

BETTER THAN HOME:

THE 2023
WORKPLACE
& HOW TO
CULTIVATE IT
THROUGH
STRATEGY
& DESIGN.

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We think of building, organisation and city as separate, but dismissing this concept will help us all thrive.

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[Bill Downer, BVN]

H + W at a city-wide level

But, do we even need cities?

The Global Creativity Index correlates cities with higher urbanisation to higher creativity. Citing Singapore, Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden and even Australia as world leaders in creativity with a largely urbanised population.

Furthermore, higher urbanisation means lower gasoline consumption. The denser the city the lesser the use of cars and, in turn, the greater environmental benefits. Urging even founders at ride-share company, Lyft, to proclaim "it's time to redesign our city around people and not cars."

In 2020, we experienced a population flight not seen before in our lifetime. New York City lost 5% – almost half a million – of residents to suburban and exurban retreats, inspiring the media to hail "NYC is dead forever" met with a series of disrupting images similar to those seen in dystopian fantasies.

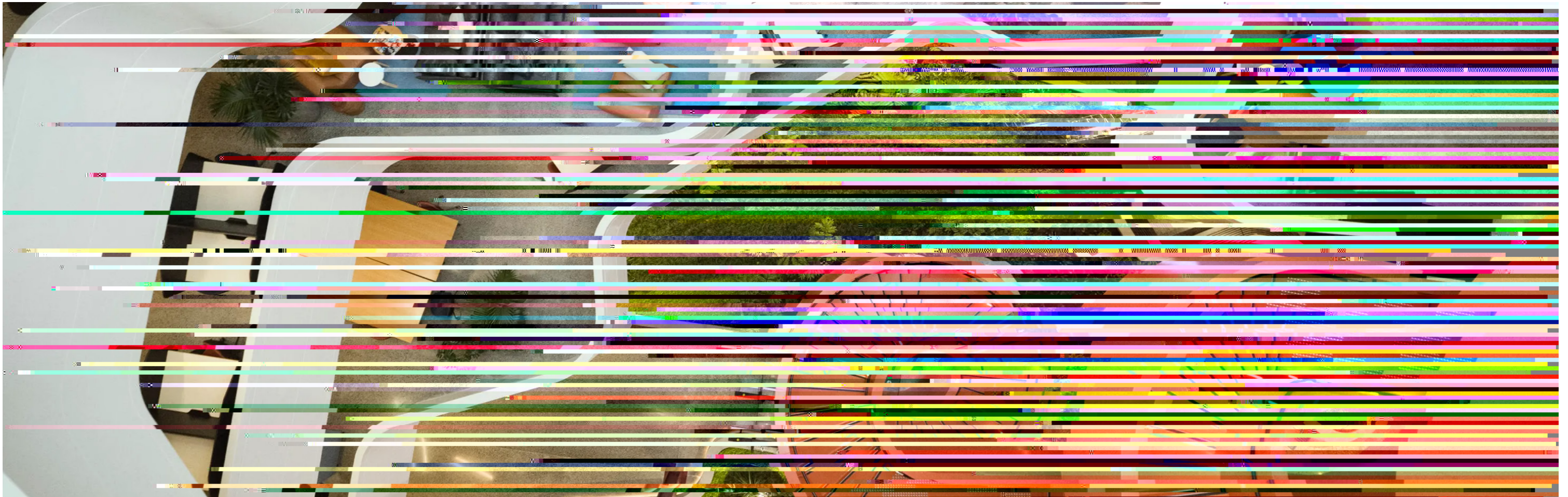
Though not in our lifetime, this abandonment of cities has in fact come before.

In the late 19th century, disease through population growth and unsanitary practices led people in London to flee, but re-thinking city planning and a solution that aimed to bring the natural world into city hubs – today known as River Thames – reinvigorated the city and drew back the masses.

Philip Vivian, Director at Bates Smart, contends that the reinvigoration of our cities must be addressed at a societal level, with infrastructure, public space and private amenity interplaying to create a prosperous future office.

In Bates Smarts work with the City of Sydney on Sydney 2050, they suggest "to sustainably increase density there needs to be a fully integrated transport system in place," proposing a supertall development in the city to fund such a sustainable transport system. This proposal is complemented by their Vision for Circular Quay, which proposes the removal of the Cahill Expressway presenting the opportunity to transform Circulate Quay into a grand urban room and put an end to the area's infrastructure domination.





Seek, as well as ANZ's Open House
 designed by Foolsap Studio, applied
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The shift comes from
 thinking about real
 estate as a static
 resource to a building
 as a service.

// [BVN]

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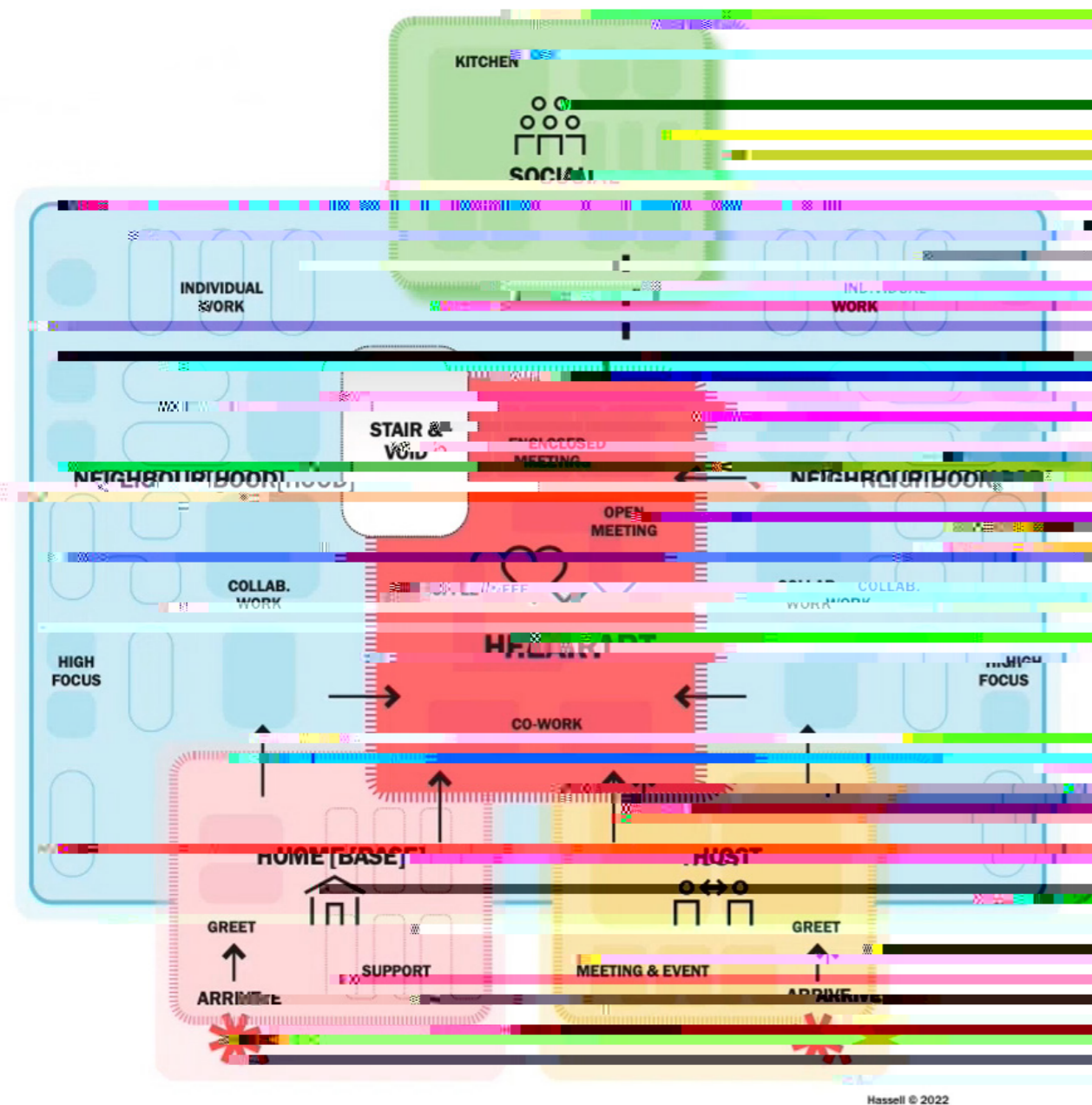
Make the
office a magnet,
not a mandate.

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The 'heart' of the workplace

// [Hassell]



This shift towards softness and openness – in both aesthetics and approach – is so predominant it has infiltrated workplace design language. With Hassell, Foolsap Studio, and Mirvac all making reference to a workplace floor plan that centres around an accessible, central social and collaborative hub that is repeatedly touted as the 'heart' of the modern office space.

This dedicated space plays a multitude of roles. Sometimes a serendipitous conversation can lead to a creative solution or a learning opportunity, directly benefiting business objectives. More commonly, and arguably even more impactfully, it provides the "subtle togetherness" that is felt by sharing a space.

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Work socialisation is nuanced, from scheduled meetings to unforced, organic conversations and a sense of being a part of one.

// [Franziska Heuschkel, Co-Founder, Space and Pepper]

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These interpersonal encounters and this intangible 'sense' speaks to two key non-physical employee drives of the future workplace: experience and identity.

> Experience, likened to 'software' by Hassell, is proposed by the design firm as one of the four key elements of the holistic workplace – separate to but interdependent on: place (hardware), technology (digitalware) and culture (humanware).

> Identity, the cultivation of pride, belonging and culture according to Henning Larson, is a shared set of company ideas, values and identifiers that must exist between members but can be fostered by the environment.

H at the workplace optimisation level

This focus on the physical workplace

of work: it's hybrid. While research by both CBRE and Hassell shows Australia lags behind the rest of the world in its adoption of remote work – contradicting international trends by displaying a greater 'in-office' workforce – the most clear finding is not about which way your policy leans but rather that employees are given the choice.

Hassell's survey of 2500 traditional office workers (who now work in various locations) debunked one of the greatest debates of remote work, citing no difference in relative productivity. However, the policy did impact a key concern for business: employees are 4-10% more likely to quit if no freedom or choice is granted.

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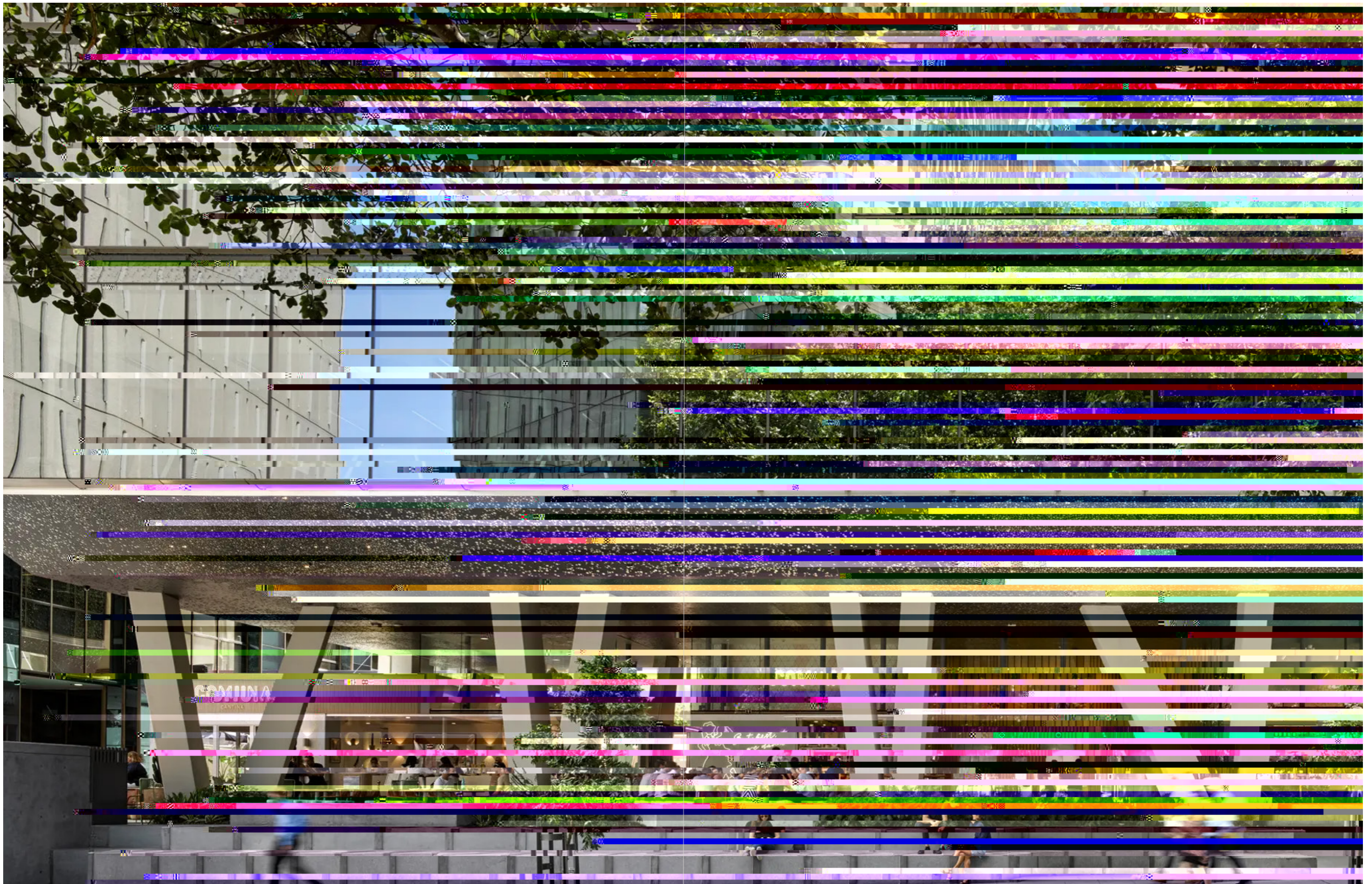
There's no relative difference in reported productivity between remote workers and those in the office.

// [Hassell]

We've established society's need for urbanisation and organisations' priority for shared zones but what individual employees need varies, not just between people, but through the different stages of a person's life.

A hybrid model – respecting employees' desire for choice – is the only solution.

However, leaders urge companies to be as bespoke as possible. Leading Australian property developer, Mirvac, have been optimising their own workplace, with pilot program: **The Adaptive Workplace**, "a highly flexible, dynamic work environment that responds in real time to the specific task, people or team using it. Embedded with a kit of parts and design components that allow it to oscillate between a variety of settings



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Is hybrid really the one word we should use to describe this experience? By definition this means mixing and remixing the ingredients, but instead of mixing, we should think about the recipe.

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Space and Pepper's research on the future workplace took on a different approach: looking to the tech-world to optimise the existing workplace according to user experience rather than facilities.

Franziska suggests in addition to building togetherness and creativity, providing a touch of novelty – reducing repetitiveness and sparking joy – through simple gestures, like swapping pizza day to sushi afternoon, and annual office refreshes, that don't require a change in furniture but an employee-led switch of styling and positioning to keep things intriguing.

At Schiavello, we believe the culmination of all these strategies: societal, architectural, design-led and operational will work together to build the workplace of tomorrow, and look forward to being at the forefront of how it takes shape.

