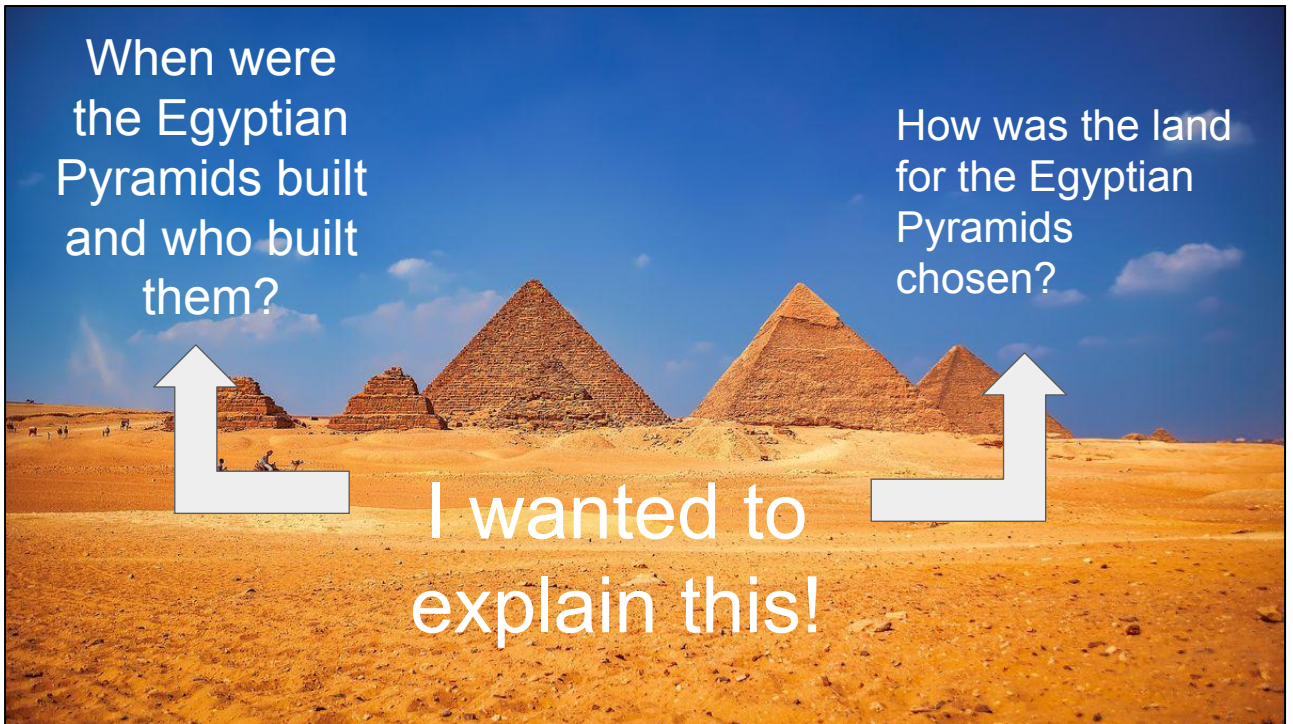# How Enthusiasm Ruined My Mansions of Eternity

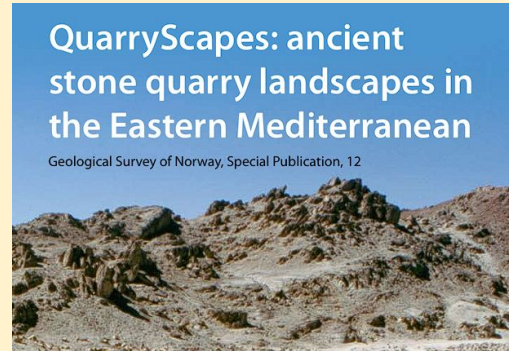Shanon Marietta Badger (sbad@itu.dk)

IT UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN

I named my project Mansions of Eternity to capture the grandeur of the pyramids. I wanted to explain why and where they were built, but my enthusiasm led me to tackle too much at once. The result? A confusing presentation that lost the audience.

So HOW did it go so wrong?

I love the pyramids, but I tried to cover every angle. Instead of focusing on one clear question, I overwhelmed my audience with details they didn't need.

# I hit the books hard, immersing myself in the archaeology and myths.

QuarryScapes: ancient stone quarry landscapes in the Eastern Mediterranean
Geological Survey of Norway, Special Publication, 12

Pharaoh	Ancient name	Modern name	Dyn	Site	Bas	Bas	Heig	Slope (deg	Volume (	Latitude	Longitude	Type	Lepsius	Material	Comment
Djoser	Hiemlender	Step Pyramid of Djoser	3	Saqqara	121	109	60		3304	29871215	31216644	Step	XXXII	Mudbrick	
Sekhemkhet	-	Buried Pyramid	3	Saqqara	120	120	70		336	29866	31213	Step		Mudbrick	(unfinished)
Khaba (?)	-	Layer Pyramid	3	Zawyet el'Aryan	84	84	40		4704	2993282	31161262	Step	XIV	Mudbrick	(unfinished)
Huni	-	Pyramid Lepsius I	3	Abu Rawash	215	215	145			30040833	31094444	Step	I	Mudbrick	totally ruined
Huni (?)	-	Pyramid of Athribis	3	Athribis	20	20	16	50		30470556	31188056	Step		Mudbrick	
Huni (?)	-	Pyramid of Elephantine	3	Elephantine	18	18	105	82		24085556	32885278	Step		Rose Granite	
Huni (?)	-	Edfu South Pyramid	3	Edfu	18	18	125	77		24943611	32841944	Step		Sandstone	
Huni (?)	-	Al Kula Pyramid	3	Hierakonpolis	19	19	12	77		25116667	32800000	Step		Limestone	
Huni (?)	-	Pyramid of Naqada (Pyra	3	Naqada	19	19	14	80		25940556	32709167	Step		Limestone	

Pyramids of Ancient Egypt (kaggle.com)

I dug deep into pyramid dates but made big assumptions, like using pharaoh death dates as construction completion dates. This created a lot of 'BS'-misleading data that could confuse anyone.

# Initial biases influenced everything that followed!

Confirmation Bias ⟹ "Educated" Guesses ⟹ Dynasty Misattribution ⟹ Incorrect Date Estimates
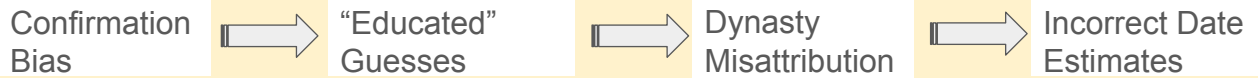
Pharaoh ▾	Ancient name ▾	Modern name ▾	Dyn ▾	Site
Djoser	Hiemlender	Step Pyramid of Djoser	3	Saqqara
Sekhemkhet	-	Buried Pyramid	3	Saqqara
Khaba (?) ⟵		Layer Pyramid ⟶	3	Zawyet el'A
Huni	-	Pyramid Lepsius I	3	Abu Rawas
Huni (?) ⟵	-	Pyramid of Athribis ⟶	3	Athribis
Huni (?) ⟵		Pyramid of Elephantine ⟶	3	Elephantin
Huni (?) ⟵		Edfu South Pyramid ⟶	3	Edfu
Huni (?) ⟵		Al Kula Pyramid ⟶	3	Hierakonpo
Huni (?) ⟵		Pyramid of Naqada (Pyr ⟶	3	Naqada

My confirmation bias made me fill gaps with guesses, which led to misattributing dynasties. Each red arrow shows how one assumption shaped the next, turning uncertainty into misleading data that could be off by decades or thousands of years. The unchecked bias distorted my data which heavily influenced my visualizations and interpretations.

Dispersal of the Revered One (Osiris)

Osiris: Foremost of the Westerners
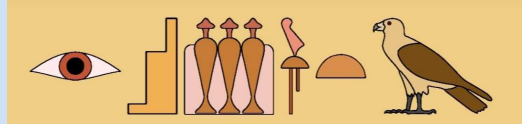
The BenBen Stone

I tried too hard to explain the beliefs of the pyramid builders and made a huge mess of it!

The anthropological explanation

My curse of knowledge bias got me lost in cultural details, forgetting to simplify. The key point-that Egyptians buried their dead west of the Nile-got buried under too much info.
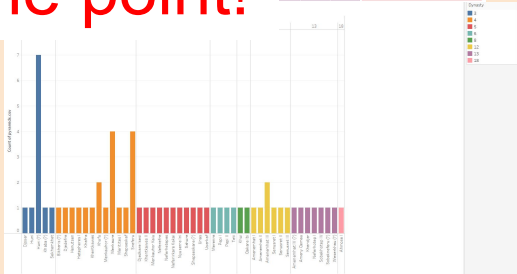
Because of completion bias, I thought showing every draft and messy chart would be more honest-but it just confused my audience. One clear answer is always better.
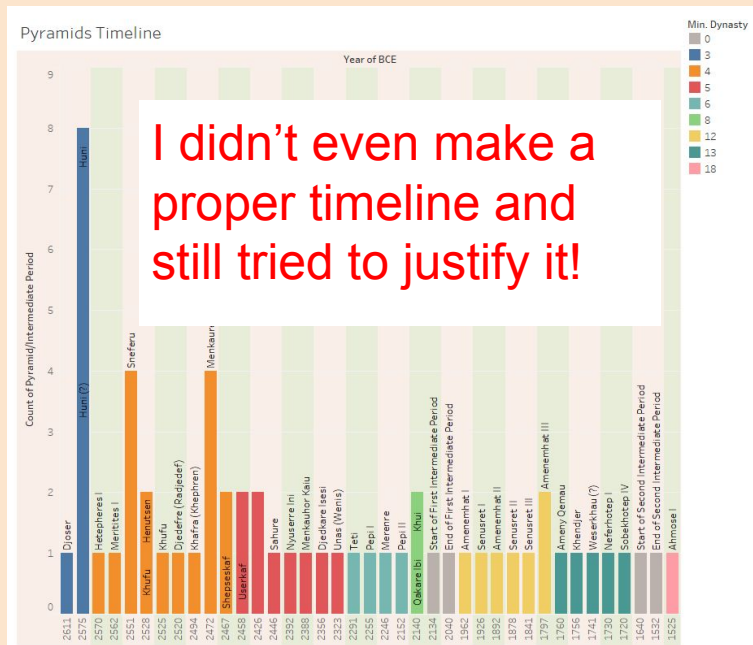
My biases made me defend a flawed timeline-missing labels, skipped gaps, and misleading bars-instead of fixing the real issues; a chart that looks good still needs to tell the truth. This was neither attractive nor truthful.

Improvements?

- Include images for pyramid progression
- Change background color for intermediate periods instead of using grey bars
- Find more specific dates for pyramid completion from new research (not possible for all pyramids)
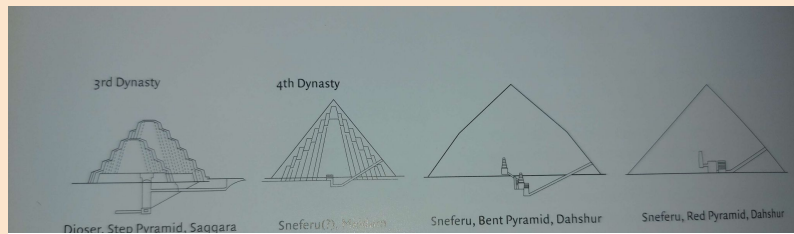
I tried to pretend my "Innocent mistakes" could be rectified later!
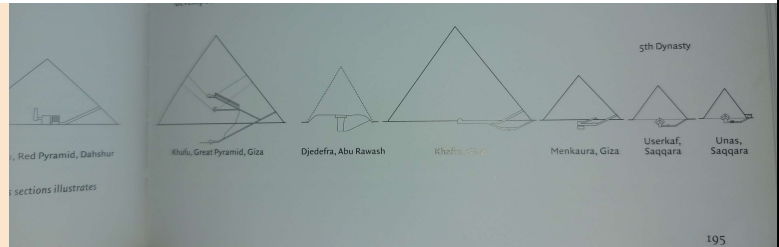
I thought I could fix my mistakes later, but in reality, I was just avoiding the real problems-most people won't come back for a revision, so you only get one shot to get it right.

Pyramid Plotting:

OOOPS, I did it again!

Too many colors

Redundant and scales don't match

Interesting, but difficult to explain

I showed every map draft instead of just one clear version-overwhelming my audience a second time when a simple, final map was all they needed. My overconfidence bias and curse of knowledge bias influenced all my visualizations, not just the timelines and the repeated mistakes could have been avoided, had my bias been checked early.

Our map:

A flawed map to match my flawed timeline!

- Background colors distinguish desert from water
- Easy to see and follow the Nile
  - ...w/Blue markers colorblind ...y and show up well against ...background
  - ...asis that pyramids are to the ...f the Nile readily apparent on ...
- Superfluous colors removed. Not necessary to see what the resources or dynasties are on the big picture.

I was proud of this map, but it was too small, used a modern Nile, and missed the real ancient landscape-a missed chance to show true context.

Improvements?

And I even knew better!

- Use map of Ancient Egypt instead of modern map
- Include the sizes of resource plots by outlining the relevant area
- Include location of pastoral lands to show where burial was not a viable option
- Use special symbols for pyramids once resources plots are outlined

This old textbook map got it right-showing the ancient Nile, quarries, and even the fertile lands where it made more sense to farm and raise livestock than to build monuments. However, my innovation bias made me think a new map would be better, but sometimes established work is the best foundation.

So what did I learn?

- A good report can't fix a bad presentation.
- Focus on one question, not many.
- Know your audience; keep it simple.
- Question your data and call BS.
- Build on solid, trusted sources.
- Being transparent does not mean overloading your audience!