

OPEN CITY AND THE FUTURE OF LONDON

The #LondonIsOpen campaign

12th November, City Hall

<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/sociology/research/projects/isc/opencity/>

Outline

- Introduction
- What is the Open City project
- Imagining London
- #LondonIsOpen: Representations and reactions
- #LondonIsOpen: Planning the campaign
- Discussion and conclusion

What is the Open City project?

- 36 month, ESRC funded project between 4 universities – Open, Oxford, Warwick and UWL
- Based at Warwick
- Focussed on one city: London
- Awarded Spring 2020; start delayed to early 2021
- Full time staff: 2 Research Fellows

Overarching question



To what extent do cities welcome newcomers?



By who? In what ways? What is the role of city government?



London is open - to whom and what?

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EVERYONE WELCOME

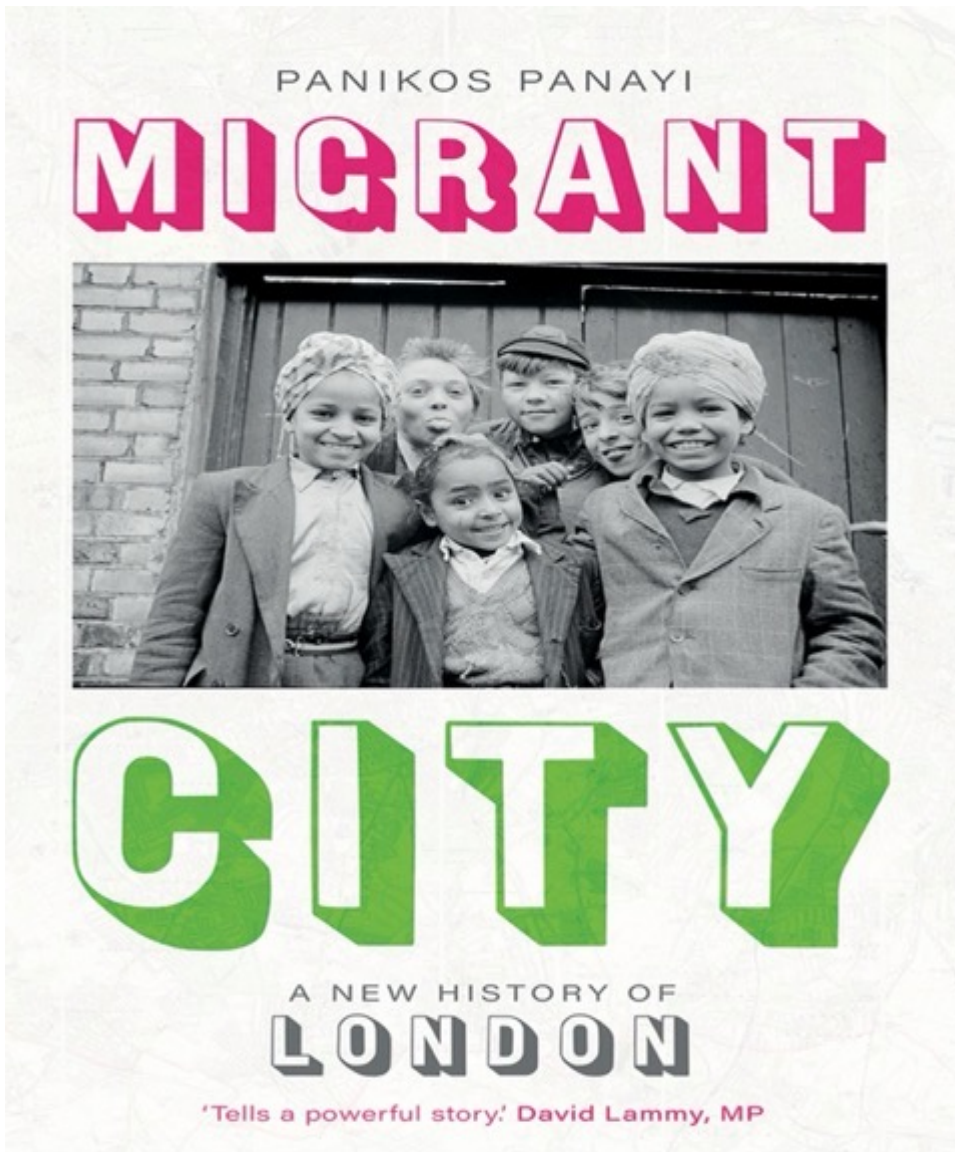
#LondonIsOpen

"What images or places or people do you recall or associate with the campaign?"

(Is there something/anything you think was missed or should have featured more?)

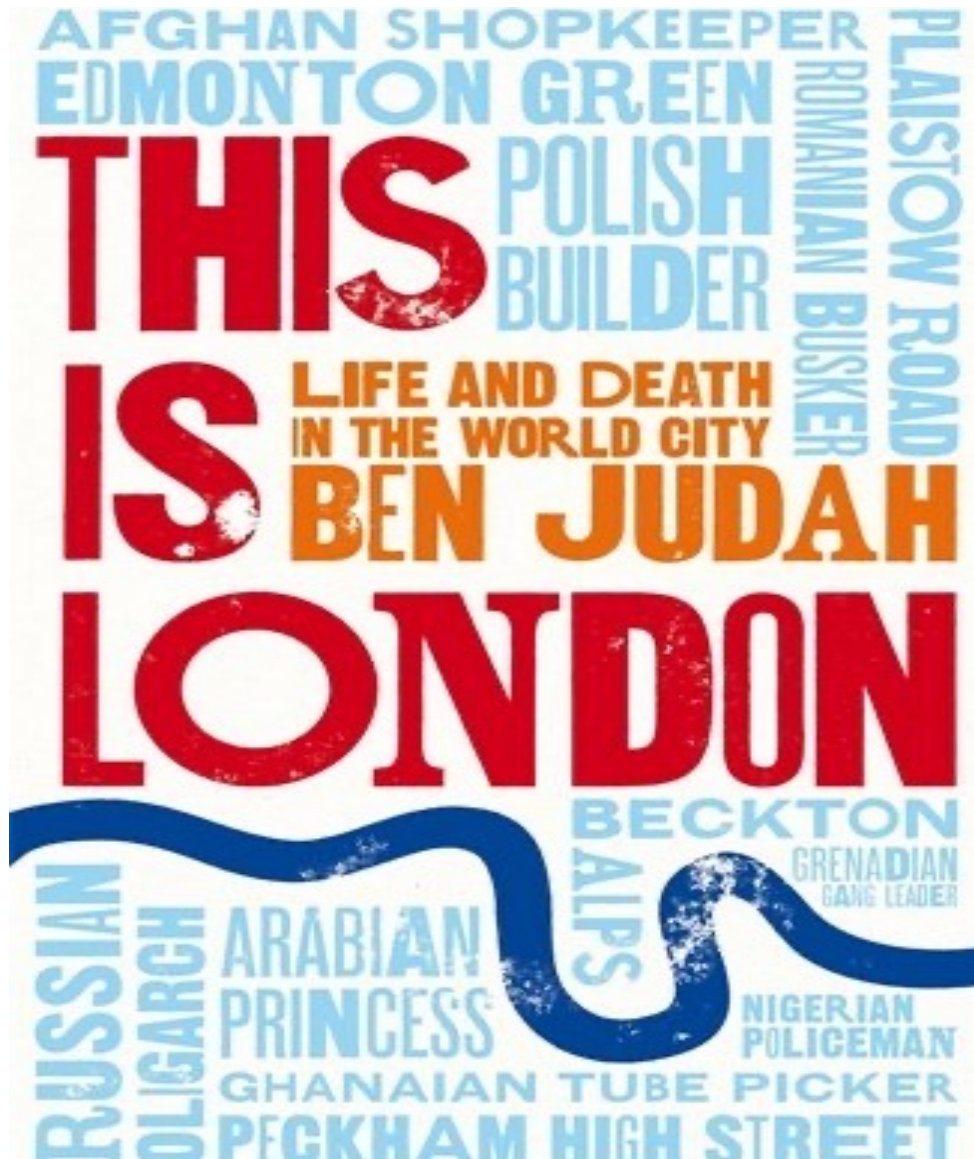


GLA, (2018), What is London to you?



Is this 'real London'?

- The story of London- from its founding two millennia ago by Roman invaders, to Jewish and German immigrants in the Victorian period, to the Windrush generation
- Migration has been fundamental to London's economic, social, political and cultural development
- London's economy (and culture) has long been driven by migrants, from earlier continental financiers and more recent European Union citizens



Or this?

- A megacity of global migrants
- Extremes of wealth and poverty
- Many ethnic enclaves
- Decline/halving of white population over the past 40 years



Titchner, (2016), No Them Only Us, Canary Wharf Station

Why are we interested in #LondonIsOpen?

- How is welcoming framed and understood through the idea of openness?
- What are the different ways in which London is imagined and represented?
- How can we reflect and capture our multiple Londons?

#LondonIsOpen

Tracking the campaign

- #LondonIsOpen launched in the immediate aftermath of the Brexit referendum result
- The campaign has been used to promote London as:
 - **A tourist destination**
 - **A city of film, sport, art and fashion**
 - **A site for investment**
- It has also been relaunched in response to:
 - **The London Bridge terror attack in 2017**
 - **The publication of the Brexit withdrawal agreement in 2018**
 - **The easing of Covid-19 restrictions in summer 2020**

**“The city is a
world within
itself, the city is
my home”**

“You know, cup of
tea, fish and chips,
good food, bad
weather”

**“London is
avocado on toast,
London is Sunday
roast”**

**“London is a roost
for every bird”**

**“London is a city
of inevitable
change”**

#LondonIsOpen: recent uses



Right: GLA, (2021), London Welcomes Refugees. Left: GLA, (2020), #LondonIsOpen for business

Methods

- Documentary analysis
 - **Analysed the content of campaign videos and materials**
- Twitter mining
 - **Scraped 79,000+ #LondonIsOpen Tweets for analysis**
- Interviews
 - **Conducted interviews with GLA and Cavalier leads**

#LondonIsOpen: Visions of the city

No matter who you are
Or where you are from, London's the city!
To feel and belong!



#LondonIsOpen: Vision of the city



GLA, (2016), #LondonIsOpen for business

#LondonIsOpen: Representations and reactions

Key campaign themes: London is...

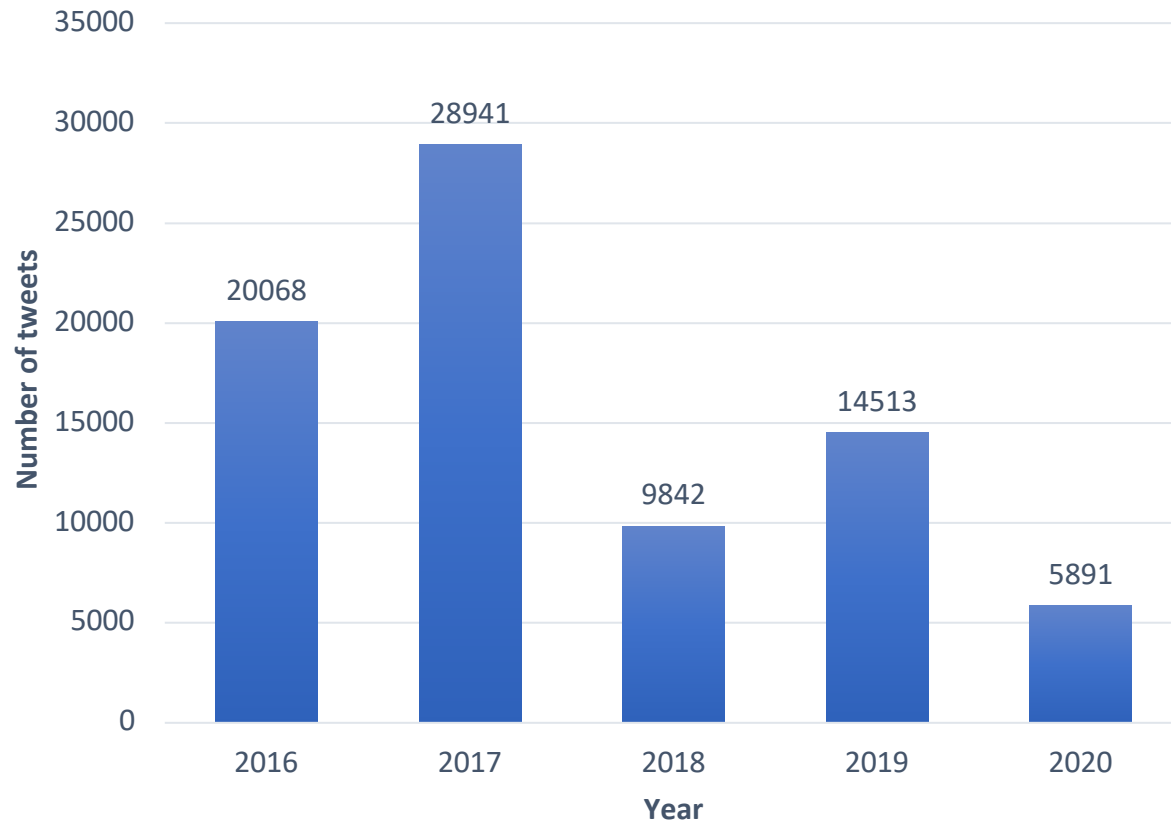
- ...Diverse, welcoming, inclusive
- ...Entrepreneurial, pro-business
- ...Global

- **Key online response themes: London is...**

- ...Diverse, pro-migrant
- ...Entrepreneurial, pro-business
- ...In crisis – crime, housing
- ...Reverse racist?



#LondonIsOpen Tweets per year



#LondonIsOpen on Twitter

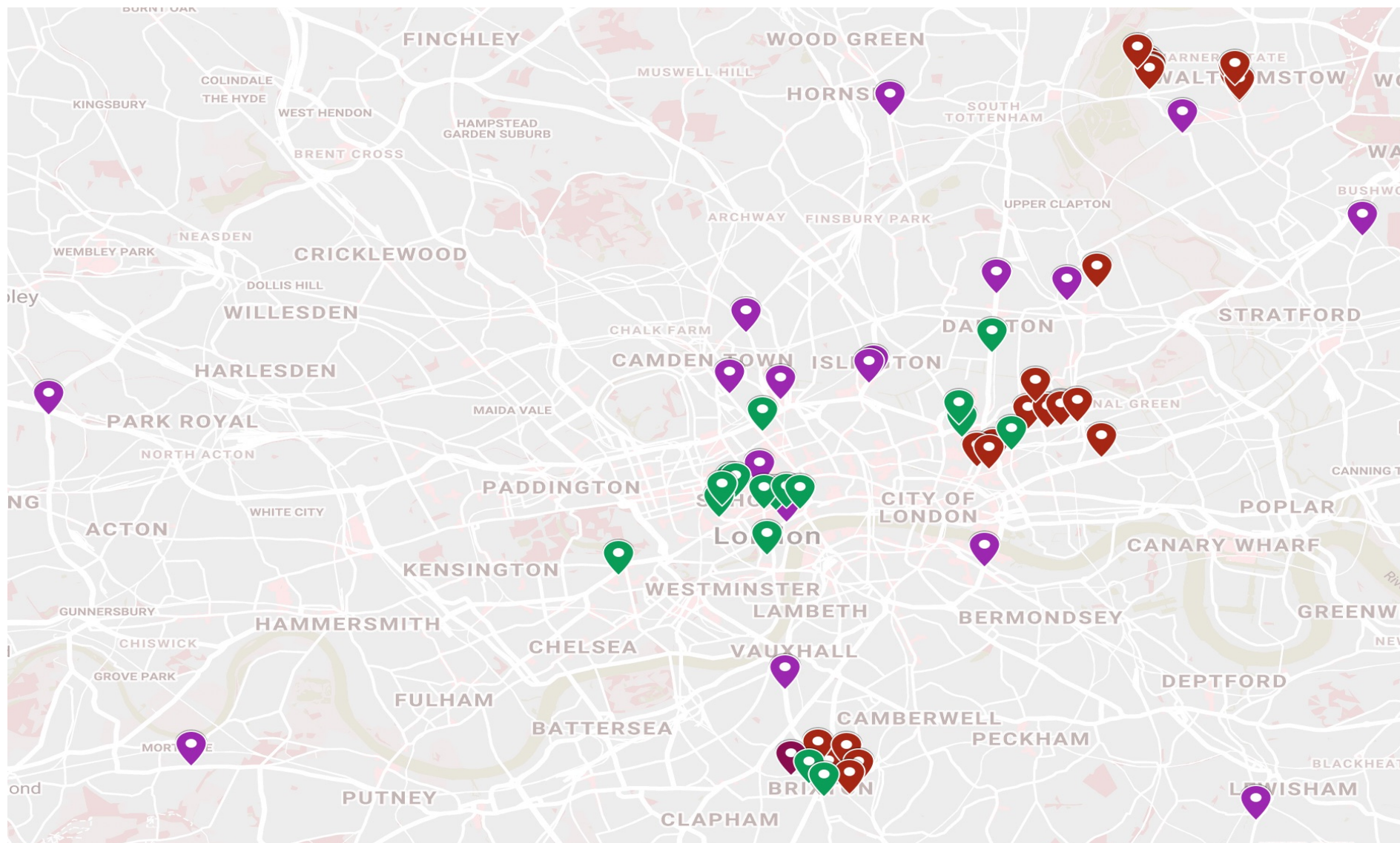
- Tweets in 29 languages including English
- Over 79,000 unique tweets in five years
- Hashtag most used in 2017 with over 28,000 unique tweets
- "Brexit" one of the most frequently used terms across the full data set

Representations and reactions

#LondonIsOpen on Twitter

- How. Fucking. DARE you? Keep your fascist nose the hell out of London's business. We do not want your input #LondonIsOpen (2017)
- 31 faces. 4 white, 27 black. Murder, GBH, knife attacks. #LondonIsOpen (2020)
- #LondonIsOpen Stress Free Landlording (2016)
- ...Bulgarian at Wood Green; Cypriot at Bounds Green; French at Gloucester Road; Greek at Kentish Town; Irish at Kilburn; Lithuanian at Canning Town; Polish at Perivale; Romanian at Edgware Road; & Spanish at Lancaster Gate #LondonIsOpen (2018)
- @MayorofLondon #londonisopen for every criminal from any part of the world who wishes to exploit our politically correct stupidity. (2017)
- #LondonIsOpen, #Diversity is our greatest strength and our open borders make us safer. (2020)
- @SadiqKhan's homelessness strategy is to "#endroughsleeping" by funding deportation of roughsleepers from EU (2021)
- Oh #London we are very proud! Our #city has overtaken #NewYork as the #global #fintech investment crown! #LondonIsOpen (2019)

#LondonIsOpen: Where is open London?

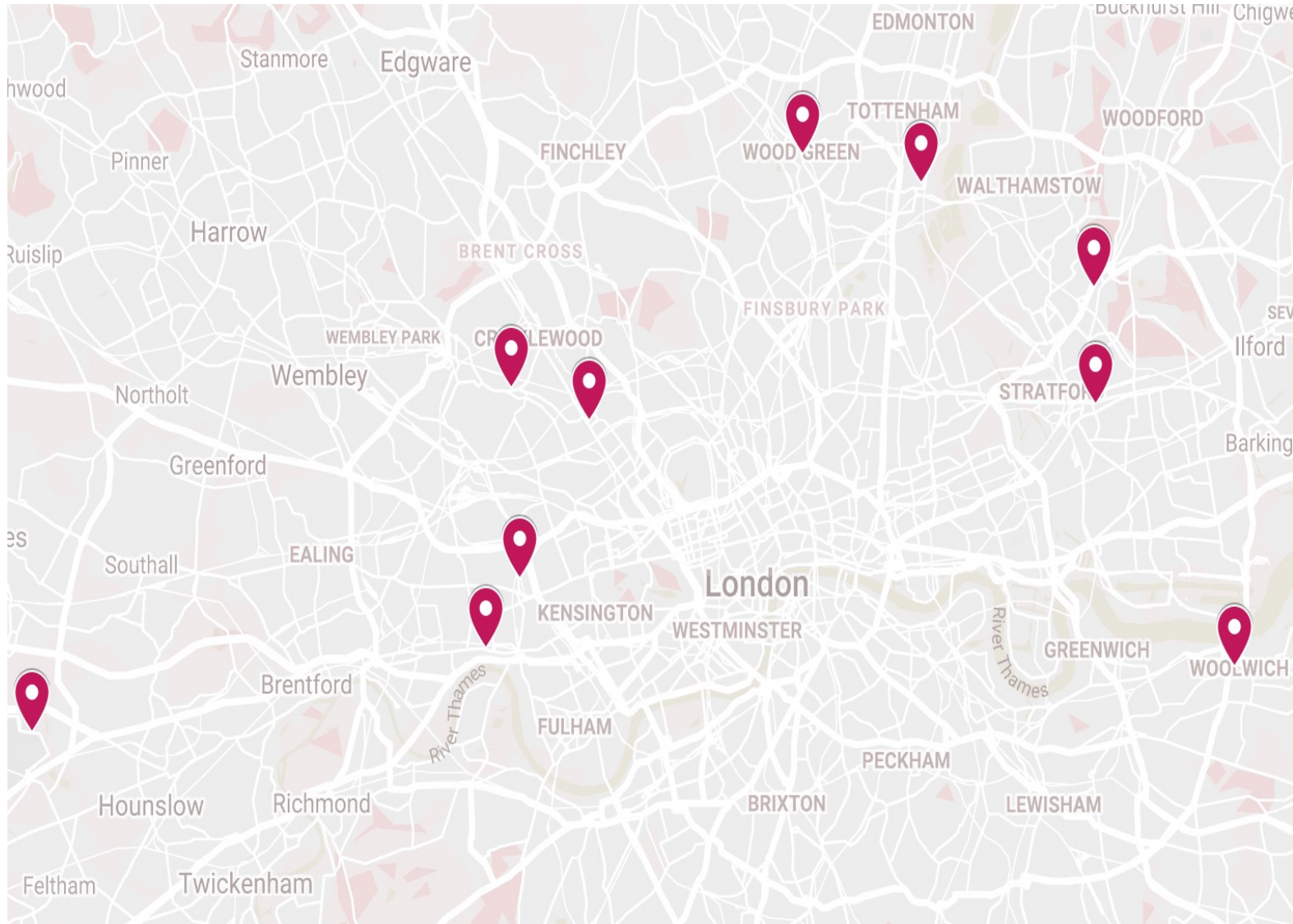


Map of #LondonIsOpen video filming locations

Key

- Green: 2016
- Purple: 2018
- Red: 2020

#LondonIsOpen: Where is open London?



Key

- Red: tour bus destinations



Map of #LondonIsOpen tour bus locations (left); #LondonIsOpen tour bus (right)

Re-Opening London? The post-pandemic city



IKEA tube advert, 2021 (left); Coca-Cola tube advert, 2021 (right)

Discussion

- What would a welcoming city look like and do?
 - What places in London represent the welcoming city?
 - What places in London could become sites that represent the welcoming city?
- What can be done better and differently?
- Which London(s) should be represented to?
 - Investors
 - Londoners
 - Visitors

Thank you!

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Project website: <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/sociology/research/projects/isc/opencity/>