

Linnart's Lockdown

This has been my view for about 90% of the time over the past few months. And yes, it is always this tidy.

I moved to London in 2018 after finishing my Bachelor's degree, and fell in love with a vibrant city full of life. Right now, things are very different.

I graduated from the ISG in 2014, 6 whole years ago. To be honest, I did not expect something like this to happen, probably because I naively expected the world to be better prepared for a pandemic,

considering we've had quite a few of them over the past hundreds of years.

Nevertheless, here we are, sitting inside, realising all of the small things we took for granted. We're now grateful for the times we could just go to a restaurant, we're virtually interacting with family and friends because it's the only way, we are terrified of public transport and enclosed spaces, and we are extremely annoyed at all of the politicians that should have taken this a lot more seriously, with their inaction leading to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people, as well as all of the CEOs and shareholders who have been milking their companies for years in search of those sweet "profit margins" and now suddenly need massive bailouts to keep going, if "keep going" means laying off all of your staff even though you received trillions in free money. That last one is more of a personal annoyance of mine, although I know others feel the same way.

How did we get here? How do we go back to normal? Or is this going to be the new normal? Isn't it morbidly fascinating how we watched a novel coronavirus evolve from a small epidemic to a global pandemic in real time? This is stuff you usually read in history books. And something that I do find interesting is how quickly it has become "normal". Taking a wide berth around someone you see on the street is now considered friendly, rather than rude. You see someone with a mask entering a store and think "what an upstanding citizen." The speed at which society adapted to the threat is quite astounding.

Quick adaptation is how my lockdown started. I work for an EdTech (education technology) start-up, and we were "ahead of the times" when it came to COVID-19. As soon as it became clear that the virus had spread to the UK, we appointed a "Head of Corona", who monitored the spread of the disease and gauged whether or not we should switch to permanent working-from-home. The decision was finally made on the 12th of March, a full 11 days before the UK government ordered the countrywide lockdown. While my company was already social distancing, Prime Minister (and full-time idiot) Boris Johnson was still out shaking hands. I initially thought the UK had done quite well to handle the crisis, as did a lot of the country. However, it has now become clear that inaction and incompetence was littered throughout the UK's response to this crisis, which has led to my general annoyance with underprepared politicians. Why can't we have strong, well-prepared (female) leaders like Germany and New Zealand? Tens of thousands of lives might have been saved.



It's not all doom and gloom. The quick transition to working from home helped keep a sense of normality in my day-to-day life. Working in EdTech also feels rewarding, since this crisis showed the importance of having novel solutions in place so that children can still learn, even if schools have to be closed. Experts already think that this generation of schoolchildren have received permanent damage to their education and development due to COVID-19. Hopefully companies like mine can step in and mitigate that damage now and in the future. My company furloughed me for a few weeks, which gave me some time to reflect on recent developments, improve my skills, and also just relax. I've talked to my family and my friends way more than I would in normal circumstances. Being the only family member in the UK, video calls would be the normal means of communication anyway, so it's funny that the number of video calls has gone up during these times. Everyone is scheduling weekly calls to just catch up and check on one another, which is really nice to see. People care about each other and are always trying to be positive, demonstrated when the whole UK clapped for NHS and care workers, who continue to put their lives on the line every day, something (this is me annoyed at politicians again) they shouldn't have to do, but do anyway. I hope we keep this sense of community and appreciation going forward. The quick environmental recovery due to reduced pollution and human activity was astounding to see, and further hammers home the point that we aren't actually destroying the planet. The planet will recover. We are just destroying ourselves, so let's try and be better and keep the world intact.

I'd like to end with this: black lives matter. Institutional, systemic racism has been allowed to go on for too long, with most of the world just watching it unfold. It's not enough to not be racist, we have to be actively anti-racist. Sign petitions, donate to good causes, read about these issues, spread the word, hold the people at the top accountable so that change happens. Both COVID-19 and George Floyd have given us the perfect window of opportunity to make the world a better, safer, healthier place. Let's not waste that opportunity and go back to how things were before. We have to create a new and improved "normal."

I hope everyone is staying safe and staying positive. See you on the other side!

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