HK And you said you’d send the consent form after.

VP9 Yeah, I’m really sorry about that, I just completely forgot that. Yeah, but I filled it out and I can fax it back to you right after.

HK That’s great. Lovely. Thanks very much. So I sent you some questions and also you know to sort of start just by saying that our research is about finding out what happens the moment that somebody interacts with data visualisation and kind of? Can you hear me?

VP9 Hmm. Yeah. I think the audio cuts off.

HK Okay can you hear me now?

VP9 Yes I can.

## Gender / Age / Ethnicity / Nationality / Education / Employment history

HK I’ll put the video back on and see how we get on. Yeah, so it’s about that moment of interaction between a kind of ordinary person and a data visualisation. So we’re interested in visualisation professionals thinking about the user as part of that. So I’m going to turn the video off again because it’s just told me to. So let’s see how we get on. So the first couple of questions, just to find out a little bit more about you. So do you mind telling me how old you are?

VP9 I’m thirty-one.

HK Yeah and what about, are you American?

VP9 Yes.

HK And what’s your kind of education and employment background up to this point?

VP9 So, I went to a-, I did an undergrad, completed undergraduate degree which in the States it’s er four years after High School. And then I worked for about four years and I did an on-line graduate level course for about a year from a journalism school and then I decided to go back to graduate school full-time and completed a graduate course in another graduate school. And then did a short Fellowship after that and then I moved again and worked for I think three years I New York and then I just moved down here last year. And I’ve been working in the newsroom since. It’s a non-university network I’ve worked in but I have been recently.

HK So have those courses and that work experience always been in information design or in journalism or in a range of fields?

VP9 So my undergraduate degree was in Media Studies which is more media theory and media criticisms. So I actually before, I never thought I’d be in news because I’ve always been trained to be very critical of these sorts of media engines but I still am but it’s just kind of a funny irony. So earlier studies was more media theory and then my graduate level courses were more journalism oriented. So the short on-line course I did it was a part-time graduate course so it wasn’t really a full degree, but they-, that was sort of a bridge between media theory and journalism. It taught us a lot about how digital media and information architecture and wire framing and organising information and then when I went to full-time graduate school it was really a full course in journalism. And I specialised in digital interactive news. So, but it was very much teaching me how to be a journalist.

## How would you describe what you do today?

HK So how would you describe what you do today?

VP9 Well I work in a news room and so my title is Interactive Editor I think. But I call myself a visual journalist because that’s not to be ambiguous but it’s a little bit you know because I’m a journalist I consider myself a journalist because I work on a graphics department at the [Company 1]. So the [Company 1] here is a pretty large, it’s one of the largest news organisations in the States which means it can afford to have a sizeable graphics department. And, also it’s great to be valued ((0:44?)) afford to have another you know department in our place, I guess, but a lot of news rooms can’t afford to have interactive developers working for them. So, just to give you a little bit of background. Yeah, so the newsroom is pretty large and our graphics department is pretty large as well. So within the graphics department, I am-, I work as a developer, so what that means is I work with reporters to identify visual opportunities for stories. And I pursue them in terms of you know either gathering data or doing reporting or working with data that the reporter has already acquired and think of ways to make it have a visual presentation. You know most of the time then involves data visualisation like though it really varies, I mean nowadays anything is possible on the web so it can really take on any form. And then I develop it and design it and publish it on the web. So it sounds like that would be a long process and normally I think I’d like it to be but here we work under very quick deadlines and you get a day to five days really. So it’s a pretty quick process. I mean sometimes there are long projects but those are a little rare.

HK So it’s not just data visualisations, it can also be graphics or info graphics would you say or is it primarily data visualisations that you produce?

VP9 Yeah, yeah, no it’s-, it can be all kinds of things. You know there are other people in our team that are well, better skilled to render maps say. I’m not-, I don’t work with maps a lot unless they’re like electoral maps of the United States and I’ll do those, but I don’t you know like with the crisis in the Ukraine that’s happening right now, we have cartographers that are rendering those maps, so you know we have illustrators that do modelling and things that I just don’t have the skills to do. So that maybe a little bit infographicy, but so I’m, I’m really a web developer and that’s my best skill that I have. Although I work in many other formats if needed. And to answer your question on data visualisation, everything we do is based on some sort of data. You know whether if I was an illustrator and I was doing like models, do some sort of graphic model of a-, there was a mall shooting here several months ago, we rendered-, not me but someone on the team rendered like a model of what the mall looked like with the levels and things. I guess that is technically based on data as well, but it’s not using like numerical quantitative data, but so sorry not to go on a tangent about that but you’re right, I typically do work with numerical quantitative data with I produce like traditional data visualisations mostly.

HK So you, would you initiate a conversation with reporters about what they’re working on and what you might work on or would the editor point you in certain directions. How does that process go?

VP9 It depends. I would say we’re typically pretty busy. Definitely both and I think when I first got here a year ago, I was doing more of the approaching. If we heard of a story coming through the pipe, and it seemed like it had some kind of visual potential or data potential, then you know either I would hear about it and tentatively ask or my editor would and she would tell me “Oh yeah, go see about this story if it has any potential.” But it seems like we’ve gotten you know it ebbs and flows, but to me it seems as though we’ve got pretty busy pretty quickly and now we’re approached a lot to say what graphic elements can we have for this story. So, but it depends, it’s both.

## How much say do you have over the visualisations & the messages they are communicating? What happens if you don’t agree with the client over a visualisation?

HK And who’s kind of-, where does the power lie you know, is it do reporters trust you to tell a story, or are the editors who say “Make it look like that.” How does that conversation work about what the end result should look like?

VP9 That’s a really good question I think. I feel like I’m pretty lucky here. Reporters definitely trust us because we have a pretty good reputation here and my editor here, especially has a good reputation. And so if ever I do something that’s not to her standards, then she’ll definitely tell me to revise and she might give me specific pointers on it. So she ultimately-, it has to pass her test but you know, we’ve been pretty yeah, I think we’re trusted a lot; and my team is pretty-, I mean it’s an amazing team and they always have great ideas and great examples. Let me turn off my Outlook so we don’t keep getting weird sounds and stuff. But yeah, so I’d say that we’re pretty well trusted, but she definitely has edits and she’s very honest about what things need to change. It’s never really like a completely new direction, but it definitely is a process.

HK Yeah. But do you feel that that’s part of your learning kind of, that you’re learning from her, as she says we’ll do it slightly differently, or do you ever feel like you’re compromising in telling a particular story with data when you feel like the data doesn’t tell that story? Are you asked to compromise do you think or not? You’re just asked to ‘better’?

VP9 Gosh that’s a good question. Most of the time she trusts our understanding of the data, because we’re the ones that really get involved and she definitely is, she manages a lot of people and she’s very busy, so she normally doesn’t understand the data to the death like we do. So, I think she trusts us mostly with that. I feel like it’s definitely learning, I mean no-one always agrees with every single edit that they’re given and that’s always, because sometimes it just, you feel like you put a lot of time into a project and sometimes some of the edits seem I don’t know how… How public are these comments going to be attached to my name by the way?

HK Not at all. Not at all. It’ll be totally anonymised when we write it up, nobody will be identifiable as themselves or as working for a particular organisation.

VP9 Okay.

HK But if you’re not comfortable answering any of the questions, feel free to say “I’d rather not answer that” that would be fine as well.

VP9 No, I definitely want to be helpful, I just don’t want to you know. So as I was saying, I think that sometimes it’s frustrating to get feedback and you see your project going a certain way but on the whole I really feel like her comments are very helpful. And I, to answer your other question about do you feel like it’s actually changing the editorial direction? I felt like that very little, but, I feel like I am concerned overall about the shape and this is something I’ve sort of been struggling with, like myself, which is why I ask if this is going to be anonymous. Because I feel like I really want us to have solid quality content and you know it’s hard to reach that level of understanding on such a short timeline and really produce a visual representation of that understanding. And sometimes it-, we do have to compromise on that and I see that as kind of alarming because I feel like what the news organisations that are getting called out about that kind of thing are doing that. And, I kind of see it as a growing trend in my group and I don’t-, I’m afraid of that, I don’t feel like that’s the kind of journalism that I want to do. I don’t know if it’s going to flesh out, I mean I want to be open minded but I see my project times really decrease and I don’t really, the fact the past few things darn I don’t really know if they’re adding that much to the overall discussion. And a lot of things that people do in my department, do, that’s great but I think that having to produce something good, something of a certain standard is just necessary. You’re just going to have to have-, especially when you’re-, it’s not like you’re a text reporter and you can write something quickly under deadline, we have to develop. We have to code the something that just takes time and to get all that ironed out in less than a day is really, really hard. I mean it’s really hard to produce stuff, so I do think that you know, I do think-, that is something I struggle with.

HK Do you think it’s inevitable in the kind of news production cycle that times will be short or do you think it is possible to have a bit more time and to do it a bit more thoroughly?

VP9 You know I mean I so I think in PR which is another pretty big news organisation here, they’re graphics team have developed a philosophy of doing slow news. Which means that the graphics they’ll still like produce like reactive things like maps of the Ukraine crisis they’ll render a map, they’ll even show that graphically. But for-, they’re going to take the rest of their time and their energy to do more long-term things and that’s just editorial decision from higher up that seems really fascinating to me. [Company 2] is also known to do that too and they use really outstanding, I mean they’re really outstanding, everyone loves them. They’ve just continued to blow me away on like what they accomplish. I look up to them a lot. And, they still produce some really in depth graphics-, I mean they take explainers that they come out with on the short timeline are really incredible and they’ve got a great design, and aesthetic and they’re very easy to read and they’ve got you know quality text that goes with them and they’re just-, they’re really got like a system. I would like our editors to kind of model that. I think that short timelines and also mistakes that go with short timelines are inevitable. And it’s okay, it’s not ideal and news I think trying to be one hundred percent right is not bad. I mean it should be one hundred percent right the news but you know we’re all human and little mishaps are going to happen. I don’t know if it’s efficient to be completely reactive on the news and do interactive graphics. I don’t think that is unless you have like a really terrific team and everyone has specific roles that they play. And you just kind of factor in, you do one thing and you do it really well, and you do it really quickly and I mean I still don’t see really how that would be, how that would lead to really good ((0:16:58?)) It just really depends on what your editorial vision and how you want to approach it. I think my boss is making decisions on that which you know I guess I’m a little concerned with how it’s going to shake out. Personally, I like other people’s models.

HK And are news organisations going to be called out for misrepresenting data visually?

VP9 Yeah.

HK Can you give me some examples?

VP9 Sure, yeah. I think we have-, we’re going really vigilant but people that are in data visualisation are being very vigilant and also really critical in good ways and in bad. I mean being critical people have been critical about my work and it’s been very constructive in a lot of ways, and I see criticism about a couple of news organisations that we have here called-, they’re called Locks and Five thirty-eight. And also, so I’ll point you in the direction of a piece by Alberto Kyro, have you heard of him?

HK No.

VP9 He’s like a just a, he’s sort of like a very vocal character, news interactive and graphics and data visualisation. He teaches at the University of Miami. He’s known for his criticism, let’s just say and he wrote an article recently in the Niemen Journalism Lab and I can forward you that link if you’d like but there’s a few examples in there. There’s one where I think it was Box that, both of these news organisations have-, I mean one of them says they haven’t explicitly decided to do this, but knowing these communist journalists who work there, they kind of take on a more data journalistic aspect, well they’ll acquire data sets, they’ll look at data and they’ll try to explain things. It’s this whole like explanation journalism wave debts-, ((00:19:00?)) journalism that’s going on right now and there’s this one where I think it was ah, it could have been Five Thirty-eight. I have not saying it for the right person because it’s a criticism but they were reporting on the number of kidnappings in Nigeria after the three hundred girls in Nigeria got kidnapped. And they basically just produced this TimeLax map that kind of had dots all over the country and they were kind of like spikes when there was kidnapping per year. So every year it was kind of like the map matched a different scene and you could see like the size of the circle how many kidnappings occurred. But the data that they used to produce that map was just this news agency that analyses the news itself in Nigeria or elsewhere reporting on kidnappings. So, to clarify, the data wasn’t actually like police reports and even if it was police reports, it doesn’t necessarily all report the kidnappings you know we need some sort of like model or statistician to say this is how many, this is how under represented this number is, something like that. It was just news reports of kidnappings, so maybe news reports don’t happen in rural areas as much or there’s tons of other variables that could influence that, but they were just reporting that these were the number of kidnappings that happened. And of course, there are a lot of people that pointed that out and like it was a pretty harsh criticism and I mean we shouldn’t have it, that’s not even data journalism. That’s just journalism 101 you know. You have to understand your data source and report that well because it can be-, it can be irresponsible to you know?

HK Yes.

VP9 So that’s the kind of thing and people are critical of like just all kinds of things like sheds I mean people are getting very critical with the way visual-, it’s not so much an all factor any more, it’s just kind of you know, which is good because we’re all learning. But none of us do it perfectly. But, you know people are definitely getting more aggressive and more confident with their criticisms.

## What kinds of technologies do you use?

HK Yeah. I just want to ask you really briefly what technologies you use and then I’ll move on to talk about research process and how the kind of end user figures. So what do you use to develop your visuals with?

VP9 Sure um so initially I think you have a data set or couple of data sets or an idea and if you acquire them you kind of have to analyse it and you know everything be verified, everything and you gather all you need I mean I think if you’re still in a discovery phase like you don’t really know what the data set has, you just I mean I play around with it either Excel like a really basic thing. Sometimes if it’s too big for that, I’ll just actually code some crude visualisations, so and then after that I’ll produce them. So the tools I use to produce crude visualisations for exploratory means and the code that I use to like you know “go live” is pretty much all the same. So it’s just from a development so it’s Java script nicely and HTML and CSS additionally, but for the programming it’s mostly Java script. So with Java script you have other libraries that are really helpful like D3 is mainly the big one that people use now for to visualise and animate things. And so I’ve really been using that one a lot this last year.

## How do you go about researching and preparing for a visualisation job? What resources do you draw on whilst carrying out a job?

HK Yeah. So I know you do this very quickly. How do you go about sort of researching and preparing for a visualisation job? Have you got time to research a job, or do you just sort of crack on with it with the data set in front of you?

VP9 Yeah, I mean I think that it just in terms of a project, like I said the reporters have already acquired the data and I think just having a really frank conversation with a reporter and kind of getting an idea for this piece they’re writing so you can produce a visualisation that’s appropriate, that kind of moves that forward. Because I remember one time I was given a data set that had so many possibilities that I really just had to make sure I was focussing on what would be complimentary, not complimentary, that’s an ad word from what we do, but something that would be a different but similar story to what he was talking about. And so you just I think just talking to the reporter now there’s another story that I was working on about immigration that the reporter wasn’t around to or really didn’t have any ideas in terms of data and so I just had to search round, I phoned a few people, I think there’s a migration policy institute here that I called and talked to a couple of people. There’s a team at Syracuse that is tracking a lot of this data and this nice lady was kind enough and she told me all this stuff that I didn’t know, and so you just have to research, call the experts because it’s really the easiest way to do it. A lot of times I don’t have to go to that step, just because I work in a newsroom with news reporters who are very conscientious and they’re very smart on their beat so a lot of times it just happens. But I have had to make ((00:24:36?)) just because that wasn’t a structure there, so.

## Do you user test visualisations before sending them to the client? Why/why not?

HK And what about the end user, you know the reader of [Company 1]? Do they-, is there any way that they can figure in the process of producing a visualisation. Can you do any user testing or is it all too much of a quick turnaround for that luxury?

VP9 Oh man, that would be great. I think user testing is something I’m most embarrassed that we don’t do. I think that it’s so important for so many reasons and we don’t, you’re right, we don’t have time, we not allotted time, none are of value unfortunately here. And because I think if it was of value, we’d make time, but it just seems to not be. I think we can, I mean there’s just so little user testing going on with visualisations in general we have such an obvious platform to do it here because we’re bigger and we have readership and we’re doing you know, nice enough things, so yeah, we just-, it doesn’t happen.

HK What about systematically kind of paying attention to what people say about the visualisations that you produce on social media or in the comments sections of your online presence? Does that happen in an ad-hoc way or in a systematic way or not at all?

VP9 No, we pay attention, it’s not systematic, there’s no system for it. If you know you may check to see how your interactive is doing on Tweets if you want to, but it’s not required. You know if there’s a comment from a reader and it’s pointing out something either confusing or like something is wrong, like maybe one of our data points is wrong, which has happened, many times before. Of course we’ll like respond to it and fix it. But, you know we don’t-, there’s no-, I mean we honestly have tracking software you know that gives us facts and figures and comes out weekly about graphics and we can casually look at that, but there’s no, there’s no kind of-, we’ll casually pay attention to the number of clicks that things get. But my boss says that’s not the most important tactic and I agree. I’m actually-, I hope that she actually means that, oh no, but she’s told us that she doesn’t pay attention as much to that. But that’s the only metric that we use to gauge the success of our projects and obviously that’s really dangerous and it’s not efficient and we don’t look at anything else really. So, we mostly use those tracking sites to see how people are viewing our visualisations so we know which devices to consider more. We try to make everything mobile, but it’s a real good indication of who’s looking at mobiles.

HK So, do you know what the software is?

VP9 It’s Omniture I think. That might be not, I mean we do something with Omniture, I’m too ignorant about those systems to know if that’s like a general term or an actual company name. But I think that’s what it is.

HK That’s telling you things like how many people viewed a page with a graphic on it and how long they stayed on the page, whether they clicked through the graphic, those kinds of things?

VP9 Yeah, yeah. I think what is allocated to us is pretty basic so, it might just have like three or four stats or maybe just page views, I’m not sure. But it probably has much more in the back end somewhere.

HK And do you know why you’re using that, is it because the editor of the overall paper wants your department to use it, or is it-, you know what-, how-, why is it being used? If everyone’s doing it and so you have to even though you’re not engaging that much with what it’s telling you.

VP9 I honestly don’t know. I mean I feel like I’m very out the loop in this conversation which I think can be problematic. I just don’t think that’s something that’s shared with us. Like I said I hope it’s not just clicks because I feel like if we’re going for clicks the quality of our item might go way down and that’s always a huge concern and also I don’t know, that’s such a tricky metric test. So I hope that if they were being seriously considered as in terms of making decisions as to like what editorial direction we going into, or how much staff we need for this, staff cutbacks or something, I mean that would be shared with us, but honestly I don’t know. And I don’t know how, I mean I can guarantee that they are definitely looked at by my editor and even the editors above her. My editor is the head of the graphics department, so she’s pretty-, she’s already a pretty high step but you know I’m sure that they don’t get passed anyone. Like a lot of the graphics that go like viral that just go-, get blown up, the person is congratulated and I’m for that, I know that they’re valued. It’s like ‘wow that graphic’ we had a couple of graphics about the first Malaysian airline to go down, that went nuts online and it was a big deal for the guy that made it. He was like really congratulated and so I mean obviously it’s taken into account, and to what extent I have no idea.

## What do you understand to ‘work’ in a visualisation & why? Is it possible to answer generally, or does it depend on the specific visualisation?

HK Yeah. Given that you don’t have this time for extensive user testing or kind of extensive engagement with extensive analytics. What do you think works in a visualisation? I mean can you answer that generally, that you have sort of certain principles that you think, this works and that works and try to kind of achieve those kind of principles with everything I do.

VP9 Sure, wow you ask such big questions.

HK Thank you.

VP9 Well I will say you know generally I’ll start with generally what works and then what we’re trying to do in our department which I guess isn’t top secret but… Yeah I think the most important parts to any sort of visual product whether it be you know a website or you know a specific interactive graphic, or data visualisation. You, I mean you obviously want to call the user, the reader if you want to humanise a bit more, but you want to tell the user what to do and where to go. Like what to click on, so you really need to make the interactive parts you know, understood. And you also need to make other interactions whether it’s a drop down or a text field or you’re actually like interacting maybe with data points like hovering or dragging and you need to make that interaction very obvious. So it’s quite hard you know the simplicity of having something simple is tough and I mean design is really is hard whether it’s information design or graphic design or any other kind of architectural design. It’s tough. So I think that is very important and utilising things like text type, colour schemes, you know to indicate interactive ease, is really helpful. I think what we try to do additionally is also we’re trying to tell more of a story. So we’re trying to do less of a database of data. You know there’s that famous Hans Rosling scatter plot with…

HK Yeah.

VP9 … okay so you know that and over time circles get bigger and on my computer you can play around with it, it’s nuts, it’s fantastic and that really tells a story. But I think what my editor would want instead of that now, is maybe to reproduce that database but have annotations, or maybe have like a text at the top with maybe like highlighted text phrases. Talking about specific years, or, you know specific trends or maybe highlight the graphic image itself to that particular year or chose that particular thing. So we’re trying to have some of the main points of the graphic sectioned off so that people can say “Oh that connects to this idea”. Because when you produce like let’s say a map of a bunch of data and maybe the states or a district I’m talking about the US obviously. They’re all coloured differently, with different intensities of the same colour like a heat map and you kind of expect people to get the idea just by hovering over. I mean people really just go to their state or their district, they you know kind of leave. How do we get people to totally engage with something? I mean, I don’t think we’ve really figured that out. I’m not saying but I think at least I’m very interested in doing more than just providing a database of information. But providing a story, that’s also interactive and visual. So, I think that that’s important because I think that people are getting bored of the-, you know that was definitely a wow factor for a while. And it still is, if you do it correctly, but I think that people are maybe looking for a ‘beyond’ that now. You can be more literal with visualisations, they need more.

HK So in answer to the question “What works” you are saying making it clear what’s interactive, where people can go and explore more and doing more than representing the data, also telling a story. Is that fair?

VP9 Yeah, yeah. That’s exactly what I’m saying and I know it sounds pretty basic to just say that make people know what to do, but that’s like sort of the first thing that people fail at. And it’s hard in fairness, but you know people don’t really get the full extent to the capabilities of what’s happening. Like there’s a taxi cab interactive that came out a few days ago and other than hiding its methodology which was kind of they tucked it under the rug which was important and is a separate point, but it was kind of hard to know the extent to what you could play with. What the capabilities of the data that it was actually saying which is all really interesting you know had that been a little bit more obvious and a little bit more streamlined.

HK So, but that is interesting what you said about hiding their methodology. Do you have mechanisms of not doing that?

VP9 Yes. I mean we definitely don’t want to hide things because our readers will find them. We don’t-, like I said I mean so many things like-, there’s so many things to keep straight, it’s not like we get everything right and I’m still learning a lot, but we just did this and I don’t even know if this is the right way to do it but we just did this election graphic that I worked on. And its some statisticians that we have, some bloggers that we have predicted the mid-term election and kind of updating the prediction is constantly so it’s a map of the states and what direction which party the state is going and it’s supposed to swing the districts too. And, of course the methodology is really important and you know how they arrive at that number and what factors they use like the popularity of president, how well the economy is doing and there’re a bunch of other ones. And so we have a little blurb at the bottom in text and prose just talking about methodology and it links out to a blog post that gets more indepth. I don’t know if that’s the right way to do it, you know I try to be as open as possible without kind of cluttering the page or hiding it on a pop up or some kind of thing like that. I mean it’s the headline, the map and then a paragraph about methodology. You know we’re not covering it up at all. But we’re linking out to a longer forum so that’s what we do there. We definitely need to explain methodology that we do, either the source line or whatever for other graphics. But I don’t think that’s done either that I can recall. That’s been important. Sometimes we use analysis of other organisations and I think maybe highlighting that methodology will be, I think I should probably keep that in mind, to do and not just link back to the organisation, but actually like explain how they arrive at that figure as well. So, that should probably be something that I keep in mind.

## What kinds of skills do you think people need to make sense of visualisations? What problems do you think people have in understanding visualisations?

HK So it was interesting that you said that you think people are getting more literate at getting more used to visualisations. So it links to my question about what kind of skills you think people need to make sense of visualisations. What would your answer to that question be?

VP9 I guess, so I guess for our readership and I think this is an audience question because I think you know the kind of visualisations you are going to produce for economists, or statisticians are a lot different than what we produce in this publication. We want people to engage with and learn from. So going with the presumption that our audience is the general public, or like [Company 1] I think that we want to assume that they don’t have many skills. Other than just basic like they know that there are hyper-links and things to hover on in the left bend. If you’re on mobile you can swipe things and just general things like that which people actually may not have. We try, I think that’s why we’re trying to tell more stories rather than just provide databases. We’re trying to guide people though things, we’re trying to say not only are we showing you there this larger trend, but also look over here and there’s something really interesting going on. Or, you see the big trend, but additionally here’s some other things that make this trend really important to understand. Trying to like I guess work harder at that stuff. I think ideally people will understand why we don’t want to use pie charts a lot and you know only pick certain colours or you know what familiar tools are to access data alike dropdowns and things and what like a slider is. But what I think we have to have the assumption that those skills aren’t. I mean we do have-, we do offer an assumption that those skills are known but…I think we’re trying to make things as…

HK Sorry, I was just to clarify, you’re assuming that the skills are there, or that they’re not there?

VP9 I think we assume that those skills are there and we assume that people you know like an image on a before and after slide. We assume that they know how to use those things and drop downs. So we do assume that even if it’s a little too basic for us, but you know I guess we try to make things as successful as possible. So we do assume that people I think have a basic literacy of the web. That’s not always the case, but we do assume that. I guess ideally we would like for people to know certain design choices and why circular graphics are kind of trick to eye more than clarify why grasses that aren’t zero based are sometimes fallacious, sometimes they’re incorrect and things like that. Why we don’t like use shapes for bar charts, why it’s just like a rectangle and not like a bunch of cars to show the number of cars sold in a year or something. But you know that’s we’re just going to have to get there slowly.

HK So I think you’re talking there some of the things are like visual literacy, I think because you were talking about colour and then some of them are like graphical literacy like understanding graphs for example and were you saying that it’s less possible to assume that those literacies are there, so yes, you do assume some basic web literacy? You don’t necessarily assume the visual literacy and this sort of graphical literacy but it would be good if it was there because it would help people make sense of what you’re doing.

VP9 Yeah. Yes I think so. But we don’t do, we don’t bend our-, you know our good principles of graphical design for just to get clicks. I don’t think we go that far, but they would be helpful.

HK So do you sometimes make less innovative visualisations than you would like to because you know they’ll be easier to make sense of?

VP9 You’ve cut out.

HK Oh, can you hear me?

VP9 No.

HK No, I’ll click off I think. Let me just put the…

VP9 Oh okay I can hear you now.

HK Can you hear me? No, I’ll just ring off and come back again. So I was saying, what was I saying?

VP9 You were saying…

HK You assume web literacy, you don’t assume visual literacy or graphical literacy but it would be good if that was there, because… Oh I was asking if you sometimes kind of make a less creative, innovative option about what you make something look like, because you know people will understand it better. So you might want to push the boundaries of what your visualisation looks like, but you know that if you stay within more familiar format, people will understand it better. Are they choices that you make sometimes?

VP9 I think that I’m sure sometimes we do. So, for election graphics. That’s one that I was kind of grappling with. People really like to see a map, even though as you probably know, representing geographical maps in colour, those geographical areas in, especially in the States because a lot of our larger states hold the fewest electoral votes and electoral votes is what wins a presidency. And so we have these really large geographic areas that don’t hold a lot of numerical weight. So when we represent a US map a lot of our red states, like our conservative states are large states and so you see a lot of red on the map. There’s very little blue. But President Obama still wins and people you know it’s not immediately clear. So that’s obviously a really big one, but you know for things like that, we’re still probably making I just do the design and just launch something that has a map on it and I was literally having a conversation with my editor. Like I really want to push this forward, I know we still need to be familiar with that, but to be honest, on ones that are less weighty than electoral graphics, because that’s going to be a big one, we I think she’s pretty comfortable pushing the bar and doing these things. And I hope so because I think there’s a lot to say for experimentation in data visualisation I mean that there are a lot of familiar graph types that are probably the most efficient way of showing most of our data. But I think with certain data sets that are particularly robust and we should be thinking of new ways to tell the story if it doesn’t clutter the information or doesn’t detract from just you know the central point. And I think she’s pretty open about telling those things. I think if it’s a bad idea and it’s kind of like just decorative, it’s not an efficient-, she’ll definitely make-, she’ll definitely call it out.

## What informs your choice of fonts, colours and other elements of the design (that are not directly related to the data)?

HK So do you have much freedom amount choices you make about elements of the design that are not directly related to the data, so things like fonts, colours or little things that might be seen as decorative. Or are you quite constrained by the kind of branding of [Company 1]? How do you make those decisions, what informs your choices about those things?

VP9 So with fonts, we have to stick with [Company 1] ones and so that’s really our, there’s a Serif and a Sans Serif and a sort of fancier headline font if we choose to use that. And, then you know Arial if we want it but no one really likes to use that very much. So we’re confined there a bit. I really like the fonts that we use, so I’m okay. I’ve been really okay with that. With colour, we are we have sort of-, we definitely have an established pallet but if it calls for a little bit of a different colour then we can and if it’s appropriate, we can make a case to use it. I just did one on [Politician 1]’s speeches where I actually changed one word of the headline to green. It was from ‘[Title 1]’ because they were claiming they were dead broke. And we’re just sort of like playing off what politicians say, kind of holding them to their words and this was about money and so I changed that one word in the headline to green. And you don’t typically do that. But here it kind of worked, it just worked with the page layout and it kind of looked a little bit more bespoke to that graphic. My editor wouldn’t want that to happen all the time, so we do have freedom, it’s just we have to kind of make a case for it. And with our Olympics’ graphics she really wanted them to be more bright and fun, so she kind of came up with a new palette for those. And a new kind of visual key, so we used that for our Olympics’ graphics. So we do have some flexibility but we’re definitely not-, she’s really great about that. We’re not barred to them, but we try and stay within a relative family just so we have consistency in our graphics.

## What do you think about the premise of our research that there is not enough understanding of people’s engagement with visualisations within the field?

HK So the final question really is about whether you sort of agree with the premise of our research that there isn’t enough understanding of how people engage with visualisations and what happens when they look at a visualisation and that we need to know more about that. Do you think that’s a reasonable you know, assertion to base research on?

VP9 I wholeheartedly agree with that. I’m actually jealous that you’re doing this because I feel like there’s a great gaping hole and what we all know, the practitioners, the readers, the theorists like Alberto Kyro, that don’t really practice, he doesn’t really make these things but he’s a critic. And you feel like there’s a gaping hole in all of this and it’s waiting for someone like you to swoop in and start educating us on what you’re researching and educating us and what your findings are. And I feel like you’re enormously set up to be one of the first pioneers in this and it’s really odd and confusing that no one has ever used a PhD dissertation, or you know PhD programme to research this more. And I mean I just feel like it’s so needed and it’s surprising that it hasn’t happened yet and I think it’s really exciting to hear anything about this. Because it will definitely affect how I ((00:50:56?))

HK That’s really great to hear I mean I think there is the occasional thesis that is like from a cognitive psychology point of view or a you know, is it better to put the instructions in the left or the right kind of-, those kind of studies. But I think partly because we are media study folk as well that we’re looking at a broader range of things, like what about subject matter, the context as well as semiotic, aesthetic and organisational things. So, I do think media studies has got something that it can you know use its approaches to contribute to understanding. But it’s really great to hear how enthusiastic you are, about what we’re doing.

VP9 I’m just happy to be a part of this and I hope that I’ve been someway helpful. If I can do anything else, if you need a follow-up, I’m really happy to help. I promise I’ll be much easier to get a hold of for the next few months so, just let me know if I can do anything.

HK Well I’m going to turn my video on for the last minute just so you get to see me, because I think it’s been a bit one way, and it might cut it off. But yeah. Hello. I mean we’re really keen to do more you know on this and to expand the project and I think visualisation in a context of journalism is the way that ordinary people in their everyday lives are going to access visualisations and therefore data, that is increasingly being used as a base for conversation and decision making and so I think journalism as a place where visualisation is happening, is really important. So we’ll definitely tell you what we find and keep you posted and see if there’s any scope to work together in the future depending on you know what comes off, so thank you. It’s really, really, really interesting to hear about how it’s different in journalism I think it’s really quite different from the other interviews I’ve done so far. So that’s really great. Thank you.

VP9 It’ll be interesting to see what you come up with and thanks so much for including me on this.

HK Thank you. Thanks for your time, it’s been really interesting. Okay, so see you, bye.

VP9 Bye.

HK Bye thank you.