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SPECIAL EDITION
CORONAVIRUS

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The Post-Virus World of Design Coronavirus Foundations

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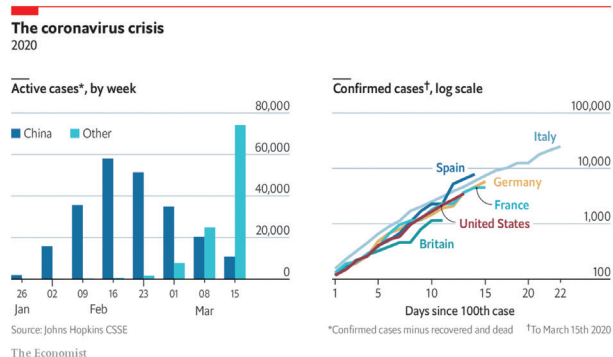


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Subject *In this rapid response, DI's technology expert Blaine Wishart shares email stream-of-thought data and links on the virus with our internal team. We include his tips on accessing real data in their original, raw, unvarnished form - for broader reach.*



Team:

I've been following the data published by Johns Hopkins daily since January 24th. The image above from The Economist is the most informative single image I've seen.

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Understanding what has happened on the ground in China is challenging for anyone.

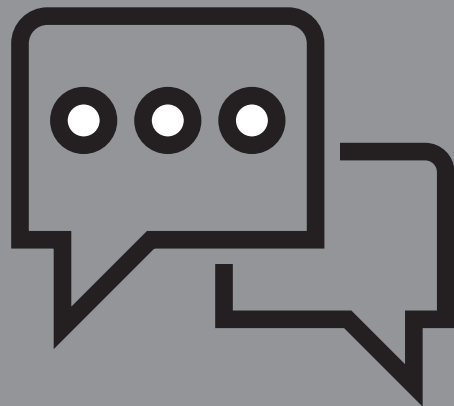


The runner up is this graph that illustrates the impressive power of lockdowns.

Understanding what has happened on the ground in China is challenging for anyone. The information does not flow freely there. Yale’s Human Nature Lab is a world-class lab and it’s director, Nicholas A. Christakis, is publishing some wonderful material from China with the help of his students, who can read and write Mandarin. It documents what is happening on the ground and gives a hint of how diverse the Chinese response has been.

The conversation Dave kicked off with his note on The Post-Virus World of Design can be valuable. My personal inclination is that an assessment of the events of this year is a good starting point. In two weeks, that will have been very preliminary. For example:

- We don’t know if the US and Europe will reverse their current trajectories as China and S. Korea have done. That result — success or failure — will lead to drastically different Post-Virus worlds.
- We don’t know if the concept of Post-Virus is valid. I can’t speak for him, but Bill Gates may well think we have been in an ongoing virus world for 2 decades.
- We don’t know if China’s apparent reversal will hold as people return to work.



Nonetheless, I think a working assumption is that we will do as well or better than China (we do have some advantages) and in the foreseeable future we will be able to look back on COVID-19 as we look back on SARS. These assumptions can lead to useful discussions. [Other discussions may also be useful.]

Communication: Existing trends will get stronger.

- Most notable is the trend toward async communication. Whether using text, images, sound, video or a combination the common thread of TicToc, Instagram, YouTube, WeChat, Twitter, and even some blogs is async communication and that implies remixing. [This email is an example.]
 - When the synchronization is frequent, WeChat or Twitter feels like, well, chat. But synchronization is often at the level of minutes, hours, days or more.
 - When we sit in a zoom meeting, it feels interactive, not async but many also make use of texting to coordinate or conduct other business during zoom sessions. Often people don't participate directly but use the recordings.
- Interactive communication, but not face to face, will become more important. Does this require pre-existing social connections? I'm not sure. Often, they will facilitate things like use of Zoom, but I think we are seeing a generational divide. Some of the richest interactive communication I have comes from my Twitter feed and I observe others (younger) for whom interactive media is the primary initial social channel.



- It is worth mentioning that as many of us use it, Zoom is largely asynchronous.
- For the foreseeable future, conferences at a specific location and time will be greatly reduced.
- The rhythm of science will continue at a faster pace. Many people I know who once checked a few journals a few times a month now check bioRxiv and/or medRxiv frequently, if not daily. That makes preprints feel almost interactive rather than the batch processing mode of journals — especially in the context of Twitter and WeChat. Interesting preprints are propagated quickly worldwide. COVID-19 is a good example because so much of the basic science is well known as this article explains. As a result, scores of clinical trials are in progress or are about to be launched. [Weird that in the US we have not mastered the testing S. Korea established by February 7th which has allowed it to flatten the curve w/o massive lockdowns.]
- The ratio of information I receive async compared to interactive video is more than 100:1.
- Rich data will become an even more important dimension of communication. Those who collect it will gain an advantage.

Technology: Better Editors and Remixing Tools

- We are where the internet was before HTML/http. Before Cern released those, we could get information from all over, but combining gopher, ftp, etc. was cumbersome. Cern defined the APIs that allow Mosaic, then Netscape, etc. to get rapid adoption. Right now, combining information from diverse sources, especially mixed language sources, is painful and time-consuming. Story: I listen to WeChat in English (using a Baidu plugin and a text reader plugin), select a 15-second clip and paste it into email as English text and then add a live link to a Python animation of hospital ICU bed utilization in the Bay Area. [This could be written now.]

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I've been in 'shelter in place' or the stronger Chinese lockdowns since January 25th. Hate to say it, but it feels more-or-less normal.

- We can get much we need to know about communication by looking at how Old Town Road evolved and answering the question: Why is it easier for some native English speakers to check into a Chinese hotel where only Mandarin is spoken than to check into a quality hotel in London where everyone is a native English speaker?
- Concern about secure communication channels will grow as reliance on face-to-face communication declines and the Iot/5G hacking possibilities become obvious.

Except for a brief, and wonderful, 4-day stint in London in early March, I've been in 'shelter in place' or the stronger Chinese lockdowns since January 25th. Hate to say it, but it feels more-or-less normal. I can have face to face conversations with neighbors in the back yard. We keep a big distance (3-5 m) but it is great. Bike riding and CRX in the yard have replaced a gym and the wonderful surf of Hainan.

I hope you are all well too.

Please look at that graph from Italy again: Every day of social separation has an impact.

thank you,
Blaine Wishart

*On 3/23/2020 Blaine informed us from Berkeley, CA via email that he had awakened with symptoms. Upon testing he was deemed virus-free.

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