

Lockdown diaries: Alan, currently writing a book about modern day Spain

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It's ok to be stressed, and it's normal to be losing it. Most of us are. But we are doing it together," says Alan McGuire, who used to be a psychiatric nurse back in the UK. Now a writer and English teacher here in Madrid, he's struggling to use this time to finish his book about modern day Spain. It's hard to concentrate. He's also observed that the grey pollution cloud above Madrid, known locally as the 'boina', has lifted off the city, but the clouds in people's minds are growing by the day.

You can read Alan McGuire's written works [here](#).

What was your life like just before the lockdown vs. today?

When the lockdown started, I had already begun to prepare to work from home a bit. In a previous life I was a psychiatric nurse, so I had a feeling from watching the news that it would get bad. Seeing how China locked down the country and stopped their entire economy, the largest in the world, to try and stop the virus, it made me think. Then when Italy got hit, I

had a feeling it would reach Spain. My wife's friend that I normally tease for overreacting agreed with me, that confirmed my suspicion that things were getting more surreal in the world (We have already had Brexit and Trump). Being a nurse you always assume the worst will happen, however I never expected it to be this bad.

If two weeks ago you told me I had to spend a month at home I would have thought '*great, I can finish writing my book and I don't have to see people or get interrupted*'. But since it has actually happened, it hasn't been great. It is getting worse by the day. I find it hard to concentrate and end up staring at bad news all day. To top it off I haven't written a thing. I have to say, this has started out as a depressing article!

What does the street look like?



I live in a commuter town south of Madrid called Leganes. Normally it means leaving a night out early to get the last train home or travelling for an hour on the last metro back at 1am. However now it is nice to be away from the busy centre.

I have a small green area with a woodland near me where I can walk my dog India. It has a great view of Madrid, but just looking at it makes me feel desolate. Knowing all those people are cooped up stressed in their houses, worried about their jobs and homes more than their health. I think it is a sad reflection of our society. The grey pollution cloud above Madrid, known locally as the 'boina' or beret, has lifted off the city but the clouds in people's minds are growing by the day.

Have you noticed any random acts of kindness or uplifting things recently?



I saw two dog walkers talking to each other outside my flat and one of the older neighbours started shouting at them to not stand close. I thought 'good on ya'.

I have also seen the local street cleaners putting out a large sign outside their depot, saying thank you for the applause that happens every night. **The applause is ramping up here with music and instruments, although it got a bit much when they started playing 'I Will Survive'.**

How are you coping?

I keep reminding myself we are all in this together to a degree. Reading philosophy has helped, and my e-book has been revived with many cheap or free domain philosophy books. Great time to catch up on the classics! Reading is a great form of escapism after staring at a screen all day whilst simultaneously entertaining 4-year-olds or correcting the pronunciation of sheep for the fifth time.

I hope that people stop pretending to be ok and stop this social competition of *look how creative I am* and *look how altruistic and relaxed I am*. **I think it is ok to be stressed, and it is normal to be losing it. Most of us are.** But we are doing it together. In solidarity and there is help if people need it. We just need to find each other. See, even people with dogs are struggling, it is not the golden ticket.

What's the first thing you'll do once this lockdown is over?

Of course, I would like to say go to the beach or visit the UK to see my family. But I won't have the money, I will have spent it all on baked beans as even the Spaniards won't eat them. It will be all that is left on the shelves of DÍA (supermarket) after the apocalypse. Well, that is how it feels at the moment.

In all honesty, I will probably be adjusting to hearing about things other than Covid-19. **I never thought I would miss the day Brexit was on the news.**

Oh and of course a beer on a terrace with friends.

If you could tell the government one thing right now, what would it be?

Keep it up and don't forget the people when the threat of the illness goes away. When the economic fallout happens don't forget to protect the people that you govern, the businesses that will be struggling and the services that have saved us.

- You can follow Alan McGuire on [Medium](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).
- Read Alan's article on [The Rastro's Political Flea Market](#), which he wrote for Naked Madrid just before the lockdown
- Also read his [recently published article](#) on the history of Spain and COVID-19

Check out all [Madrid lockdown stories](#)

If you'd like to get involved and share a compelling story from this ongoing chapter of history, reach out to Daphne Binioris (daphne@veracontent.com) and Daniel Catalan (a96039@aup.edu)