of course, the new nationalist movements are not going uncontested. On the contrary, in France Emmanuel Macron scored a handsome victory campaigning on an avowedly liberal and pro-European agenda. But disagreements between nationalists and those with more cosmopolitan outlooks are reshaping our politics. Older post-War political cleavages, between a left committed to a larger redistributive state, and a right in favour of lower taxes and free markets, are giving way to divisions based on national borders and national values.

Nowhere is this truer than in the UK, where the surprise victory for the Leave campaign in the 2016 referendum looks likely to mark a profound historical watershed, as the UK government slams the brake on 40 years of European and global integration. At the same time, older party alliances are coming under pressure, as Brexit – widely viewed as the political issue of our day – divides both the Conservative and Labour parties.

This paper explores where London fits into this changing political landscape and in particular, how London identities have evolved in recent years and how they compare to developments elsewhere. As many political economists have observed (e.g. Saskia Sassen, Ed Glaeser and Richard Florida), while the most recent wave of globalisation has spread wealth and opportunity relatively widely, most of the growth has been concentrated in cities and much of it in large, already successful global cities.

London has been a major beneficiary of this trend, re-establishing itself, over the last 30 years, as perhaps the world's leading global capital. It has attracted migrants, entrepreneurs, investors and visitors from all over Europe and the world beyond, drawn by its economic opportunities but also its welcoming cosmopolitan culture, energy and creativity. The process however has not been without its tensions. London has long played a leading role in UK's economy and culture, but over last decades its lead has lengthened. The capital has become richer relative to rest of the UK and regional economic disparities have become greater. To many British people, London may as well be another country. And there is widespread scepticism about whether it actually helps other parts of the country at all.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, the capital itself has in some respects become more divided. Wealth inequality has deepened; Londoners on modest and middle incomes have seen living costs rise faster than earnings. Poverty remains stubbornly high.

But what have these developments meant for London identities? One position – put forward in David Goodhart's *Road to Somewhere* for example – sees London as an atomised place, which people visit to earn money or enhance their careers, but then leave without putting down roots. People who did once have a strong sense of London and national belonging – the white working class – have left the city. In so far as liberal Londoners do go in for identity politics, it's the politics not of national or city belonging but politics of gender, race, and sexuality.

*“London is Anywhereville. National attachments and feelings of community tend to be weaker in big cities such as London, where there is a high population churn and where there are disproportionate amounts of Anywhere people”.*<sup>2</sup>

Another view sees London as exemplifying a ‘strength in diversity’ cosmopolitan identity. This view likes to draw a contrast between the insular identities animating populist movements and the more capacious but no less powerful urban identities that have emerged in leading global cities. In that world view, for instance developed by the late Benjamin Barber, the future is in cities, and populism is the last gasp of the nation state.

However, there has been relatively little actual research into how London identities have changed over time, or how they compare and relate to developments elsewhere. This paper aims to begin to fill that gap.

The evidence on London identities is scattered and incomplete. City identities are much less studied than national or local identities. There isn’t a big dataset that surveys London identities, tracks them over time or compares them with identities in other cities. There are some data from national surveys on feelings of belonging, and some one-off polls that offer interesting snapshots of London identity and city pride among adults. However, given the personal and contingent nature of identities, we also draw on a patchwork of more intimate work in social psychology and cultural studies. On top of this, we use the insights from an expert roundtable convened to discuss the latest developments in this area of study.

We start by charting how recent changes in London’s population, economy and civic sense may have affected Londoners’ attachment to their city. We then explore the extent to which Londoners sign up to a ‘London identity’, how this is informed by and intersects with other elements of identity. Finally, at a time when policymakers are eager to find ways to bring people together, we ask whether London politicians should be aiming to bolster a shared sense of belonging and if so how?

## 1. The changing city

At a time of re-urbanising economies internationally, London has been among the global leaders. The sheer number of job opportunities in the capital, and its educational, cultural and social scene, have made it a very attractive place for young people from across the UK and overseas. The city is a magnet for young graduates: half of working-age Londoners are university graduates, compared to one in three in 2004,<sup>3</sup> although the city is not as homogenous in terms of occupational class – many graduates work in ‘non-graduate’ jobs.

According to polling data, the proportion of Londoners who were born in London decreased from 58 per cent in 1977 to 52 per cent in 1987 and to 25-32 per cent today, depending on the survey.<sup>4</sup> Among the younger generations of Londoners ‘born and bred’, the majority have foreign heritage and many speak more than one language from a young age.<sup>5</sup> London’s population turnover is considerable, but the rate is close to that of other major UK cities: ten per cent of London’s population move in and out of the city every year, when seven per cent do in Greater Birmingham and Greater Manchester.<sup>6</sup>

Life in the city has also changed markedly and offers new sources of shared identity. There are new London cultural institutions, the city’s public services have improved, and more people are using public transport. Since 2000, London’s mayors have been high profile politicians, acting as ‘first citizen’, and as a voice for the city. The mayors have sought to reinforce a sense of London’s identity via the public services they manage, for instance by developing a unified transport brand, based on the iconic London Underground style, for all modes managed by Transport for London. Public campaigns have also drawn on but perhaps also reinforced Londoners’ sense of pride – “Recycle for London”, “London needs you alive” (against knife crime), “Do it London” (to prevent HIV). Mayors have also regularly

Belonging to a city seldom requires being “born and bred” there. The London identity is, it seems, relatively easily and swiftly acquired. Like many migrant cities – and New York is the obvious example – Londoners have managed to create a strong identity for themselves.



engaged with many of London’s communities, for instance through supporting Black History Month, Pride and cultural festivals.

But London’s recovery has had an infamous flip side. Inequality of income in the capital is very high, and wealth inequality has widened - a characteristic London shares with other global cities.<sup>7</sup> Londoners know the city can be a tough place to grow up in, but living in the capital has become expensive to the point that fewer and fewer young Londoners can afford to buy in the area they grew up, or even in the city.

## 2. Being a Londoner

Given the changes that London has gone through in recent years, you might expect the strength of a London identity to have diminished. This is not the case. As many citizens identify as Londoners as did 40 years ago.

A 1977 poll asked people living in London if they considered themselves a Londoner (it was a yes/no question).<sup>8</sup> 73 per cent said yes, as did 37 per cent of people living just outside the city. A September 2017 poll by YouGov for Queen Mary, University of London,<sup>9</sup> asked again the question ‘to what extent do you think of yourself as a Londoner’, this time on a 0-10 scale - 63 per cent of Londoners polled responded eight, nine or ten out of ten; in total 89 per cent of the Londoners polled felt they were Londoners at least to some extent.

It is striking that the popularity of the London identity remains at a similar level to 40 years ago whilst the share of Londoners born outside the city has doubled, and despite significant changes in how Londoners perceive their city. 77 per cent said they were ‘proud of London’ in 2014, compared to 64 per cent in 1977, and 79 per cent say that London is exciting, against 41 per cent in 1977.<sup>10</sup> The London identity is, it seems, relatively easily and swiftly acquired, and is independent of feelings of pride in place.

**Table 1: Headline findings, September 2017 poll by YouGov for Queen Mary, University of London<sup>11</sup>**

To what extent are you...?	Strong identity (8-10/10)	'In betweeners' (3-7/10)	Weak/no identity (0-2/10)	Average score (out of 10)
<b>A Londoner</b>	63%	26%	8%	7.7
<b>British</b>	59%	27%	9%	7.4
<b>English</b>	50%	28%	20%	6.6
<b>European</b>	29%	35%	30%	4.9

Although London appears the most popular identifier, this does not seem to be at the expense of national identity. 86 per cent also felt British to some extent (even though only 75 per cent have a British passport).

We can’t say from this data whether there are some people who identify as Londoners but reject the British identity, however it seems unlikely given both identities are popular, and that having British citizenship correlates with stronger attachment to London.<sup>12</sup> English identity, on the other hand, has become weaker among Londoners – a trend also experienced less sharply in the rest of England.<sup>13</sup>

Another surprising finding is that a London identity seems to be fairly evenly distributed across political and generational groups (Table 2), though slightly more variable depending on social grade. By contrast, identification

with Britain, England or Europe was strongly related to politics and age. London it seems, offers a unifying identity. We also did not find evidence of significant differences by area of the capital,<sup>14</sup> either today or in 1977, the London identity was broadly as popular in inner and outer London.

**Table 2: Identity across groups, September 2017 poll by YouGov for Queen Mary, University of London<sup>15</sup>**

	Average score (0-10 scale)										
	All	Voting intention		EU Ref vote		Age				Social grade	
		Con	Lab	Remain	Leave	18-25	25-49	50-64	65+	ABC1	C2DE
<b>A Londoner</b>	7.7	7.5	8.0	7.8	7.7	8.0	7.6	7.8	8.0	7.4	8.2
<b>British</b>	7.4	8.3	7.5	7.7	7.9	7.5	7.2	7.9	8.3	7.4	7.7
<b>English</b>	6.6	8.3	5.7	6.1	7.5	6.4	5.8	7.4	8.1	6.0	7.1
<b>European</b>	4.9	3.5	6.0	6.6	2.5	5.2	5.3	4.7	3.9	5.6	4.1

● 0.5 + above average      ● 0.5 + below average

However, saying that a London identity is widely held, is not the same as saying that it is widely understood in the same way. There is an argument that a shallow London identity actually masks the reality of an atomised and segregated city.

Those who see London as an atomised place cite several surveys that show a city less integrated than the rest of the country. In 2014, the Social Integration Commission found that there are fewer interactions between groups than would be expected from London's higher diversity compared to the rest of Britain. They argued this was a result of class and ethnicity divides reinforcing each other in London, as London's white population was more likely to be middle or upper class.<sup>16</sup> And the larger the city, the more opportunities for people to connect with others who are like them.

Others suggest a more positive analysis, highlighting a London-specific ethos of mixing and difference. Engagement with diversity in public or semi-public places like corner shops and school gates may be superficial, given there is little mixing going on in private,<sup>17</sup> but this ethos of mixing through light-touch engagement is also regarded as essential to city life. In fact, most people disapprove of non-participation in local activities, for instance not engaging with local businesses, not sending children to local state schools, or not treating each other with conviviality regardless of their background.<sup>18</sup>

To consider further how shared or disparate London identity is, we now review the evidence on how other factors and characteristics, such as place, class, ethnicity and sexuality inform and intersect with London identities.

### Local area

If there is one global city that can be expected to have strong local identities, it should be London. The city has grown from towns and villages, each with its own centre, civic institutions and identity. Attendees at our roundtable noted that the pre-1965 boroughs are still a very salient scale for local identities: people talk of living in Battersea, Bermondsey or Bethnal Green, more so than Wandsworth, Southwark and Tower Hamlets. And

the Greater London Authority thought local identities were significant enough to redraw in 2013 the map of London localities first ordered by chief planner Patrick Abercrombie in 1941.

However, we know little about how the London identity interacts with local identities. 70 per cent of people nationally think that where they live shapes their identity,<sup>19</sup> but very few surveys allow respondents to specify at which scale this shaping is strongest. A 2014 poll by Britain Thinks asked 1,000 Londoners to choose their dominant identity between British, English, Londoner, and a sub-London identity. A third of those who identified as Londoners actually preferred a more local identity: they said they were North, South, East or West Londoners above all.<sup>20</sup> Interview-based research with young people found evidence of very strong local identities, particularly in areas of London closely associated to an ethnic group, or that have stigma attached to them.<sup>21</sup> Anecdotal evidence also suggests that local area identity may be a precursor to acquiring a London identity: a representative of the Eastern European Resource Centre attending our roundtable mentioned that new residents relate first to their local area, or their borough, before getting a sense of the city as a whole.

### **Ethnicity**


People from all background identify themselves as Londoners, but we know that for minority ethnic people in the UK, ethnicity generally has greater salience than place in shaping identity.<sup>22</sup> In parts of London, we found strong evidence that amongst young people, ethnicity and place identity inform each other – especially when identities are constructed against racist representations of ethnic groups or the local areas they live in.<sup>23</sup>

But is London's ethnic diversity itself a facet of London identity? Londoners who aren't white certainly value the city's ethnic diversity and most would not want to live in a place less diverse – a 2010 survey showed they valued ethnic diversity in their local area the most, partly because they derived a sense of protection from it.<sup>24</sup> And their residential moves confirm this – ethnic minority people are three times less likely to have left London than White British people between 2001 and 2011.<sup>25</sup> But some speculate that a share of the White British people in London feel threatened by the increase in London's ethnic diversity – an argument derived from the fact that White British Londoners were as likely or less likely to view immigration as good thing than the White British people living outside London, and as likely to want to leave the EU.<sup>26</sup>

A lot of research has focused on whether living in near people from different ethnic backgrounds can attenuate racial prejudice amongst white people. A review of existing research shows that living in a diverse area does reduce racial prejudice (using attitudes towards immigration as a proxy) but only at neighbourhood or ward level.<sup>27</sup> However, at the scale of the city, increased diversity correlates with a higher sense of anxiety among the White British population, and higher hostility towards immigration.<sup>28</sup> So while there may be a 'Dalston effect' or 'Brixton effect' fostering appreciation of diversity amongst White British Londoners, there isn't a 'London effect'.

### **Class**

Class has a significant impact on place attachment, and significant importance relative to other markers of identity. This was apparent in the government's 2009 Citizenship Survey, which found that nationwide, people in professional occupations consider their work more important to their identity than their place of residence, whilst for people in routine occupations it was the reverse.<sup>29</sup> Does the same finding hold true within London?



London is part of my plans for the future.

I know London well.

I don't stick out in London.

Having lived in London defines who I am.

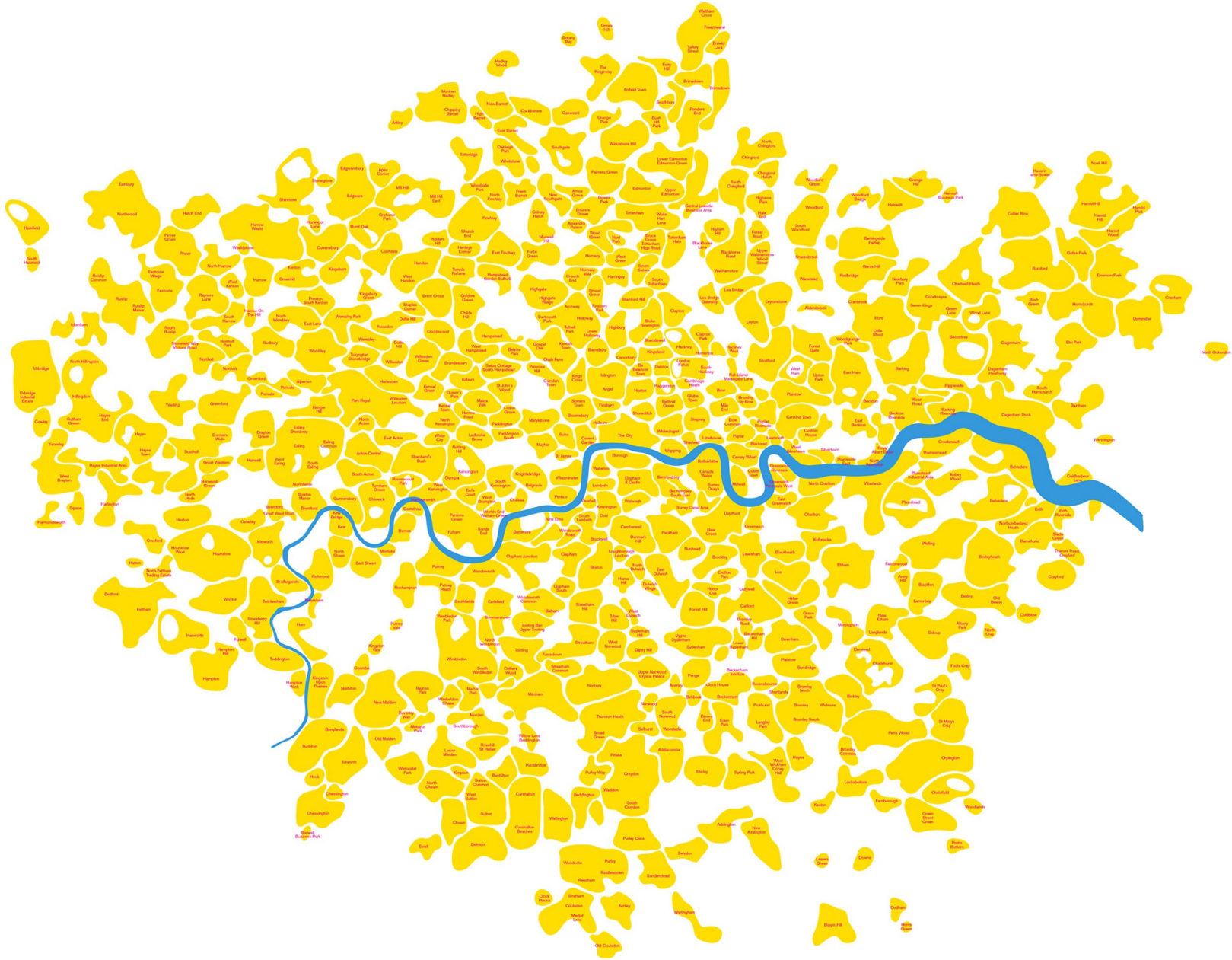
I feel at home in London.

London is unique.

### **Becoming a Londoner**

While state citizenship is obtained based on formal requirements, cities do not have membership rules enshrined in law. Belonging to the city is formed through contributing to its economic and civic life; electing to move there and committing to stay, or feeling respected as a citizen regardless of other identities held.

# London Localities Map, by Mark Brearley and Adam Towle, Design for London



As discussed above, there is some evidence that working-class Londoners are more likely to identify as Londoners than middle and upper-class residents. In the 2017 Queen Mary, University of London poll, to the question “to what extent do think of yourself as a Londoner?”, 61 per cent of those in lower social classes responded 9 or 10 out of 10, for those in higher social classes it was 48 per cent.<sup>30</sup> One should not rush to conclusions - some of the difference could be due to other factors such as length of residence - but it does suggest that the middle classes are less willing to identify as Londoners.

However, these preferences need to be seen in the context of alternative place attachments that are available to better-off social groups. Higher-educated, higher-earning residents are more mobile, and so able to select the place where they put down roots; by doing so, their city of choice forms part of their life story.<sup>31</sup> Mike Savage’s survey of residents in and around Manchester found that middle classes expressed belonging to a larger area - their city as a whole (“Manchester”) or their region (“the North”) – more so than to their neighbourhood or town.<sup>32</sup> Anecdotal evidence also suggests that there are some Londoners with a particularly local outlook: a couple of roundtable attendees mentioned that some teenagers growing up in London only knew their local area, particularly those in deprived families or going to a local school: “some have grown up in London but have never seen the Thames”.

So different classes may be answering questions about identity in different ways: working class Londoners may be thinking about their neighbourhood when they sign up to a London identity, whereas middle class Londoners may be thinking at a metropolitan scale.

However, more work needs to be done on how class affects urban identities. Evidence from London suggests that middle class people can strongly claim their attachment to their local area too, for instance by seeking to preserve what they consider to be their neighbourhood’s defining physical and social aesthetics - existing buildings, or the city’s diversity and quiriness.<sup>33</sup> And indeed, middle class residents are well represented in London planning committees and neighbourhood forums, as was pointed out by interviewees for a Centre for London report on local opposition to development.<sup>34</sup>

### **Sexual orientation**

Queer sexual identities have developed in large cities like London. But there is very little research on whether queer Londoners identify differently with their city. A recent survey by two housing associations interviewed LGBT\*Q Londoners living in social housing and found that they were much less likely to say they “belong” to their local area.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps queer Londoners are more likely to identify with the city as a whole, which they perceive as more friendly to their queer identity than specific neighbourhoods.

The sections above have reviewed the strength of Londoners’ understanding of their London identity and how this intersects with and is informed by other characteristics; the next section looks at some of the markers of the London identity that most people share in.

### **London ‘reminders’**

If the 8 million Londoners were asked what reminds them of London, their lists would show the diversity of interests, experience and memories of the city. But some features of London, from landmarks to popular culture references, would come up repeatedly.

A 2014 poll of Londoners by Britain Thinks sheds light on some of the identity markers Londoners have most in common. Interviewees showed

Londoners pictures of the city, and asked them if they were part of ‘their London’. People identified overwhelmingly with the city’s green spaces – in fact these were the element of the city that drew most attachment. Iconic Zone 1 landmarks – the Palace of Westminster, Trafalgar Square, the South Bank or Brick Lane also drew a large majority to say “this is part of my London”. These findings are backed up by US research that looked at what elements of the city people missed the most after a devastating hurricane - green spaces and trees came first, followed by city landmarks.<sup>36</sup> Unsurprisingly, the everyday elements of London life also carried significance to the Londoners polled. Rain, suburban roads, night buses, crowded tube trains and black cabs were broad identifiers for Londoners.

Popular culture – books, films, TV programmes and songs – also identifies, embeds and celebrates different aspects of London’s character, which in turn inform public perceptions and understanding of the city. We list in below the wide range of ‘London reminders’ that we have come across in our review, or that future empirical research might want to test out.

### **Typology of London reminders**

- Physical attributes: green spaces, built environment,<sup>37</sup> such as landmarks, brutalist, modern buildings, streetscape, shopping centres or local businesses
- People, social interactions
- The vibe: public spaces, London caff,<sup>38</sup> the juxtaposition of middle-class with post-War social housing estates<sup>39</sup>
- Etiquette (being street smart)
- Languages (Multicultural London English,<sup>40</sup> Cockney, foreign languages)
- Events (Carnival, Olympics, Pride...)
- Mayoral institution and election
- London media
- Entertainment, nightlife<sup>41</sup>
- Representations in the arts and in popular culture
- Engagement with the past<sup>42</sup>

Such is London’s size, diversity and complexity, that generalising about behaviours and values, is unreflective of the nature of the city. But rather than being obscured or blurred by it, perhaps it is that very diversity, and the strength London draws from it, that shapes the city’s identity.

● Londoners born abroad

22% ————— 37%

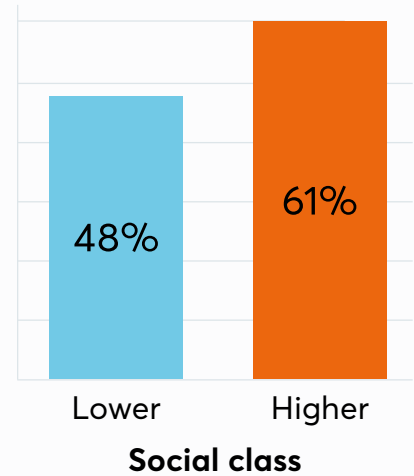
1991 ————— 2016

20% ————— 40%

● Non-white Londoners

**Q:** To what extent do you think of yourself as a Londoner?

**A:** 9 or 10 out of 10



**London identity remains as strong as it was 40 years ago, and crosses barriers of politics, class and age.**

**80%**

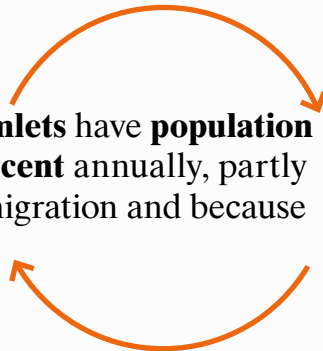
**of Londoners** have lived in London for at least 5 years.



**70%**

**of Londoners** have lived in London for at least 10 years.

**Westminster and Tower Hamlets** have **population turnover rates above 20 per cent** annually, partly due to higher international migration and because people move around the city.

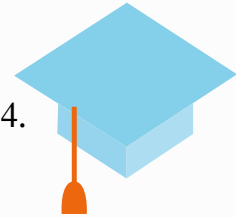


**White British Londoners** have **left the city** at three times the rate of ethnic minorities.



London was the only English region to vote to remain in the European Union, but **40 per cent of voters voted to leave.**

The majority of **working-age Londoners are university graduates (52 per cent)**, when they were one in three in 2004.



**London mayors** have been high profile politicians, and have acted as the **main voice for the city.**

Several of the **city's flagship public services have been brought under a mayor's leadership** – London transport, the Metropolitan Police and the fire brigade.



2014 poll found that a majority of British people outside London believe that **national politics, media attention and cultural activity are too focused on London** and do not reflect local needs.



### 3. What role for policy?

Engaging in policy terms with identity is often fraught with challenges. By their very nature, identity formation, promotion and perpetuation can be exclusionary processes, as they rely on the creation of the in group ('us') and the out group ('them'). For politicians to involve themselves in these distinctions, which are often constructed over a long period of time, requires a very careful and considered approach. Top-down interventions are often clunky, heavy-handed and can have negative consequences – whether or not these are intended.<sup>43</sup>

But is there political value in civic identity? All three London mayors have reflected an image of London through their policy and publicity programmes, albeit in different ways. Their focus on the issue reflects the important role/s that identity can play:

- Identity can support social cohesion in the capital; an appropriate and positive overarching London identity could bridge other social divides.
- Identity has important implications for London branding, both nationally and internationally. The current Mayor's 'London is Open' campaign, launched in 2016 in the wake of the EU Referendum, seeks to promote a vision of London internationally among both individuals and businesses. He has also appointed a Deputy Mayor for Social Integration, Social Mobility and Community Engagement and set up an office for citizenship.
- A shared sense of belonging and common purpose within London could support policy implementation.<sup>44</sup> Citizens are more likely to accept policies benefitting others if they feel some sense of social solidarity. The idea of 'common good' is strongest perhaps within social welfare policy (generally set nationally),<sup>45</sup> where individuals more readily accept payment or provision to their fellow 'in-group members', but may equally apply to various policies London's government may want to pursue.

All three mayors elected to date have celebrated immigration and diversity in a way that reflects the views of an electorate more comfortable with difference, and indicates that the politics of the capital are at odds with national politics. Boris Johnson made numerous statements supportive of immigration as key to London's economic success,<sup>46</sup> and appreciative of London's ethnic diversity.<sup>47</sup> In 2009, Johnson launched 'The Story of London', a call for Londoners to reconnect with the city's history.<sup>48</sup> He pointed at "cultural strengths" that people bring to the city, and how it turns "everybody into Londoners".

Sadiq Khan chose to stress London exceptionalism after the UK vote to leave the EU, celebrating London's difference to the rest of the country and the city's plurality.

"We don't simply tolerate each other's differences, we celebrate them. Many people from all over the globe live and work here, contributing to every aspect of life in our city. We now need to make sure that people across London, and the globe, hear that #LondonIsOpen."<sup>49</sup> - Sadiq Khan

Sadiq Khan has also focused on social integration as a priority issue, appointing a Deputy Mayor for Social Integration, and launching a social integration strategy.<sup>50</sup> The Mayor has also promoted the London Borough of Culture programme, which awards funding and recognition to boroughs that promote cultural projects connecting communities. The boroughs that entered the competition emphasised their varying cultural heritage, and contributions to London's culture, building on what different groups perceive as elements of being a Londoner, and how these understandings can form bridges between groups and geographies within the city.

The narrative of a successful and hospitable global city has also gained prominence as mayors have developed their own response to traumatic events, high exposure moments when they have sought to reinforce solidarity and the city's identity. In his speech immediately following the 7/7 bombings in 2005, Ken Livingstone stressed the attractiveness of London's way of life – a city comfortable with difference that offers refuge to many.

*"However many of us you kill, you will not stop their flight to our cities where freedom is strong and where people can live in harmony with one another. Whatever you do, however many you kill, you will fail."<sup>51</sup> - Ken Livingstone*

Strengthening city identity could also help London to make the case for more devolution. But identity and devolution is by no means a straightforward relationship. Indeed, there are also questions around how a stronger London identity would fit within a broader national identity, particularly if the two display some contrasting attributes. Overinflating the capital's sense of civic pride and exceptionalism could result in some untoward and unintended consequences. For example, a 2014 poll found that a majority of British people outside London believe that national politics is too focused on London and does not reflect local needs, and that media attention and cultural activity are both too focused on the capital.<sup>52</sup> There is a resultant degree of anti-London feeling from elsewhere in the UK, which could be further exacerbated – increasing London's isolation – if messages of difference and a stronger identity were pursued.

So, urban identity formation can be a valuable tool for branding, for cohesion, for making the case for devolution – and can form a valuable bond when articulated at times of crisis – but it rarely comes from the top-down. London identity remains as strong as it was 40 years ago, and crosses barriers of politics, class and age, despite the dramatic changes that the capital has seen.

The Mayor and other London leaders need to tread a difficult path: on the one hand, they need to avoid crude appeals to a London identity that defines itself against the rest of the country and excludes some Londoners; on the other hand they need to find language and policies that sustain some sense of common belonging. Any policy involvement needs to be delicate, intricate and aware of complexity. The less we seek to homogenise and simplify an identity that is complex and polymorphous, the better.<sup>53</sup>

London identity remains as strong as it was 40 years ago, and crosses barriers of politics, class and age, despite the dramatic changes that the capital has seen.



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Stephanie Riddell

## About the authors

**Nicolas Bosetti** is a Senior Researcher at Centre for London. His research interests include housing, transport and local government. Nicolas has an MSc in Urban Policy from the London School of Economics and Sciences Po, Paris.

**Tom Colthorpe** is a Researcher at Centre for London. His research interests include health policy and population health, urban transport planning, and issues surrounding social exclusion in a city context. Tom holds a BA (Hons) in Geography and an MSc in Evidence-Based Social Intervention and Policy Evaluation, both from the University of Oxford.



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Unit 1, 32-33 Hatton Garden  
London, EC1N 8DL  
T: 020 3757 5555  
[hello@centreforlondon.org](mailto:hello@centreforlondon.org)  
[centreforlondon.org](http://centreforlondon.org)  
Company Number: 8414909  
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