Data.Europa Academy • Visualising data for impact

Foundations of Effective Data Visualization

Alberto Cairo

<u>OpenVisualizationAcademy.com</u>

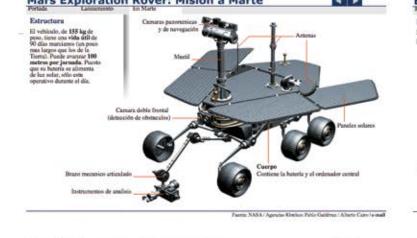
Information design

The intentional presentation of information within a certain set of constraints with the goal of aiding thought.

Data visualization

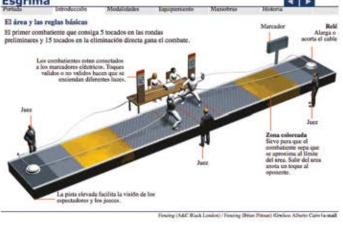
A branch of information design that focuses on the graphical encoding and presentation of data.

— A bit about me —



 \triangleleft

Cassini-Huygens: cita con Saturno



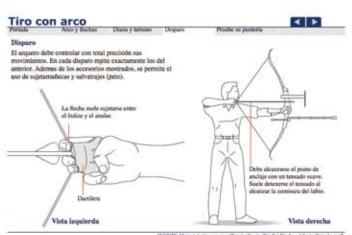








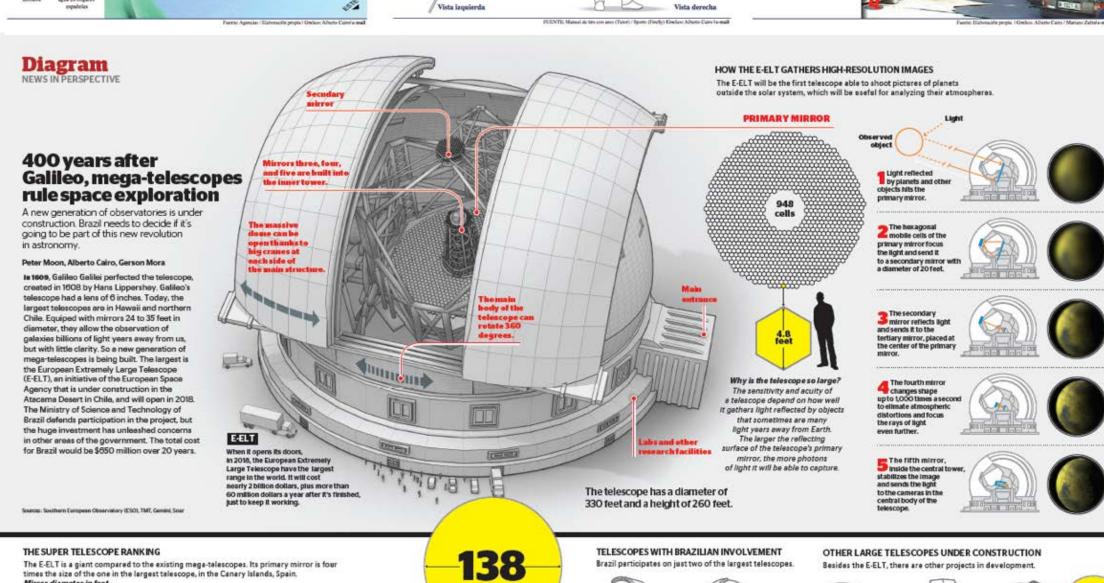
-32-





Opening: 2018 Cost: \$600 million Mirror: 80.4 feet Place: Childen Andes Builtbyn USA, Austrelia South Koree

Opening: 2012 Cost: \$1.3 billion Place: Atacerra, Chile Buff by: Europeen Union USA, Coneda, Jepon Teiwen, Chile



Built in Cerro Pachón, Chile.

end the Maune Kee volceno. Hawaii, these twin telescopes

naves, traces twin telescopes as the secope are for 26.5 feet. Brazil perticipates by covering 2.4% of the total cost is exchange for the right of using them for observations.

Suilt in Cerro Peckón, Chile.

the Southern Astro Physical Research Telescope has a

mirror with a diameter of 13.5 feet. The Brazilian National Scientific Development Council

Opening: 2018 Cost: \$1 billion Mirror: 98 feet

-8,4-

in the past ten seem. Breed's gogs lationgrew, on learnings, 12th between 2000 and

Alberta Carro, Francisco Lima.

DIAGRAM

NEWS IN PERSPECTIVE

Demographic Opportunity

How Brazil can take advantage

of a future with fewer children.

PROLEMENARY DATA FROM THE 2010 CENSUS create an interesting picture of the changes. that the Brazilian population has gone through

Brazil's

be, corbje.

Marco Vergetti

2010, but the tentity rate is below 21 children. per woman, the minimum tokespie. population from sharking. According to Clour Mangago, a demographer from the University of Campissa, the osain challenge Braziliwill face in the future is now to maintain. a beautily bodies becarby systems if the in arriver of older and refined people will terry be much begin than it is today. Read on/to learn about all the variables of plus in this story.

BRAZELS POPULATION IS BROCER

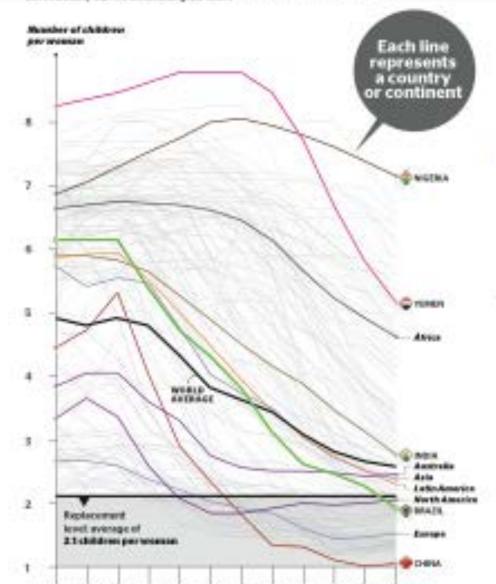
The 2010 Carons has revealed a 5x1% population increase between 2000 and 2010. The differences between plates, as you can see on the chart so the right, are extiseable. Most rish. stetes, such as 580 Paulin and Rio, distrit. grow as fast as the ones in the north east.

2000 565 299 179 2010 150,712,694

46.00 Decrease. DESCRIPTION SHOWS 1275 16.65 DAMEST COLUMN LONGER 18.0% 2005227 0.75 8400.540 245 TELESCO. STEAM 1381301 25.5 THURSDAY ANALYSIS -DESCRIPTION AND ADDRESS ---ARK. (State applicated on Hovember 4, 2000) LINEAR -The rear shows the change is population 4.763.664 in Brazilian resonoparativo, stetereon GORGAN PRI 10% 2000 and 2010, 0530 office and fowers. those a hotel of 6 little, just papulation. Also AMERICA WARRANT DOOR Grande do Sai la the state with a the largest COLUMN MERCES INC. marrier of increiographic that said introducts. HANGED - BORDAM - IM-168 start to a significant drop in fertility ratio DESCRIPTION BARBARS IN 44% and dements: engineers THE BUNCH . AVERAGE +8.4% A Server BOL UN NorthBell Cate Margar SHOMP!

■ -BUT THE FERTILITY RATE IS MUCH LOWER THAN EXPECTED

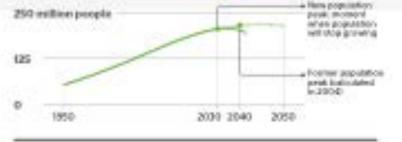
A charp in 2004 estimated that in 2010, the firstilly rate would be 2.4 children. per woman, an evenage. But new data collected by the ISGE prove that the first stry rate is already 1.0; below the threshold coded "replacement rate". When the Pertitive rate drops below this number, the population of a country will eventually start to shrink and grow older.



Part + 1955-03 50-55 50-50 7075 75-90 All-65 50-90 90-95 50-00 90-95 2009-2009

AS A CONSEQUENCE POPULATION WILL STOP GROWING-

Forecasts made in 2006 anticipated that \$rast's population is sold stop growing in 2040. But the most recent data from the Biblic suggests that this could suggest reuch earlier, in 2010.





How Brazil can transform the population challenge into an opportunity

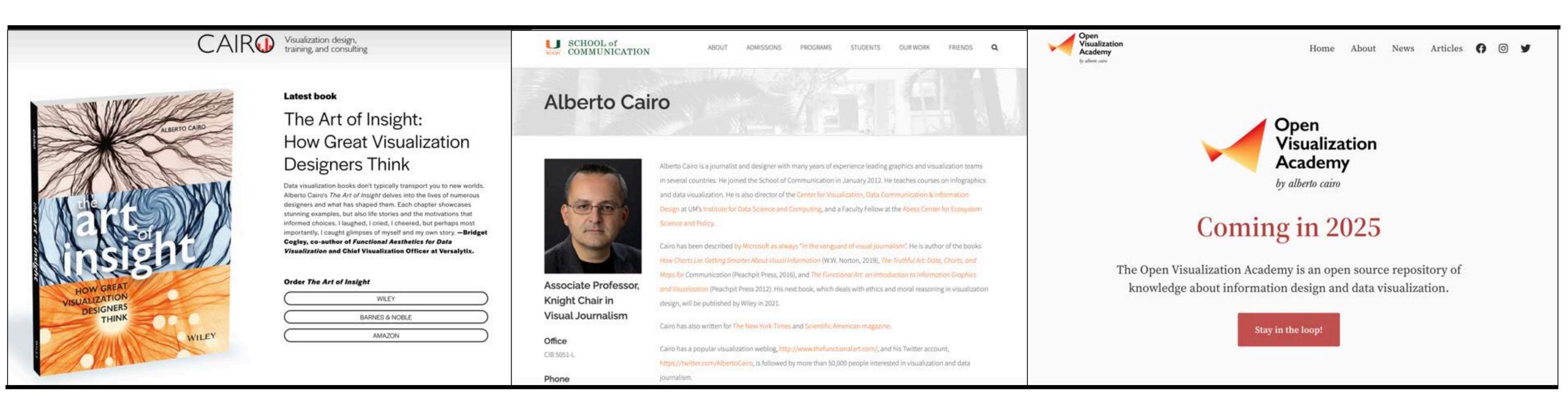
As the population ages, the proportion of people of working age increases. The country will therefore have more people producing wealth Gilbs labor market can absorb thereit and fewer children to consume investments. It is a window of opportunity, because in some cases the number of people of working age to fall track when older people are leaving the market.

The propulation under 15 years of ago is falling today. A smaller number of student in public schools will facilitate the quality of leaching. If the amount invested in education steps the same.

Educational policy focused on low recome youth favors the formation of more skilled workforce and grouter social mobility.

In the fature, Search will reach the stage of Europe and Japan, which struggle to support their aldies. This is very it's so important to prepare a more halance retirement system, which will include retirement at a later age.

Teaching

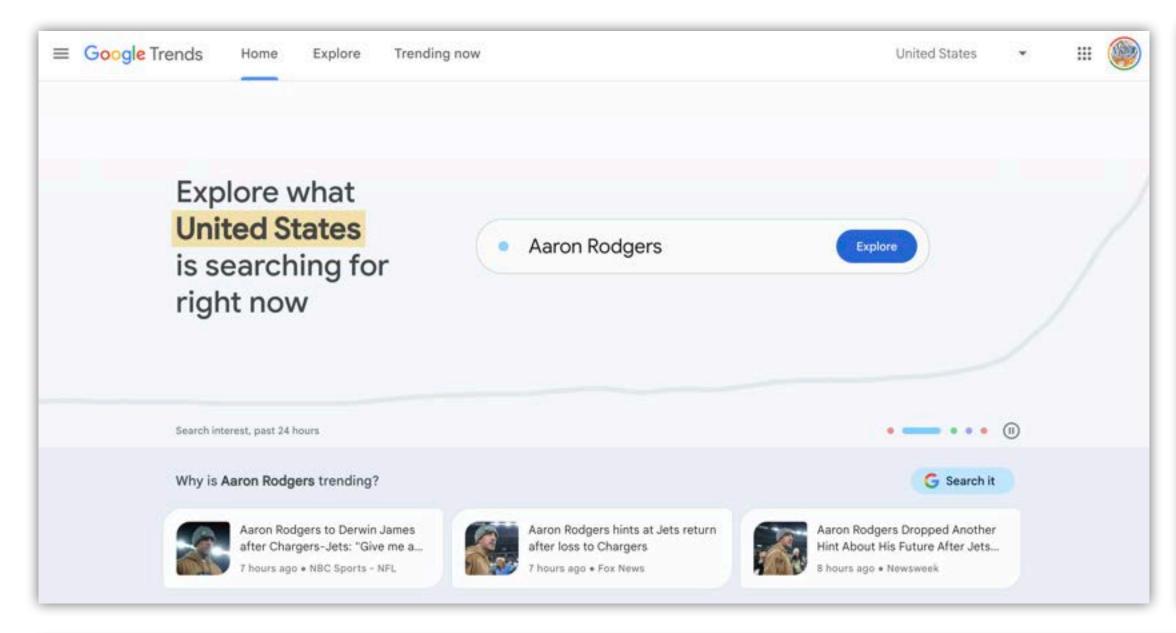


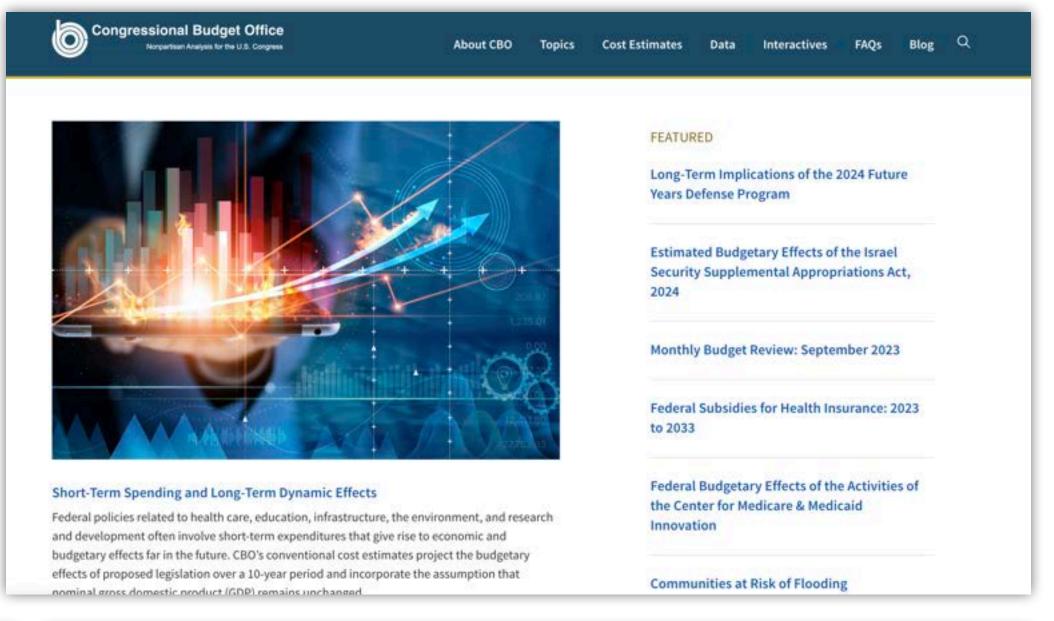
www.albertocairo.com

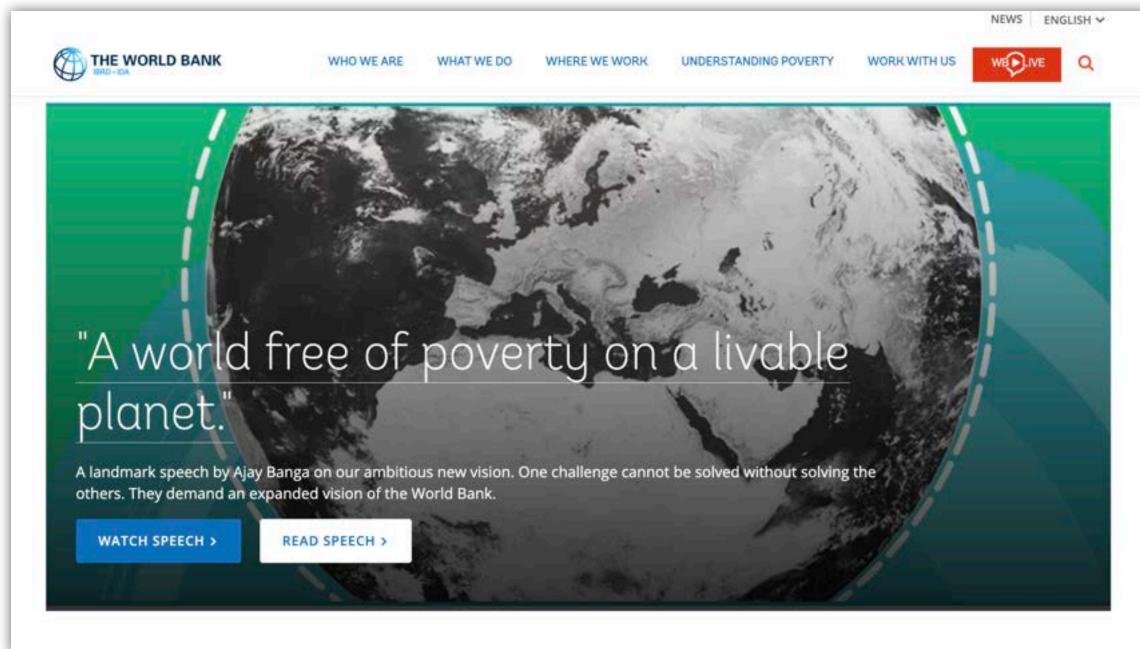
https://com.miami.edu/profile/alberto-cairo/

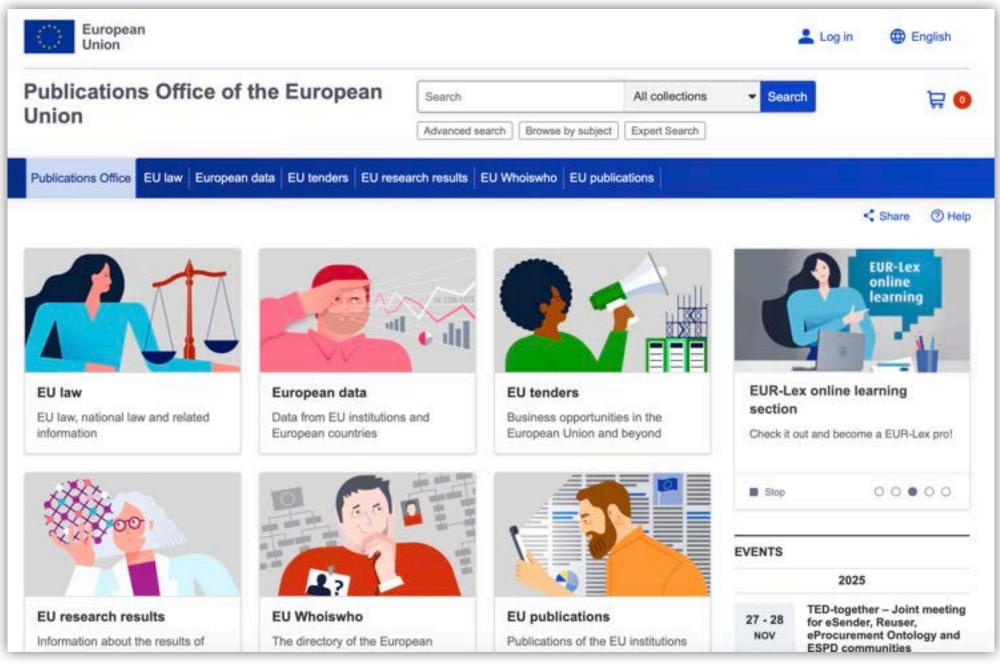
https://openvisualizationacademy.org/

Consulting, training, art direction









Books



- Housekeeping -



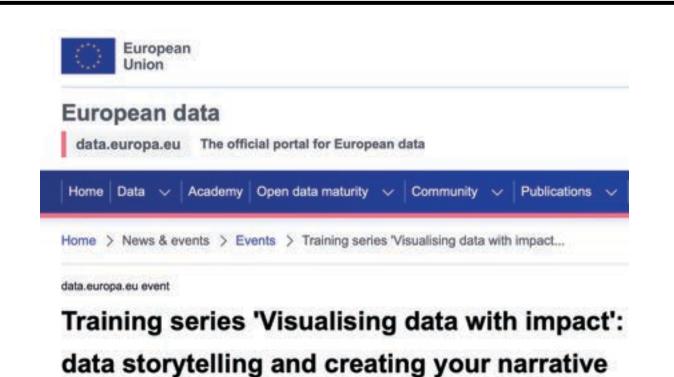


https://data.europa.eu/en/news-events/events/training-data-visualisation-session-I-foundations-effective-data-visualisation



Episode TWO - October 15

https://data.europa.eu/en/news-events/events/data-visualisation-training-session-2-designing-integrity



15 October 2025

16 October 2025

Online

Online

Episode THREE - October 16

https://data.europa.eu/en/news-events/events/data-visualisation-training-session-3-data-storytelling-and-creating-your

EPISODE ONE: Foundations of effective data visualization

Defining information design and data visualization

Exploration, exposition, explanation, expression in visualization

Why do we visualize? The basics

The grammar of graphics

"Rules" versus decision-making

EPISODE TWO: Designing with integrity

Myths of visualization: From "A picture is worth a thousand words" to "the data should speak for itself"

The role of mental models

Why and when do charts "lie", and what to do about it?

A structured way for thinking about visualization and minimizing misunderstanding

EPISODE THREE: Data storytelling and creating your narrative

Structuring a layout

Building a narrative

Considering visual design

Creative visualization

What comes next in visualization?

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EPISODE TWO: Designing with integrity

Myths of visualization: From "A picture is worth a thousand words" to "the data should speak for itself". The role of mental models

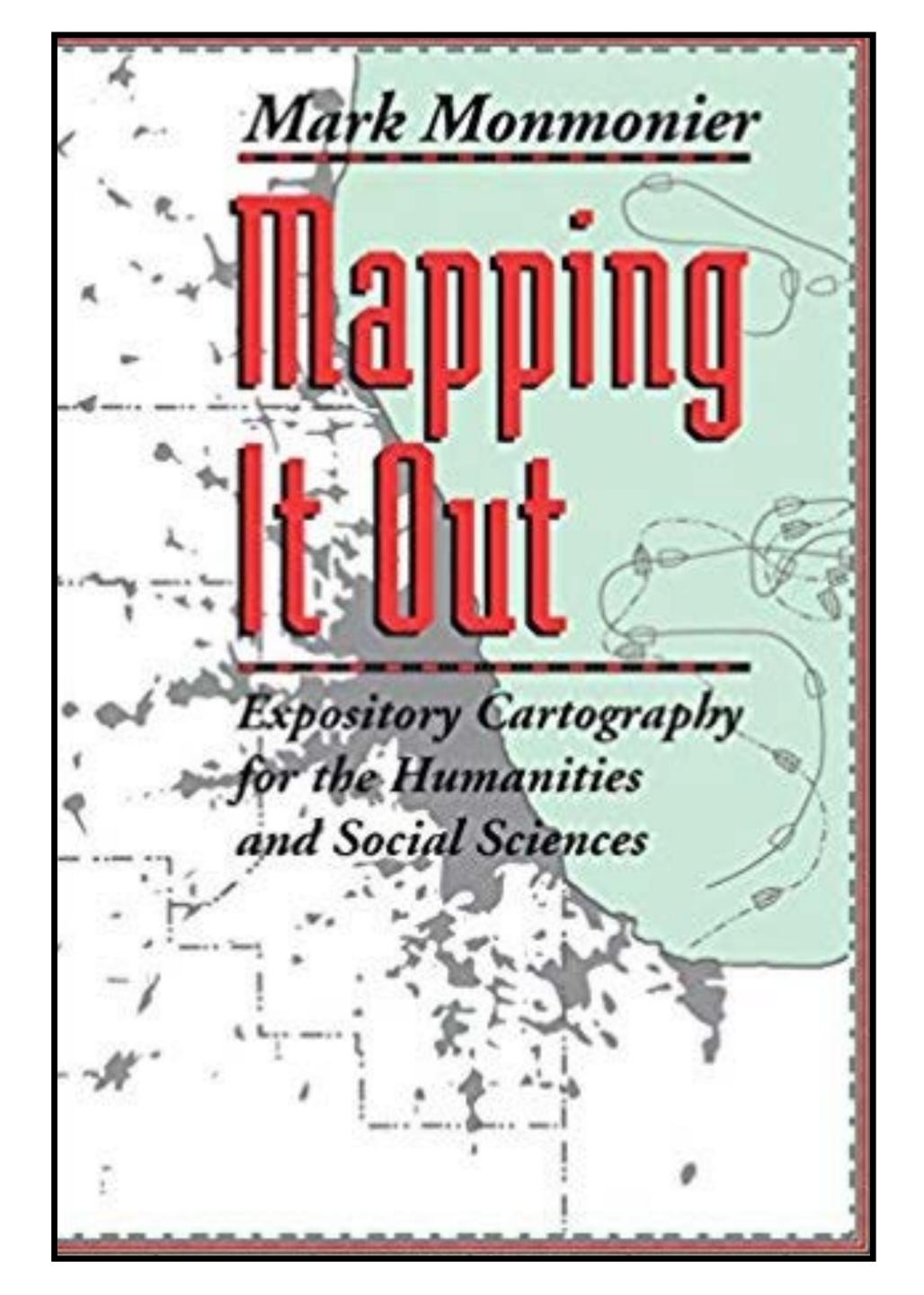
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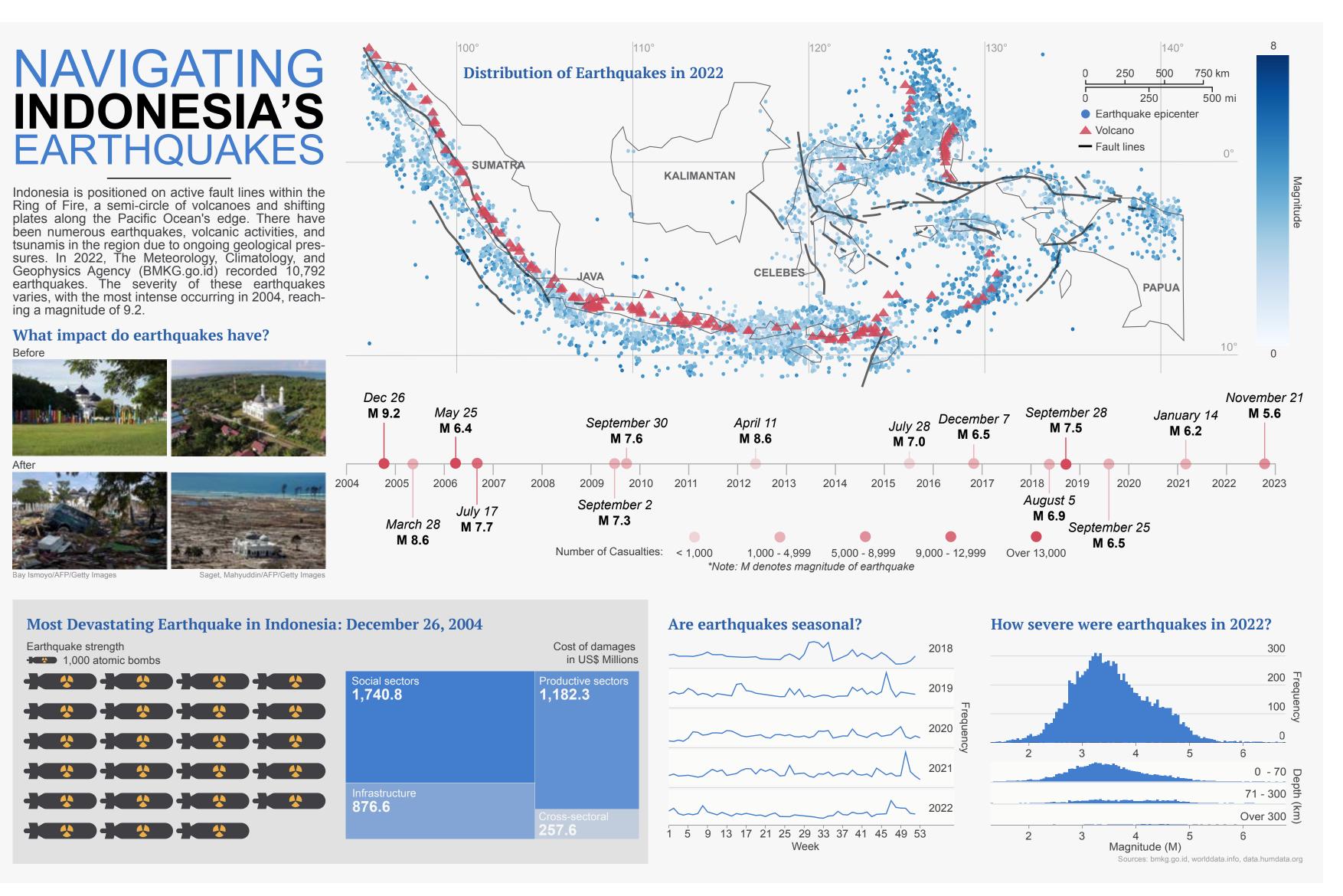
Everybody can (should!) design -

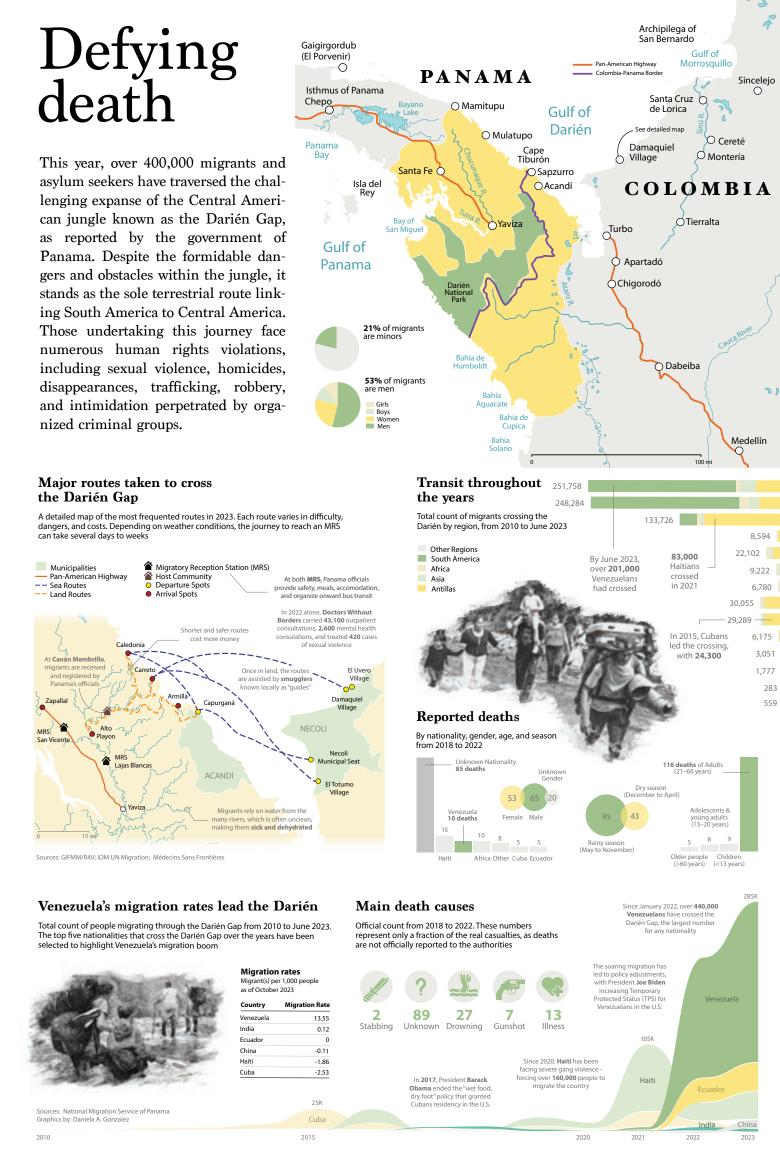


Modern literacy:

- Literacy
- Articulacy
- Numeracy
- Graphicacy

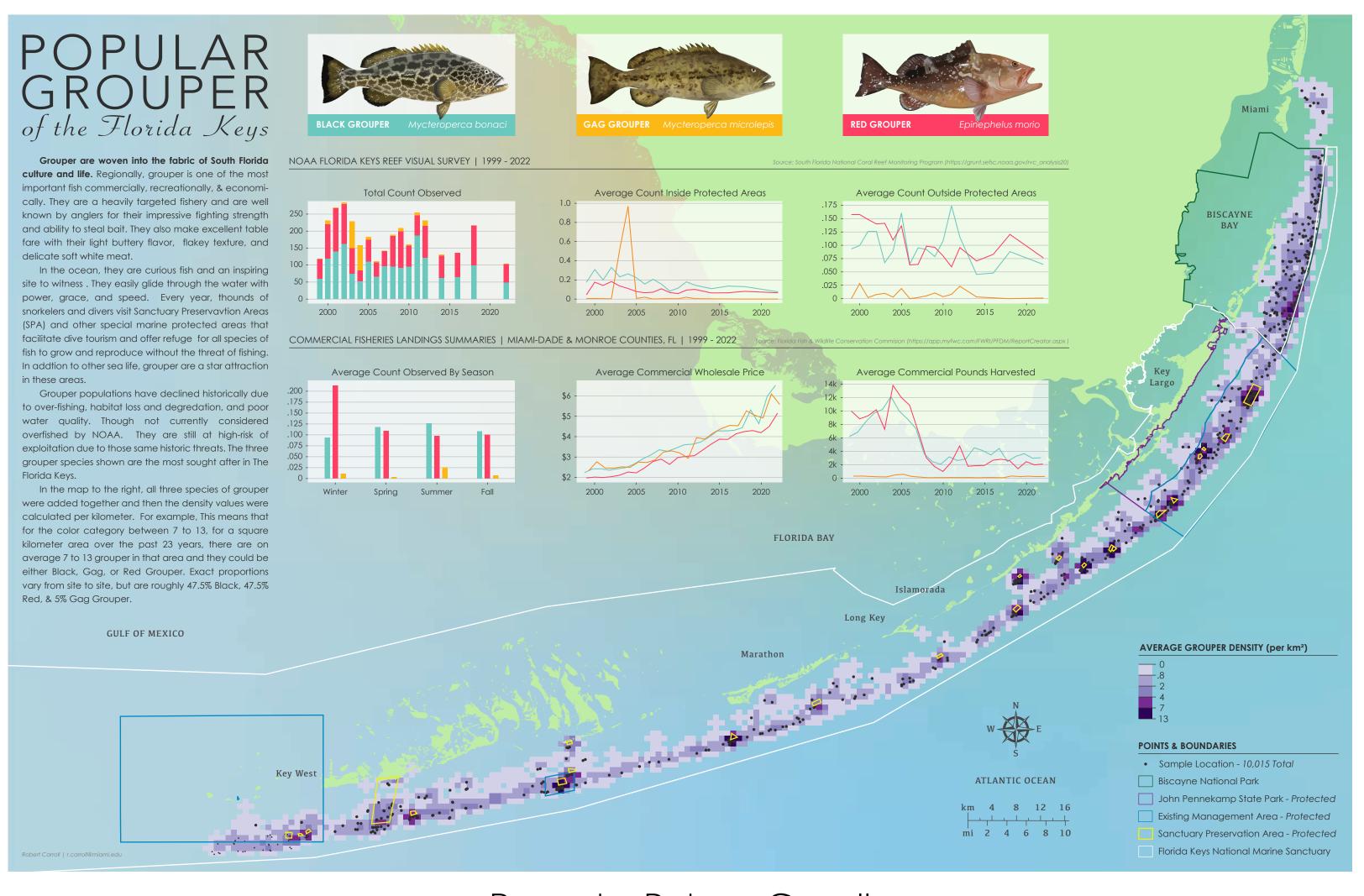
The same way that anyone can learn to write well, anyone can learn to design and visualize well





Poster by Daniela González

The same way that anyone can learn to write well, anyone can learn to design and visualize well



Antibiotic-Induced Shifts in Coral Cell Populations

<u>Shara Sookhoo</u>, Aliyah True, and Nikki Traylor-Knowles Rosenstiel School of Marine, Atmospheric and Earth Science, University of Miami, FL sys25@miami.edu



Summary

ROSENSTIEL SCHOOL of

& EARTH SCIENCE

Antibiotics are commonly used to treat Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLD) but can compromise the coral's long-term resilience. The goal of this study was to evaluate the side effects of antibiotic treatment at the cellular level. This study showed that antibiotics reduce cell death and stress in the short-term. This suggests that antibiotics decrease the pathogenic bacterial load. Future studies will address the long-term effects of antibiotics on corals at the cellular level.

Introduction

- Coral reefs are biological hotspots and provide many ecosystem services.
- Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLD) decimated Caribbean reefs.
- Treatment with antibiotics is 95% effective^[1] but reduces coral microbiome diversity which lowers host resilience^[2].
- **Research Motivation:** Little is known about the impact of antibiotics on corals at the cellular level.



Figure 1: Left shows white SCTLD lesion on coral colony. Right shows treatment of lesion margin with antibiotic infused epoxy

Goals

To identify distinct coral cell populations and determine whether their abundances are impacted by the addition of antibiotics.

Discussion

- Reduction in dead cells and cellular stress markers (lysosomal production and phagocytic activity) suggest that antibiotics have a positive effect on corals at the cellular level.
- The next step is to determine if cell populations have distinct microbiomes and ascertain whether they are differentially impacted by antiobiotics.
- Future studies will investigate the long-term impact of antibiotics on coral cell populations and indetify whether these effects can be mitigated by the addition of beneficial micro-organisms.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank PhD candidate Aliyah True for guiding me through this project. I would also like to thank my advisor Dr. Nikki Traylor Knowles and the other members of my senior thesis commitee: Dr. Douglas Crawford and Dr. Grace Klinges. Thank you to the family of Dr. Linda Farmer for providing the financial support to conduct this research.

References







QR codes are provides for references [1], [2] and [3] from left to right. Images were taken from the National Park Service. Figure 2 was created using Biorender.

Methods

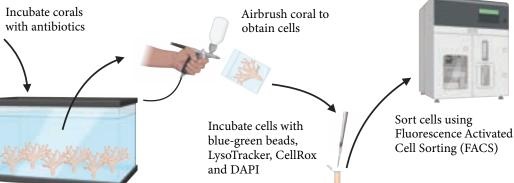


Figure 2: Corals are either exposed to antibiotics for 2.5 days (n=3) or 4.5 days (n=6). Corals are then airbrushed to obtain cells and incubated with blue-green beads to identify phagocytes. Cells are also incubated with LysoTracker which stains lysosomes, CellRox which stains reactive oxygen species and DAPI which stains the DNA of dead cells. Cells are sorted into different populations based on inherent properties or marker intensity.

Results: 5 out of 9 Cell Types are Significantly Impacted by Antibiotics

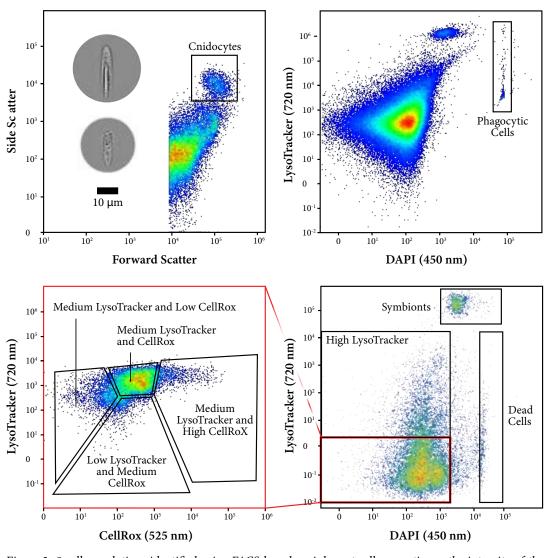


Figure 3: 9 cell populations identified using FACS based on inherent cell properties or the intensity of the non-specific cell markers [3]. Images taken via image flow cytometry are provided for cnidocytes.

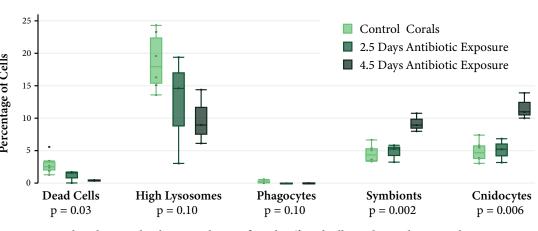


Figure 4: Boxplots showing the change in the significantly affected cell population due to antibiotic exposure. p values are given for ANOVAs.

The same way that anyone can learn to write well, anyone can learn to design and visualize well



Antibiotic-Induced Shifts in Coral Cell Populations

Shara Sookhoo, Aliyah True, and Nikki Traylor-Knowles Rosenstiel School of Marine, Atmospheric and Earth Science, University of Miami, FL



Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLD) but can reduce cell death and stress in the studies will address the long-term effects of biotics on corals at the cellular level.

Cell Sorting (FACS)

- Coral reefs are biological hotspots and provide many ecosystem services.
- Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLD)

which stains the DNA of dead cells. Cells are sorted into different populations based on inherent properties or

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Results: 5 out of 9 Cell Types are Significantly Impacted by Antibiotics

To: Cairo, Alberto









DAPI (450 nm)

Wed 4/26/2023 5:08 PM

I have really enjoyed this course, wanted to pull my hair out many times, but it has completely changed the way I think about charts and design.



nese effects can be mitigated by the addition of beneficial micro-organisms.

References





Figure 3: 9 cell populations identified using FACS based on inherent cell properties or the intensity of the non-specific cell markers [3]. Images taken via image flow cytometry are provided for cnidocytes.

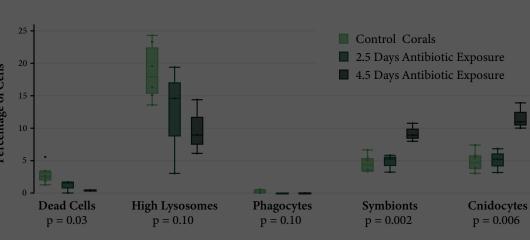


Figure 4: Boxplots showing the change in the significantly affected cell population due to antibiotic exposure

"...It has completely changed the way I think about charts and design."

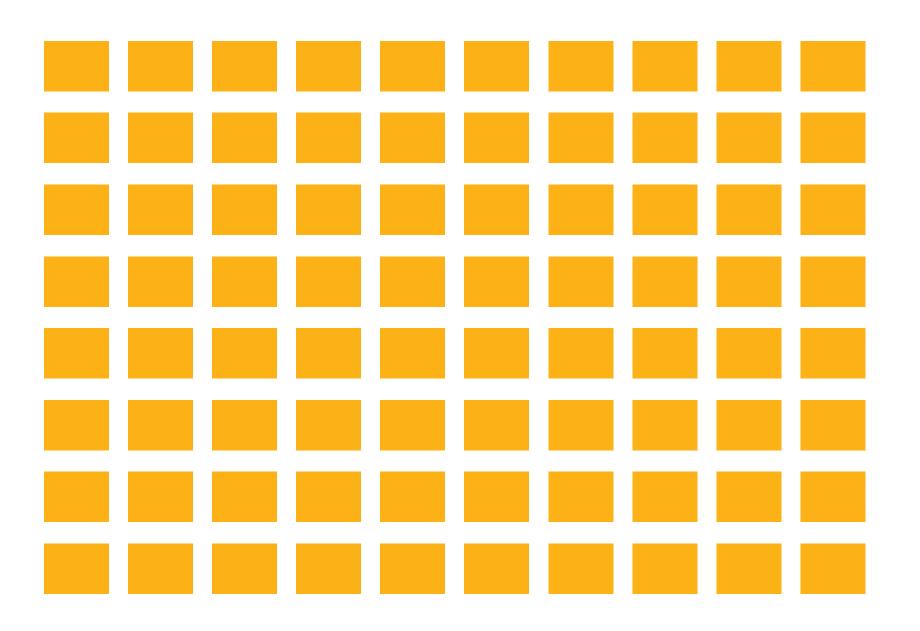
Spoiler alert: Like the class that changed this student's mind, these three webinars aren't about *how to* make visualizations.

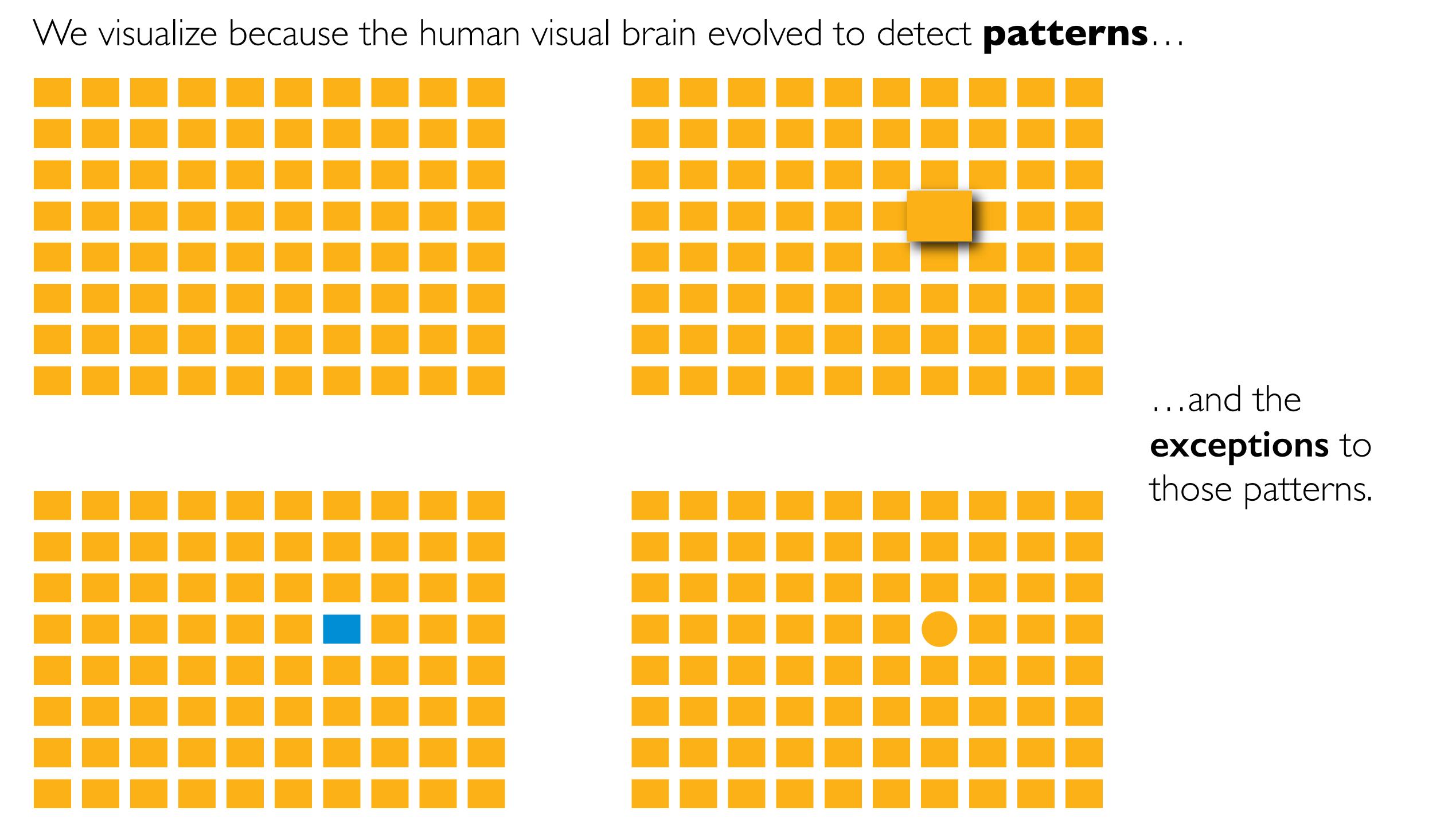
They are about *how I*, an individual designer, makes visualizations.

— The basics of visualization -

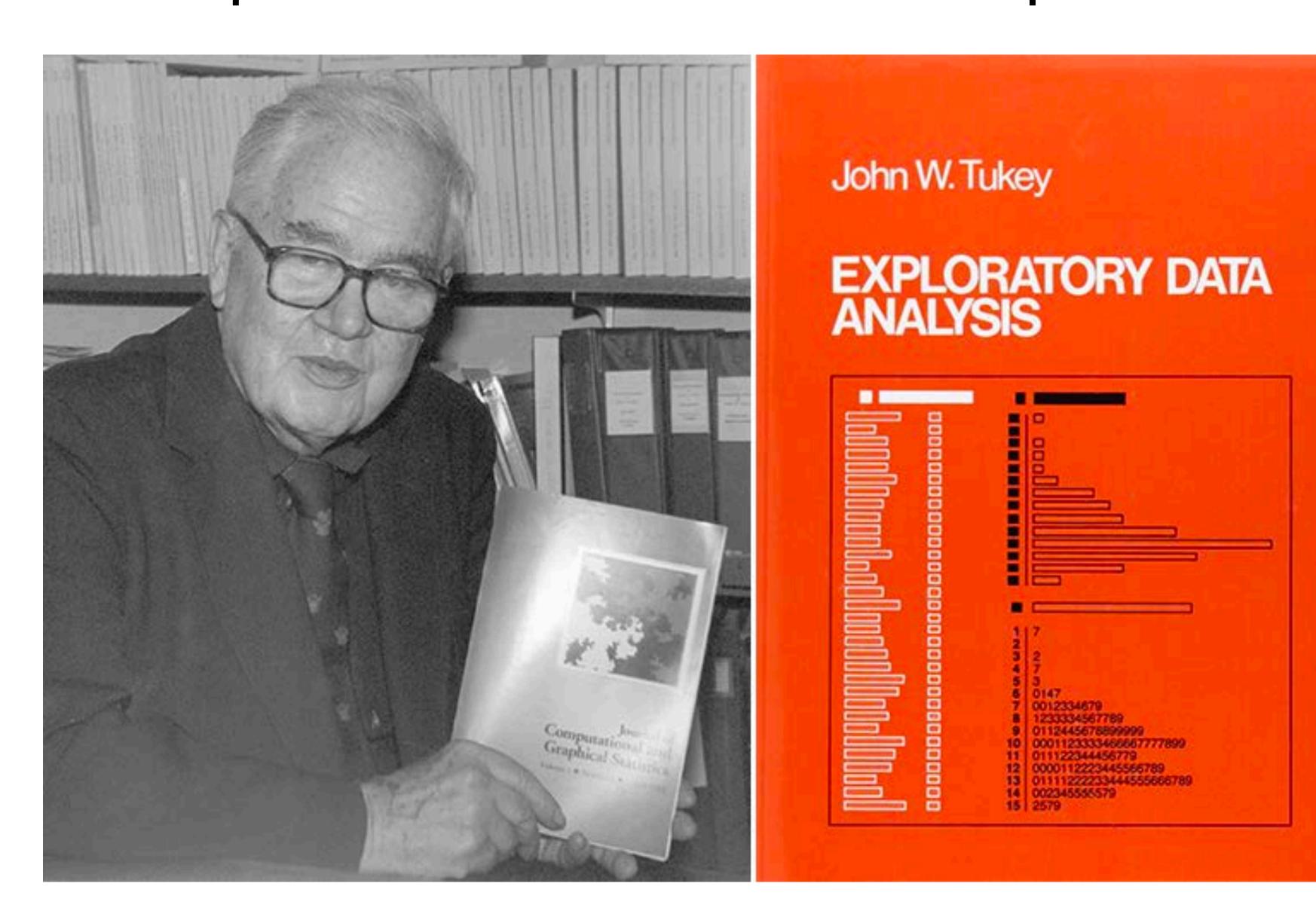
The type of visualizations I typically design are graphical displays intended to enable either **exploration**, **discovery**, or **communication** by letting us see what we cannot normally see.

We visualize because the human visual brain evolved to detect patterns...





The relationship between patterns and their exceptions is a key principle of data exploration: to reveal **patterns and trends**, but also the **exceptions** to them.



"The greatest value of a picture is when it forces us to notice what we never expected to see."

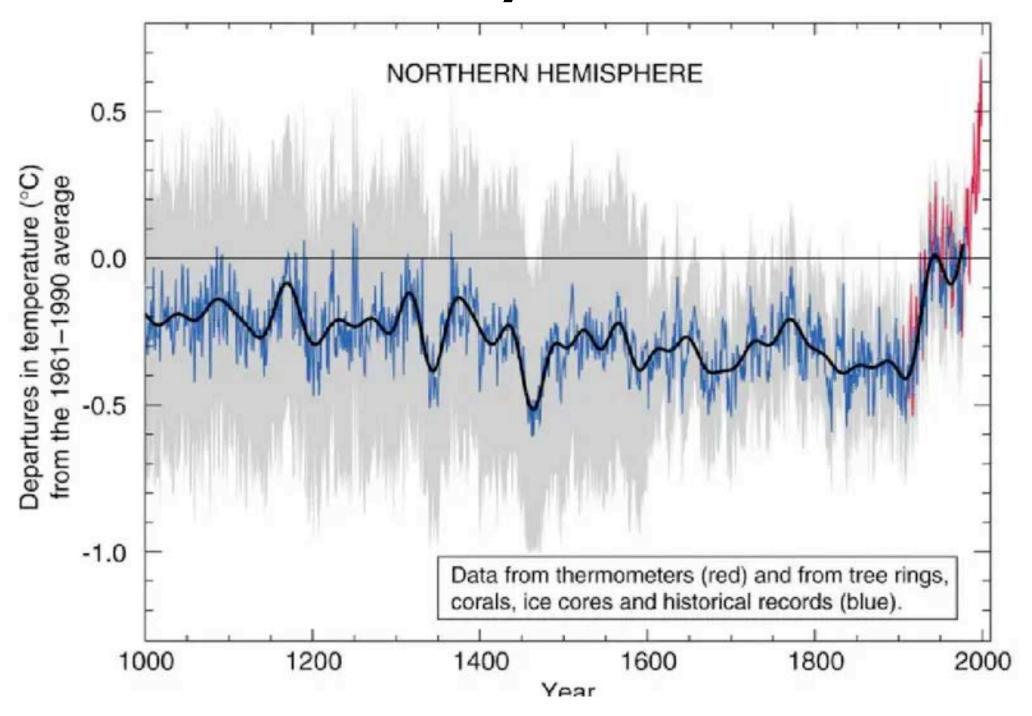
John W. Tukey

If we want to see each value, show each value...

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9	1007	0.0042	1007	0.240347	0.480693		0.123588	886	1884	-0.2125	1884	0.113229	0.226457	8.25301E-02	7.75211E-02	
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11	1009	-0.0296	1009	0.240347	0.480693	0.206137	0.123588	888	1886	-0.1084	1886	0.113228	0.226456	8.25298E-02	7.75208E-02	
12	1010	0.1187	1010	0.240347	0.480694	0.206137	0.123589	889	1887	-0.3265	1887	0.113228	0.226456	8.25296E-02	7.75206E-02	
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14	1012	-0.1634	1012	0.240347	0.480694	0.206137	0.123588	891	1889	-0.1339	1889	0.113228	0.226456	8.25298E-02	7.75208E-02	
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17	1015	-0.1146	1015	0.240346	0.480692	0.206136	0.123588	894	1892	-0.3186	1892	0.113228	0.226456	8.25295E-02	7.75205E-02	
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21	1019	0.0305	1019	0.240347	0.480693	0.206137	0.123588	898	1896	-0.0804	1896	0.113228	0.226456	8.25298E-02	7.75208E-02	
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24	1022	-0.0743	1022	0.240347	0.480693	0.206137	0.123588	901	1899	-0.3486	1899	0.113228	0.226456	8.25297E-02	7.75207E-02	
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26	1024	-0.0434	1024	0.240346	0.480693	0.206137	0.123588	903	1901	-0.1575	1901	0.113228	0.226456	8.25296E-02	7.75206E-02	

...but if we care more about general patterns and trends than we care about individual values, then we should think about visualizations

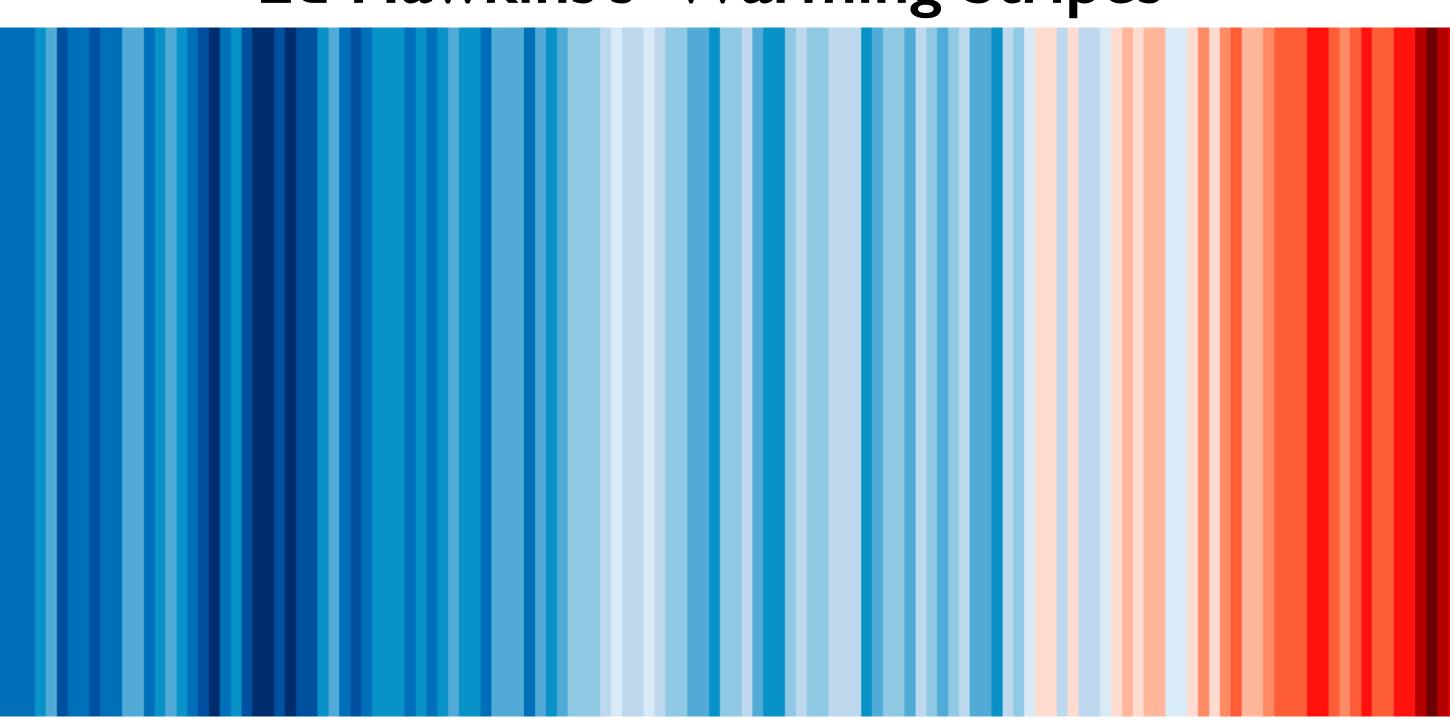
The hockey stick chart



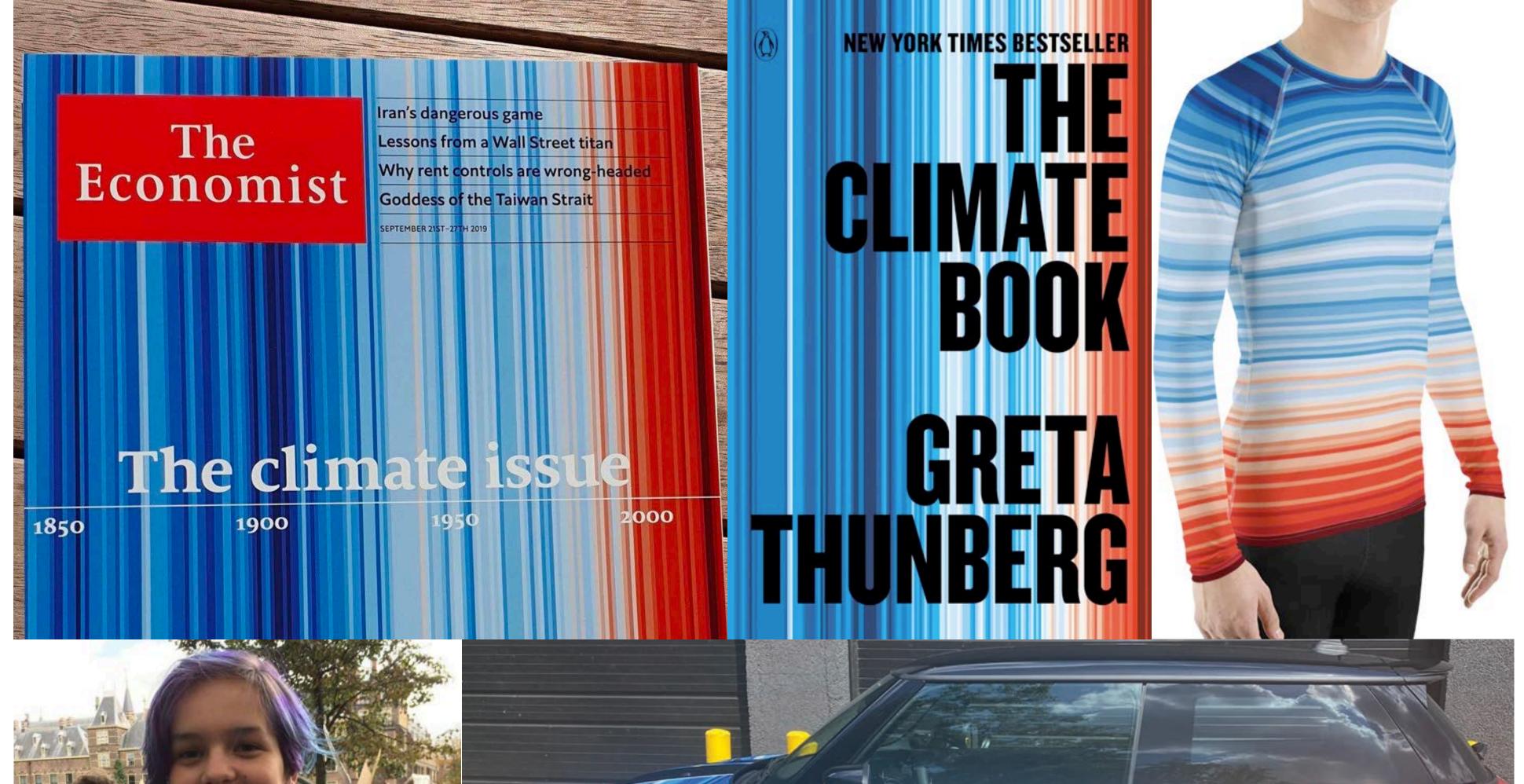
Michael E. Mann, Raymond S. Bradley, and Malcolm K. Hughes

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Third Report, 2001

Ed Hawkins's 'Warming Stripes'



https://showyourstripes.info/s/globe





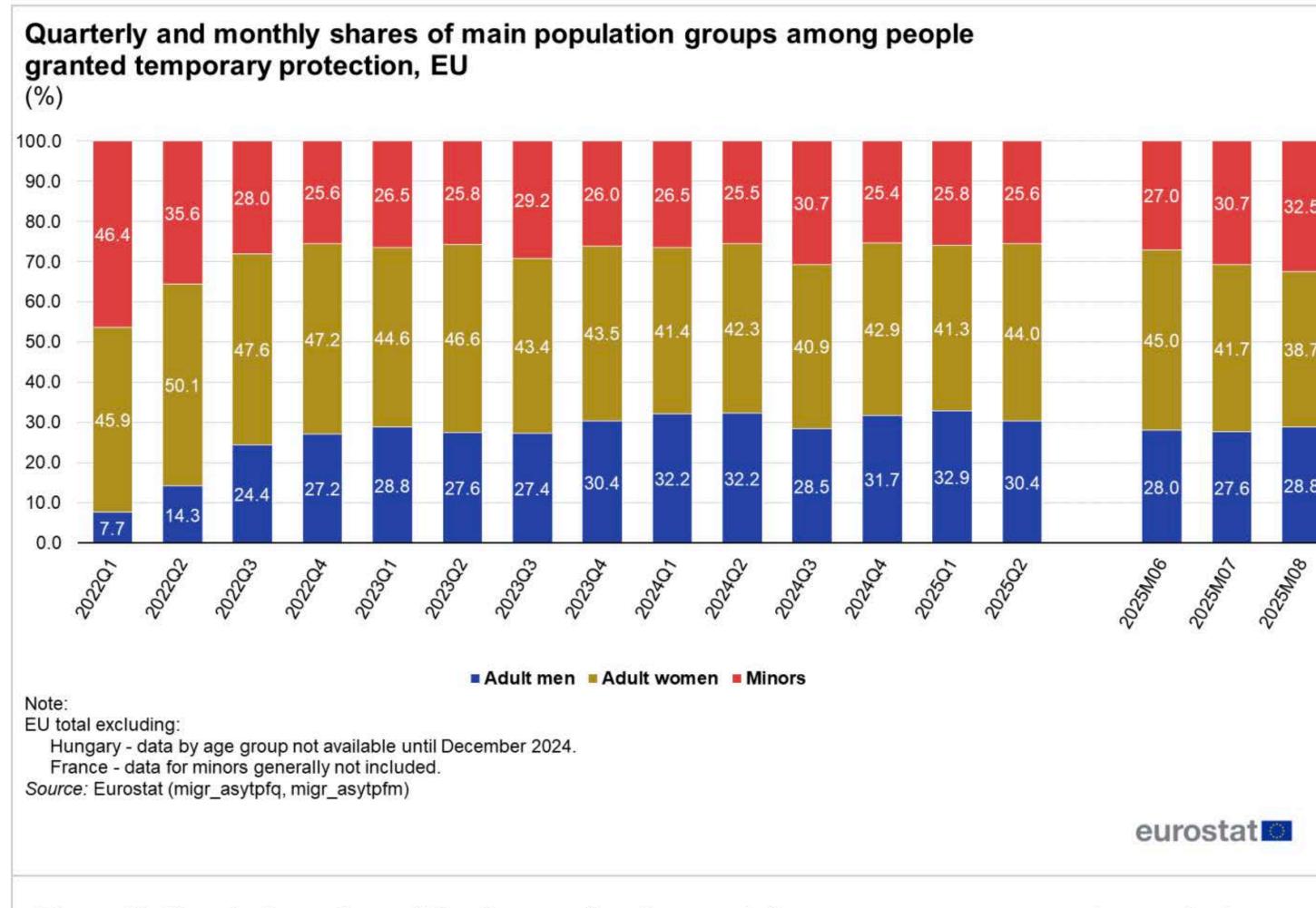


Figure 3: Quarterly and monthly shares of main population groups among people granted temporary protection, EU

Source: Eurostat (migr_asytpfm)

Should we include all figures in a chart? I'd say: Only if we have a very good reason to.

If not, it's better to design a table.

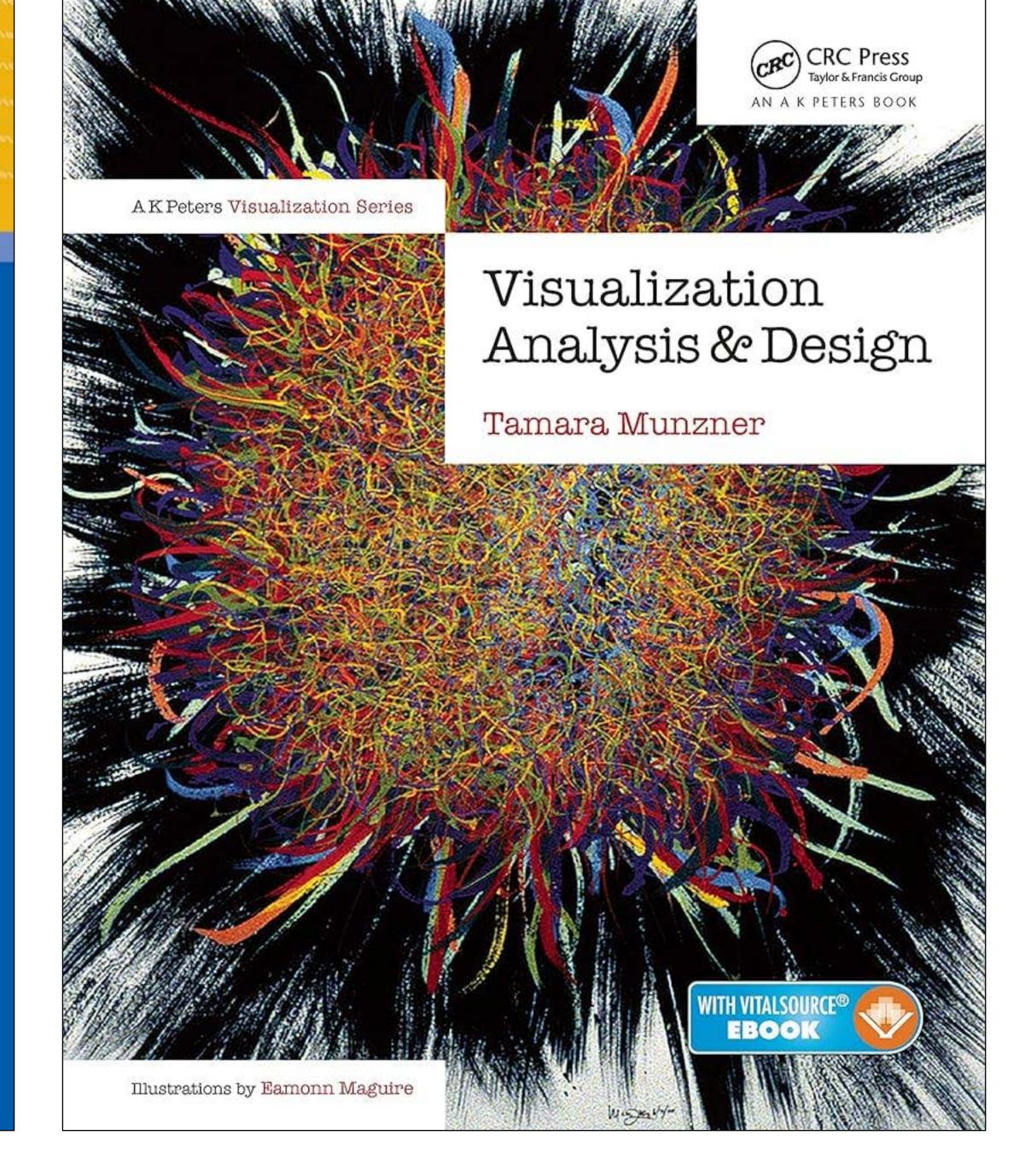
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Statistics and Computing

Leland Wilkinson

The Grammar of Graphics

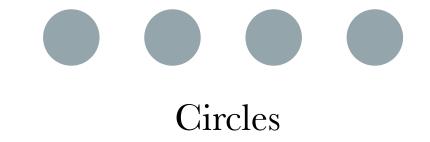
Second Edition

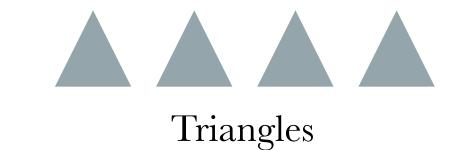




Marks

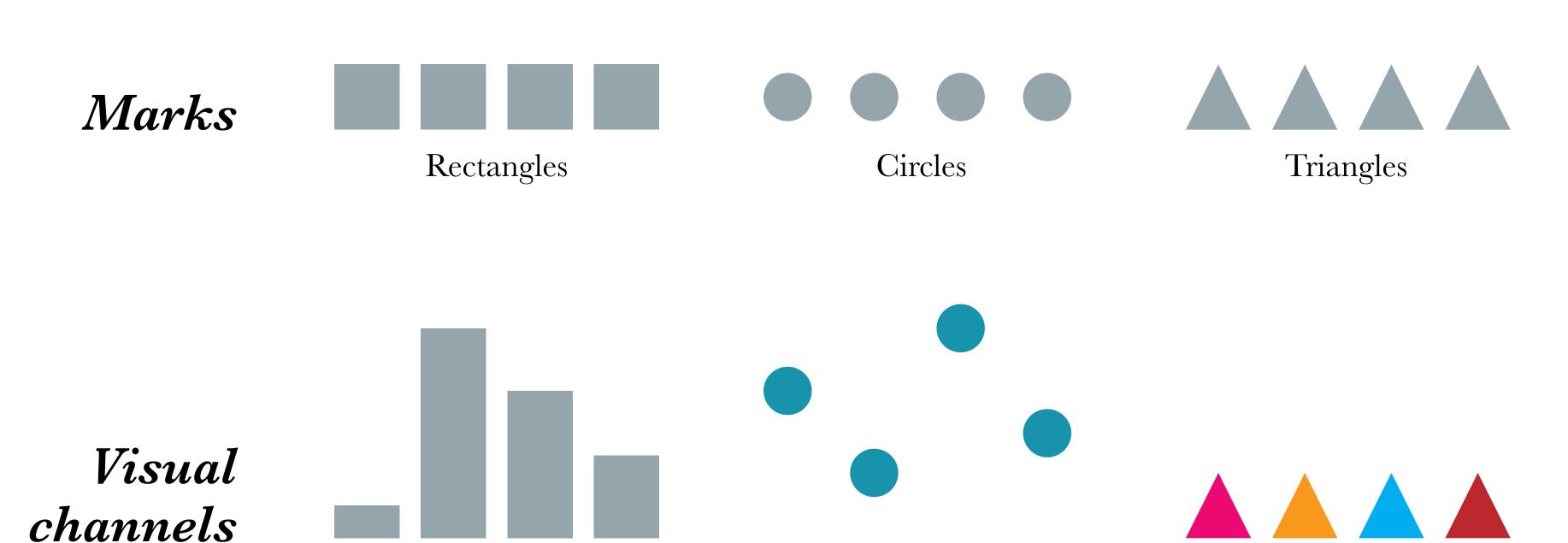






Encoding data

Data visualization consists of mapping data onto attributes of objects—commonly abstract shapes, called "marks".



Position

Color hue

Height

Encoding data

Data visualization consists of mapping data onto attributes of objects—commonly abstract shapes, called "marks".

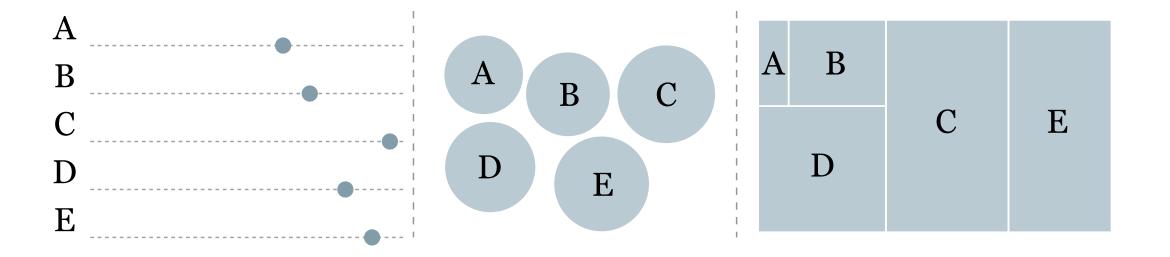
These attributes that vary in relation to the data are called "visual channels".

Length or height

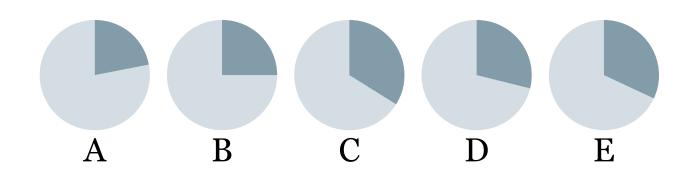


alberto cairo

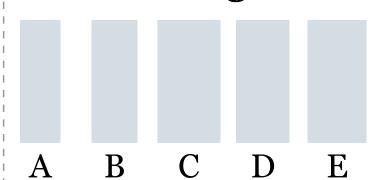
Position Area



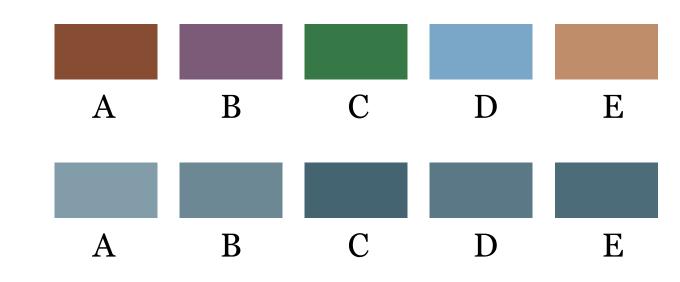
Angle/area



Line weight



Hue and shade



Figures represented in all these graphics: 22%, 25%, 34%, 29%, 32%

Encoding data

Data visualization consists of mapping data onto attributes of objects—commonly abstract shapes, called "marks".

These attributes that vary in relation to the data are called "visual channels".

What visual channels do you see here?

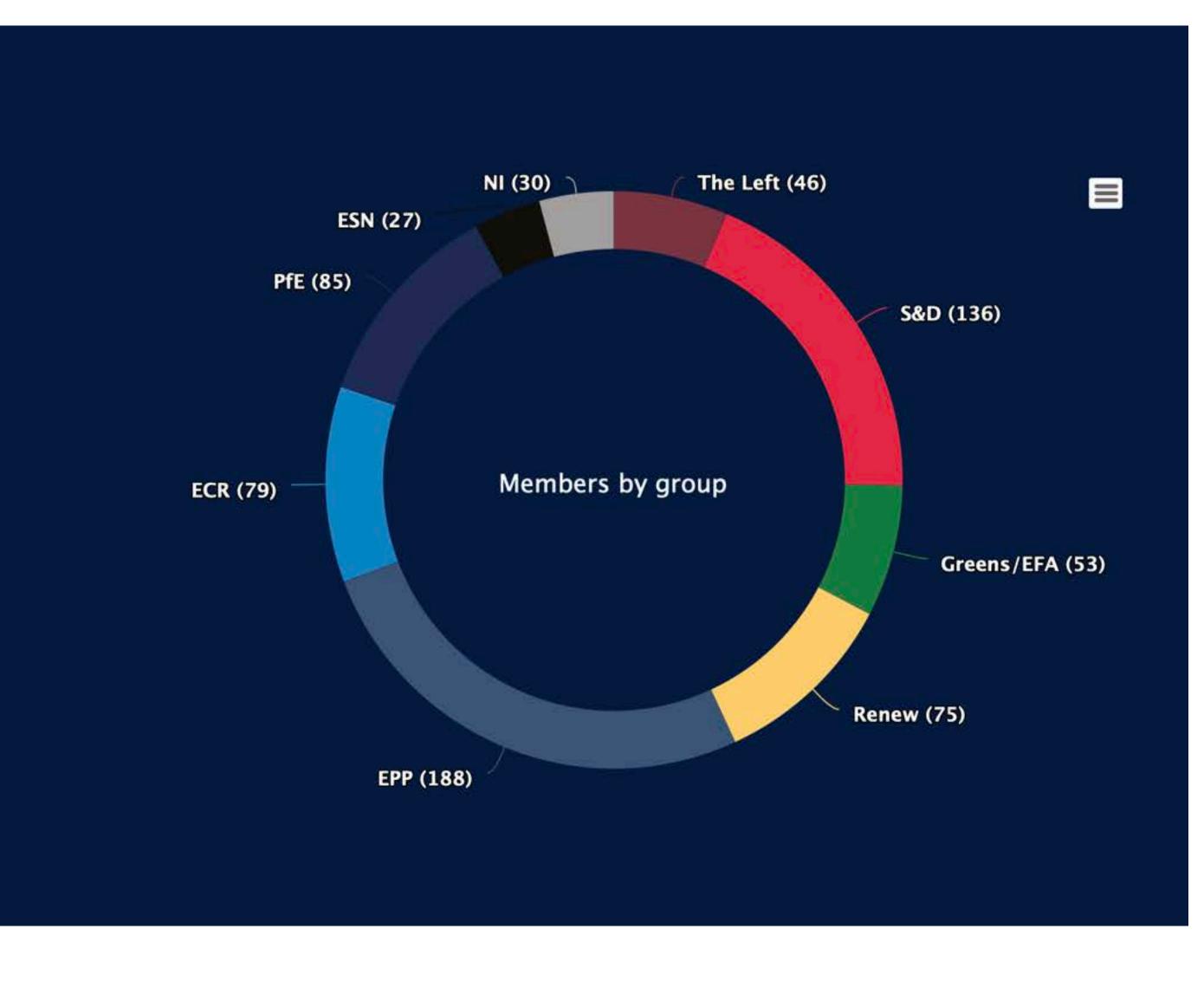
Political groups: size, composition by country and national political party of their MEPs

Selected date: 10th term - October 2025

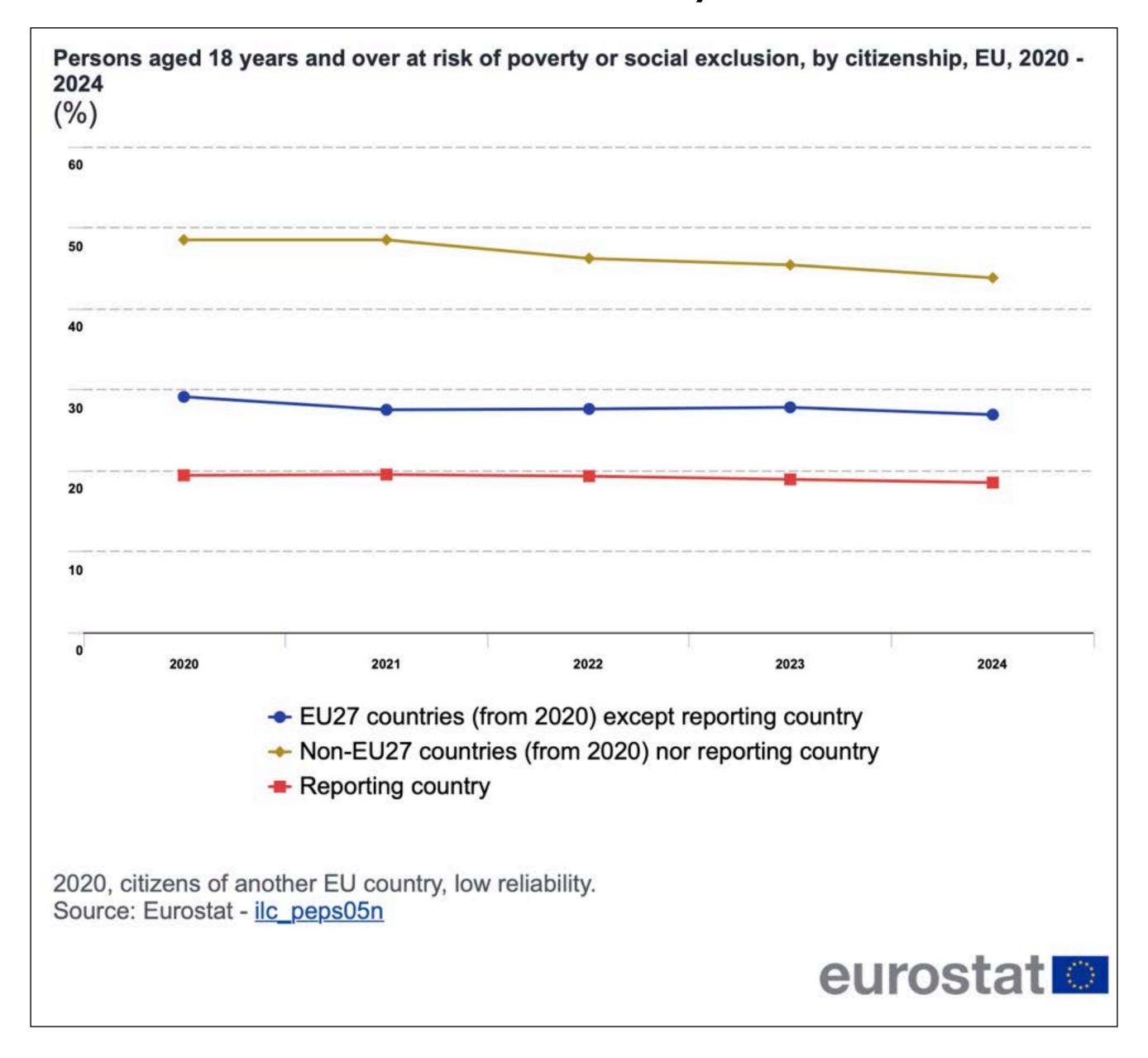
This graph details the composition of the European Parliament for the selected legislative term. Move your mouse over any political group; you will be shown the share that the MEPs of that group represent in terms of the total number of MEPs. If you select a political group, you will see the MEPs of that group, divided by Member State. By clicking on a given country, you will see the number of national political parties within the selected political group and Member State. A final click on the graph will display the names of the MEPs belonging to that national political party in that Member State.

Three question marks means there are no data for the given item.

Source: European Parliament



What visual channels do you see here?



https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php

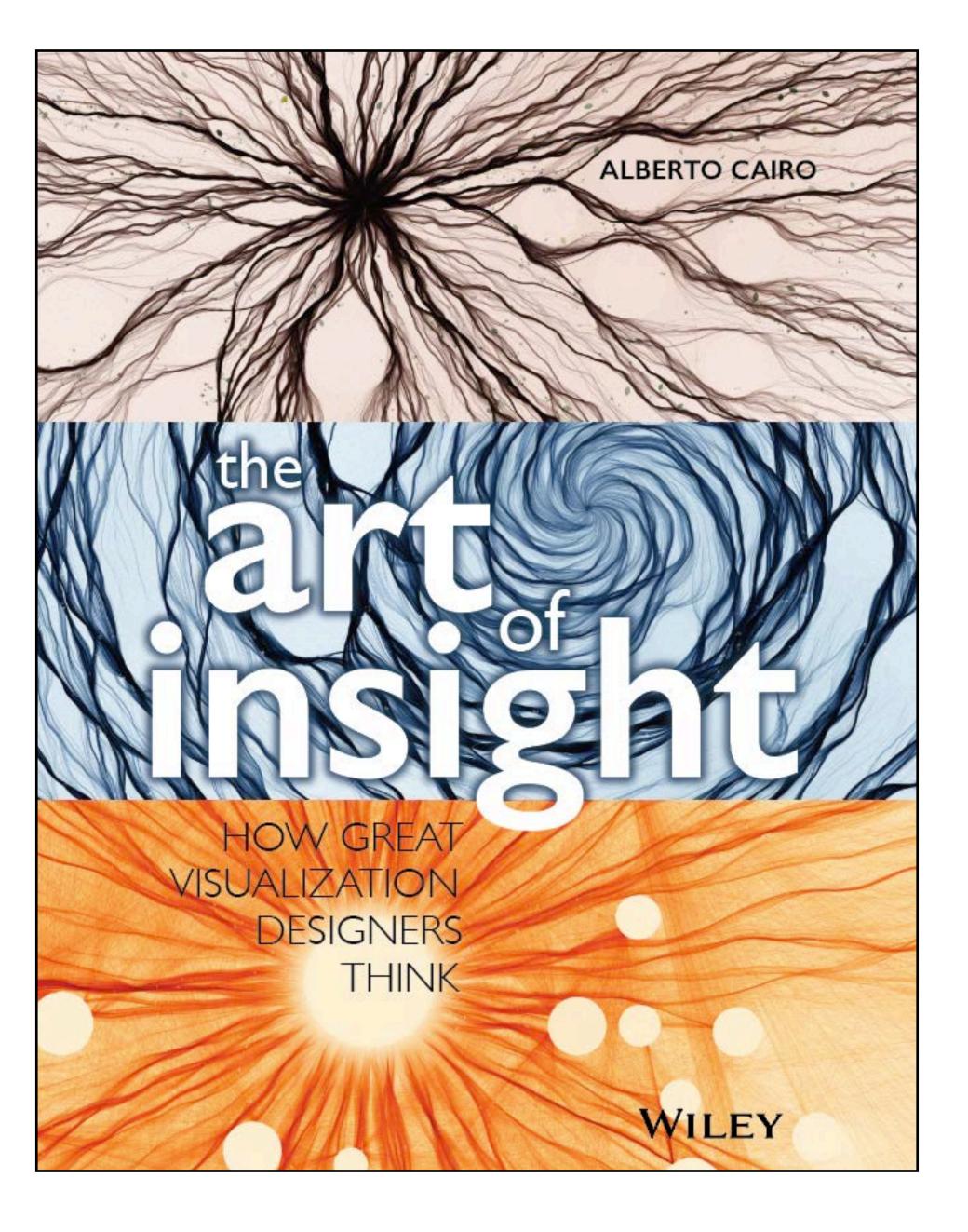
Something I hear often:

 Visualization is similar to writing in many ways.

First, it's based on a vocabulary and a grammar.

Second, there are few "rules" that are set in stone and that can be memorized when it comes to designing visualizations. It's not that easy! Like writing, this is a craft takes time, dedication, study, and practice to master.

Third —again like writing—visualization can be used for many purposes: Communication, reasoning, exploration, or even artistic expression.



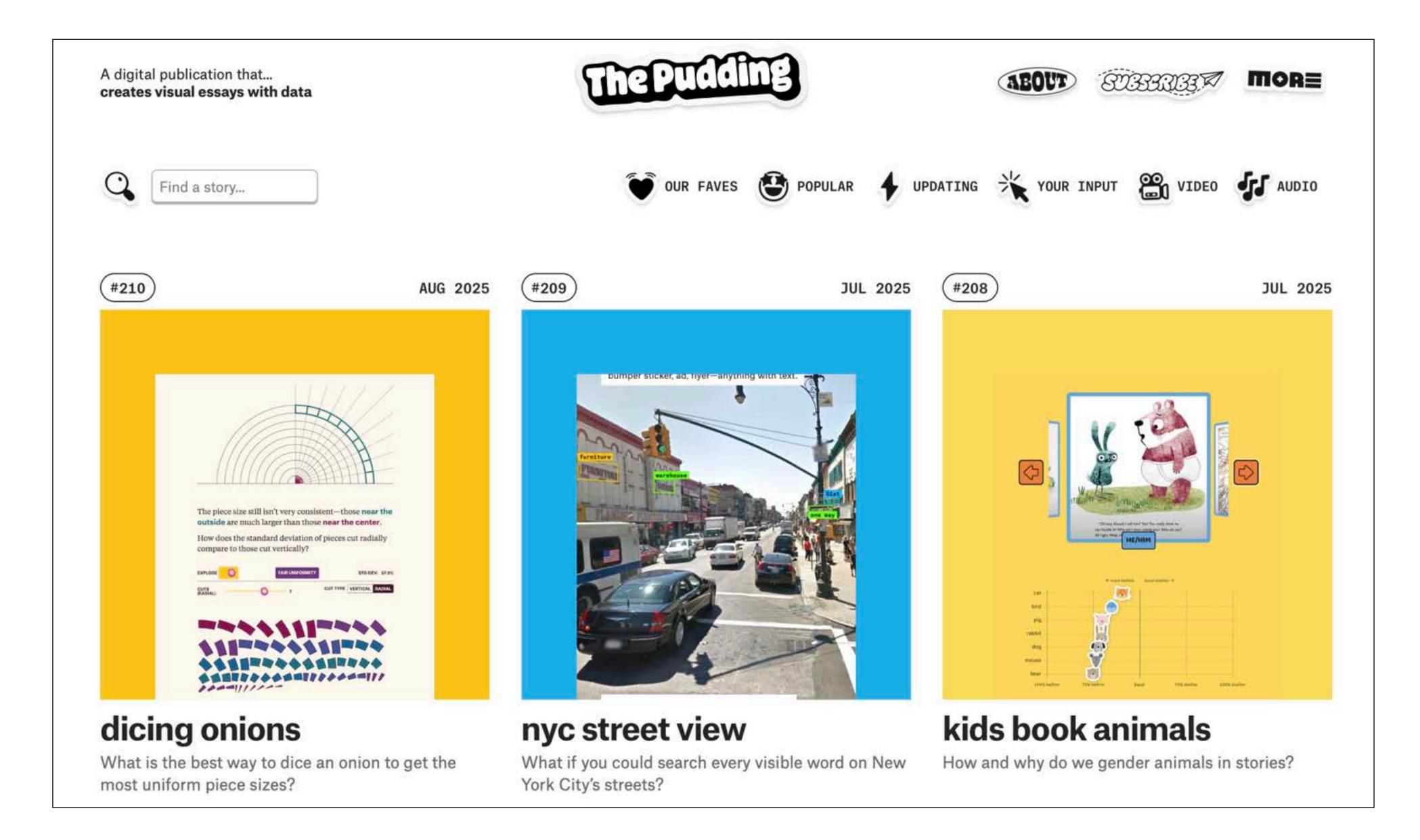
Visualization design consists of **reasoning** about possible **choices** by considering the interplay between:

- I. Content: The nature, origin, and limitations of the data.
- 2. People: Your audience.
- 3. Intent: The purpose(s) that we define.
- 4. Constraints: The limitations that we may face.
- 5. Outcomes: How the graphic is received.

Every design choice must be deliberate.

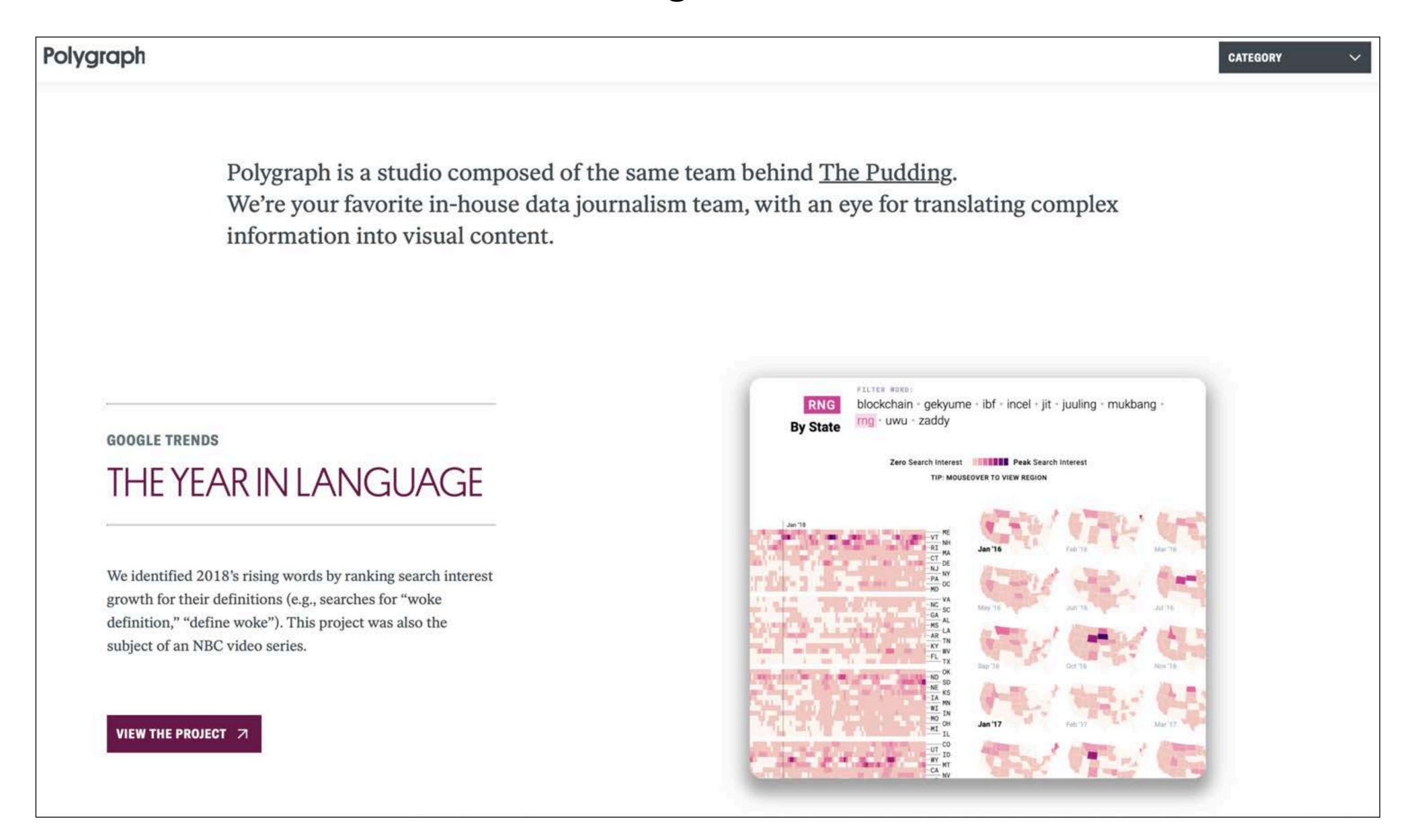
It is inevitably subjective, but it should never be arbitrary.

Aside: Reading recommendation



https://pudding.cool/

Aside: Reading recommendation



https://polygraph.cool/

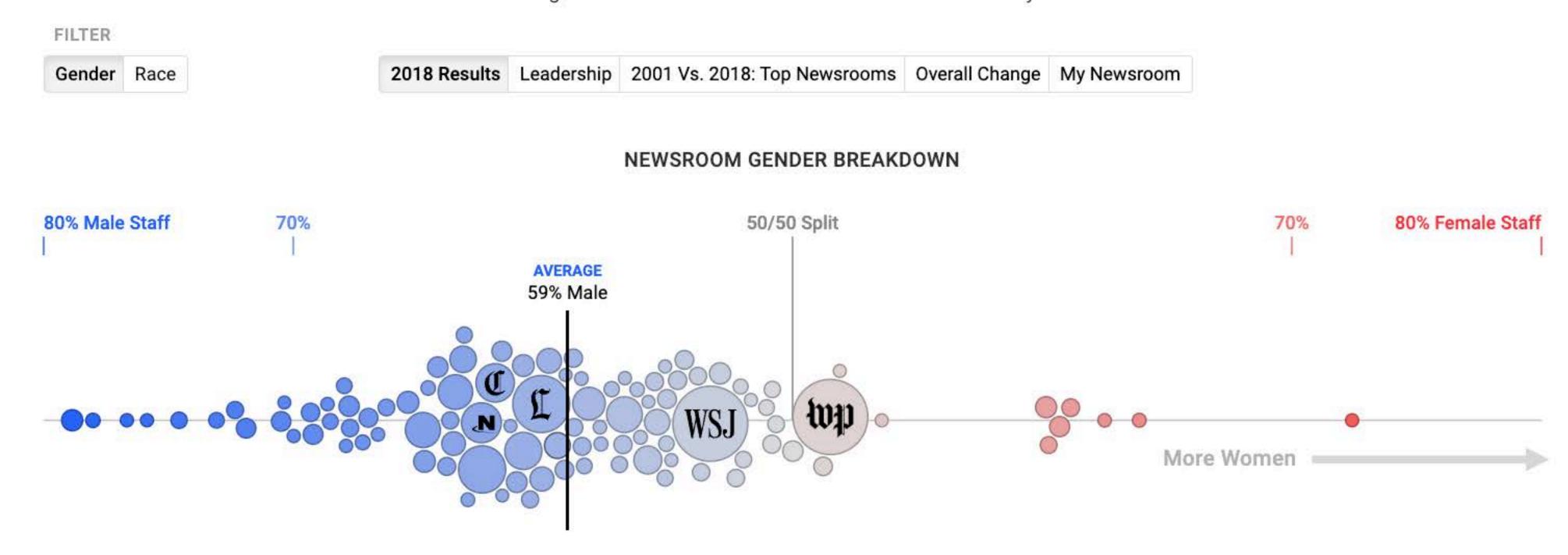
A good exercise: To reverse-engineer existing visualizations

"If I were the designer who created this, what choices would lead me to this solution?"

AMERICAN SOCIETY of NEWS EDITORS

How Diverse Are US Newsrooms?

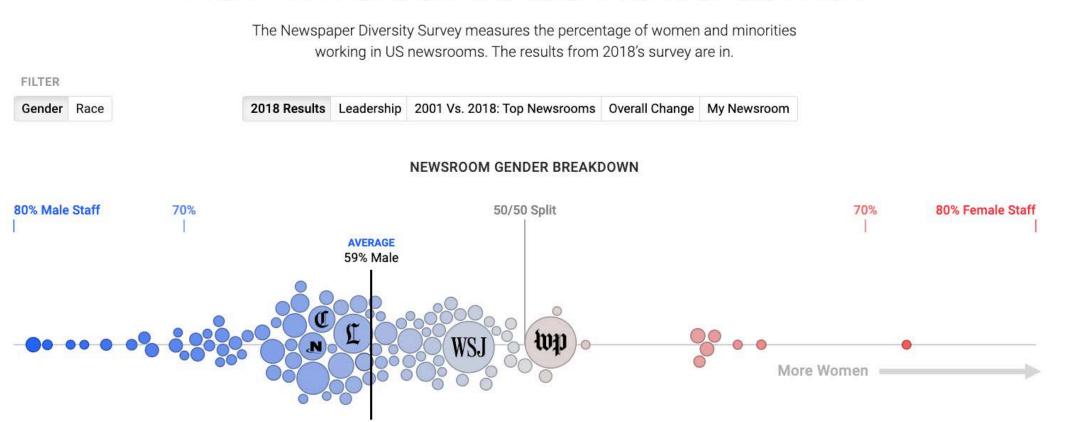
The Newspaper Diversity Survey measures the percentage of women and minorities working in US newsrooms. The results from 2018's survey are in.



https://googletrends.github.io/asne/

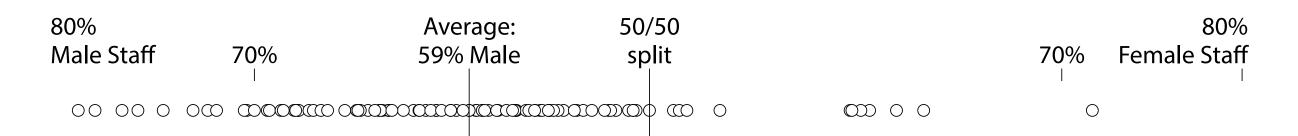
How Diverse Are US Newsrooms?

AMERICAN SOCIETY of NEWS EDITORS



Designing information graphics and data visualizations doesn't consist of applying **rules**, but of **reasoning** about choices, and **justifying** them.

Every choice in design is **subjective**, and therefore debatable, but it should never be **arbitrary**.



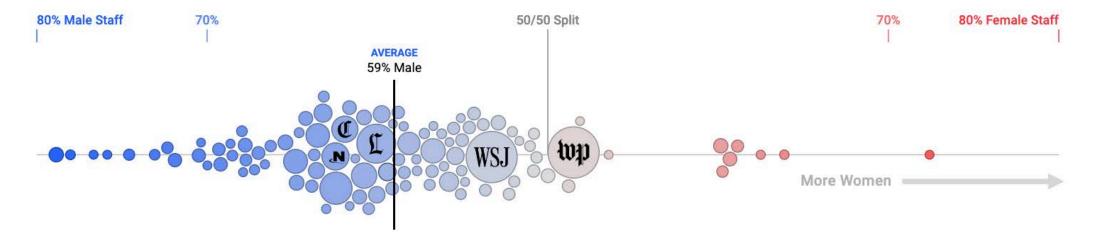
How Diverse Are US Newsrooms?

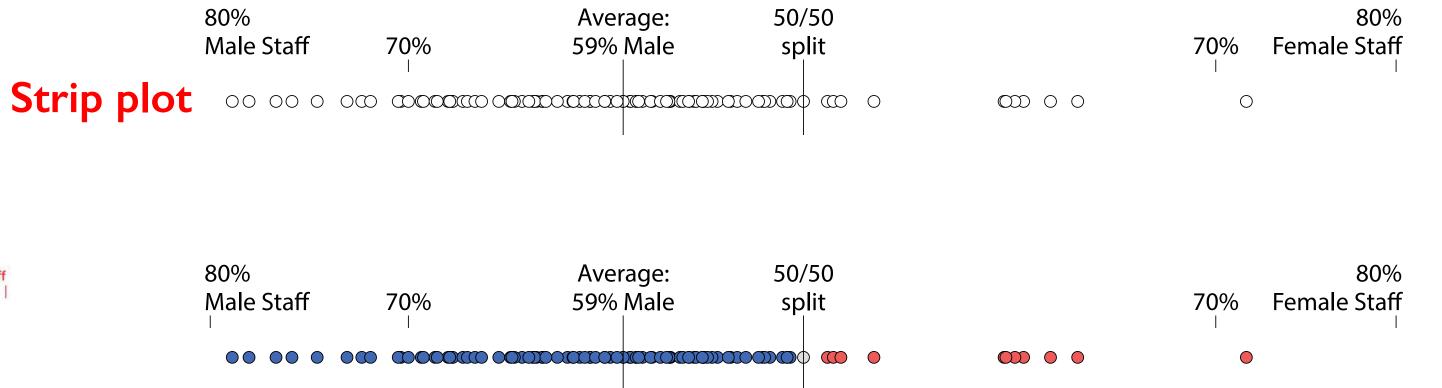
The Newspaper Diversity Survey measures the percentage of women and minorities

working in US newsrooms. The results from 2018's survey are in.

FILTER Gender Race 2018 Results Leadership 2001 Vs. 2018: Top Newsrooms Overall Change My Newsroom

NEWSROOM GENDER BREAKDOWN





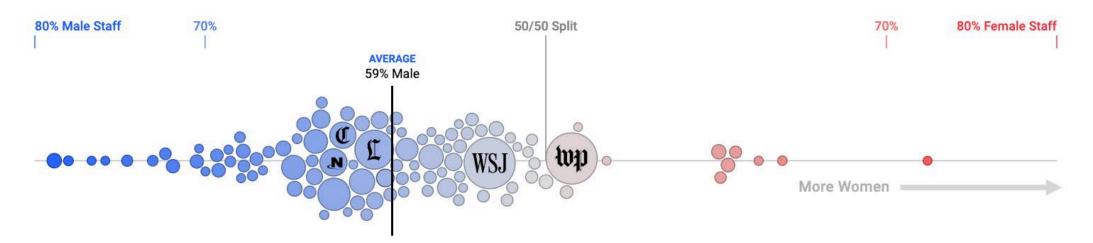
How Diverse Are US Newsrooms?

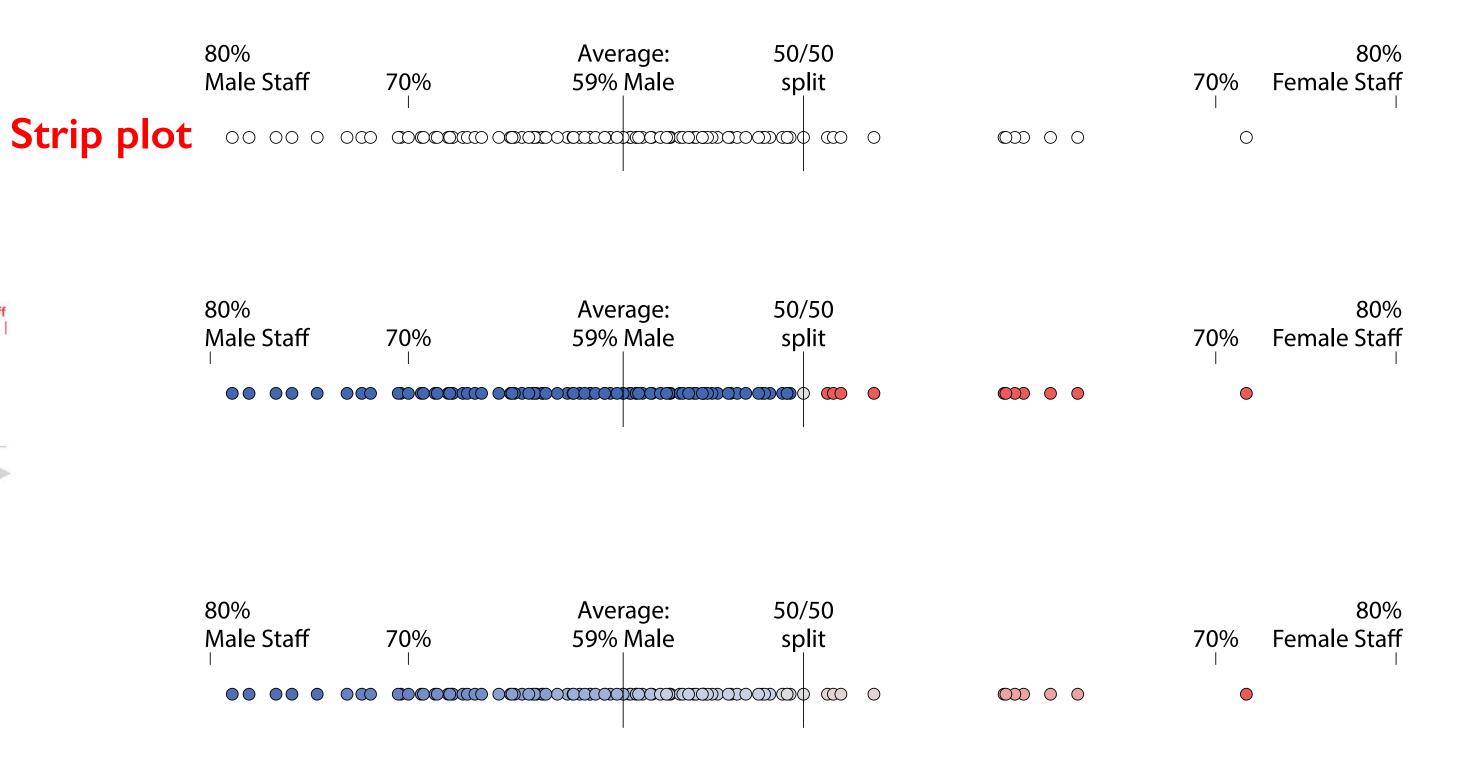
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Gender Race 2018 Results Leadership 2001 Vs. 2018: Top Newsrooms Overall Change My Newsroom

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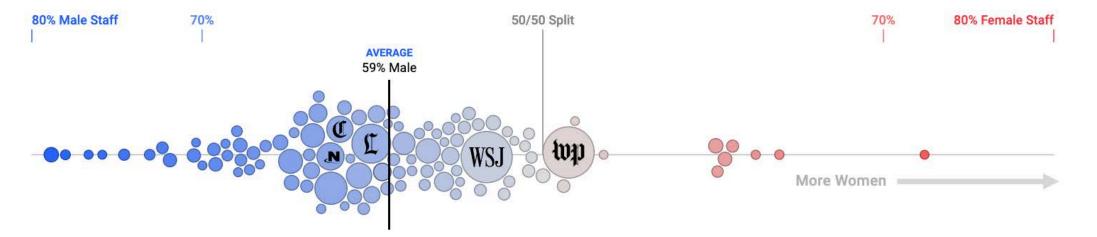


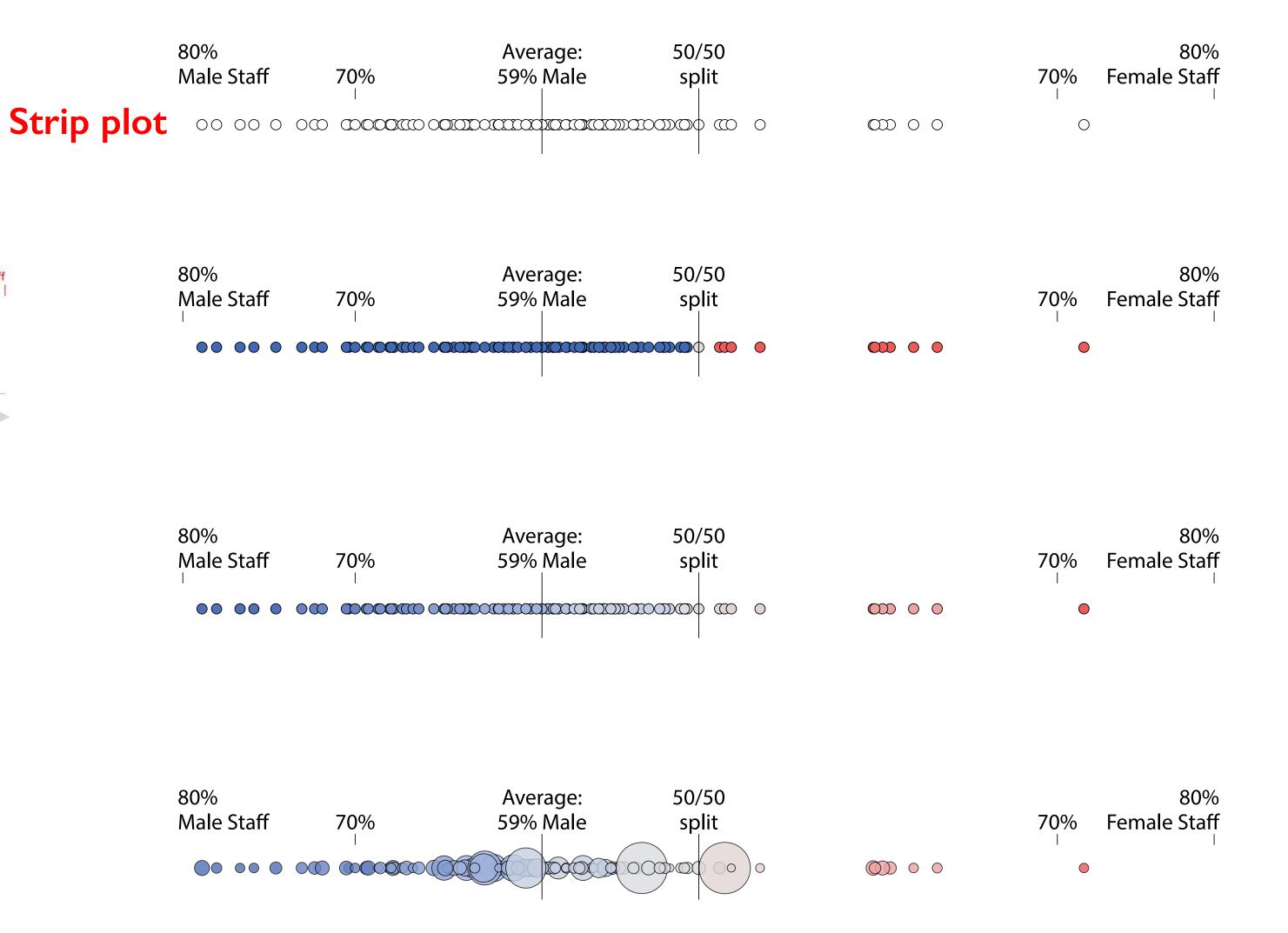
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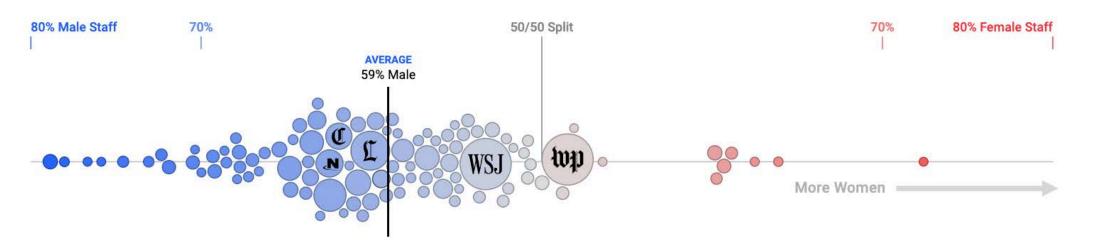
How Diverse Are US Newsrooms?

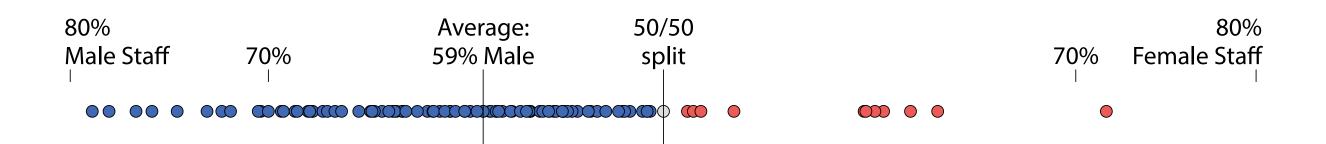
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working in US newsrooms. The results from 2018's survey are in.

FILTER Gender Race 2018 Results Leadership 2001 Vs. 2018: Top Newsrooms Overall Change My Newsroom

NEWSROOM GENDER BREAKDOWN





50/50

split

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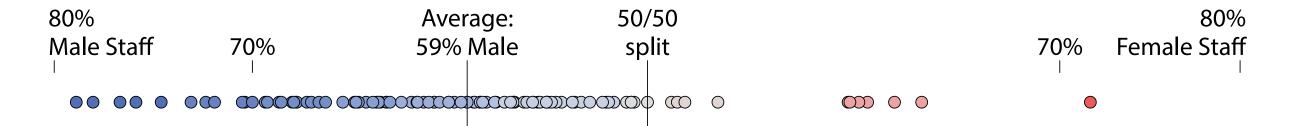
Female Staff

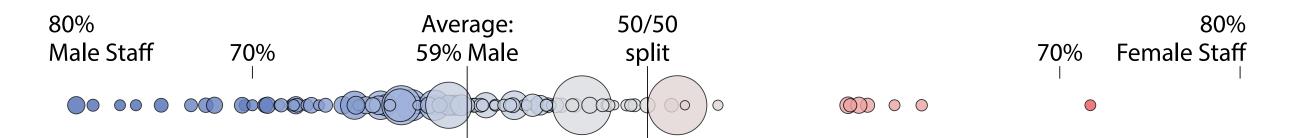
Average:

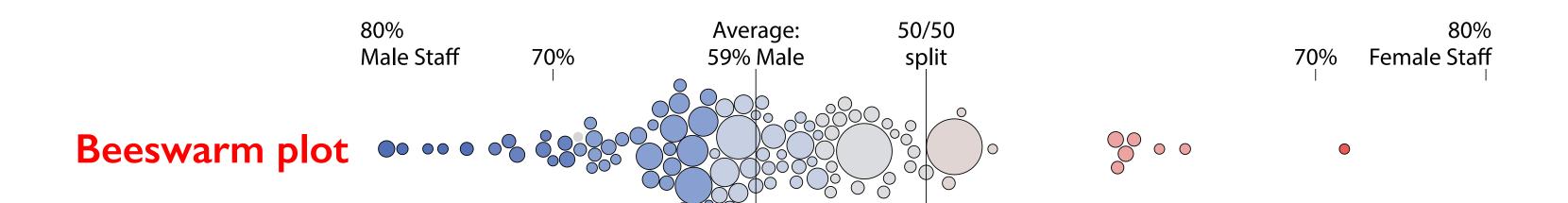
59% Male

Male Staff

70%



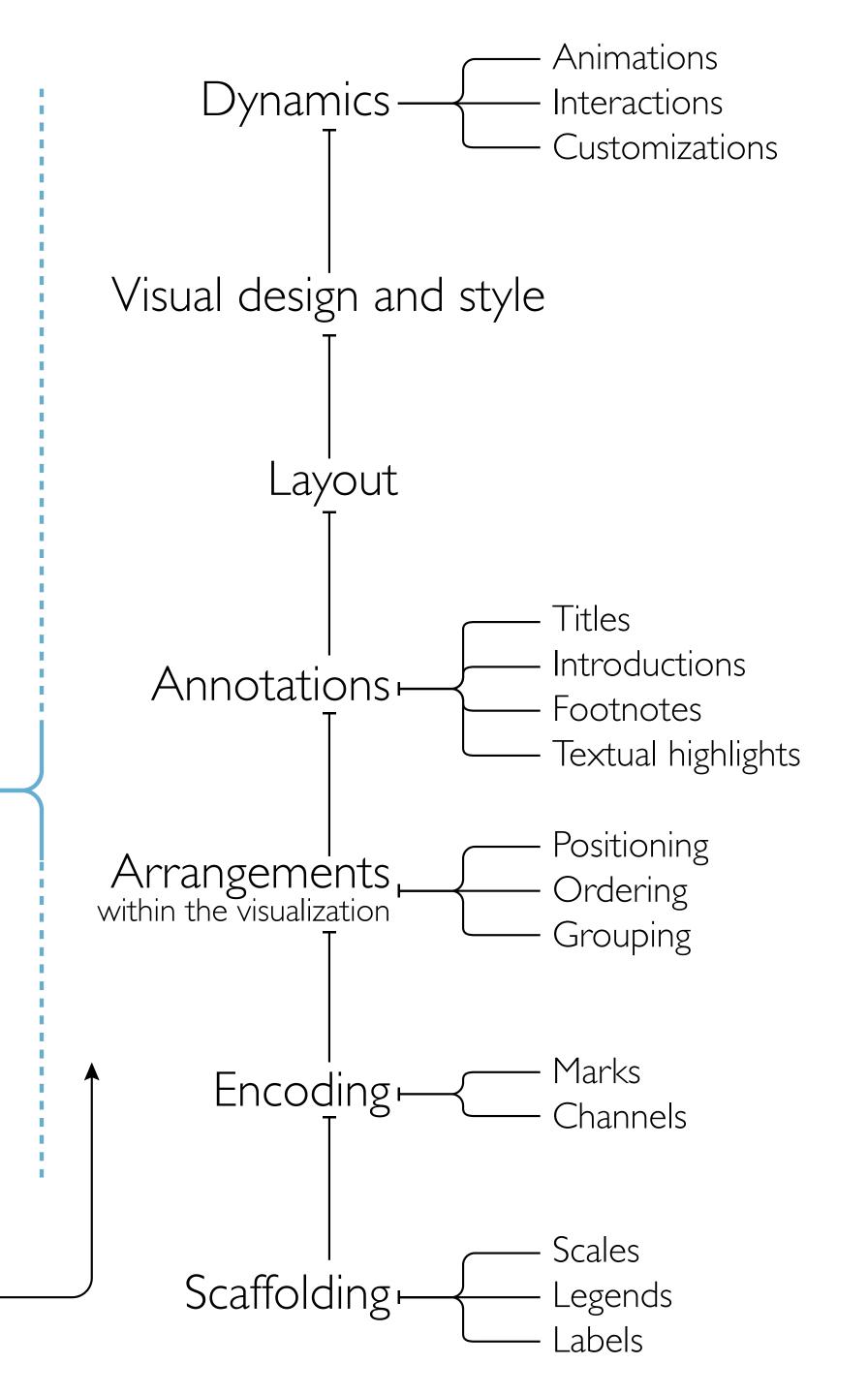




Visualization:
Layers and
elements
to think about

The nature of the data to be visualized influences everything else

Read from the bottom-up



Reasoning based on our intent-

Learning objectives framework

The reader will [verb][noun]

Papers by Elsie Lee-Robbins et al. https://elsieleerobbins.com/publications.html

Communicative Visualizations as a Learning Problem

Eytan Adar and Elsie Lee

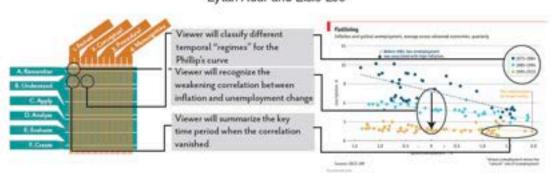


Fig. 1. The extended Bloom Taxonomy (left) and a visualization of the Phillips curve (right) [32]. Learning objectives, and visual support for

Abstract - Significant research has provided robust task and evaluation languages for the analysis of exploratory visualizations. Unfortunately, these taxonomies fail when applied to communicative visualizations. Instead, designers often resort to evaluating communicative visualizations from the cognitive efficiency perspective: "can the recipient accurately decode my message/insight?" However, designers are unlikely to be satisfied if the message went 'in one ear and out the other.' The consequence of this inconsistency is that it is difficult to design or select between competing options in a principled way. The problem we address is the fundamental mismatch between how designers want to describe their intent, and the language they have. We argue that visualization designers can address this limitation through a learning lens: that the recipient is a student and the designer a teacher. By using learning objectives, designers can better define, assess, and compare communicative visualizations. We illustrate how the learning-based approach provides a framework for understanding a wide array of communicative goals. To understand how the framework can be applied (and its limitations), we surveyed and interviewed members of the Data Visualization Society using their own visualizations as a probe. Through this study we identified the broad range of objectives in nunicative visualizations and the prevalence of certain objective types.

Index Terms—Learning objectives, communicative visualization, visualization design

Communicative visualizations represent the bulk of exposure any individual has to visualizations. We experience the messages of data journalists, scientists, instructors, designers, and analysts as charts, graphs, and in many other forms. In each case, the person creating the visualization or context (the thing-a paper, article, etc.-in which the visualization was embedded) has a specific set of intents. The intents are as unique as the visualizations with which they are associated: A evidence or to support a decision; an instructor to teach the relationship between two interacting chemicals. The main question we tackle here is: how do we formally describe communicative intent in visualizations? We propose that using cognitive learning objectives as a frame will encourage a better way of building communicative visualizations.

our problem because they are, "explicit formulations of the ways in of clusters. It is used in k-means clustering for the 'elbow method' which [viewers (i.e., students)] are expected to be changed by [communicative visualizations (i.e., the educative process)]." In their role as 'educational tools', communicative visualizations must be designed as "intentional and reasoned act[s]" [9]. Doing so requires a formal language to allow a designer to explicitly formulate their expectations

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Manuscript received xx xxx. 201x; accepted xx xxx. 201x. Date of Publication xx xxx. 201x; date of current version xx xxx. 201x. For information on obtaining reprints of this article, please send e-mail to: reprints@ieee.org. Digital Object Identifier: xx.xxxx/TVCG.201x.xxxxxx

Given the prevalence of advice and taxonomies for visualization designers, it is worth asking why we even need such an 'intent language?' Significant literature already exists to ensure that our viewer can read our encoding of data accurately and effectively-a success, if that was really the designer's intent. However, knowing that the visualization will support finding X, or the encoding will allow the viewer to accurately decode Y, is poor proxy for knowing if the visualization satisfied our communicative intent. A designer would not, and should not, be satisfied if the message was, 'in one ear and out the other.' Knowing journalist may seek to explain an insight; a scientist or analyst to convey the message was communicated clearly and interpreted accurately may be necessary, but is not sufficient.

Existing task and evaluation taxonomies are not refined enough to describe the intent behind a communicative visualization. Take as a simple example the plot in Figure 2 which we may encounter reading a technical paper, webpage, or textbook. The plot shows the Sum With apologies to Bloom [13], learning objectives may help address of Squares Distances between entities as a function of the number of determining an optimal k [54] (roughly, that one should pick the number of clusters where there is a 'kink' in the plot, e.g., 4 clusters). The plot in our context is communicative-it was produced by someone else to tell us, the readers, 'something'. That 'something' reflects the designer's many possible intents. This may be to convince us that a choice of k = 4 was correct; to relay the insight that 4 was significantly better than k = 3 or k = 5; to critique a bad choice of k; to teach us what the term 'elbow' means; to demonstrate how to read or create a plot suitable for an elbow method analysis; to contrast it to an alternative

(e.g., the silhouette plot, Fig. B); or to lead us to create alternatives. All these are possible-in fact, likely-intents. But how does the designer know that the visualization is successful? The mechanisms for evaluating are as varied as the intents: Can the viewer recall which k was picked? Can they define an elbow point? Can they read a new plot? Can they produce a similar plot for their own data? Can they critique

Learning Objectives, Insights, and Assessments: How Specification Formats Impact Design

Elsie Lee-Robbins, Shiqing He, and Eytan Adar

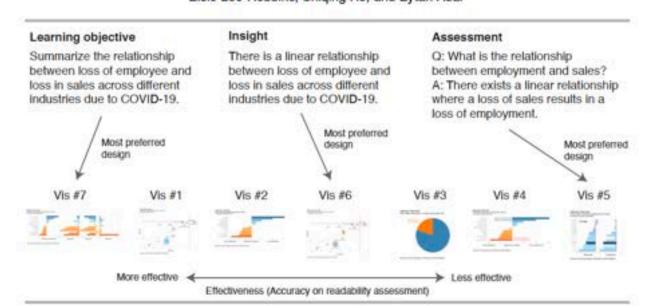


Fig. 1. Example of three specifications (learning objective, insight, and assessment) with the most preferred visualization design identified for each specification. The seven visualization designs are ordered from most effective to least effective.

Abstract— Despite the ubiquity of communicative visualizations, specifying communicative intent during design is ad hoc. Whether we are selecting from a set of visualizations, commissioning someone to produce them, or creating them ourselves, an effective way of specifying intent can help guide this process. Ideally, we would have a concise and shared specification language. In previous work, we have argued that communicative intents can be viewed as a learning/assessment problem (i.e., what should the reader learn and what test should they do well on). Learning-based specification formats are linked (e.g., assessments are derived from objectives) but some may more effectively specify communicative intent. Through a large-scale experiment, we studied three specification types learning objectives, insights, and assessments. Participants, guided by one of these specifications, rated their preferences for a set of visualization designs. Then, we evaluated the set of visualization designs to assess which specification led participants to prefer the most effective visualizations. We find that while all specification types have benefits over no-specification, each format has its own advantages. Our results show that learning objective-based specifications helped participants the most in visualization selection. We also identify situations in which specifications may be insufficient and assessments are vital.

Index Terms—Communicative visualization, evaluation, visualization specification

Communicative visualizations are omnipresent. They exist in everything from news articles to scientific papers and from Web pages to television broadcasts. The people involved in the visualization design process must make design decisions based on their inlents or goals. Unfortunately, most design guidelines do not connect communicative intent to the actual design. Instead, there is a significant amount of information on what makes communicative visualizations effective perceptually, focusing on making the visualization readable. However,

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Manuscript received xx xxx, 201x; accepted xx xxx, 201x. Date of Publication xx xxx. 201x; date of current version xx xxx. 201x. For information on obtaining reprints of this article, please send e-mail to: reprints@ieee.org. Digital Object Identifier: xx.xxxx/TVCG.201x.xxxxxxx

this low-level information often fails to account for what kind of impact people would ultimately like to make: to influence the viewer cognitively (i.e., to have them learn something) or affectively (e.g., to have them believe something) [1,23].

Current design literature is often biased towards low-level cognitive efficiency [7,17,36,37,40]. This literature is built on significant academic foundations [38] that have allowed us to identify which encodings can be read accurately and quickly. However, if designers only rely on cognitive efficiency evaluation methods, such as how fast a viewer can decode the visualization, they might fail to consider higher-level communication goals for what they want their reader to be able to know or do. In most instances, being able to read the visualization is only the first step and may not even be the most crucial [12/25]. A designer may also want the viewer to remember the message, take personal action, or generate hypotheses. If the reader only reads the visualization but does not take any of these next steps, it would not be considered a good design. In addition to focusing on low-level cognitive efficiency, identifying higher-level communicative goals would benefit everyone involved in the design process.

Affective Learning Objectives for Communicative Visualizations

Elsie Lee-Robbins and Eytan Adar

Abstract--When designing communicative visualizations, we often focus on goals that seek to convey patterns, relations, or comparisons (cognitive learning objectives). We pay less attention to affective intents-those that seek to influence or leverage the audience's opinions, attitudes, or values in some way. Affective objectives may range in outcomes from making the viewer care about the subject, strengthening a stance on an opinion, or leading them to take further action. Because such goals are often considered a violation of perceived 'neutrality' or are 'political,' designers may resist or be unable to describe these intents, let alone formalize them as learning objectives. While there are notable exceptions-such as advocacy visualizations or persuasive cartography-we find that visualization designers rarely acknowledge or formalize affective objectives. Through interviews with visualization designers, we expand on prior work on using learning objectives as a framework for describing and assessing communicative intent. Specifically, we extend and revise the framework to include a set of affective learning objectives. This structured taxonomy can help designers identify and declare their goals and compare and assess designs in a more principled way. Additionally, the taxonomy can enable external critique and analysis of visualizations. We illustrate the use of the taxonomy with a critical analysis of an affective visualization.

Index Terms—Affective visualization, communicative visualization, learning objectives.

Data visualization designers often emphasize their goal of conveying facts, insights, comparisons, and patterns to their audience through communicative visualizations. Goals of this type are commonly viewed as 'cognitive objectives' (e.g., recall that group X's unemployment is greater than group Y's). By modeling the designer as 'teacher' and viewer as 'student' it is possible to state intents as learning objectives [1]. Using a learning objectives framework, a designer can explicitly state their objective (e.g., "the viewer will analyze the impact of different policy 'bundles' on global temperature") and assess whether a visualization successfully supports this outcome. Most attention in the data visualization field-both from researchers and practitionersfocuses on the cognitive domain. However, data visualization practitioners also have goals that go beyond the cognitive domain—they want their audience to have a reaction or a response to their visualization. For example, a designer may want their viewer to consider that Obamacare is a bad system if they show a chaotic diagram [37] (or a good one if they show an organized one [61]). The cognitive intent becomes limited in these visualizations; the designer doesn't need the viewer to remember how Obamacare works or critique its particular features. Rather, the designer may want their audience to agree with an appraisal (e.g., Obamacare is bad), accept an attitude (e.g., hospitals should be for-profit), or believe in a value (e.g., small government). These goals are affective intents, and cognitive learning objectives do

Affective intents are most obvious in data visualizations that are created for advocacy reasons. With these, designers are clearly trying to raise awareness or have a call to action. Advocates for a cause are not trying to hide the fact that they are taking these positions and that they want you to care about their cause too. The visualization "U.S. Gun-Deaths" created by Periscopic is a very clear example of an affective visualization [64]. Among other features, the visualization animates a tally of 'stolen years' due to gun violence. The cognitive aspect of the visualization-how many people were killed-is important, but not the main takeaway of the visualization. Periscopic co-founder Kim Rees reflects, "We need people to react. We need people to sort of get riled up about things, get excited about things, and want to make change in the world" ([72], 5:30). At a minimum, the goal of "U.S. Gun Deaths" 2 BACKGROUND

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Manuscript received xx xxx. 201x; accepted xx xxx. 201x. Date of Publication xx xxx. 201x; date of current version xx xxx. 201x. For information on obtaining reprints of this article, please send e-mail to: reprints@ieee.org. Digital Object Identifier: xx.xxxx/TVCG.201x.xxxxxxx

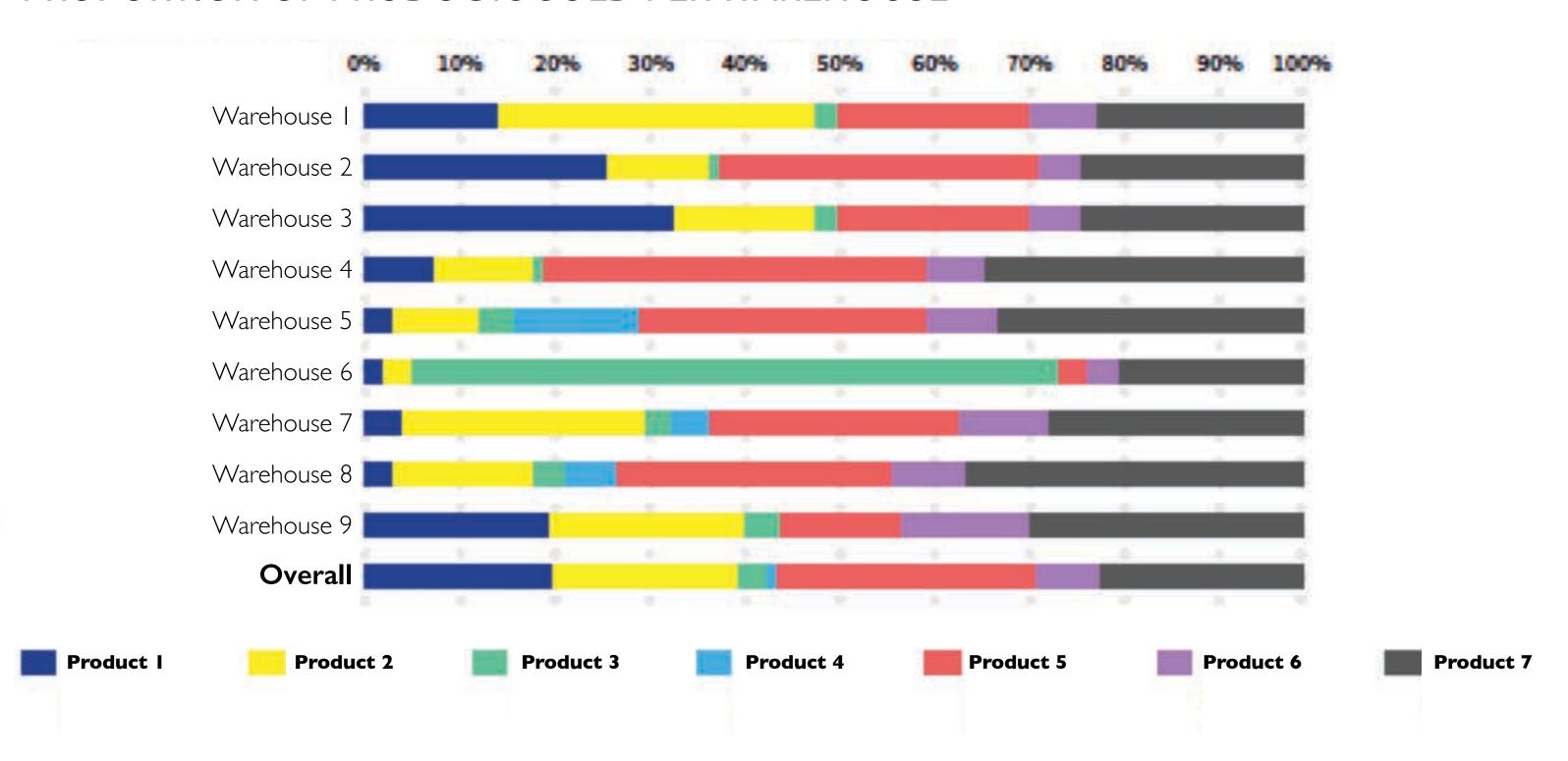
is to create interest in the topic. Ideally, the visualization will evoke empathy within the audience for the victims. The affective response, not the cognitive component, is the main intent of the visualization.

However, even in domains other than advocacy and social justice, designers have affective goals. They want the viewer to care about the topic, strengthen an attitude, or take further action. A visualization of a family tree might have you consider your own family ties. A visualization about sleep patterns might lead you to value sleep. A visualization about blood donations might inspire you to donate blood. Unfortunately, because of the lack of attention in this area, designers may not even realize or consider that they have affective goals. Given the focus on 'neutrality' (or related concepts), persuasive data visualizations are often controversial, which might make designers try to hide the fact that they have affective goals. Even if a designer acknowledges that they have affective goals, they may not have the vocabulary or framework to articulate their goals.

In this paper, we extend our previous research on cognitive learning objectives to the affective domain, adapting the affective taxonomy from the education realm to work for data visualizations. We conceptualize affective intents as goals regarding an audience's reaction or response to appraisals, attitudes, or values. We begin by adapting the (so-called) Bloom's affective taxonomy [43] to provide a framework for communicative data visualization intent. We conducted an interview study to learn more about data visualization practitioners' affective goals, how they conceptualize their intent, and how they could use learning objectives. Based on this study, we revised the affective taxonomy to better align with visualization intents. A language for describing affective intents will not only benefit designers, but will also enable new kinds of critique. We also draw a distinction between affective rhetorical techniques (i.e., 'pathos') in contrast to affective intents. Specifically, we contribute: an affective learning objectives taxonomy for data visualization, a qualitative analysis of an interview study of associated learning objectives to illustrate the taxonomy's use. Data visualization designers will be able to apply this framework to their own work to consider their affective intents.

Data visualizations are not neutral, even though designers and viewers might want them to be. To create a data visualization, designers must make choices that will shape how the audience will interpret the data. Intentionally or unintentionally, designers have biases, backgrounds, and personal opinions and preferences that will influence their design decisions. Strategically, designers employ logical (logos), emotional (pathos), and credibility (ethos) elements that are designed to evoke emotion in the audience (e.g., visual imagery). In many cases, these pathos-based techniques, such as humanizing data, coincide with trying

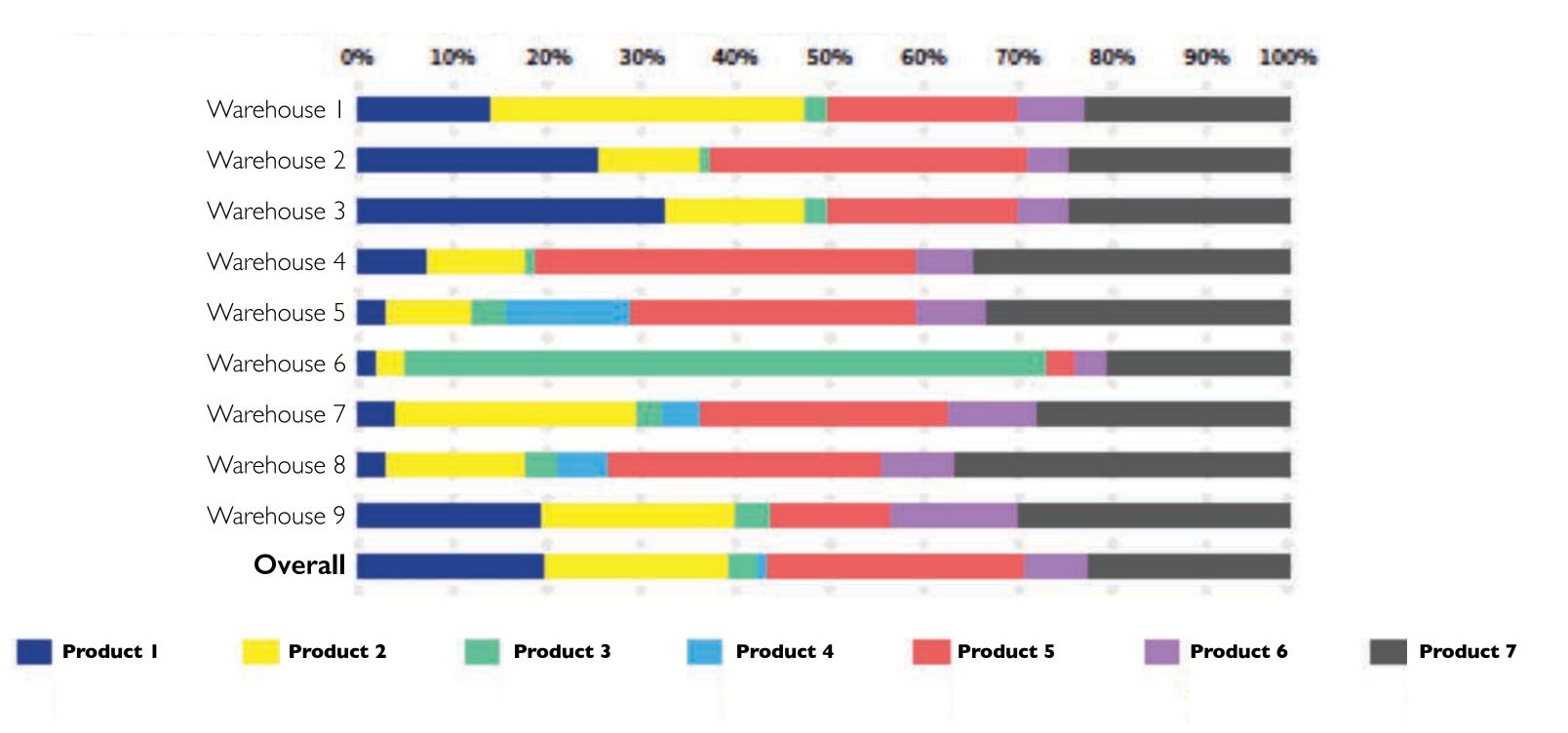
PROPORTION OF PRODUCTS SOLD PER WAREHOUSE



The reader will see that the data corresponding to each category adds up to 100%.

The reader will get a general (not very precise) impression of the portions of that total.

PROPORTION OF PRODUCTS SOLD PER WAREHOUSE

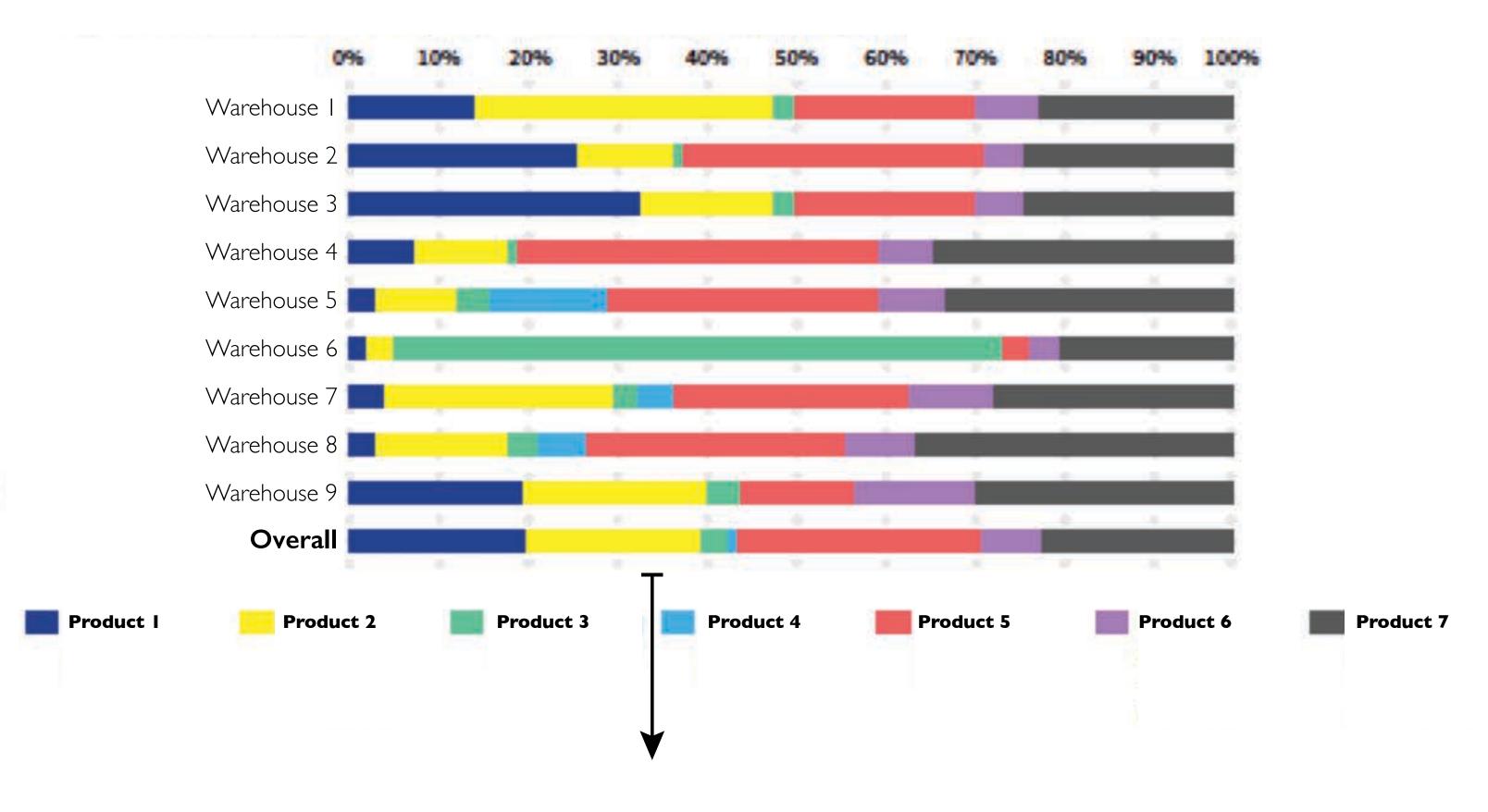


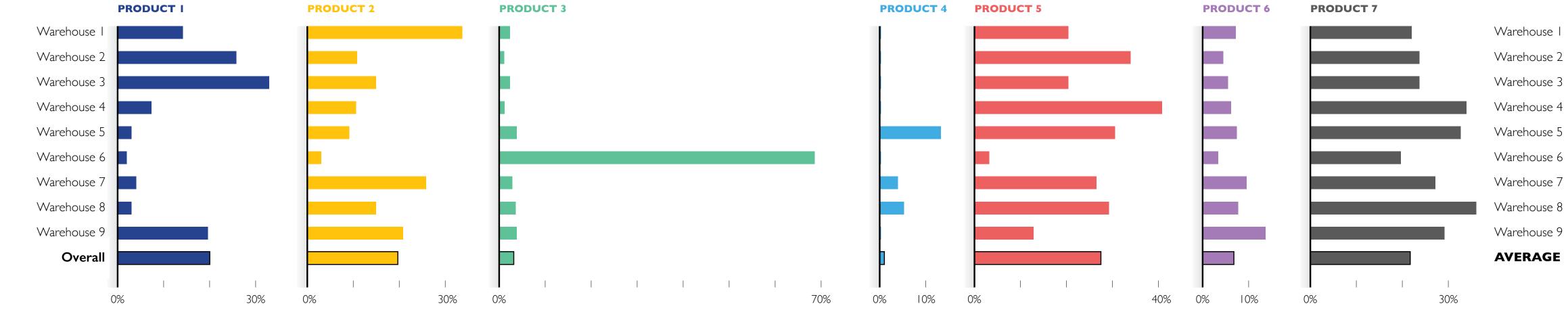
The viewer will see that the data corresponding to each category adds up to 100%.

The viewer will get a general (not very precise) impression of the portions of that total.

The reader will be able to compare percentages within each category of products.

PROPORTION OF PRODUCTS SOLD PER WAREHOUSE





— An example of decision-making



Beginning in **January of 2017**, Company B manufactured certain components for products (machinery) produced by Company A. For a while, fewer than 0.5% of these components were defective.

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Between mid-2018 and early 2019, a substantial percentage of components—up to more than one third in February of 2019—made by Company B began failing, making an equal rate of Company A's machinery fail, as well.

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Our client, Company A, obtained tentative evidence suggesting that, at least since **June 2018**, there was a defect in the equipment that Company B was using to produce the components.

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However, without telling Company A, Company B purchased new production equipment, which was put in use on **May 2nd, 2019**.

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After the new production equipment was in place, the percentage of defective components dropped sharply, eventually going back to <0.5%.

Beginning in January of 2017, Company B manufactured certain components for products (machinery) produced by Company A. For a while, fewer than 0.5% of these components were defective.

Between mid-2018 and early 2019, a substantial percentage of components—up to more than one third in February of 2019—made by Company B began failing, making an equal rate of Company A's machinery fail, as well.

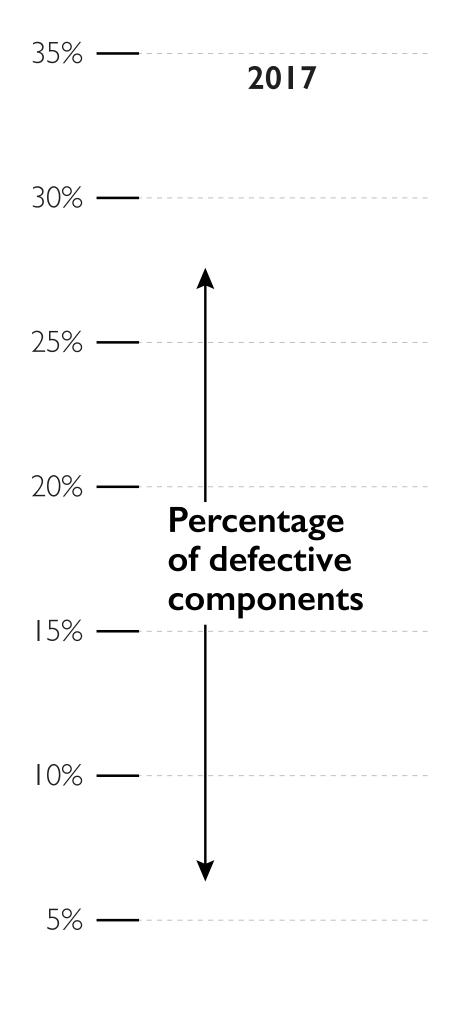
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COMPONENTS MADE BY COMPANY B AND PURCHASED BY COMPANY A THAT FAILED BEFORE THEIR SERVICE LIFE





—————Build date of components -

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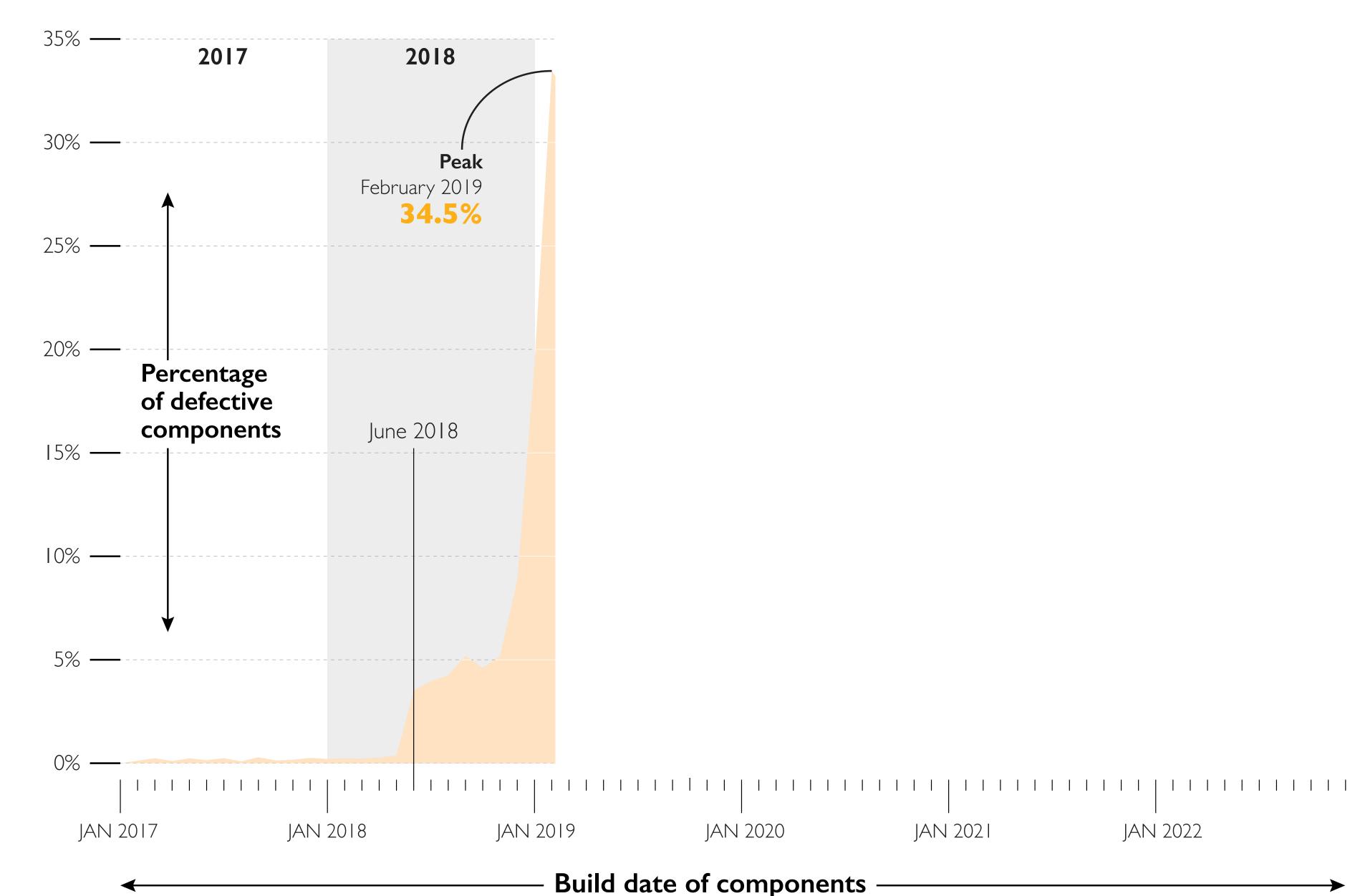
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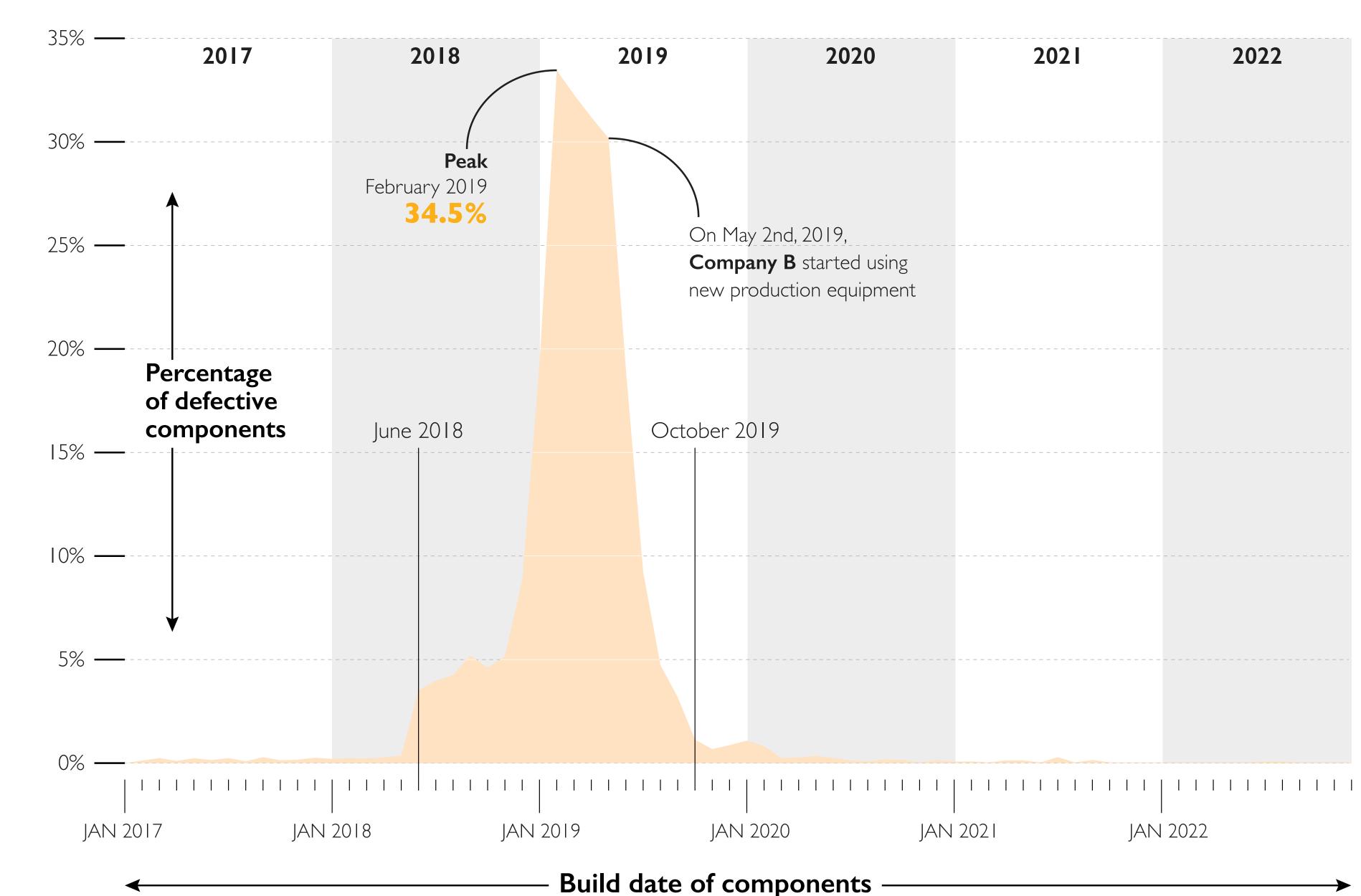
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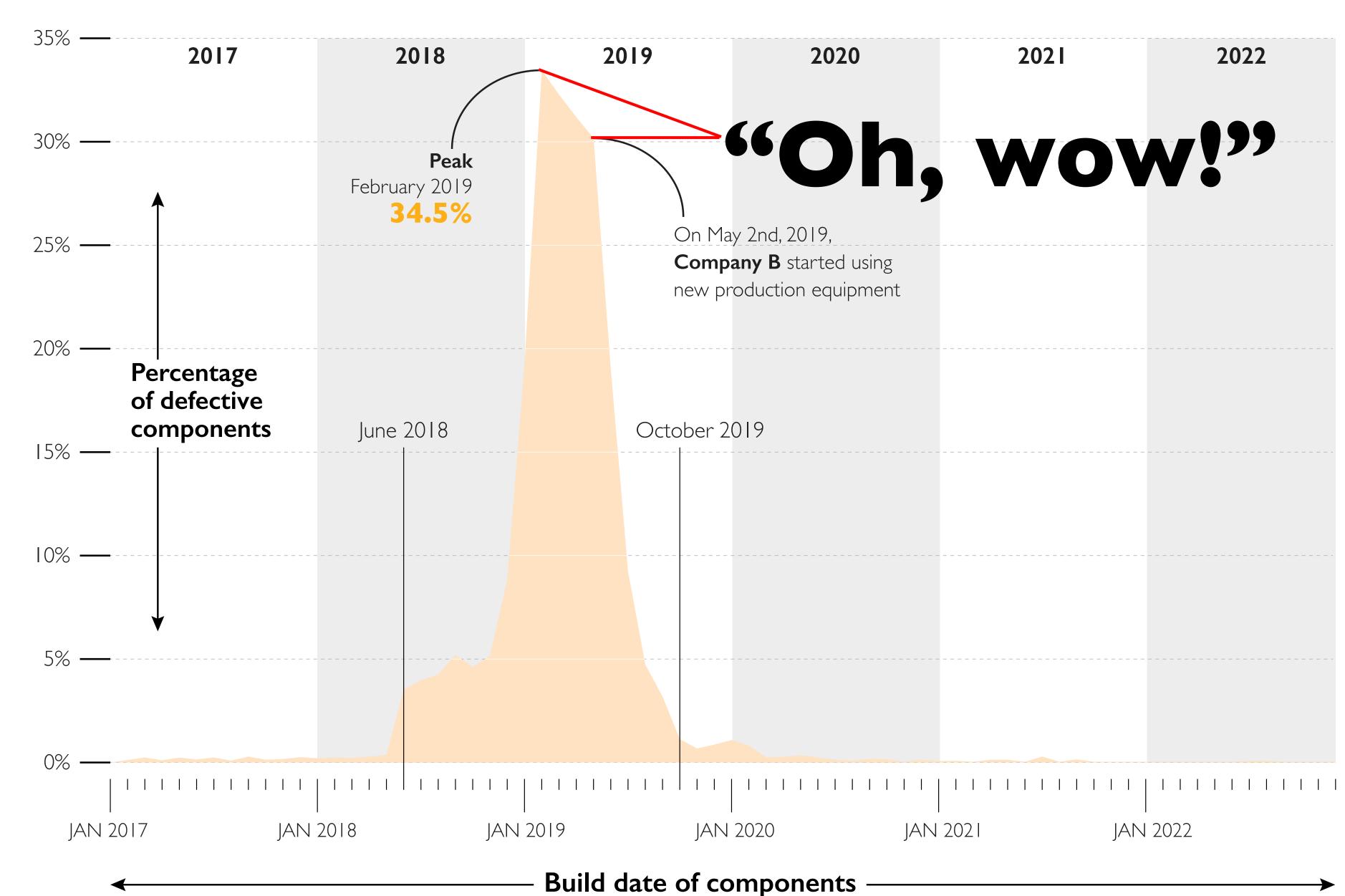
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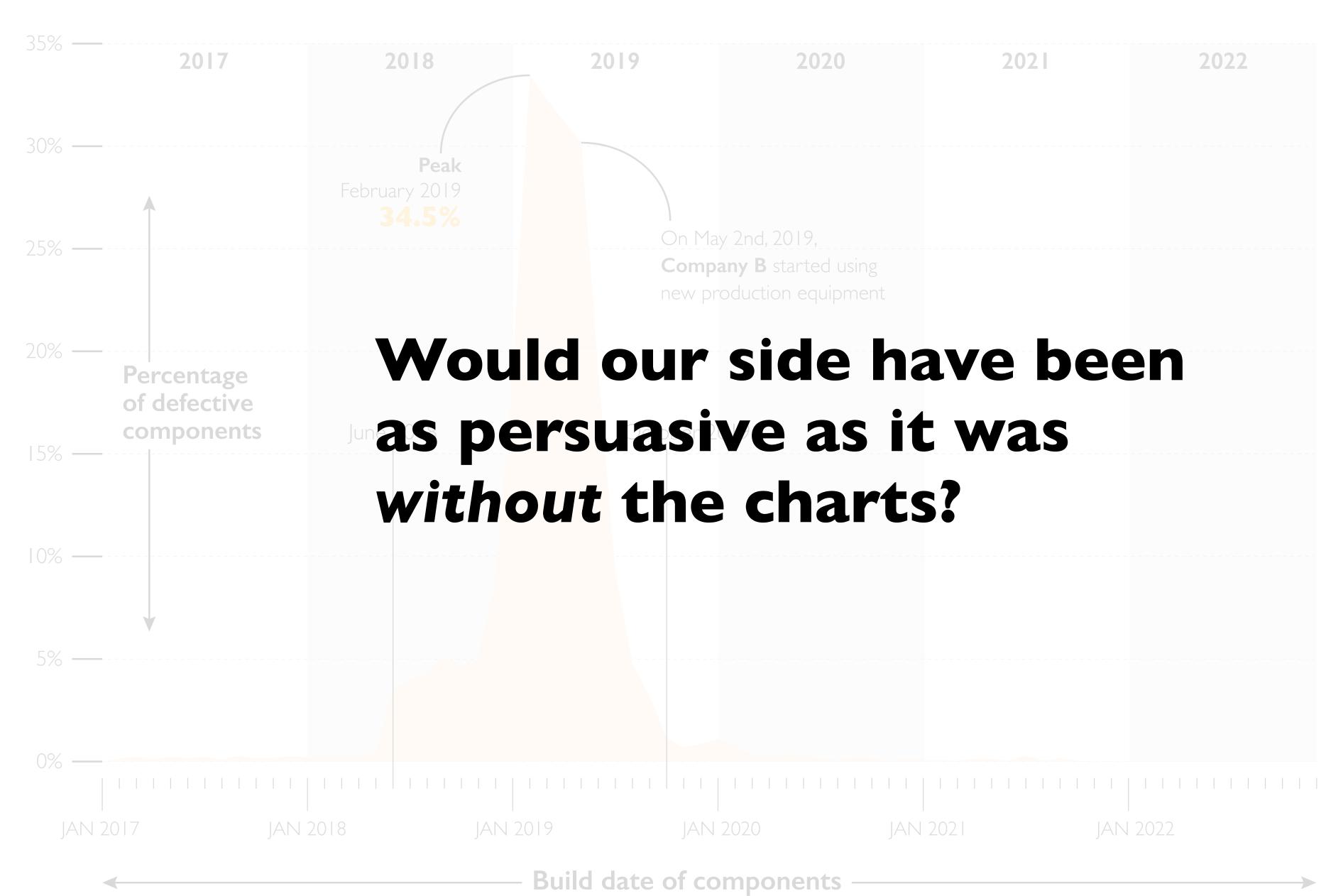
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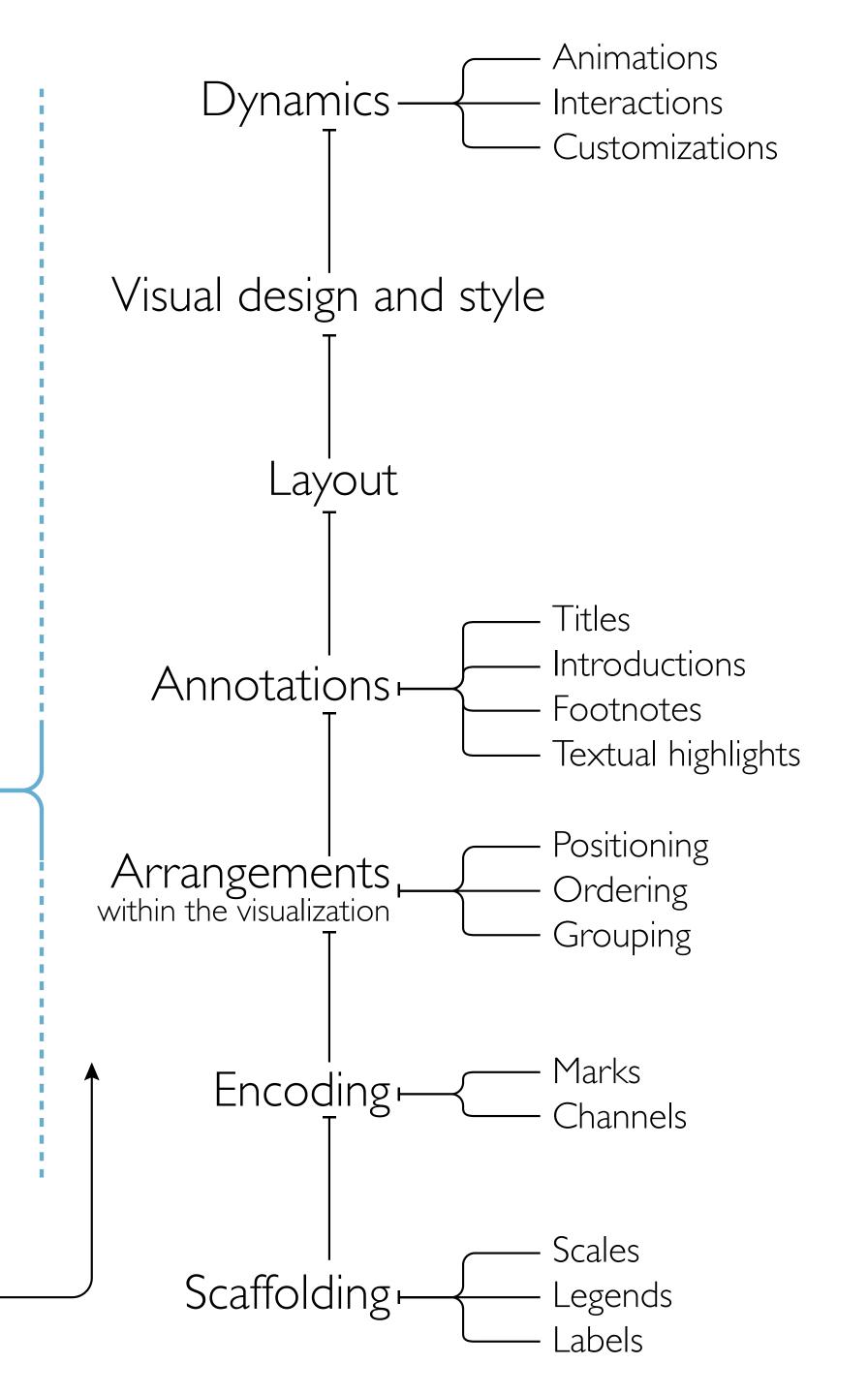


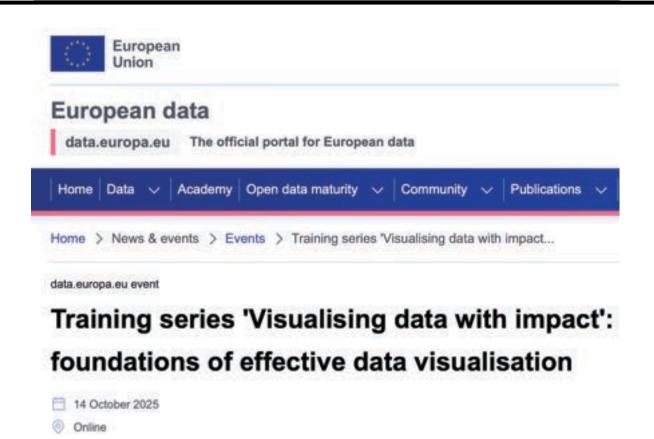


Visualization:
Layers and
elements
to think about

The nature of the data to be visualized influences everything else

Read from the bottom-up





Episode ONE - October 14

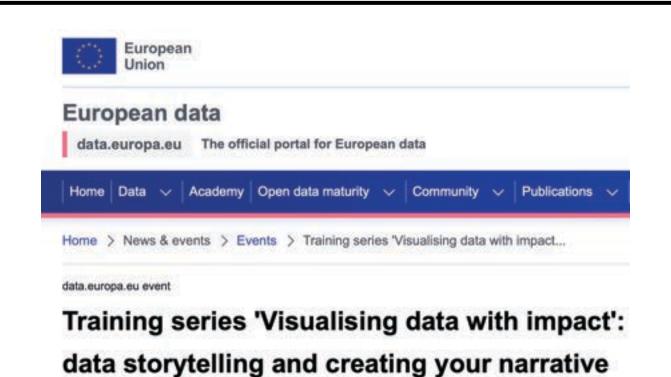
https://data.europa.eu/en/news-events/events/training-data-visualisation-session-I-foundations-effective-data-visualisation



Episode TWO - October 15

Tomorrow's webinar

https://data.europa.eu/en/news-events/events/data-visualisation-training-session-2-designing-integrity



15 October 2025

16 October 2025

Online

Online

Episode THREE - October 16

https://data.europa.eu/en/news-events/events/data-visualisation-training-session-3-data-storytelling-and-creating-your

- 1_The_Basics
- 2_History
- 3_Chart_Taxonomies
- 4_Perception_and_Accessibility
- 5_Visual_Design
- 6_Annotations_And_Storytelling
- 7_Uncertainty
- 8_Maps

Extra readings

https://tinyurl.com/mr2st327

Data.Europa Academy • Visualising data for impact

Foundations of Effective Data Visualization

Thank you!

Alberto Cairo

<u>OpenVisualizationAcademy.com</u>