

Lockdown diaries: Leah, journalist & author of [Madrid No Frills](#)

Both of Leah's parents are retired healthcare workers who are planning to return to work to help with the crisis at home in the UK. She's very proud of them. One of the best ways many of us can also help right now is to support local businesses. As she always says, if you're fortunate enough to have nothing to fight for, then fight for someone else!

Leah Pattem is a teacher, journalist and the author of [Madrid No Frills](#). She's been living in Madrid for seven years, exploring Madrid's hidden gems and neglected spaces, and shining a light on the inequalities and injustices surrounding them.

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



I was in a no-frills bar (Wednesday night) with a group of activists discussing how we were going to continue our activities under the impending lockdown. We were some of the only people in the bar – it was already eerily quiet, and we all knew that this would be our last outing for a while.

What does the street look like?



My street is quiet but for lingering dog walkers, lone shoppers carrying 'bags for life', the odd street cleaner and slowly patrolling police cars. By night, everyone is out on their balconies, not just for the *#aplausosanitario* but also

just chatting away – it's like radio patio but exterior. I love it.

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

My parents, both retired healthcare workers, are planning to return to work (where they met) to help with the crisis in the UK. I'm so proud of them.

How are you coping?

I'm normally out for several hours a day wandering Madrid's streets, chatting to strangers and having *cañas* in no-frills bars, but I'm fine. I'm just worried about everyone else and am trying to help. As I always say, if you're fortunate enough to have nothing to fight for, then fight for someone else!

One way in which many of us can help right now (if we have the income and are able to go out) is to support local businesses. As soon as lockdown is over, [disaster capitalism](#) will sweep through our streets and we'll see Five Guys colonise even the most overlooked corners of our neighbourhoods. But we have the power to stop this simply by shopping local – it's so easy. Many markets even do online deliveries, so you don't have to go out. And bonus point: no dystopian queues!



Avoid dystopian queues and order online from local businesses!

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

Run out onto the street and celebrate with all of my neighbours! I picture it being like when they announced that the war was over.

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

Just one thing?! OK, I'll give it a go. Dear Pedro, you're putting a moratorium on mortgage payments for those affected by the coronavirus but not for renters? Is this a class war?

And then when the moratorium on evictions ends, presumably those tenants are out too, right?! This is bullsh*t.

Also, don't reprivatise all those public hospitals! Have you seen the state of the NHS, Pedro?!

- Check out Leah's inspiring platform, [Madrid No Frills](#)
- Read our [interview with Leah in celebration of International Women's Day last year](#)

See all stories of [Madrid Lockdown Series](#) here

If you'd like to submit your story, please email daphne@veracontent.com