

## *An egalitarian evaluation of lockdown*

**Alex Broadbent** (University of Durham)

“Lockdown” has come to designate a cluster of non-pharmaceutical interventions intended to slow or stop Covid-19. One familiar line of objection to lockdowns is libertarian: lockdowns restrict freedom of movement, association, and so forth. However, the appeal of libertarian arguments is limited to (a) moral contexts globally where individual liberty rights are a primary dimension of policy evaluation and (b) audiences that see such rights as outweighed by the dangers of Covid. Among the latter are some motivated by egalitarian considerations, who claim that Covid hits poorer people including “minorities” harder than richer people. This paper contends that there is a neglected but extremely powerful egalitarian argument against lockdown, based on the fact that most poor people live outside rich countries in circumstances where lockdowns offer no protection, where the risk posed by Covid 19 is lower both absolutely (due to demographics) and relative to other risks to life (due to these being greater), and that lockdowns greatly exacerbate these risks. This includes racial and other majorities who are routinely referred to as “minorities” by authors in rich countries. The paper argues that neglect of these facts is an instance of epistemic injustice, the victims of who are predominately so-called “persons of colour”. The paper argues further that the unfair features of lockdown are not coincidental, but that it was these very features that led to their endorsement by powerful groups, nations and international bodies, and to the persistent positive attitude to lockdowns. From an egalitarian standpoint, their actions can be interpreted as using the commanding heights of the global knowledge economy, not to reduce the global burden of Covid overall, but to transfer as much of the burden of Covid as possible from the global rich to the global poor.