

Co-operation, unity, and direct action

Thinking about our online worlds under an extended period of lock down.

Paul Caputo Mar 17  



Agnes Callard wrote in The Point, “We may not have arrived at the end, but we have certainly arrived at the thought of it”

Plainly, things are bad out there, and they’re likely to get worse before they get better. Yet, the speed at which events are playing out means that all we can really do, for now, is stay calm, supportive and vigilant. The lack of information translates into uncertainty, and in such times, there is logic in a variety of different responses to this outbreak. We should remain sympathetic and empathetic to people’s concerns. Everybody’s circumstances are unique.

The British Government *appears* to be taking a different approach, but this may change quickly as the country’s under-resourced health service begins to labour. As I write, there are 1950 positive cases, although we suspect the inability or unwillingness to comprehensively test means the cumulative figure is many times that. When the numbers suggest that other countries have curtailed the spread by enforcing a strict lock down there are plenty of questions around the UK’s position. It is both confusing and worrying that we seem to have arrived at a different conclusion on how to manage things.

While the concept of ‘herd immunity’ evokes awkward historical comparisons (to say the least) few could argue that someone still needs to be out there to keep the lights on. The global economy is already crumbling. Even so, the approach feels flawed. I do not find myself in the vulnerable category, making

the probability of recovery high, but not initiating a formal lock down will surely prolong the virus's circulation. Alongside this, there are plenty of reports of young, healthy people requiring intensive care to pull through. In this sense, suggesting we'd get bored if we protected ourselves too early was insulting, and outrageously dangerous for millions of people.

Only time will tell whether the government has got this catastrophically wrong, or indeed, has courageously delayed until just the right moment. Regardless of the answer though, we're facing inconceivable economic damage and in all probability, a cultural shift of irreversible magnitude.

With the widespread closure of hospitality venues, the on-trade is in for a very difficult period. How this ultimately plays out is anyone's guess, but for now it's a game of 'wait and see'; the safety of staff and customers is justifiably a first consideration. The impact depends, everywhere, on the duration and stringency of restrictions, but sadly there is little room for optimism. As the days and weeks pass, the knock on effects will mount, hitting all aspects of the supply chain.

Wine lovers will carry on drinking at home and this is an opportunity in the short term for companies who are sufficiently geared up for e-commerce. Direct to consumer platforms could offer some potential to keep the industry functioning, but, the the speed at which the economy is buckling is

frightening. The seemingly simultaneous collapse in supply and demand is unparalleled.

In the short term we need co-operation, unity, and direct action. Already there are heartening examples. In the north of Italy, [Zorzettig](#) has launched a special label initiative with proceeds going to supporting the intensive care unit of Ospedale Universitario Santa Maria della Misericordia in Udine, which is fighting at the forefront of the emergency. Some might see this as bandwagoning on the back of a crisis. I see it as a question of necessity. Every little helps.