

## **Written Response – Methods of Contextualising**

When reading the Paris Agreement, it became clear that, like many other legislative documents, it has a dry language and was confusing to read. What surprised us was its abstract language and the absence of specific actions or measurements to combat global warming. This prompted me to contemplate my position as a designer and how I can use design and communication to make it more accessible and easier to read while still being specific. How can design effectively raise awareness? Or is awareness alone insufficient, and design needs to bring about change to be effective? Ultimately, the goal of the agreement is for 195 countries to effect change and save the planet.

During my research, I came across “Layers of Action,” a chart created by graphic designer Benedetta Crippa, which categorizes designers’ actions regarding climate change. The symbolic layer focuses on superficial representations, the material reality layer deals with tangible sustainable choices, and the holistic layer delves into deeper questions of power and exploitation to propose alternative forms. Each layer plays a role in promoting sustainability, but the holistic approach seeks to challenge dominant traditions and expand our capacity for coexistence. This raised the question: Do we, as designers, need to apply each layer to truly resonate with people?

### **Climate Calender, (2024)**

[https://www.behance.net/gallery/188782743/Climate-Calendar?tracking\\_source=search\\_projects%7Cclimate+change&l=27&](https://www.behance.net/gallery/188782743/Climate-Calendar?tracking_source=search_projects%7Cclimate+change&l=27&)

This project reflects our thoughts when we read the Paris agreement: anxiety about our future and frustration. When creating the zine, we used an iterative approach with different visual and contextual experiments but ultimately our goal was to highlight the importance of acting and showing the urgency of the matter. It aligns with this project, which reflects on how little time is left, by using language and material to demonstrate the consequences of what will happen, if there is no action to be taken. This work also served me as a visual reference for the poster that I created by using the disappearance of form to show the importance of global warming. When analysing the language of the document we dissected and highlighted the words that are most relevant, and used cataloguing as a method of finding similarities and grouping the words together in order to summarize and add value to the context.

### **In title of the show, Julia Born**

<https://gfzk.de/en/2009/inform-julia-born-title-of-the-show/>

Julia Born uses space to recontextualize her work, by changing the scale and bringing her graphic design work into an art context. This made us realize that

changing size and space alone can completely change the viewers perception. In our project we decided to use size as a tool in order to facilitate the readers experience, by highlighting the most important part of the agreement and printing it on a bigger page, without modifying its content. This allows the reader to read the whole page and immediately understand the main goals of the Paris agreement. Like Julia Born does in her work, showing a still growing and ever-changing project and exploring how design can change and evolve over time, we wanted to explore different methods in order to see which one is the most effective and powerful. Our work can be seen as a sort of test experiment, finalized not by the designer but by the reader itself.

### **The medium is the Message, Marshall McLuhan, (1967)**

Marshall McLuhan describes the western man in his book *The medium is the Message* as a visual man and sees visual space as uniform, continuous and connected. (McLuhan, 1967)

This statement posed the question on how we can integrate visual elements into the text and make them work together in a simultaneous way. Creating recognizable forms related to climate change out of the words and articles has helped to achieve a more immediate understanding and gives a layer of hierarchy to the text. The image immediately gets perceived by the reader, even without adding further context to it.

We feel more secure when things are visible, when we can "see for ourselves." (The medium is the message, Marshall McLuhan, (1964)

As Marshall McLuhan points out, adding something visual adds a level of believing and seriousness to it. In our work the graphs and visual forms become lenses, through which we can understand the context and also act as a motivation to read the whole document.

### **Exercises in style, Queneau, Raymond, (1998)**

Queneau Raymond's *Exercises in style* illuminates the reality of multiple perspectives from which everything can be viewed. This has posed the question: What happens if you change the perspective of the author of the Paris agreement? So, what if it's not a human's perspective anymore but transforms into the eyes and mind of nature? What if you try to narrate through the eyes of a child? As scientists point out, the babies that we see on the street now will be the most affected generation, so why should we not give them a voice. Translating the 3 main points of the agreement into a child's language was an initial experiment which then progressed into translating the most important key words and adding children's doodles over the initial text of the document. Using simplified language and symbols act as a summary and direct communication in order to create a more approachable outcome.

## **UN Emissions Gap Report (2023)**

<https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/43922/EGR2023.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y>

Since the Paris agreement was signed in 2015, we wanted to inform ourselves about the progresses being made and find relevant data closer to 2024. We therefore looked at the UN Emission Gap report, that tracks the progress in limiting global warming well below 2°C and pursuing 1.5°C in line with the Paris Agreement. The report provides a comprehensive analysis of current emissions trends, policy actions, and mitigation efforts by countries around the world. By filtering important data from the report, we created graphs that show the viewer the reality of the situation without hiding the horrifying truth. The UN Emissions Gap Report served us as a critical tool for assessing the Paris Agreement. Just like the Emissions Gap Report warns that mitigation efforts in line with current policies will result in global warming of 3°C throughout this century, the graphs act as a warning too, encouraging to read the full document and to recognize the urgency of it.

## **The two sides of the Paris Climate agreement: Dismal failure or Historic Breakthrough?, Raymond Cléménçon, (2016)**

[https://www.jstor.org/stable/26197961?searchText=&searchUri=&ab\\_segments=&searchKey=&refreqid=fastly-default%3A7480b19d04239422655916b5f994956a](https://www.jstor.org/stable/26197961?searchText=&searchUri=&ab_segments=&searchKey=&refreqid=fastly-default%3A7480b19d04239422655916b5f994956a)

The Paris Agreement is built entirely around voluntary country pledges—as different as the countries they are coming from—which are still far from adding up to achieving the objectives the agreement defines. (The two sides of the Paris Climate agreement: Dismal failure or Historic Breakthrough?, Raymond Cléménçon, 2016)

As Raymond Cléménçon says in this essay the Paris agreement does not bind its parties to act, but focuses on unspecified global goals and individual measurements for each country. When analysing its content, we realized that its language is passive and unspecific. We therefore asked ourselves on how we can transform it into a more action-based document, by using active language. Thinking about the role of graphic design we posed the question on how can we educate and inform people. This essay gave us a critical and two-sided view on the Paris agreement and pushed us to do further think about our design choices and our audience. The zine we created is not only directed to policy makers but also to a general and more wide audience.

## References:

Marshall McLuhan, *The Medium is the Message: An Inventory of Effects*  
Berkeley: Gingko Press, 1967] 2001

Queneau Raymond, *Exercises in Style*, London: John Calder, [1947] 1998

Climate Calender, (2024)

In title of the show, Julia Born

UN Emissions Gap Report, (2023)

The two sides of the Paris Climate agreement: Dismal failure or Historic Breakthrough?, Raymond Cléménçon, (2016)