

Using multiple encodings

An example of this idea of using multiple visualizations or multiple methods of encoding when the story that you're trying to tell is complex, that requires both an overview of the data and then being able to make accurate judgments based in the data, will be this story by the Washington Post titled "America's Great Housing Divide. Are you a winner or are you a loser?".

This is a basically a very long story that includes several data visualizations. The main one being an interactive graphic that shows in your area, which neighborhoods experience an increase or decrease in home prices between 2004 and 2014.

When you get to it, you may notice that the data is represented in two different ways. First of all, it represented through a choropleth map, shades of color. Right? The different shades of color represent a variation of home prices between 2004 and 2014. Now, this is, by the way, you can input your zip code here. Right now we are seeing Washington, D.C., but you can put any zip code here. And then the map will show your specific area, your specific zip code.

Now, the data again is first represented through shades of color. Just to give you an overview of the spatial distribution of this data, where home prices increase or decrease in terms between one year and another year. That gives you the overview of the data. But then what about if you want the details? If you want to see, for example, the year by year variation very accurately in that specific region that you are selecting. Because you can select any neighborhood over here and a chart will appear on this side of the graphic. Right?

This is a line chart, so it is using angle. And it's also using in this case position of dots, as we explained in a previous video when talking about encoding. It's using the position of those dots, later connected with a line, to show you the year by year variation of home prices in this area.

The second chart shows you the detail. The second chart is what allows you to see the year by year variation very accurately. The map is not very accurate in giving you an impression of the variation year by year. It's just an overview of the data. The spatial distribution of the data.

But then you have this other graphic that encodes the exact same data, but it does it in a completely different way. Rather than use shades of color, it is using position and the lines to represent the change over time, so you can get a much more accurate picture of the data.