

2020 Wuhan COVID-19 Lockdown Oral Histories

Kent Interview

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Virtual Meeting

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Kent Follow Up Interview

ROBERT BROWNING: Okay, today's date here in America is March 23, 2023, and this is a short follow up interview with Kent about the events and things that have happened since the first lockdown in Wuhan, China in 2020. So I would like to begin by asking you, Kent, three years later, what are your feelings now about the first lockdown?

KENT: Well, my feelings are quite complicated, but after all, deep in my mind right now, I think the Chinese government did the right thing about [the] first lockdown. (00:01:04) Because the first time people didn't know what was the effect of COVID-19. So the first lockdown in Wuhan had contained the spread of the virus. That meant a lot, because in that way I think the government saved a lot of lives. (00:02:00) And the second point is that because [of] the first lockdown, China had quickly contained or suppressed [the] spread of the virus that meant the Chinese manufacturing capacity could be stabilized. I think that could boost the economy at that time. But why I said my feelings are quite complicated about the first lockdown [is] because, on other hand, the first lockdown was quite fierce and it was quite intense, which created a very bad international image of China and the Chinese government to the people of the world. (00:03:04)

BROWNING: Okay. All understandable. And so since that first lockdown and what followed, you know, for the rest of 2020, 2021 and last year, 2022, what are your feelings about what happened after the first lockdown? (00:04:02) I'll leave it up to you as how you want to respond, but it could refer to the other lockdowns that occurred, the other restrictions or anything else, you know? It's up to you how you wish to respond.

KENT: Right, um, like I said, my feelings are quite complicated about the aftermath of the first lockdown. It has changed me, not only me, but a lot of people who live in this country. Um, we changed our habit of life. (00:05:00) Maybe doing more exercises than usual. Promote the sense of personal hygiene. Yeah, and enhance our idea of how to expand our personal savings.

BROWNING: Okay.

KENT: In case there's going be any other emergency issues, just like COVID, just like this pandemic.

BROWNING: Okay, I mean, you still run or operate or manage a bar and restaurant in Wuhan, right?

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KENT: Right.

BROWNING: Did any of the events since the first lockdown affect your business? (00:06:05)

KENT: Yeah, yeah, it affected my business quite badly. Because the bar business or the food catering business, we can refer to, it was a disaster. I mean, the first lockdown and the following lockdowns [that] happened here all we're definitely a disaster to [the] Chinese bar business and the food catering business. A lot of owners or a lot of small businesses went bankrupt. (00:07:05)

BROWNING: Right.

KENT: Right, and we are still here. We survived.

BROWNING: That's good.

KENT: Yeah, that's good. But life is hard, because [the] lockdowns has severely damaged the confidence of the public consuming [things]. And still we are in the time of recovering our confidence. We're still on the way, yeah.

BROWNING: Yeah, I can only imagine. (00:08:00) So has anything changed in your own life since we did the first interview? Anything at all it has maybe changed?

KENT: Well, not that much. I think after the first lockdown, for myself, I created a way of life that I think I'm [becoming a] harder working person, maybe. (00:09:00) Yeah, and I think the first lockdown changed me to a person who is more willing to connect to people that I know and it taught me as a human being in this world, you can't be isolated. You should cherish your family, your friends, the people you know around you because you don't know when will be the next lockdown or pandemic that will affect your life. And maybe next time you won't see these people again. (00:10:00) So you should take your time and take it easy and you have to cherish the people around you.

BROWNING: Right. Yeah. Again, all very understandable. I think it's kind of natural that some people's thinking has changed because of what's happened in China and around the world as well. It's only natural that some things have changed.

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KENT: Yeah. Definitely.

BROWNING: Maybe because my next question is kind of related to what I just asked you. You know, I was going to ask you, what have you learned about yourself because of what happened. (00:11:00) But I feel like I should ask maybe something, what have you learned about yourself as a businessperson because of what's happened?

KENT: Well, I think it's very good question. As a businessperson, I think the whole epidemic taught me about the tactics of risk. Because risk is a thing that is unavoidable and it is happening through your whole life, right? (00:12:00) I mean, your life as you work, as you talk to people, as you are connecting to people, there's all kinds of risks. You need to recognize them. You need to analyze them and you need to avoid them.

BROWNING: Can you maybe give me an example of how you maybe avoided a risk because of what happened or maybe even adapted to the changes in your business?

KENT: Right, um, I'll give you an example of my bar business. (00:13:01) Before the lockdown, because everything was good, I mean, the bar supply chain was very stable. There were many varieties, like, everything was quite normal, stable. So I didn't need to check my inventories or my stocks on a daily basis or weekly basis, but after the lockdown I know that the supply chain will be different. So I established a mechanism that you need to check different items, which belong to the bar, which will be consumed during the daily operations. (00:14:10) And you're going into the very details about every item. You check the inventory or the stock level of each item in the bar on a timely basis. Yeah, otherwise, there might be a risk that you will be out of supply. You can be out of stock. Because one item [is] missing, or several [are] missing, that could affect your daily business. (00:15:05)

BROWNING: Yeah, definitely. I'm sure. So you had to be more mindful and pay attention to what you had in your inventory.

KENT: Right.

BROWNING: Yeah. I mean, I'm sure that could be very exhausting or, you know, frustrating at times.

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KENT: Yeah, you mean the first lockdown or the following lockdowns or?

BROWNING: Well, just the, you know, operating the business during everything, you know? (00:16:02)

KENT: Yeah, yeah. Throughout the whole time, it was very exhausting and it was hard to operate the business. I think it was not only me, but a lot of my peers here in China, but we got lucky because we survived in our own way. And I'm really sorry for those who didn't survive after the lockdowns, after the pandemic. Yeah, I'm very sorry for them. But that's life, right? That's life. (00:17:00)

BROWNING: Right, definitely. So I guess my one last question I have for you is earlier you talked about cherishing others and I guess even cherishing time with others, so besides that, has there been anything else that you learned about yourself personally since of all this pandemic stuff started?

KENT: Yeah, just like I already responded, I think I'm becoming a quite hard working person than usual. (00:18:03) I will value maybe money [more] than usual. I became a person who prepares for more options.

BROWNING: Okay.

KENT: Yeah, because before the lockdowns maybe I only got one option. But afternoon lockdown, when I do something, I always think about option A and option B even option C as my backup plans. I was like, What if things have changed, right? (00:19:004) And, you know, there's [been] a lot of changes. So I need to get myself prepared for more backup plans. I think that the first lockdown changed me in my own life.

BROWNING: (Coughs) Excuse me, yes, I can imagine. I can imagine. So I think with that, I have no more questions, but I guess I do want to just ask, if there's anything else that you would like to share or maybe something that I did not ask about that you would like to talk about? (00:20:05)

KENT: Yeah, yeah, I think there is one more thing I would like to add. I want to talk a little bit about the comprehensive lifting of the lockdown by the Chinese government. That happened from December ninth or tenth, 2020, I think—

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BROWNING: Of last year 2022, right?

KENT: Yeah, 2022. Sorry.

BROWNING: That's okay. That's okay.

KENT: I think the date was December the ninth or tenth. (00:21:00) I think you can verify it on the Internet. I think there is an exact date for it. So December ninth or tenth of 2022. Because that day was the first day of lifting the official lockdown. So after the lift of the lockdown, I think everybody I knew, or everybody I know around me got it. I mean, got COVID.

BROWNING: Right.

KENT: Yeah, and even my friends, my relatives died of it. (00:22:00)

BROWNING: Oh okay.

KENT: That was, yeah, pretty sad. And my mom got it. Because for me it was like a cold. So I recovered [in] about a day, but my mom recovered, I don't know, maybe a month or two months [later]. But I think she is still affected by COVID. I think she's got the long COVID. But nevertheless, I think the Chinese government did the right thing about the first lockdown because it saved a lot of people's lives at that time. Because we barely knew the knowledge of the COVID the virus, right? (00:23:03) It kind of saved the Chinese economy at that time. But I think also the Chinese government did the right thing about the final lift of the lockdowns even though it killed many people. But still (___??) it proved that the following lockdowns didn't work. We still have to face it, face the virus. And I think in China right now we already created, like, the herd immunity. I think COVID in China already passed. So for that part, I'm very happy. (00:24:02)

BROWNING: Yeah, so would you say that things kind of feel more normal now in a way?

KENT: Yeah, yeah. We're becoming [more] normal and normal. Like, you know, the life is getting normal. The work is getting normal. The society order is getting normal. There'll be no lockdowns anymore. There's a thing no restrictions of travel.

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BROWNING: So, you know, you don't have to answer this question. But I feel like I should ask, how is your mother doing now? Is she okay? (00:25:00)

KENT: Yeah, yeah, she's okay. But she will always feel exhausted when, you know, after going shopping, after going to the grocery store. Because my mom has done yoga for over, I don't know, fifteen or sixteen years. But now every time she will feel exhausted after doing yoga. I think the side effects of the virus is quite a thing. But, hey, but thanks for asking. My mom is getting better now and her life is already back to normal. (00:26:03)

BROWNING: Yeah, well, that's good to hear.

KENT: Yeah, thanks.

BROWNING: So yeah, I think that about covers everything that I wish to ask about and if you don't have anything else to add, I'll just say thank you for doing this again. I really appreciate it.

KENT: Yeah, you're welcome. Thanks for having me.

End of interview