



Dataviz Show S01 EPO2 - The great wave

Welcome to the second episode of DATAVIZ SHOW, a video podcast on the magical world of information design. If you have looked at the cover carefully, I wanted to insert a proverb that over the years I have learned to love ARS LONGA VITA BREVIS derives from the aphorisms of Hippocrates and essentially reminds us how short life is compared to the many things we would like to study, deepen and know . That's when I think of exam information, the feeling is just this an endless horizon of visualizations of professional artists' techniques that I would like to study and deepen and then this second episode allows us to get to know Davide Mancino one of the authors, because I really like to define him author, more interesting is a visual journalist who beautifully combines a great knowledge of the principles of information design and an ability to communicate very complex information telling them with an extraordinary sensitivity. I was further pleased to meet Davide because last year he created one of the most beautiful projects I have ever seen on Covid 19 and I assure you that in these two years I have studied and analyzed many of them. Davide told about the pandemic taking Bergamo as a starting point, it really moved me also because in those tragic months I had my mother there in the province of Bergamo and many friends for whom I was doubly involved in the story. But the beautiful thing is that it is not just an exciting story, it is a story that I would define illuminating, illuminating, making people understand, explains in a thorough, scientific way I would say, what happened in Bergamo and more generally in Italy. But now enough let's go and meet Davide. Welcome to Davide Mancino and thank you for accepting the interview proposal then welcome to Dataviz Show. Davide I usually leave room for the interviewees to introduce themselves but I like to give some indications ask you a question to try to understand also the path you have currently made by reading your profiles a bit then your presence on the internet you are specialized in visualization of data in support of journalistic stories of scientific communication this is a bit of the cut you are giving to your career to better understand how you came to this type of professional path and I wanted to ask you what studies you did and therefore how you are I came to study information design and then specialize in this subject and no it was all very random as it often happens so in reality there was not really a thought of I want to make visualizations cuts also because when I started it is a very pioneering thing in short, almost ten years ago as there was already someone who did it but in Italy I think they could be counted really on the fingers of one hand and therefore in reality I studied communication like many others and then I did a master's degree in science communication in Trieste at SISSA and there among the various courses there was one in which we were also taught a little bit but just maybe 2 - 3 lessons of data applied to journalism but it is something that I liked a lot and therefore well there is a little something to do in that sense and then one thing leads to another I discovered that in fact the visualization to say something that I enjoyed a lot and then from there I started studying a bit because again especially in Italy but then practically everywhere it is not that

there were particular resources for them the only thing was to study and see what they did in short, the others try to learn and then start doing things then see how it goes. Compared to other information designers I really like your work the fact that it is strongly here all obviously have a part of a narrative component of a narrative structure because it is not that only the data are displayed but there is a story behind in your case I find strong this component let's call it storytelling because it is a term that is used but in reality I find it very strong you got there naturally that is if a person who already liked to write we do absolutely started writing that I was maybe 14 years old so something that made me always passionate and I have always been a great reader in short so then I think it is quite natural if one reads a lot also try to write and then interesting because there is always a bit of tension in journalism in the sense that the storytelling issue is obviously there is it can enter and important but let's say then there are also some exaggerations in the sense that I want to say a lot about journalism is to try to give and a reader information to give him something useful for which it would not always be right not to try to put even the stories inside a narration in fact normally it is not something we do but fortunately in short, for example, in the last year he had an opportunity to do it with a pproject is in my opinion in my opinion when it can be done when we say the context allows it is something that helps you a lot then it depends a lot on the story you are telling let's say for example when it is present in the case of the epidemic in short it was it was important that in some cases at least look for a narrative approach because it is not that we are making a statistical atlas of the cases of deaths that is it would have been a huge mistake too cold that this is absolutely treat it as a story of data as if we were talking about any other topic and therefore in that case in my opinion it was important to try to do it I must say I was lucky to have had the chance because one thing that does not happen even since we ended up talking you are talking about the project THE GRANDE WAVE as I anticipated before is a project that struck me a lot in the meantime I find it really beautiful both for the part of the story and for the part of you The analysis of the data struck me a lot because having studied in Bergamo and lived in the province of Bergamo for many years I stayed a lot I had friends who called me and constantly updated me and told me that the situation was very it was very serious then at that moment there and also the departure of the pandemic for us so it was something that seemed impossible as Bergamo just because it was the opening words there were no reasons that have you that we have told you to create this project that is if it was another city that was leaving in this way it would have been the same or somehow there is some reason why you wanted to attract let's say go there for a certain sense to start the road of the project ali seemed to me a way in my little dreams to give back something like to say I don't know if I mean it is something that seemed right to me also because it was, let's say, it fell well in the story in the sense that in any case it is obviously being a project of reason is in short based on a lot of statistical data in short, a very intense work from that point of view but it seemed correct to me to try to get it started by talking about people not numbers and therefore that seems to me just the best way to start the story. It's a project you did with Federica Fragapane

how did you know her before that is you had already worked on it no it was the first time I worked on it together i am a huge fan of hers so as someone who loves this and so i jumped at the opportunity to contact

her so but how nice that is so she was that you said I have in mind to do this project to do it together in this advance before just a very lucky occasion because this type of projects that I really know do not exist in the sense precisely it is something an idea that SISSA had and not I can only thank them because it was really very rare if not unique to have the chance to get a year at work only with a decent budget, in short, for once and then have the time to reflect on things and maybe do some tests, even go back all the things that journalism is practically impossible nowadays and therefore taking advantage of this saying well but in short two heads are better than one and therefore well surely in short the usual is s a project as they used to say was really very nice I remember that when in the first year of the pandemic I did during some lessons I showed an article in the New York Times that showed how the pandemic started from Whuan it was very nice there too it was a bit of storytelling there was certainly not that idea of restitution towards the population towards the territory but still a nice project here reviewing I really liked it because it was like saying how our pandemic started in fact now I consider them two beautiful projects that show how the pandemic was born but they also put us in terms of narration something they add some content material to us no but in fact this idea of dynamo try to combine the two aspects that is the obviously analytical no of data is the most human if we want to call it that, it was probably the pivot of all the work both in terms of what it is directed at they absolutely agreed it is a leader to try to combine these two things and humanize these stories as much as possible and do it not only in the text but also and above all the visualizations which is much more difficult because obviously when one writes it is much easier than not rendering I take account of the emotions of the feelings and do it in a much much more difficult visualization because we tried to for example use some techniques I must say quite unusual because I had never used before probably because luckily in short there was never any need but in this case it seemed right for example to say a thing every time we visualize a person in the work so there is an individual the same symbol is never used we never have a single circle a square with what to represent it in every part of the work when we talk about an individual we always have techniques to randomize them because everyone is individual there are no two alike and this was a small thing for heaven's sake but in short to give the idea of the type of approach we had and it seemed to us one of the ways to talk about people about us fully beautiful to this thing that you said to me because often and willingly precisely when I approach and analyze with a visualization it comes natural to go talk or go identify the coding signs what was used to show this etcetera etcetera and to show and that thing these things you say to me this sensitivity in translating a coding sign that is individual and not so generic is something that I find really very very beautiful very interesting. In the course of my training activity, I always invite those who participate even if, let's say, my target are often people who work within companies, so the data they have to show or view are business sales data and so on I always say look take anyway on Sunday the Corriere insert because even if they deal with themes that are certainly far from your area, you will still find some very interesting ideas then it is just a matter of having a little creativity and translating them into your area I usually do it during the journey so I don't do it throughout the year but then during the comment path together with them the views and you happened with two numbers in a row this year one was the display on the manga and the other the nobel

prizes were the 2 views I wanted to ask you a question how these projects are born ie how long before we say the assignment on the subject I imagine that you are then free of how to say decl in it a bit as you prefer I think that perhaps the only one how to say constraint with the only let's say limit is the layout they will give you a horizontal vertical layout are a page two here this insinuates in fact version the most interesting things most beautiful collaborations of the Reading that c 'it really was beautiful artistic freedom of expression and it is one of the beautiful things about di's products to work on the data, in short, to use them like this is that in any case maybe it is a person who does not have something a little dry he is a graphic designer and remains however there the hand of the person who makes them you see in the sense that you see a graphic of a person the style of that person between the inter and stands out a lot makes the eye there are distinguished many different jobs and no why to come to yours question and there in fact it is not what they tell you look you have a lot of space on page or on two pages sometimes that are to their needs then you see the theme this year I think some content is part or sometimes it also happens and that I myself stumble upon some nice dataset that you say look at this idea that interests them in short they say yes or no and then starting from there you can really let loose as you want indeed you have to sometimes try a little to restrain yourself because maybe one would like doing super complicated things but he says oh my it depends because someone must also understand and read them I have to be honest sometimes I imagine I imagine there is a sort of containment in the sense that sometimes I see the views are both very complex articulated everything you want but there is as if there was a bit of the handbrake so as not to go too far too mythical this yes yes this is something that I too had to learn a little over time and that especially when you are at the beginning there it is always this thing you have to do I don't know you have to show that you know how to do complicated things and then reality is useless because in any case it is always a communication product project so it must be understood if it does not come understood the problem is yours surely it is not of the reader so this is something that who is clear is a mistake that I also made at the beginning but then as we work we realize that there is always a communication thing turned outwards does not make sense as I see it doing something complicated just for the sake of doing it to show that you are capable and therefore yes also because then it is not necessarily true that complicated things are better than simple ones indeed maybe for me it is the opposite especially in this field so I think sometimes it is sometimes maybe it can help I don't know in short the metaphor comes to mind as with music it is not necessarily that the most technically complicated song is better than a simple one it depends in short maybe sometimes the case here I like that you made this connection with music because I went back there also last week talking with Tiziana Alocci because when I talk about information design I like to talk about it as if it were music in the sense that it is an extremely vast world there are various styles rock jazz classical music music can be anything and then each of the information designers probably even being able to play any rhythm or any style but actually has a your tastes so probably someone likes more rock someone you like more and therefore it is very interesting I always wanted to make you go back to the two views of the reading I liked I liked them very much in particular I appreciated your your ability to use the sides of the visualization in the sense that especially in that of the manga he had marked on the right side those that

were, let's say, still being published and also in the other of the nobel prizes there was a beautiful bar that indicated the breakdown by countries in short, I appreciated it is pointed out to the students let's say the ability to manage space and that it is one of the things that you must also know how to do with a bit of how to say inventive in the sense that with the dashed sign on the right there is no sense you needed to say these are are still published so in short it is something that really also involves a certain creativity certainly is another of the things that struck me is intrigued by your work you have also worked for Quartz and for you have collaborated with Quartz and Five Thirty Eight which are two of my totems in short how did this thing happen how and well it does like with Quartz it was a collaboration of Italy now a lot of years ago in fact it is also someone who was at the beginning of my career so there was also a relief because he played heads for me I like it very much it is then so in short reading the site they still accepted pitch proposals from people here and I said well but so much that it costs me no you can say more than no they can't tell you anyway and then I submitted a couple of ideas to him for example I remember there was one of the nicest on immigration of the Europeans there was a very nice study of the OECD is something on which there were and there are still very few numbers around because it is difficult to measure for example there is the OECD had done this study which measured the people graduates from whom they then emigrated to which countries they went to and so for example we did a little work on this a little story on this and then in actually it is a much much simpler thing than it may seem just one tries it looks nice and then in a way the same thing happened with 538 too because this was the last spring indeed sorry now spring of 2020 I want to say during the epidemic that even there he had an idea for a story about the epidemic there for example they also told me and she is nice but in reality no better not and therefore we went through but then they got back to me because because they are working on stories about the epidemic and therefore she is a journalist in Italy who at that time was the world epicenter of the epidemics she helped them so we did some things in asking what are you working on now these in these weeks is right so I am working on a very nice dataset that I have found a project on wrecks and shipwrecks in history there is someone I have found that has taken the trouble to map something like seven hundred years of shipwrecks in the world and with a lot of data and geographic coordinates all 21 very rich dataset and therefore and I'm working on that thing that amuses me the most lately also because then I found some historical maps in short st or trying to do something a little vintage themed yes instead of using modern styles of maps which in that case would have been a bit out of place i said let's try to do something old sam style like treasure maps with the X dig here not a bit like Indiana Jones and etcetera and that too is a very nice thing because in the end the themes that you then deal with are mostly infinite and from the driest things to the lightest and funniest things that in the end you can always find in order to forgive a visualization for the Reading on the bands born in '68 looks like 8 10 bands born in 68 even more known and he said well but how do we do it for example in that case I made a timeline inspired by Guitar Hero yes yes I have this in the game and I said but in fact because that is also data visualizations in the known game you have to play notes stripes appear the second of the instrument in fact there is once I do not notice this data visualization but also in full video games for example yes it can draw inspiration from practically everything and this gives me comfort

because I always say this also the television series that are more successful if you go to see have a very recognizable visual component the Queen of chess Squidgame is very strong but all these series here have all visually of the choices that are very particular and also very recognizable I seem to grasp that from what you tell me it really does not surprise me that not that, based on the project, you probably also experiment with different visualization processes different visualization tools is a bit your way of being constantly to update you so in the sense that you do not have a single production workflow always that you are really versatile curious here's a little bit this it would be easier to have it but therefore it is not possible because the type of work is so heterogeneous that you can do that each tool to its own towards its useful part we say one thing in which it can help you arrived at a certain point is that maybe you have to take the product of that flight instrument attach another it is as if they were pieces of lego no and you have one that makes you the thing you need to attack is another and then attack another you get to the point where you get to or how you are building a bridge is not that you can just do the piece co yes maybe you need the span what you want in short and then yes in the end there are or will be a dozen tools all in all that can be used at least that I use in reality obviously there are many more and therefore both you can start and I know you can use Tableau Illustrator well Illustrator is the Swiss Army knife

but even there as with all tools there is always a trade off 90 the disadvantages because doing anything complicated in illustrator a lot of elbow grease so however the things you can do in Illustrator is a flexibility that is total or even or even Illustrator as we say finisher that's why maybe you can use other tools to come up with a vector with the right data but after maybe formatting it inside R or inside other tools is a little more complex and you can make any graph but a nice graph in my opinion you can only do it with Graphic illustrator clearly well there is no other over than all the others that is in the end that is another strange thing about this job maybe he spends 10% of the time putting together the data, visualizing them etc. and then the remaining 90 to move 10 pixels a dash because it is better to put the labels the longest thing in history because there is no automatic way only until tomorrow domains first list then time to view of the plays you expect much more time to move the labels does not know how to do everything else a really funny thing but I agree we marked a question but at this point you have already practically answered me because I wanted to ask you like Davide Mancino what Davide Mancino studies what has he marked to learn for 2022 you know that everyone makes good intentions he wants this year I want to learn how to use that this other there is something that maybe it is so followed projects and then gradually learning in truth it just happens to bean because in fact for a few months I started studying D3.js ah here yes yes so it was something that in reality I should have done much sooner but in the end it is a demanding thing but yes in the end I think it is a fundamental step to take to forward only that obviously requires a lot 'he says we must leave because or white is something that is in a context in short, it is not that you can learn d3.js you must also know javascript html css begins in the set of things but let's say for some projects in fact I have seen that that also because you add interactivity to a web project therefore where there is not only text and image but there is also interaction if you are, that's the future even that is in a certain sense I remember Illustrator because it is another other

library that has extreme flexibility but unfortunately it's okay so anyway a very steep learning curve on this but in the end you studied at the end you learned also fun to do new things I know that you also deal with training or in any case sometimes take courses on what is in the sense the world is always the same but more towards those who want to become a data journalist who wants to be an information designer that that is, as the most common of this happened she was trained in the company I have to tell you it has happened to me several times also because by now in short, a part means of data communication for which many companies are oriented therefore that they themselves for which it is not the public often making graphical views and maybe they say well let's call someone that cc from two companies also because another interesting thing that learning the principles in the end does not take very fully easy for which anch and there the use of the tools and in my opinion something a little secondary sense comes, however, first the principles are needed that if you make a graph and you don't know what the principles are with that you can't do it well then a tool in the end is worth the other the tools it is certainly not in fact they want I remember when I started and where none of the tools with which I started exists anymore by now we no longer know what was there at the beginning CARTO DB

then it disappeared or not I don't know if it exists but at least I use it the more there are others and so on I remember that to make the first map I will have studied these two weeks there just moments of delirium but in the end even once I had made a face of Chernoff using R after years it happened to me and now I want to show during a course I wanted to show this thing here the library he had used no longer existed was no longer supported by which installment was no longer possible this is a bit of a shame in fact because there are so many works done and unfortunately they are not maintained they are no longer available it is a pity that they are not clearly kept it is an extra job in short, it is not that free to do it but precisely it is a pity that then they were given for certain many were really deserved in short, that's fine david I would have 500 more questions but I don't want to make monstrous podcast episodes so in the meantime I thank you and then maybe there will be an opportunity later when maybe you have u n another project so tell us you can update us a little about your work certainly very much on your feet thanks a lot thanks to you it was really a pleasure and I think that this interview conveys well the great passion of Davide for the subject and also the great curiosity that David has two fundamental characteristics in approaching the world around us to make beautiful visualizations. If you liked this second episode, subscribe to Cartesiani.it for the podcast Dataviz Show and see you at the next episode. Curtain!