

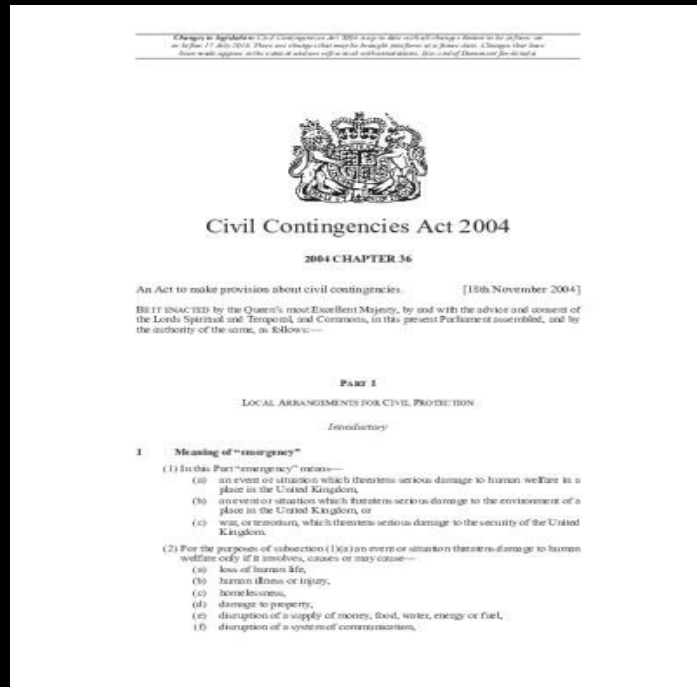
# The Logic of Emergency in Crisis Times: Exception, Hope, Urgency, Interval

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# What does emergency do?



# Wider Project: The Politics of Events

What is an event? What are the affect imbued genres through which we encounter events and their excess (disaster, crisis, incident, catastrophe, accident, occurrence etc)?

How, when, and with what consequences do genres end and new genres emerge?

# Emergency as 'Mode of Eventfulness'

Emergency *central* to the modern state-effect/affect *and* a genre used in left-liberal claims about the present:

1. Exception (the event as rupture)

Interlude: Crisis

2. Hope (promissory futures)

Interlude: Catastrophe

3. Urgency (the pressure of the future)

Interlude: Climate change suspension

4. Interval (of/for action)

# 1. Exception (the event as rupture)

All emergency action founded on an affect imbued claim of a present or future *exception* that will rupture a normal state of affairs

*(i.e. a reversal of the understanding, after Agamben (1998), of sovereignty as that which decides on the exception)*

# COVID-19 as 'exception'

"But as we've also seen from those charts, we've got to be humble in the face of nature

And in this country alas as across much of Europe the virus is spreading even faster than the reasonable worst case scenario of our scientific advisers

Whose models as you've just seen now suggest that unless we act we could see deaths in this country running at several thousand a day

A peak of mortality alas far bigger than the one we saw in April

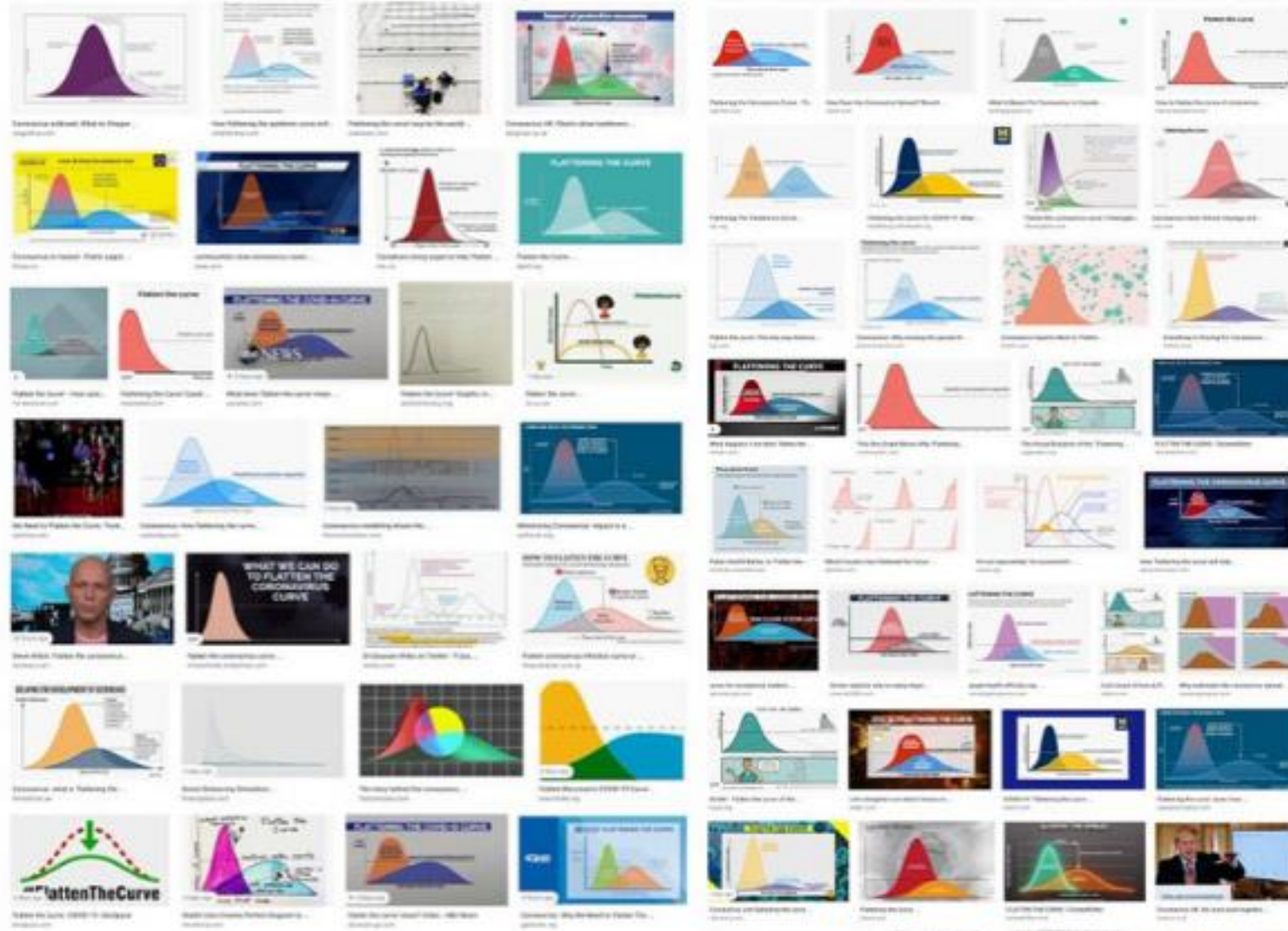
...

And let me explain why the overrunning of the NHS would be a medical and moral disaster beyond the raw loss of life

Because the huge exponential growth in the number of patients – by no means all of them elderly, by the way – would mean that doctors and nurses would be forced to choose which patients to treat"

(Boris Johnson, Statement at Corona Virus Press Conference, October 31<sup>st</sup> 2020)

# Mediating Exceptionality



# Interlude: Crisis

Extension of crisis-talk (housing crisis, ecological crisis, cost of living crisis etc):

**Crisis as extended space-time of ongoing disruption which will pass and be passed through, rather than an end in-itself, but merges and blurs with a normal state of affairs**



## 2. Hope (promissory futures)

A claim of emergency is a promise that future loss is not inevitable and that correct action will make a difference.

Emergency action makes present claims of a better future to come (which might simply be a continuation of the here and now)

# COVID-19 and the promise of normality

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**COVID RIPPER 'GRAVELLY ILL'** SEE PAGE 6

**12 page pullout**

**VACCINE BREAKTHROUGH**

## Our little bottle of hope

Five million people may get coronavirus jabs within weeks after test success

**BNT162B2**  
 For intramuscular use only.  
 Rx only

**Pfizer**  
**BIONTECH**

PHOTOGRAPH BY GUY LAWRENCE

HOPE of a return to normal life by the spring, but might surprise after trials of a Covid vaccine showed it to be 90% effective. And can home residents and staff could be given the new jab within weeks with a roll out to others next year. It is approved by regulators. Initial roll out to 10 million people, five million people, available this year. Chairman of Pfizer, Dr Albert Bourla, which developed the vaccine with BionTech, said: "There is a great day for science and humanity." **FULL STORY: PAGE 46**

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## Vaccine discovery: the world celebrates

**Breakthrough in creating jab estimated to be 90% effective in preventing Covid**

- Injection could be ready for use by end of the year if approval is fast tracked
- "A great day for science and humanity," say jubilant vaccine developers who "screamed" with excitement when they learned of success. "We feel like we are on the cusp of one of the biggest medical advances in 100 years"
- Pfizer to provide UK with doses for 5 million people by January if signed off
- Over 60s and NHS workers are priority groups set to receive protection
- Whitty applauds progress: "We must see final data but it is very encouraging"
- Impossible to know yet how long immunity to novel coronavirus will last
- Stock markets climb in response to good news and 'Biden bounce'

**Biden takes control of Covid fight**  
 Trump fires his Defence Secretary

**Jonathan Coe**  
 My new novel

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# VACCINE HOPE: LIFE BACK TO NORMAL BY SPRING

**Great day for humanity and science, say experts**

**PM: UK is 'front of pack' with jabs for 20m people**

**HOPES of a Covid-19 vaccine by Christmas soared yesterday as scientists revealed a milestone jab is more than 90 per cent effective.**

The news led one Government adviser to declare

**By Hanna Geissler**  
 Health Reporter

life could go back to normal by spring. The vaccine's joint makers - BionTech and Pfizer hailed "a great day for science and humanity" as they announced

plans to apply for approval as early as next week.

If all final checks go according to plan, Britain could see 10 million doses of the vaccine dished out to five million people by Christmas.

Deputy Chief Medical Officer Jonathan Van Tam said: "I am hopeful, but not yet certain, that we could begin to see some vaccine by Christmas."

And Prime Minister Boris Johnson promised Britain will be at the "front of

**TURN TO PAGE 4**

# The receding horizon of an end

"And we are working for the day when life will be back to normal, flying in a plane will be back to normal, and hairdressers will no longer look as though they are handling radioactive isotopes, and when we can go and see our loved ones in care homes ...

(Boris Johnson, Conservative Party Conference, October 6<sup>th</sup> 2020)

"This document sets out a plan to rebuild the UK for a world with COVID-19. It is not a quick return to 'normality.' Nor does it lay out an easy answer. And, inevitably, parts of this plan will adapt as we learn more about the virus. But it is a plan that should give the people of the United Kingdom hope. Hope that we can rebuild; hope that we can save lives; hope that we can safeguard livelihoods"

(Foreword to 'Our Plan to Rebuild: The UK Government's COVID-19

# Interlude: Catastrophe



### 3. Urgency (the pressure of the event)



# The *Redeemed* Present

Urgency as the affective presence of both the actual or to come  
exception and the promissory future i.e. an affective pull to act  
now with the presumption that actions matters

(emergency as the opposite to modes of relation which accept or  
desire an end)

# Interlude: 'Climate Change Suspension'

"The language of environmentalists has been boring, so uninspiring ... If we just speak a technical language, with many acronyms and politically-correct phrases, no one will listen," ... "You cannot bore people into action. They need to be excited and inspired to take action and change their behaviour."

(Erik Solheim, 2017, then, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP))

Boredom before mediated climate change produces non-events – a felt detachment *from within* proximity that allows a (collective/individual) subject to turn away from the call to action

## 4. Intervals of/for action

Creation of an interval – *a re-making of the present as an extended but limited space-time of and for action* – in-between a claim of emergency and the actuality of damage/harm and loss



# Governing in/through Intervals

## 'Major Incident Protocol'

"On arrival at the scene, the attendant or single person will assume the role of the AIO (Silver Medic); they will adopt the following procedures:

- Don high visibility clothing and safety helmet.
- If incident is at a Section 12 LUL station (as per list issued to all frontline vehicles), collect hand portable radios (supplied for LAS staff in the event of an incident) from LUL Station Office for use underground.
- Carry out reconnaissance of the incident site and report back to EOC (see CHALETS/METHANE).
- Declare a 'major incident' based on the criteria in the definition".

(London Ambulance Service NHS Trust 'Major Incident Plan')



# Concluding comments: The politics of emergency?

- Emergency changes the temporality of the present
- Emergency depends on the uneven distribution of mediated affects of urgency
- Emergency involves questions of how to create and inhabit 'intervals' where action promises to make a difference