

Duties to individuals versus duties to others

Justice, fairness and medical ethics seen
through the lens of COVID-19

BMA, 8 December 2020



utilitarianism
versus
deontology



In Kant's deontology, the rightness of an interaction depends upon treating a person as an end in himself/herself rather than a means to some consequence. Kant comes to this position by maintaining, as did the Greeks, that humans are rational animals and that their rationality entitles them to the right to be treated as beings of absolute worth and dignity in themselves. ... in dealing with another rational being one ought to take into consideration the other's absolute worth as an individual self. If, contrary to this, we treat him/her as a means merely, even as a means to good consequences, then we use him/her only for some purpose, thus violating his/her right to be treated as an end.

Kushner T

Doctor-patient relationship in general practice - a different model

J Med Ethics 1981; 7: 128-31.



- the separateness of persons and to the irreducibility of quality to quantity; its sense that what happens to individuals in the world has enormous importance; its commitment to describe the events of a life not from an external perspective of detachment, as the doings and movings of ants or machine parts, but from within, as invested with the complex significances with which human beings invest their own lives.

Nussbaum, MC.

Poetic Justice: the Literary Imagination and Public Life, 2001.

- to the moral relevance
of following a life
through all of its
adventures in all of its
concrete context.

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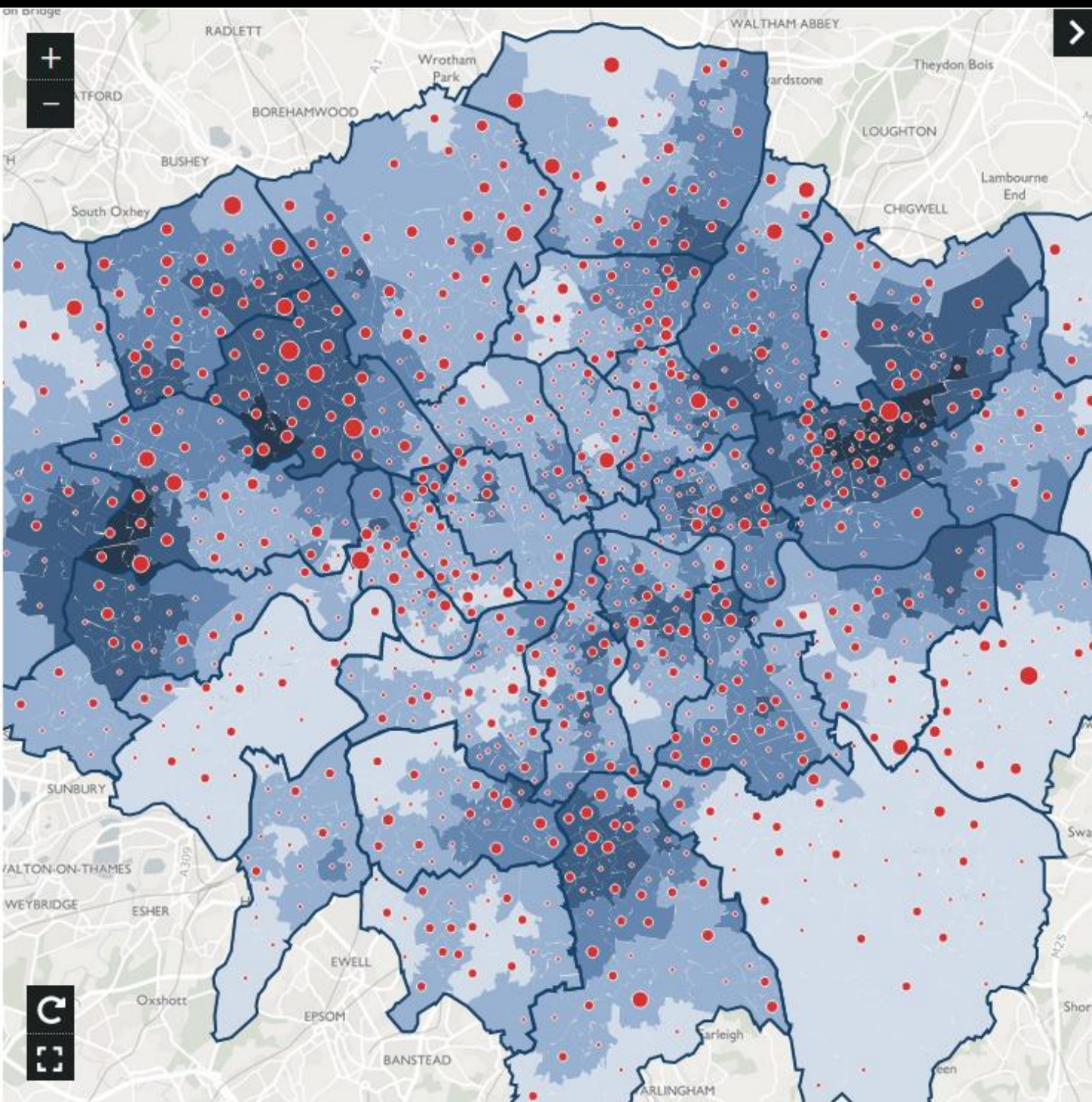
... Keeping the particular
alive in a simplifying,
generalizing world –
that's where the battle is
joined.

Philip Roth
I Married a Communist, 1998

Not until the vast wealth of
high-flown rhetoric has been
cashed into the ordinary
small change of a household
do we see what it really
entails - for me, for you, for
all of us.

Sven Lindqvist
Desert Divers
1990

A syndemic
rather than a
pandemic



COVID-19 DEATHS



This mapping tool enables you to see how COVID-19 deaths in your area may relate to factors in the local population, which research has shown are associated with COVID-19 mortality.

» [Click here for more information on reading this the map.](#)

Search near a location:

e.g. enter your postcode



Data



Context

● COVID-19 deaths per 1,000 residents by MSOA ▼

● Population & Environment Data ▼

All population data layers are aggregated by MSOA, unless stated otherwise.

● Ethnicity: % BAME ▼

● Ethnicity: % Black ▼

● Ethnicity: % Pakistani or Bangladeshi ▼

● Ethnicity: % Indian ▼

● Jobs: % in insecure occupations ▼

● Jobs: % in occupations at risk of COVID-19 ▼

● Poverty: % children living in poverty ▼

● Deprivation: IMD (by LSOA) ▼

● Age: % People over 70 ▼

● Medical: % with Hypertension ▼

● Medical: % with Obesity (18+) ▼

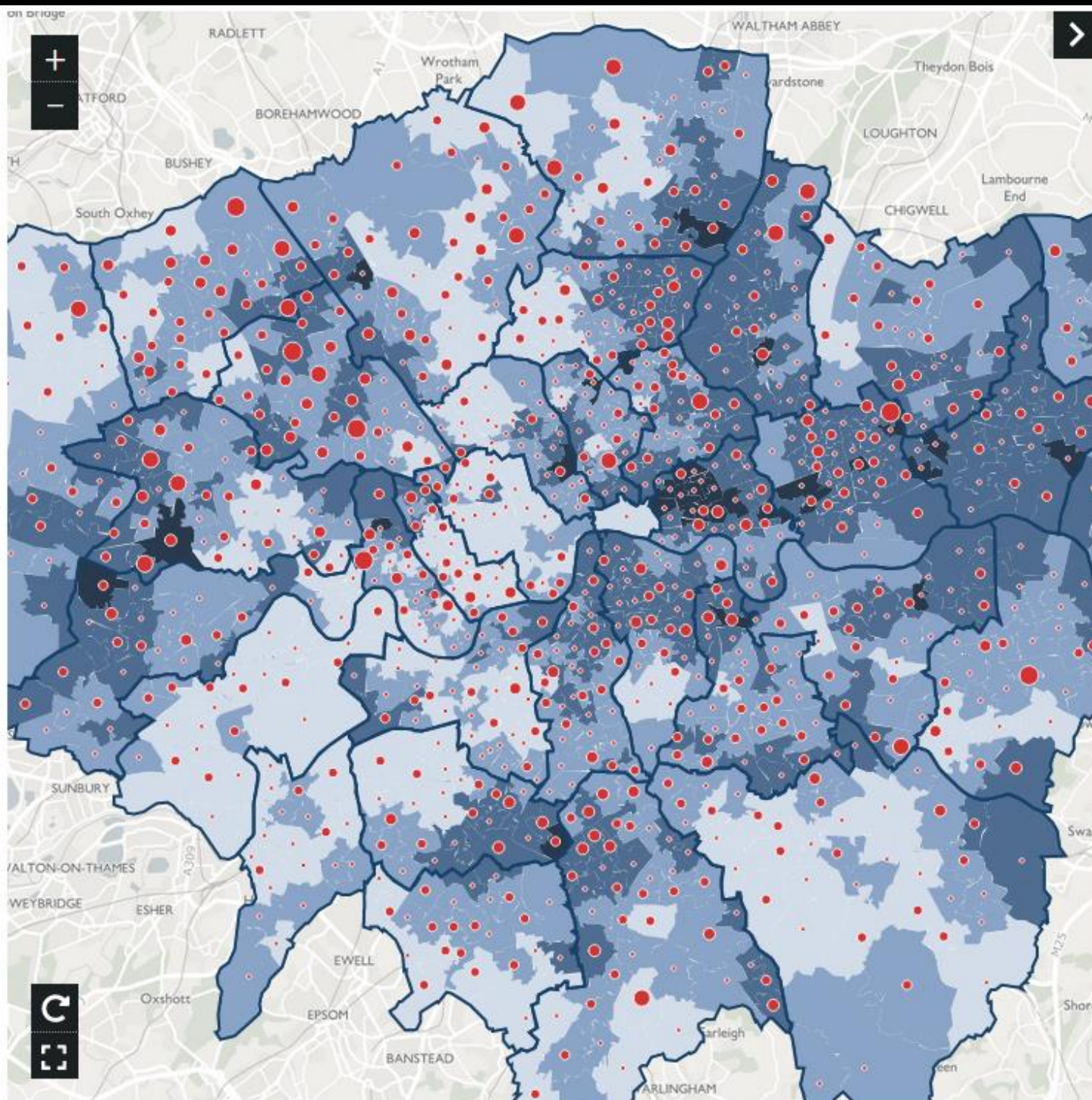
● Medical: % with Diabetes ▼

● Medical: % with Asthma ▼

● Medical: % with Coronary Heart Disease ▼

● Air Quality: Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) 2016 ▼

MAYOR OF LONDON



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Connect

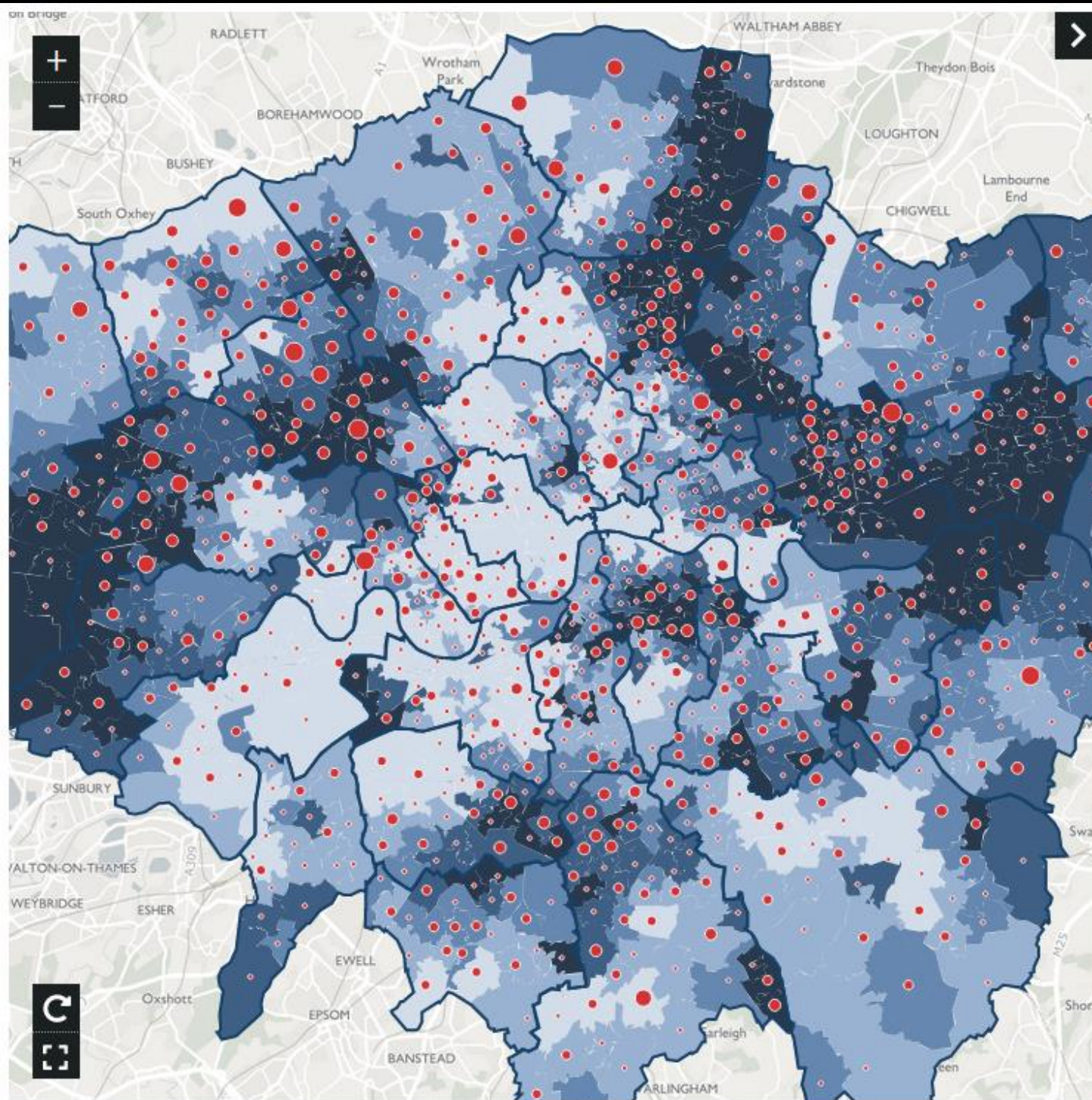
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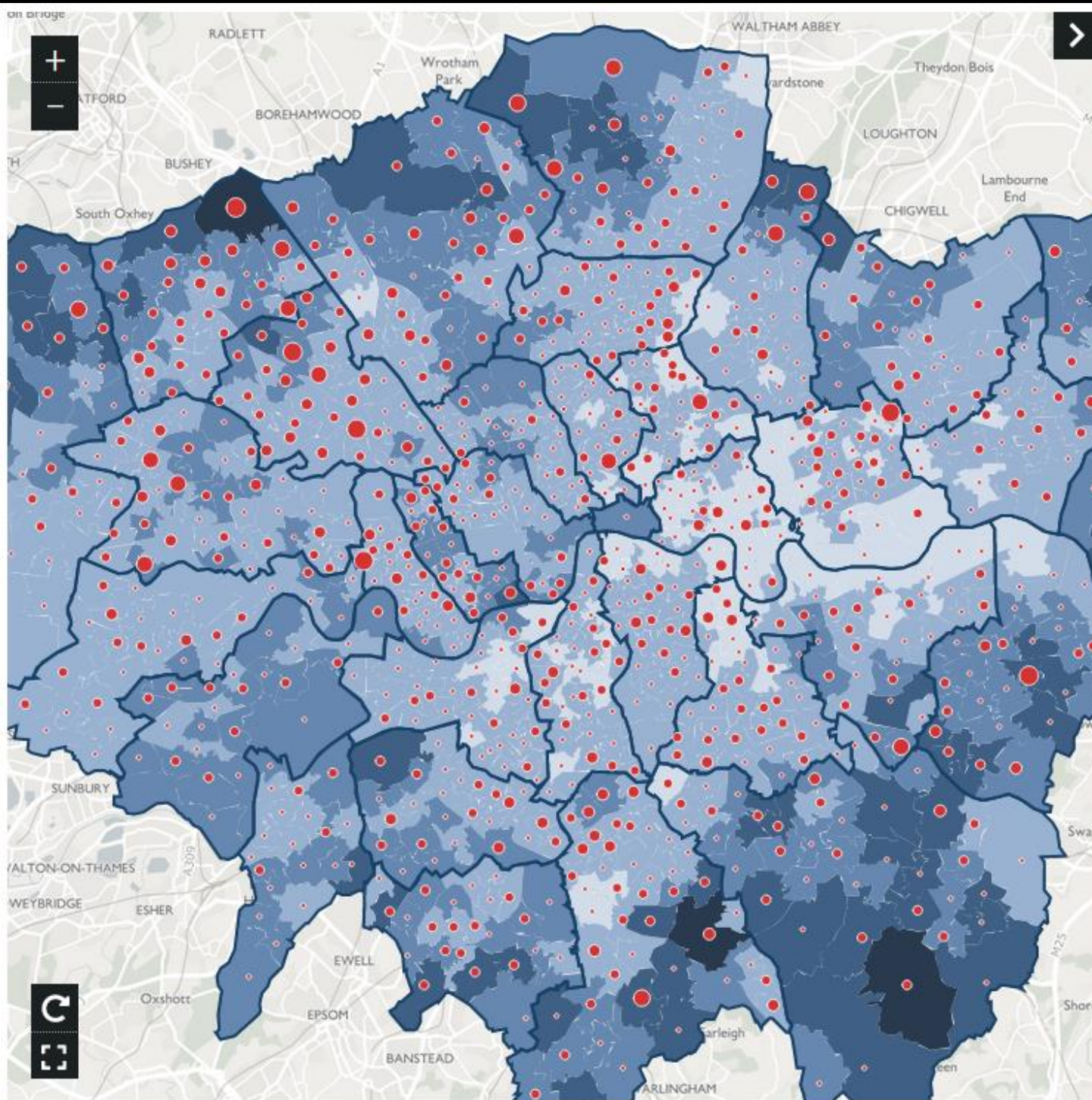
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What's certain is that the key to understanding the map is the underlying social and economic geography of England. To understand the changing medical geography of this pandemic, you must first understand how the country lives and works.

Danny Dorling

Want to understand the Covid map? Look at where
we live and how we work

The Observer, November 29, 2020

This crisis has broadly
separated us into the
exposed poor and the
shielded rich.

Anjana Ahuja

Covid-19 is really a syndemic — and that shows us
how to fight it

Financial Times, October 9, 2020

It means we have to consider not just biological issues but the social structural forces that propel disease interaction, population vulnerability and unequal access to healthcare, including, once we have them, Covid-19 vaccines.

Merrill Singer
University of Connecticut

Even though such rhetoric (e.g. 'all men are created equal') is typically taken to be part and parcel of egalitarianism, the effect of ignoring the interpersonal variations can, in fact, be deeply inegalitarian, in hiding the fact that equal consideration for all may demand very unequal treatment in favour of the disadvantaged. The demands of substantive equality can be particularly exacting and complex when there is a good deal of antecedent inequality to counter.

Amartya Sen
Inequality Reexamined, 1992

story



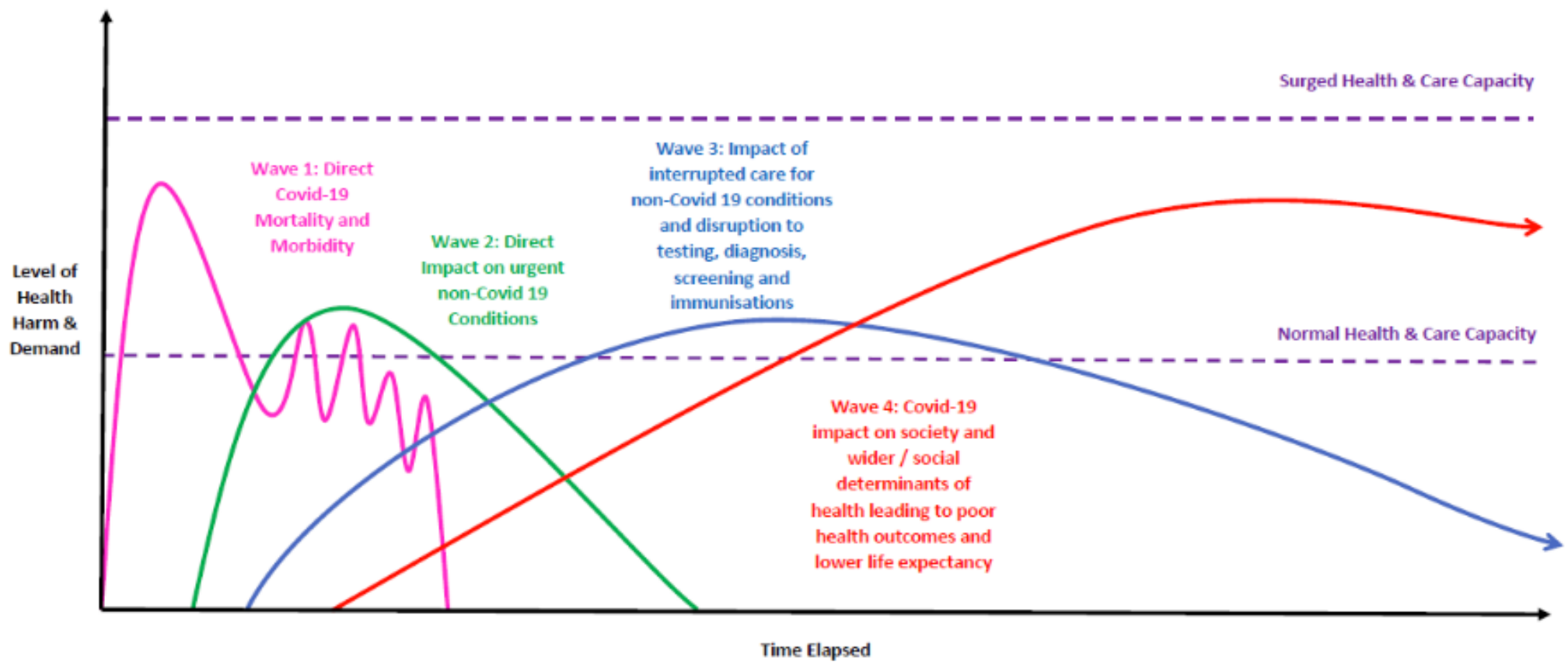


The urge to tell a story is the oldest of human impulses, for it clarifies and orders the relationship between the private and the public, our inner and outer worlds, and it records the dissonance between these two spheres of existence.

Caryl Phillips

A beacon in dark times, *The Guardian Review*

Saturday 22 November 2003





... how to defend both the idea and practice of living, immediately and wholeheartedly, against the corrosive inroads of medicalization; how to encourage a more realistic and shapely view of the life cycle, where the end of life is neither banished from the view of respectable opinion nor treated shallowly as a practical problem seeking technical solution; how to ensure that loving presence and fidelity are not casualties of the battle for longer life; how to help people learn to think about the art of living well — and dying well — in the face of mortal illness, not seduced by the techno- and bureaucratic “solutions” ...

Leon R Kass

Cancer and mortality. In Dresser R (ed) *Malignant*
Oxford University Press, 2012.

Intergenerational injustice



Financial Times Retweeted



Federica Cocco @federicacocco · 2h



Interesting comment from a reader: "Lockdowns are a horrendous transfer of riches from the young to the old, and no, we are not in this all together: the storm is the the same, but the boats are vastly different."



Federica Cocco @federicacocco · 6h

The pandemic & the associated lockdowns have had a devastating effect on younger generations. Many wrote to us saying they felt like sacrificial lambs for a generation that is more financially secure and politically powerful. Our report here: [ft.com/content/0dec02...](https://www.ft.com/content/0dec02...)

Youth concerns during Covid

% of respondents aged 15–29

● OECD ● Non-OECD



Source: OECD

© FT

... the art of taking
into account both the
present and the
future, of gaining the
most while sacrificing
the least ...

Albert Camus

Neither victim nor executioner, 1946



This Issue

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Viewpoint



June 12, 2020

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The Moral Determinants of Health

Donald M. Berwick, MD, MPP¹

» [Author Affiliations](#) | [Article Information](#)

JAMA. 2020;324(3):225-226. doi:10.1001/jama.2020.11129

The angry, despairing victims of inequity, and their supporters, marching in the streets of the US despair in part because they and their parents and their grandparents and generations before have been waiting far too long. They find no moral law in evidence, no social contract bilaterally intact. They do not believe in promises of change, because for too long people remain hungry and homeless, with the doors of justice so long closed.

Berwick DM. The moral determinants of health.
JAMA. 2020;324(3):225-226. doi:10.1001/jama.2020.11129

Just Mercy

A Story of Justice and Redemption

Bryan
Stevenson

"Not since Atticus Finch has a fearless and committed lawyer made such a difference in the American South. Though larger than life, Atticus exists only in fiction. Bryan Stevenson, however, is very much alive and doing God's work fighting for the poor, the oppressed, the voiceless, the vulnerable, the outcast, and those with no hope. *Just Mercy* is his inspiring and powerful story."

—JOHN GRISHAM



My work with the poor and
the incarcerated has
persuaded me that the
opposite of poverty is not
wealth; the opposite of
poverty is justice.

Bryan Stevenson
Just Mercy, 2015

Healers are called to heal. When the fabric of communities upon which health depends is torn, then healers are called to mend it. The moral law within insists so. Improving the social determinants of health will be brought at last to a boil only by the heat of the moral determinants of health.

Berwick DM. The moral determinants of health.
JAMA. 2020;324(3):225-226. doi:10.1001/jama.2020.11129

To ask how things are going and whether they can be improved is a constant and inescapable part of the pursuit of justice.

Amartya Sen
The Idea of Justice, 2009

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