

# The role of a visualist: Transforming stories in a newsroom

Yiyun Zha  
[yiyun@gmail.com]  
University of Lapland, Finland

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## **Abstract**

Visualization in news web site is a process of transforming news stories by integrating various modes with their communicative potentials. There arises an inevitable need to investigate in-house visualist's role due to journalistic changes, with regard to media convergence in newsrooms. This text suggests rethinking about visualist's role in transforming story in newsroom, based on the evidence of multimodal practice in the workflow. Empirical material of professional design practices is collected from Helsingin Sanomat, a Finnish newsroom, using ethnographic research tools. Visual journalists' specification is investigated during the process of transforming stories. This study evokes a highlight on the multi-faceted endeavors from team dynamics in visual journalism, which, from a designer's point of view, serve to a better understanding of multimodality in news web site.

**Keywords:** Visual journalist, web news visualization, team dynamics, newsroom convergence, multimodality.

**Summary:** Introduction. Background. Literature review. Methodology. Results. Visualist's role in a social context. Newsroom convergence and physical configuration. Conclusions. Acknowledgement. References

## ***Introduction***

This article makes the proposition that the multimodal landscape in news web site makes visualist's role complicated in the production process. On the one hand, multimodality increases in news web site and blurs the vanishing boundaries between public communication and journalism (Deuze, 2007). On the other, it challenges visualists' journalistic work in terms of implementation for both multimodality and multimediality (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001). In this sense, the changing communicative landscape raises the need to interrogate visualists' endeavors in the design process in news web sites.

Visualists,<sup>1</sup> in this article, refer to those who strategically diversify the possibilities of multimodality to make meanings; at the same time, they are working in news media and adapting their skills to the new environment (Kankaanranta, 2015). They are the visual journalists who deal with visualization issues in news web sites. Visualists choose the suitable modes and resources to shape communication and meanings (Kress, 2014). While researchers are often contending to examine the concrete outcome of the design process, such as the relationship between texts and images (Engelhardt, 2007), the design process remains shrouded to the analyst (Kress, 2014), not alone the practitioners involved.

Considering news web site as instituted of «information and communication technologies and their associated social contexts» (Lievrouw and Livingstone, 2006: 23), I presume the creative process raises attention not only on the artifacts, but also on the social arrangements or organizations that form around the artifacts and practices (Kress, 2014). Therefore, it is necessary to look beyond visualization to the people who take the role of transforming stories in the multimodal landscape, especially when more inputs are attributed to the web site in Finnish newsrooms nowadays.

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001: 20) define multimodality as, «the use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event». To identify the visualists' role in web news production, I subject the concept of multimodality to a critical examination in the production workflow that involves multiple visualists performing their specialized roles. To do so, I bring a reconsideration of visualist's role in news visualization process.

The article starts by a dialogue between a visual journalist and me as a prologue. I will then illustrate visualists' role in production team dynamics and clarify the findings in discussion based on empirical materials collected during the process of transforming news stories. A comprehensive investigation cannot be undertaken, but some key questions are examined, such as:

- How does multimodality extend and amplify previous way of doing web news visualization?
- To improve reader experiences, as phrased in *Innovation* (The New York Times, 2014: 60), how do visualists undertake the role of transforming stories in journalism?

In the article, multimodal analysis deepens the inclination of the multi-faceted endeavors from visualists, while a greater understanding of multimodality in news web site will also be obtained by interviewing the professionals responsible for creating the visual transmediations.

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<sup>1</sup> Visualists are mainly described as the designer or sign-maker who finds an appropriate way of communication design. Many researchers (Kress *et al.*, 2001; Hiippala, 2016) mention them with their specific titles in the production process, such as copywriters, project managers, art directors. On the other hand, their work is named as their values as well, in terms of information designers, layouters, motion designers and the like. In this article, I consider visual journalists' tools and workflow in the visual transmediations from print newspapers to digital. Therefore, the definition of «visualist» is elaborated around what needs to be changed and considered in their design process.

## ***Background***

During my visit to *Helsingin Sanomat*<sup>2</sup> (abbreviated as HS) newsroom I have had some informal and formal interviews with in-house visual journalists there. The following extract is from an open discussion last May with a visual journalist Boris Stefanov, held by his working space in Grafiikka (Finnish word for Graphics) Section in HS Design Department.

Me: ... So are you enjoying the work here now? Any difficulties in working in the news section?

Boris: Yes difficulty exists everywhere, doesn't it? Well, I usually have three or four projects running... I may think about the work after leaving the shift, but subconsciously.

Me: Anything else? What about the communication in the news section?

Boris: hmm... Well usually the communication between us is good. When journalists come to me, they may bring me a list of visual materials. [Pointed at the computer screen] Like these... this means they've already thought about the visualization in mind. I may decide to use or not, but at least it somehow saves my time. But in most cases, journalists came to me with a list of texts. I feel... [Smile] you know, there's no point to show them in animation (maybe in static graphics). At that time, I need to figure out what visual signs could be and what the most efficient way to express is.

Me: This seems to be tough work, as you must be very quick in response.

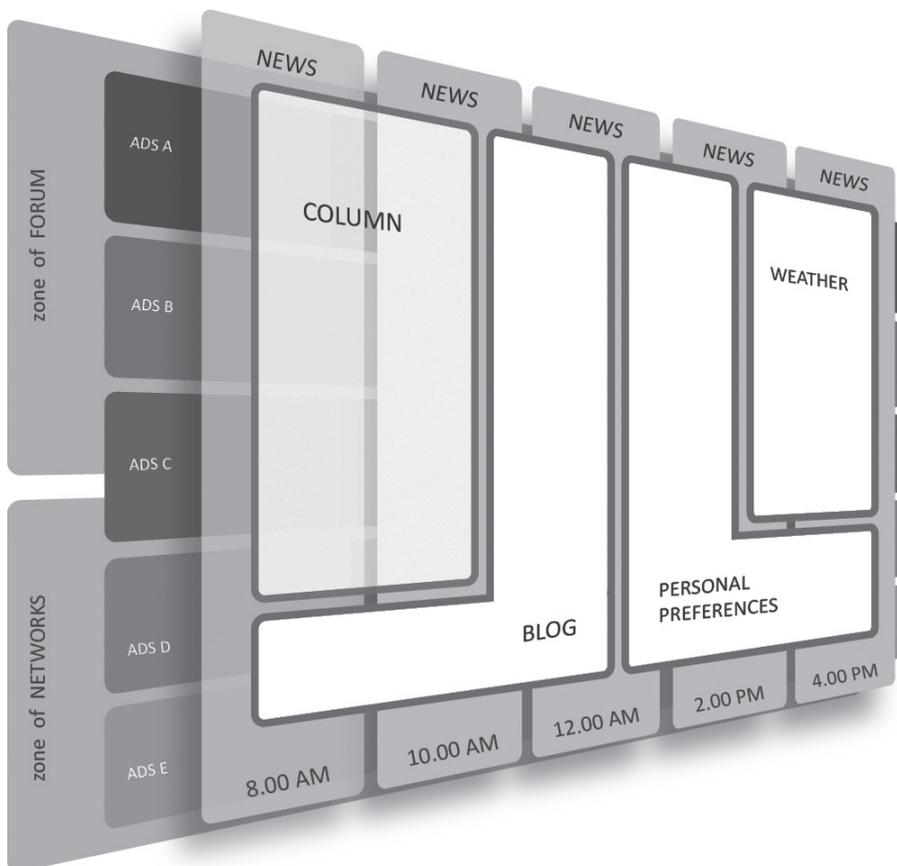
Boris: Yes. But the most difficult part is, some journalists (not all, of course) don't know the point of videos or animation, as they don't have the knowledge of motion graphics. That is, the distinguish between static and moving graphics...

Carey Jewitt once proposed that we were facing the visual turn to a multi-modal landscape (2009). Multimodality is not new in visualization, as we are getting used to communicate with visual and non-verbal signs. Yet there arise more concerns about the definition or the applicability of multimodality, when it is situated in the broader context of social and technological changes in the newsroom. The heralding of new media and new technologies enables modes to be configured, constructed and recycled in different ways (Jewitt, 2009). In news web site, the modes, whether in visual or in verbal, are intimately connected and enmeshed through the endeavors both from reporters and visual journalists. Therefore, the conditions call for cooperation in news production workflow, which offer an emergent vision of visual practice that is powerfully convincing in the communicational landscape.

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<sup>2</sup> Helsingin Sanomat website at [www.hs.fi](http://www.hs.fi). Helsingin Sanomat is the biggest newsroom in Finland, considering its readership, number of pages, journalists and working facilities. In this article, HS newsroom is working as a representative of co-involvement in visual journalists' work.

Figure 1



A key aspect of this is how multimodal ensembles feature web news visualization. Jenkins (2006) uses the concept of convergence culture to describe the new era of media use where new and old media, media producers and consumers collide unpredictably in their request for control and power. The remediation from printed press to digital news prompts visual journalists to make substantial considerations of how practices should work and change for improving reader experiences. Understanding visual modes as multimodal integration with new media technology and cultural practice asks how this characterization of web news as visualization is working (Figure 1). Newsroom convergence evokes a visual lifting in visual information structure, instead of a simple accumulation of various elements in visualization. Visualization in news web site today is no longer a one-way communication; rather, the communication is becoming layered. Within it, there are institutional and practical conversations between different groups. On one hand, layered communication is adaptive to web news, as dozens, hundreds or thousands of (textual and visual) narratives are divided into various layers.

On the other, it is beneficial that the production team dynamics can be reviewed from the bottom line. According to Norris (2009), all modes and all media carry affordances and visualists utilize the culturally mediated means to produce and reproduce the communicative meanings.

The idea of layered communication indicates how to perceive the multimodality in news web site. Meanwhile, it also extends previous thinking of visualization. In the old system, people may get satisfied with one-medium visualization. But in news web site, each individual visual is working sufficiently as a «snail» in the layer. The interplay of such many works can create an unprecedented degree of complexity and generate a depth of engagement among viewers (Jenkins, 2004).

The outlook of the final multimodal artefact comes from the emergence of technology and cultural practice, but it also paves our way to more attention to the specificity of the changes in visualist's production workflow. Technology emergence sharpens visual journalist's toolkit in redesign construction, while the multimodality elaborated in different ways transforms what can be done and by whom it can be realized. This heralds the moment that recognizes the need to understand visualists in relation to their different specification.

### *Literature review*

By transforming news stories in web site, visualists tell news based on the visual representation. Chatman said: «Every narrative is a structure with a content plane and an expression plane» (1978: 146). It involves not only the content told by reporters, but the meanings interpreted by visualists during the transformation process as well. In other words, if we speak of news story as a communicative mode, a visualist necessarily needs to utilize visual representation to produce the communicative mode of news. In news web sites, visualists use various modes (narratives) as storytelling methods.

Followed by Kress and Van Leeuwen's social-semiotic perspective (2001), «all signs in all modes are meaningful» (Kress, 2010: 59). Such notes provide a theoretical plate for understanding multimodality in digital format. Bezemer et al. (2012) have discussed some key concepts in multimodal social semiotic studies on learning, such as mode, medium and affordance. The modes are put together, arranged, organized through its mediums, and many such works serve as multimodal design. In the process, multiplicity of modes makes meanings possible by affordance and modes differ in their affordances. These ideas were originated from psychologist Gibson (1986). Later Kress and Van Leeuwen extended their understandings of mode based on Gibson's concept, «language and visual communication can both be used to realize the 'same' fundamental systems of meaning that constitute our culture, but each does so by its own specific forms, does so differently, and independently» (2006: 19). Especially in web design, there are even more choices for modes to convey meanings.

«Within the broad range of modal choices available in a society, there is then the individual's decision to make choices to use *these* modes rather than *those* in *this* environment for *these* reasons» (Kress, 2010: 76, emphasis in original). I do

agree with Oleksiak (2012) that describing and analyzing these choices is the basis of multimodality studies. What is less developed in the practical applications, however, is that Kress (2010) has not stated much about how sign-makers decide and design communicative modes with thinking about social practices.

Web news visualization more or less takes existing modes of visual production within the institutions of new media as granted. The case deals with digital production technology enabled by media workers, and the possible improvements that could follow from the people who have the knowledge of how to consume the tools at its best. Therefore, these two aspects should be treated as complementary to visual multimodality in news web site, which is spawned as a way to explore some implications of co-involvement inputs from multi-faceted endeavors.

Especially for the professionals in the field, technology speeds up the creative process and contributes to one's existing competence on skills, knowledge and talent. Therefore, Deuze (2007: 74) thought it as «central to media work», but «its role is neither unproblematic nor inevitable». Deuze (2006) once defined viewing in the open but disorganized news web sites as 'dead', and even as a 'zombie institution'. Some criticism goes to the technology at the expense of proper visualization. Jenkins (2006) thought media convergence is a top-down corporate-driven process, while technology has been particularly part of the implementation toolkit in the new media industries (Deuze, 2007).

As one of those who take the implementation in news web site, visualists' practices have become more complicated with technological development. It seemed that not only technology-focused innovation in journalism (Lewis and Usher, 2013) thicken the plot, but also the potentials in new media improve visualists' work in the newsroom. In the remediation (Bolter & Grusin, 1999) process, visualists actively consider adding what is called «new media» to their web site. The role of the visualists as co-creator of the online journalism increasingly finds acceptance throughout the journalistic industries. Like what Farnsworth from BBC (2013) thinks about digital journalism: it is not simply about visualizing data; it even brings together visual designers with the teams that create the more high-end multimedia graphics online and harnesses the unprecedented creative opportunities.

Farnsworth argued that visualist's role is definitely enhanced in the newsroom. Put more precisely, technology provides a more interesting platform for multimodality, and visualists make choices to integrate and make newsroom's meanings through visualization. In this sense, the technological improvements in digital visualization are likely to be rather less significant than other differences that arise from visual journalist's practices.

As visualist's role in the newsrooms and in the journalistic field has to be changed when more endeavors are invested in news web site, there arises a need to look closer to visualist's role in production team dynamics. In what follows, visualist's role in transforming stories in news web site is discussed in relation to their specification in the newsroom.

## *Methodology*

There are three identifiable stages in the research process: 1) Ethnographic observations and situated interviews in the newsroom; 2) Iterations and categorization of the data; 3) Analysis after the observations. The analysis is based on existing research as mentioned above, as well as a case study of a Finnish newsroom. Rather than speculating, empirical evidence from newsrooms seems to be more relevant to the current situation and actual developments in newsrooms (Erdal, 2011; Paterson, 2011).

Within social science research, multimodality and ethnographic knowing has been mainly given consideration within the stream of research known as social semiotics and the phenomenology of perception (see e.g. Pink, 2011; Ingold, 2000). I believe this anthropological approach is especially interesting to discuss in relation to visual transmediations process precisely because it is founded on different empirical research materials. In addition, Norris (2009) and Wertsch (1991) argued that visualists as social actors perform web news visualization by mediated actions with or through cultural tools. The multimodality in web news visualization allows us to study visualization from different modes and even leads us to investigate visualist's role according to different modal configuration (Figure 1). Therefore, a mix of methods involving categorization, interviews and observations was used to obtain feedback during the iterative development on the web news visualization process. The aim is to understand how these visualists' specifications are divided and how deep their work is involved in terms of the functions and appropriateness in the specific newsroom.

The article is grounded in a combination of qualitative methods for gathering and analyzing data, using ethnographic research tools. The field observation in HS Design Department consisted of a total of two weeks in April 2015. During this period, there started a reconfiguration in design department, which influenced visual journalists from both the print and digital production teams. Throughout this period of transition, I was present at a number of desks and attended editorial meetings. In addition, I have witnessed visual journalists involved are actively reconfiguring their positions in the newsroom and renegotiating their practices in web news visualization.

In the research process, different observation strategies were here construed to functional, living and embodied specification in HS Design Department (Table 1). The reason of multiple strategies comes from the multi-faceted endeavors from design practitioners, and the complexity of their work. During and after the fieldwork, I carried out 20 semi-structured qualitative interviews with information designers, data journalists, layouters, photographers and reporters. The selection of informants covers several sections in HS newsroom, rather than an exclusive focus on the design department. I aimed at interviewing informants from different specialized sections (Graphic, Data, Monthly supplement, Saturday, Sunday and Photography).

The fieldwork in newsroom is pragmatic as a grounded theory in the article for two reasons: 1) to understand visualization as design practice that may support communication within newsrooms; 2) to investigate how visual journalists'

mediated actions are realized in visualization of news web sites. At the time I was present in Design Department in HS newsroom, creation process was recorded for later analysis, especially the moment when co-involvement happened between desks. My main concern is to gain insights in visualist's way of looking at the communication and the synergy of practitioner, tool and material (Ingold, 2011). During the co-involvement process, I learn empathically about visual journalists' mediated process in practice (Pink, 2009) from a corpus of research materials for analysis, such as design guidelines, photos, recordings and videos. In the view taken up here, there appears to be the first tentative category, whereby the specification divisions lie in the empirical observations in visual journalists' work.

To distinguish different divisions of visual journalists I wanted the respondents to be able to communicate as naturally as possible and feel comfortable with being observed. Therefore I acted as an outsider in the context of their work and observed their professional identity and ability to manipulate work (Grosz, 1995). By their specification with different duties, the categories relied primarily on what emerged from the observation strategies, which depend on their work production and work characteristics. Accordingly, my qualitative methods for each specification are adjusted due to the visual journalists' involvement in the design department.

Table 1. A mix of methods by visual journalists' specification in HS Design Department, which were obtained from different qualitative methods to collect practice-led data.

Specification	Qualitative methods Collecting practice-led data
<i>Graphic designer</i>	Scoping review of literature Grouping professionals Interviews with in-house graphic design professionals in HS newsroom Observation/record/video/photo
Layouter	Grouping professionals Interviews with in-house graphic design professionals in HS newsroom Observation/record/video/photo
Photographer	Interviews with in-house graphic design professionals in HS newsroom Observation/record/video/photo
Programmer	Interviews with in-house graphic design professionals in HS newsroom Observation/record/video/photo

Despite visualists' diverse nature, I presume it suitable to investigate their role in the context through different strategies and methods. The case study can teach us something about more common newsroom cultural issues particularly in Finnish newsrooms. The findings will be useful to further illustrate how organizatio-

nal contextual factors shape or affect the web news visualization process in other compact Finnish newsrooms.

## *Results*

In the process, I found visual journalists with different specifications were fulfilling different roles within the specific context. Since the members of projects already knew each other and had sometimes even been working in the same project before, they shed more light on cooperation and interaction between (people working on) the different phases of the visualization production. On the other hand, the situation draws our attention more specifically to how interaction between different desks in the newsroom serves as a synergy in creating reader experiences. It is a matter of comprehending how multi-faceted endeavors from designers are constituted in visualization of news web sites. It is obvious that visual journalists' daily work is, more or less, involved into coworkers' production. Communication and efficient interaction is a concern for everyone in visualization process, and visualist's role worth reconsidered in case there is blurry job boundaries or team dynamics.

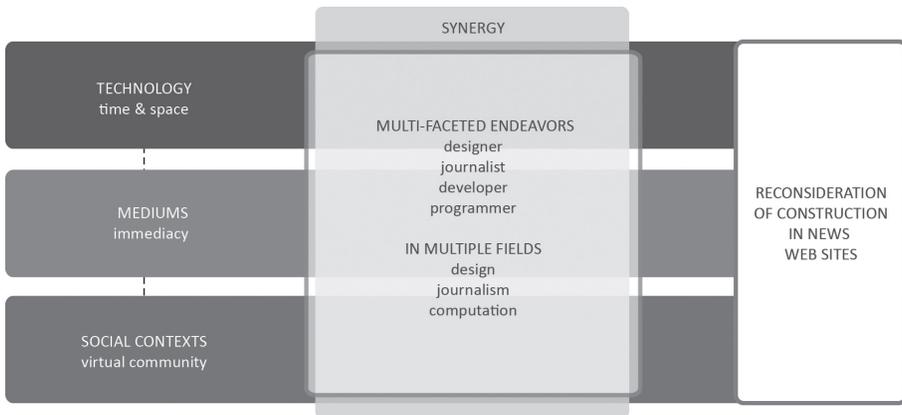
In this section are discussed what co-involvement in team dynamics means and how it may affect web news visualization, as production from visual journalists. Three of my research findings will be highlighted: design practitioners' role in a social context, their role in newsroom convergence and their practices in HS newsroom. The findings are basically facilitated by the ethnographic research. Visual journalists' role is converged into a meta-context, in a telling consideration of the emergence of multimodality in web news visualization. Furthermore, the production of design practices is integrated into co-involvement inputs within visual journalists' mediated actions with new media. By co-involvement I mean a synergy realized by the multi-faceted endeavors in news production team, which collaboratively serve to a better understanding of multimodality in news web sites.

I want to examine visualist's role from three levels —the role in a social context, the physical configuration in the newsroom and their practices in professional culture. Their daily practices and work determine how they work and with whom they cooperate. These will be well elucidated in the following sections.

### *Visualist's role in a social context*

Given that newsrooms have had approximately 160 years' history in global newsgathering, production and distribution, they should be at the forefront of multimedia (Paterson, 2011). As aforementioned, multimodality amplifies the visualization performance in news web sites and sharpens visualists' toolkit. The underlying visual lifting opens up greater possibilities in visual journalism, whilst design practices in online journalism have evolved to a broader scale of disciplines and converged with different forms and genres. Therefore, how do the design professionals involved give meaning to their work and professional identity within news production teams in such a social context?

Figure 2.



This part has focused on ascertaining the underlying role of visualists who shape the meaning and significance of the various influences on news stories, be they visual journalists, data journalists, journalists, programmers and developers. Their multi-faceted endeavors have constituted visualization in an online platform. Examine of how visualists are reconfiguring their positions in newsroom is important for two reasons. First, it prompts understandings of how visualists perceive the co-involvement of team dynamics; second, it raises a valid research question: how do the visualists, who not only motivate but also participate in the practices, learn?

I hereby try to illustrate a diagram (Figure 2) to reconsider web news visualization when multi-faceted endeavors are involved in transforming news in a newsroom. Convergence culture has been part of organizational work particularly in game industries (Deuze, 2007), and game publishers even regard their consumers as co-developers. Yet in my diagram, I argue that there also come co-involvement endeavors within the practitioners' groups in newsroom. It deals with how visualists perceive the news media processing, which has been partly fuelled by the media's changing ways of visualization, partly necessitated by readers' eyes and tastes for immediacy, and partly initiated by practitioners' thought patterns.

In Figure 2, it is assumed that technology, mediums, and social context are connected contingently. The contemporary technologies are facilitating immediacy (Bolter & Grusin, 1999) through various mediums, while different mediums are evolved to deal exclusively with social needs. The emergence of mediums developed by technologies has challenged traditional journalism; meanwhile it has affected to how news media bring a new way of working as a connection with a mass of people to time and space. This then contributes to virtual community in the social context.

With the dynamism of media convergence in mind, the role of journalistic practitioners has been introduced as synergistic in massive news processing,

though some journalists might have been reluctant or skeptical to top-down approaches to convergence. The move from printed press to digital news prompts design practitioners to make substantial considerations of how practices should work and change for improving reader experiences, which in turn give active meaning to news content.

Therefore, when considering new media in visualization, there invoke much more discussion in visualization design in news web sites apart from traditional principles of dealing with text-image relationships (for instance, Golden Mean philosophy is widely applied in design practices, so that visuals are not placed arbitrarily). A sound understanding of visualization and remediation leads to solid comprehension, propelling the visual 'story' the designer intends to tell behind the news. In this sense, there comes an awareness of to what extent design practitioners become involved in both participation and anticipation in the constitution.

The reason to rethink of the web news construction from a meta-context perspective, and to define visualist's perceptions to be of synergy effect, is that visualist is one of the main players who sustain the connection of virtual space, mediated tool and the social environment. It is through the daily interaction of creativity, content and co-involvement within media practitioners that they shape their work and profession.

Multimodality in news web site may appear to be too broad a concept to be elucidating as a unit of analysis in this article. However, when looking at the multimodal performance more precisely, we find that each section in online newspaper has been transformed in different multimodal modes, no matter which layer (Figure 1) you are investigating: a video constructed by motion graphics and textual words; a column started by a profile photo and ended with a story; and a breaking news combined with both infographics and a simple description. Visualization production team dynamics have to be delineated by finding the multiple faceted involvements from visualists. Once we start investigating visualist's role in web news visualization, we will discover that there often are many layers of actions from different disciplines. The fact may coincide with Jenkins' (2006) notes about convergence culture where old and new media collide. On the one hand, with the emergence of new media, the outlook of visualization of news web sites have been reviewed as reliance of visual representation. On the other, visualist's common ground is affirmed and a strong affiliation by perceiving their positions is revealed through understanding the cooperation of multiple disciplines in news production.

### *Newsroom convergence and physical configuration*

Considering reduced time frames and limited creative freedom for in-house visual journalists, there implies that individual work no longer satisfies the creative process of news production work. In May 2013, the Danish trade organization for media held its annual competition. The gold award was given to a special theme story called 'A one-way ticket to Zurich'. This was «the first time» that a story like this type, with a combination of words, images, sounds and videos had

been prepared exclusively for the web (Schou & Johansen, 2014). Newsrooms have different divisions for texts, visuals, videos and photography, which sometimes act autonomously for projects but more frequently nowadays coordinate their work in-between desks. The fact that the above news story was awarded in the competition signaled the synergistic effects of journalistic practices. Before furthering with this thought, let us focalize the designer's role in a design department and look closer at the interrelations between design practitioners in HS newsroom, as it is essential to establish a clearance of design practices.

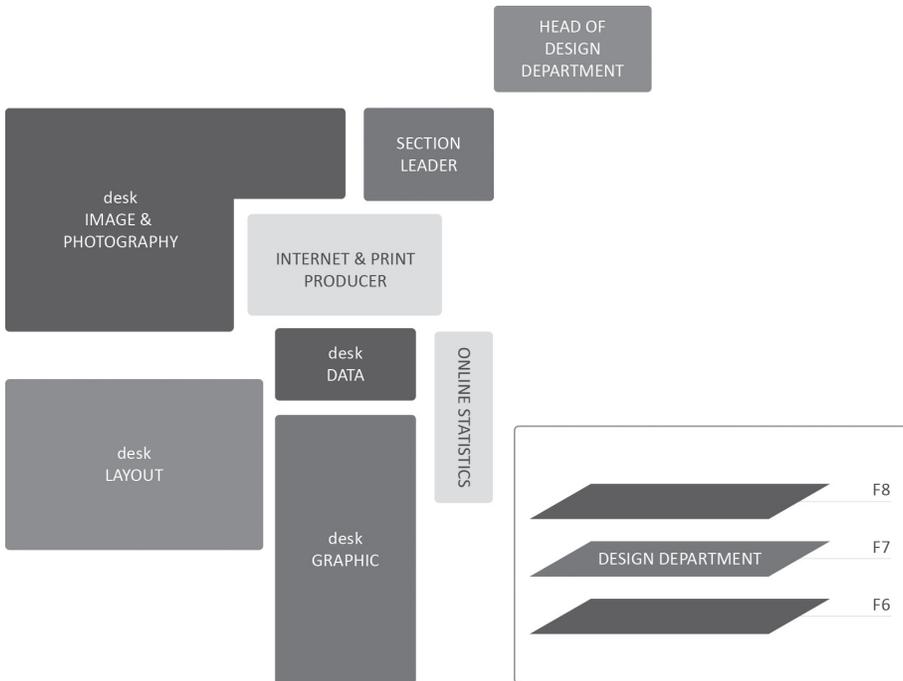
Table 2. Summary of the involvement relations for each specification in visual journalism.

Specification	Visualization development	Involvement relations
<i>Graphic designer</i>	Daily department meeting Initial selection of visualization options Iterative visualizations Frequent involvement in projects	Journalist Data journalist Layouter Editor Programmer Internet/print producer
Layouter	Iterative layout visualizations Communication with editors	Journalist Graphic designer Editor
Photographer	Daily department meeting Initial photographic visualization Communication with journalists and editors	Journalist Graphic designer Internet/print producer
Programmer	Initial selection of visualization options Initial bespoke visualizations development	Journalist Data journalist Graphic designer

It is obvious from the observations that each specification has corresponding involvement relations with other coworkers in the newsroom. The collective influence that one specification's value has on the other visualists' mediation inputs is extremely strong and is one of the key reasons why newsroom convergence culture has gained much attention (Erdal, 2011; García-Avilés, Kaltenbrunner, Meier, 2014; Wallace, 2013). Essential to the concerns in this article are the ways in which design practitioners are affected by redrafting their professional environment as creative industries, especially operated within a convergence culture in newsroom. The emerging new media system inspires and is inspired by networks of several desks under one-roof operations for media production, which had previously worked with geographical separation.

In April 2015, there just finished a re-figuration in HS Design Department, so that the whole design team is now sitting physically closer to each other in the middle floor of the three-storey newsroom (Figure 2). Within the new reconfiguration, any practice in the design department could inalienably exist, while

Figure 3.



the cooperation between different desks with distinct functions sparks more efficiency in practice. As Lasse Rantanen (2013), a visual journalist from the design studio<sup>3</sup> based in Helsinki, stated, ‘... it (the result) is «1+1=4», or at least «1+1=3»’. Before the integration of a big design department as now, some of the (design) people (, such as layouters,) were working without their own chief and scattered among other visual desks’, said Petri Salmén, one design producer in HS, ‘[laughter] Well, the work now is definitely making our life easier.’

Although in-house visualists’ production team, as a small working community, is somewhat atypical community, I believe valuable insights can be obtained by investigating such ‘extreme’ cases. During the observation, I suppose the physical move within the design department toward newsroom convergence has deeper roots. The physical proximity in the large newsroom prompts both integration within the design team and collaboration in different news projects. In Figure 3, it is clear that which desks tend to have more peer production, such as desk DATA and desk GRAPHIC, and this is the exact situation in practice. Besides, journalists are generating ideas about where to find the right visual person for a specific news story.

<sup>3</sup> The Linesmen website is a joint portfolio for two illustration and graphic design studios in Kallio, Helsinki. Website at <http://linjamiehet.fi/>

*Visualists' practices and professional culture in HS newsroom*

Since HS, as the biggest newspaper in Finland, has just finished the preliminary convergence in Design Department in the newsroom, the news media pose a challenge for the newsroom to adapt both infrastructure and professional identity in compliance with the newsroom culture. Co-involvement among design practitioners' work creates interesting and functional family-effects within the media corporation. In the process, the workflow is facilitated by a physical proximity and prompt communication. I presume the convergence process to be «preliminary», as we see that reconfiguration and reshaping of visualists' roles continue and the butterfly effects have been developing in HS newsroom.

My field observations implied visualization work in newsrooms as complex and multi-faceted endeavors. The visualist's professional role is attributed mainly to convergence and convenience shaping the relationship in co-involvement in the creation process. However, the process asks for easier collaboration in the workflow between desks.

One good trial is that visual journalists get embedding codes that facilitates both visualists' and programmers' workflow in practice. Therefore, information designers in Graphic Section directly apply html code from programmers in the newsroom nowadays, for a better and easier application to embed designs into the HS website. The html code is pre-scheduled and thus planned, and yet it is still necessary to get the results of the visualists to be published as quickly as possible. In this case, developers and programmers have created the module beforehand and information designers finish the output as long as visualization is finalized. As this visual journalist explained:

Many differences have happened nowadays, and one of the big differences we are having is that Graphic Section is merging with Data Section. Although it took us (information designers) a bit time to learn something new (how to get html code and in what ways to embed designs straight into HS website), it facilitates our work and actually our pressure is somehow released. So we do not think it as a burden to learn new things. In addition, one of us (four information designers in all in HS newsroom) is working for the so-called super spread, which is a ten-column paper, and the other three of us seem to be doing very well with all the other tasks and enjoying relative freedom from the work.

In this quote we see that visualists' work is re-structuring. On the one hand, they should learn new stuff in the practice, which facilitates web news production process. On the other, with one of them mainly contributing to the heaviest work, it brings some freedom for the rest of the team. This was described as 'hybrid teams of journalists' (Dailey et al., 2005: 5), where the key people, multimedia teams sit together to plan and assess each news event on its merits. In this case, they even assign a more appropriate way to produce news stories efficiently. The changes in visualists' practices lead to some differences of their professional culture in HS newsroom. Talking about the reasons, this interviewed visual journalist explained:

We need to change, not only because the media we are using are different, but also because HS people are getting less. People are leaving from time to time for either career or personal reasons. This means, we need to work out a better system to make the workflow functional.

In 2007, Deuze has already mentioned media work as ‘liquid life’, linking the trends of concurrent individualization and globalization with the convergent trends in life, work and play. Today, this pattern still emerges in the moment when journalistic practitioners feel insecure of their work as the newsrooms are restructuring, no matter whether the company is forced to do so.

For visualists working in HS newsroom, it seems that they have found answers to get used to the new system and the concurrent developments. In the process of transferring more focus on digital platforms, visualists’ practices are not completely being brought to job destruction, but more rearrangement and ‘workforce flexibility’ (Sennett, 1998) has emerged. Therefore, everyone should get prepared to learn something new at any time. This, in line with Deuze, means that visualists, both young and old practitioners, have to come to terms with structural job insecurity and adapt themselves into the professional culture.

### *Conclusions*

To conclude, I return to the question with which I began to discuss —how visualists undertake the role of transforming stories in online journalism. Deuze has called media life as «liquid» modern times, as media professionals employed in journalism embody in their workflow all the themes of social, cultural and technological changes nowadays (2007). Visualization landscape is more than simply a multimodal shift. Multimodality in news web site embodies in visualists’ workflow the considerations of media convergence (Dupagne & Garrison, 2006). It alters the relationship between existing technologies, genres and cultures, let alone the news practitioners’ workflow and professional ideology. The situation facilitates our understandings of visualists’ role in news production team dynamics.

Visualization in news web sites is essentially inquiring a visual lifting. Meanwhile, it implies a reconsideration of how design practitioners balance creativity and intentionality in news narration, not only about new media but also about the newsroom professional culture. For example, layouters’ work, one specification in visual journalism, is apparently getting converged into newsroom culture. For in-house HS layouters, there is an increasing dependence on CCI Layout Champ<sup>4</sup> (a desktop publishing software), which is a sophisticated layout design package for an efficient content management with convenient use. Despite of some customized services in-house, media formats and visualization is generally standardized to accommodate a fixed system. One consequence of the dependence on this

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<sup>4</sup> The CCI program allows journalists, editors, layouters and graphic designers to work on content at the same time.

program is limited and even gradual elimination of layouters' creativity. Yet it explores the possibility of engaging collective inputs from the news production team, where journalists' work is co-involved in the production process.

The implications of the consequences of multi-faceted team dynamics are embodied in three levels from a meta-context perspective, the physical proximity in a case study and their practices in professional culture. The factors investigated in this article (Figure 1) may predict how design practitioners' creative disposal works in a meta-context, especially when multiple endeavors are accountable in newsroom convergence. An introduction to how meaning and significance with new media are shaped in layered communication therefore invites a way of understanding how to realize visual lifting in news web sites. In this case, visualization benefits from the convergent news production operation that rarely exist when visual journalists were housed in separate locations in the newsroom and work sparsely. Their co-involvement endeavors in visualization production result from the roles both in a social context and in the newsroom. Therefore, the findings show that visualists' work in professional culture in this particular newsroom has been changing. Their role in HS newsroom was reshaped to a great extent by a need to adapt themselves into the current restructuring newsroom.

This article should be considered to be preliminary, as the research findings I present here are still part of the results of my ethnographic research conducted in Helsingin Sanomat newsroom. It is within the design department that I have obtained the understandings of synergy among different visual production desks. The number of players in the field has increased and their relations have become increasingly complicated to define and observe. The construction of visualists' workflow in the newsroom through redefinition and reconsideration is an ongoing process. The investigation of visual journalists' role indicates that it is valuable to think of news web site visualization not as a simple accumulation, but rather as reconstituting the way of news transformation. Visual production of online journalism is a platform with multi-faceted endeavors from the visual production team. Not only are different mediated inputs simultaneously collaborative in online news, but also they acquire co-involvement through visual journalists' efforts in the production process.

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