Why COVID-19 can — and should — change how our cities are designed.

In response to similarly long commutes in other parts of the world, many cities have been introducing policies to encourage bike and pedestrian traffic, or have even temporarily shut down public transport altogether. In Italy, following the lockdown, the city of Como has allowed people to use public transport free of charge, while bike lanes have been extended. People are using this opportunity to find new and eco-friendly methods to move around. 

While doing it. This is environmentally more sustainable. When less of the traffic is on the roads, there is less of a risk of an accident, and less pollution. People can choose to walk or cycle to work or school, and can be safer on the streets.

In 15-minute cities, the city is broken into self-sufficient neighborhoods with work, study, and recreation all in the same region. This has multiple benefits. Not only does it reduce the number of people commuting long distances, it also reduces the number of people traversing the city, which can help to reduce the spread of disease. In densely populated cities like Bogota, the city has introduced the Ciclovía, a mass recreational event, with vehicular traffic banned once a week and a designated space for cyclists and pedestrians. 

The answer to helping a city to spring back to life lies in its design. We can learn from our history, where cities are designed to be self-sustaining and functional. The nineteenth and early-twentieth century saw devastating outbreaks of cholera, a disease that constantly harrowed the city. In the mid-nineteenth century, London made major infrastructural changes to combat the spread of cholera, a disease that constantly harrowed the city. London's pioneering sewer system, which still serves it today, was built as early as 1855. Other cities also recognized the importance of decongesting residential areas and creating green spaces. Alongside an efficient sewerage system, cities also recognised the importance of green open spaces where city dwellers could breathe clean air. 

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The Caravan

May 5, 2020

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