Case Study

Financial Times Coronavirus Tracker

A visualization by **John Burn-Murdoch**

- British data visualization journalist,
  - Worked in Guardian
  - Now on Financial Times

- Twitter: https://twitter.com/jburnmurdoch

Step 1: The project – Audience and medium

- Subject:
  - Very sensitive
  - Full attention (Feb-March 2020)
- Audience:
  - Financial Times readers…but… decided to open outside the paywall
    - Non-specialists
    - People not used to charts
    - Different geographies
- Medium:
  - Digital version on desktop, tablet and **mobile**
 - Social media

Step 2: The data

- Data not fully reliable
  - Multiple origins, multiple countries
  - Timeframe of collected data
    - Wait time
    - Different time zones
  - What a "death" means:
    - Only in hospital
    - Only if tested Coronavirus
    - Only if reported
- Too much data
- Noisy data
  - Double check
  - Talk with specialists, with local people
- Constant updates

Step 3: Charts and encodings

- Time is critical
  - 24h update

- Selection:
  - Deaths
  - Which countries: story need, audience need, representation need

- Context:
  - Reference lines: speaking the language of audience
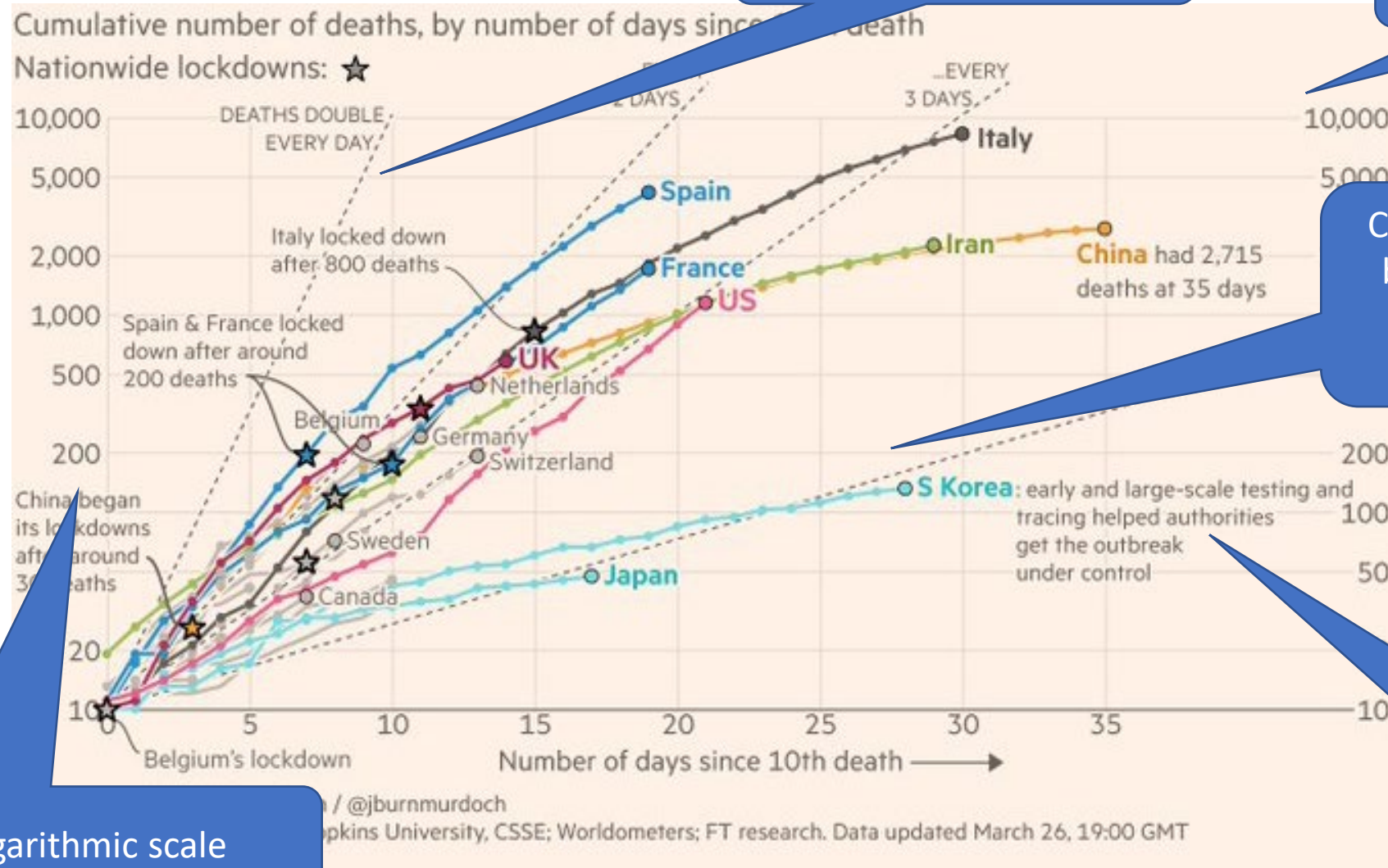
Step 3: The Financial Times Coronavirus Tracker
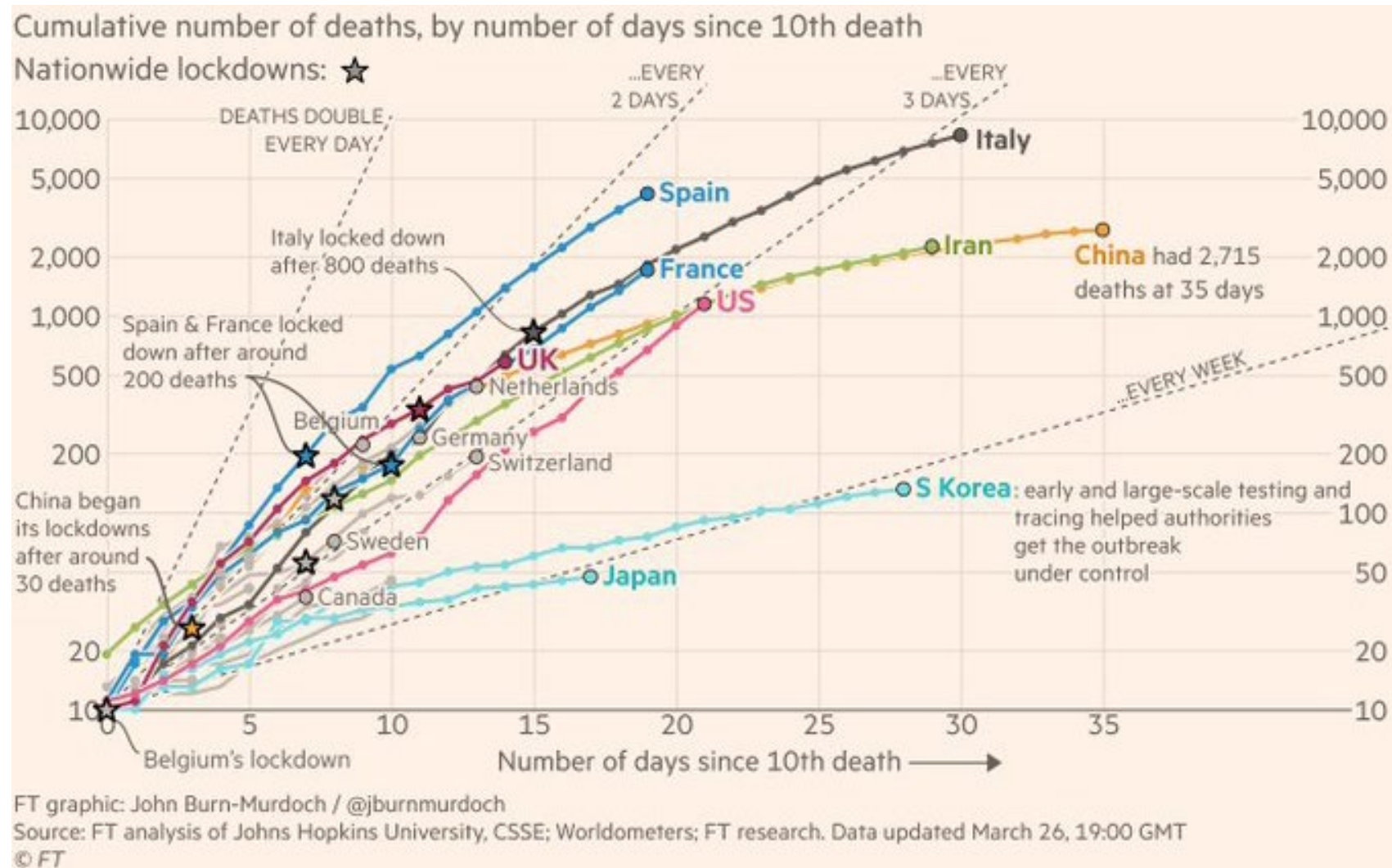
Cumulative number of deaths, by number of days since 10th death

Design decisions

Step 4: Implementation decisions

Multiple versions through an automatic process; just final fne-tuning
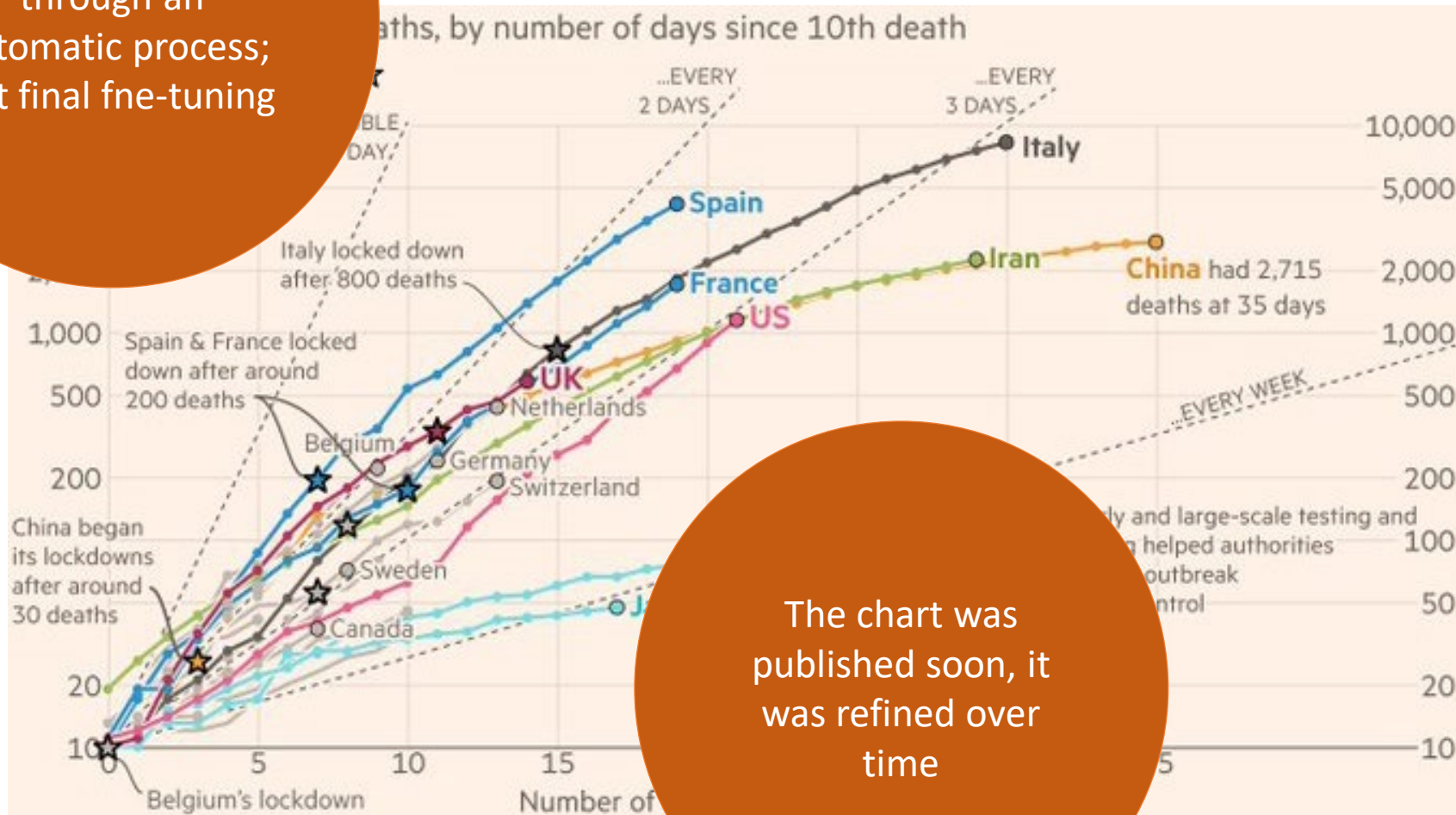
The chart was published soon, it was refined over time

...aths, by number of days since 10th death

...EVERY 2 DAYS
...EVERY 3 DAYS

BLE DAY

Italy locked down after 800 deaths

Spain & France locked down after around 200 deaths

China began its lockdowns after around 30 deaths

10,000
5,000
2,000
1,000
500
200
100
50
20
10

Italy
Spain
France
US
Iran
China had 2,715 deaths at 35 days

UK
Netherlands
Belgium
Germany
Switzerland
Sweden
Canada

...ly and large-scale testing and ...a helped authorities ...outbreak ...ntrol

EVERY WEEK

1,000
500
200

Belgium's lockdown

Number of

FT graphic: John Burn-Murdoch / @jburnmurdoch
Source: FT analysis of Johns Hopkins University, CSSE; Worldomete...
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26, 19:00 GMT

Plus additional charts: small multiples to the rescue

Cumulative number of deaths, by number of days since 10th death

FT graphic: John Burn-Murdoch / @jburnmurdoch, inspired by Philippe Straforelli
Source: FT analysis of Johns Hopkins University, CSSE; Worldometers; FT research. Data updated March 26, 19:00 GMT
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References

- S1E3 – JOHN BURN-MURDOCH – The Financial Times' Coronavirus Tracker, within Explore Explain, by Andy Kirk
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rplwvdOmKKc