



China's ongoing battle against the coronavirus: a scholar-practitioner's experiences and reflections

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Abstract

In this communication essay, I respond to the three questions the journal editor Wei-Ning Xiang asked about my experiences in, and reflections on, the ongoing battle against the coronavirus pandemic in China. At this critical juncture when the people in China are progressing on the battleground, I dedicate the article to all the people fighting against the coronavirus around the world.

Keywords Coronavirus · COVID-19 · China · Battle against the coronavirus pandemic · Voluntary home self-isolation · Work-at-home · Yoga · A community of shared future

1 What have worked in China's ongoing battle against the coronavirus?

From your experiences in the past three months, Professor Wang, what are some of the effective measures and actions people in China, including yourself, have been taking in the ongoing battle against the coronavirus?

A question from *SEPR* editor Wei-Ning Xiang¹

1.1 Home and neighborhood are the combat strongholds

The voluntary home self-isolation of the uninfected minimized people's contact with each other thus reduced risks for all; the mandatory quarantine—14-day home quarantine for risky individuals and 14-day collective quarantine for people of close contacts—was an effective measure to minimize infection risk. While neighborhood lockdown, preventing non-residents from entering, lowered the inter-neighborhood infection risk, temperature monitoring and health check of residents entering and leaving a neighborhood reduced the intra-neighborhood infection risk. Strictly implemented 24-7

in cities and towns across the country, these neighborhood level measures turned out to be the most critical operations in the battle against the coronavirus (Fig. 1).

1.2 Government, business–neighborhood partnership, and data transparency brought peace of mind

In cities and towns across the country, the living necessity supplies have been sufficient to meet people's needs, and prices stabilized; people were calm—they were concerned but not panic. Contributing to such a peaceful and stable state of affairs are governmental leadership, business–neighborhood partnership, and information transparency, among other factors.

1. The governments, among other expeditious actions, have been swift and efficacious in identifying infection cases and implementing risk-control measures on areas where these cases were found, and have methodically arranged living necessity productions in low-risk areas and had the produce and products transported to cities and towns.
2. Through an emergent business–neighborhood partnership, what used to be a home delivery service was replaced by a neighborhood delivery service. The living necessities were delivered to the neighborhoods where

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¹ I received the invitation to respond to this and other two questions (see Sects. 2 and 3 of this essay) from Wei-Ning Xiang (wxiang@uncc.edu) on March 6, 2020.



Fig. 1 Mandatory temperature monitoring and health check at the neighborhood entrance [a neighborhood property management employee was checking the author's temperature at the entrance of his neighborhood in Shanghai on March 15, 2020. The neighborhood has been locked down since February 8, 2020. Photograph provided by the author]



Fig. 2 A neighborhood delivery service replaced home delivery (at the entrance of the author's neighborhood in Shanghai, a neighborhood property management employee was stacking packages she received on behalf of the residents who placed the orders. Photograph taken on March 15, 2020, by the author)

the customers who placed the orders live (the resident–customers); the neighborhood property management took the responsibility to receive and keep the delivered orders for the resident–customers to pick up (Fig. 2).

3. The full transparency and timely update of pandemic data gave people great peace of mind. In particular,



Fig. 3 A cell phone screenshot of an up-to-date pandemic map [The real-time map shows the locations of identified infection cases (the red dots) in relation to the author's present position (the blue dot). Screenshot by the author] (diameters of the two concentric circles are approximately 2 and 6 kilometers, respectively; color figure online)

the free-of-charge pandemic map apps on cell phones allowed people to readily access up-to-date data from the official sources (Fig. 3).

1.3 A new lifestyle and a new business model, thanks to the Internet

People bought daily necessities online and received them through express neighborhood delivery service; universities, primary and secondary schools were closed but have been operating under an online teaching–learning mode—offering virtual classes through the Internet; commercial and service enterprises have all turned to conducting business activities online. Not only did the Internet truly become an integral part of the resilient social fabric, but its widespread and penetrating use brought about a new lifestyle and new business model (for an anecdote on my



Fig. 4 Morning practice of Chinese calligraphy [each morning before breakfast, the author spent one hour reading and copying *Dao De Jing* (《道德经》) by Laozi (老子). Written more than 2200 years ago, the classic contains 5000 characters. Photo provided by the author.]

new lifestyle since the beginning of voluntary home self-isolation, see Sect. 2).

2 A typical work-at-home day

Professor Wang, how would you describe a typical work-at-home day during your voluntary home self-isolation?

A question from *SEPR* editor Wei-Ning Xiang

Typically, I wake up at 7 a.m.; check the updates on the coronavirus pandemic, especially the pandemic map; practice Chinese calligraphy (Fig. 4); have breakfast and tea around 8:30 a.m. From 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., I do my academic work online—checking emails, discussing research projects and article writing with my team members, teaching classes virtually, and doing guest editorial work for several journals. By noon, I need to report my health condition to my employer Tongji University by phone. At 5:30 p.m., I practice two-hour yoga (Fig. 5); then have dinner; and watch news and movies before going to bed around 11:30 p.m.

3 We are a community of shared future

Reflecting on China's ongoing battle against the coronavirus pandemic thus far, Professor Wang, what new insights did you find that illuminate socio-ecological practice and research?

A question from *SEPR* editor Wei-Ning Xiang



Fig. 5 Evening yoga practice (a daily practice of 3-min headstand and other yoga poses helped induce physical relaxation and mental tranquility. Photo provided by the author)

It takes the entire nation to win the battle against this cruel pandemic in China, and it takes the whole humanity to win the war in the world. We should keep fighting shoulder to shoulder till one day when people will announce from every corner of the world:

*The human beings are now safe;
the human beings are all well.*

Meanwhile, we need to rethink the way we, the human beings, live our lives and reassess the way we treat other beings. We should strive to pursue and cultivate a community of shared future among all beings on the earth.



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