

## METHODS OF CONTEXTULISING: WRITTEN RESPONSE P1

As a member of the Publishing & Literacy group, we explored visualisations of quantitative data in order to develop our own visuals and gain a deeper understanding of what it means to publish that type of information.

This project forced me to recognise my own illiteracy surrounding the magnitude of publishing that focuses on providing information about climate change, however I found that I was able to absorb that information from a more confident position through research.

I initially focused on campaigns and projects about CO2 emissions that were initiated by a range of companies and organizations, not only for their visualisations of quantitative data but so that I was able to see the information provided surrounding that data, such as the language associated with the campaigns/projects and how much of that information was released to the public. I was further interested in categorising their visualisations from a design standpoint, to see whether they were functional, aesthetic led, or strategic, in order to compare the legibility.

The outcome that we chose to develop was a mock up of a store receipt which had the waste data sub-areas listed as purchases alongside their total weights as the price. This would then be contained on a website that allowed users to interact with the receipt.

To support that item I created a short clip of that receipt being printed from a UAL labelled device, while images of the waste being listed accumulated in the foreground. As this clip could be an item that exists on social media, acting as a connection to the website, the data on the receipt was simplified for easy absorption and comprehension.

**Designing Graphic Interpretation**, Johanna Drucker

Johanna Druckers, *Designing Graphic Interpretation* chapter from her book, *Graphesis: Visual Forms of Knowledge Production*, focuses on the false sense of 'neutrality' in conventional data visualisations and proposes an approach that fosters humanism through uncertainty and ambiguity. Drucker believes that this can be achieved through strategies that are open to interpretation, such as "Wandering lines, insertions, deletions of branched options, thoughts that begin and end, are dropped, aborted, abandoned, their unfinished lines broken partway through their expression".

As someone who is used to viewing data in the traditional form of tables and charts, I found Drucker's argument for a humanistic approach to data visualisation to be quite moving; Reflecting humanistic patterns and behaviours through data wouldn't just leave room for interpretation, but it would also allow us to engage with the information through active investigation and development of our own practice.

*Drucker, J. (2014) 'Designing graphic interpretation' Graphesis: Visual Forms of Knowledge Production Cambridge: Harvard University Press*

**On Patterns and Proxies**, Wendy Hui Kyong Chun

The essay *On Patterns and Proxies* discusses the challenges associated with proxies, particularly in relation to climate change as they act as a stand-in for something that we can't observe directly. Due to this, Chun explains that the topic of climate change isn't just open to interpretation but also to scepticism, and that proxies can simultaneously provide assurance and introduce doubt, "Proxies are not innocent, but neither are they inherently guilty". Despite being considered a necessary tool for comprehension, proxies can generate strong reactions from either direction.

Chun's essay provided a helpful insight into the way that data could be perceived when proxies are introduced as a stand-in, and prompted me to consider the ways that I would attempt to "bridge the unknown or absent"; In relation to the waste data, what would be both an accurate and appropriate representative piece of information or image to use?

*E-flux.com. (2017). Accumulation - Wendy Hui Kyong Chun - On Patterns and Proxies. [online]*

METHODS OF CONTEXTULISING:  
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## READING LIST

The book, *Data Feminism*, debates that data science is rooted in political practices that can perpetuate harmful narratives for minorities and the marginalised in society. D'Ignazio and Klein explain that data collection and analysis can often operate with a degree of bias, resulting in misinformation and miscalculated findings. As a solution, D'Ignazio and Klein propose that these practices are re-shaped by principles that deconstruct the traditional methods, and introduce a feminist approach to encourage an equal and ethical operation.

The topic of inequalities surrounding data collection heightened my interest in the unseen and uncalculated data areas, particularly when it came to considering the reasons why that information may not have been accounted for. If most data collection practices were inherently political and biased, then what could we do as practitioners to ensure that we don't continue to perpetuate that? How can we produce fair and unbiased visualisations of that data?

*Klein, L.F. and D'Ignazio, C. (2020). Data feminism. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Mit Press.*

**Decolonising Innovation in Sustainability Transitions for Pluriversal Justice & Wellbeing**, Saurabh Arora, Bipashyee Ghosh, Andy Stirling

The article *Decolonising Innovation in Sustainability Transitions* explores the flaws to mainstream sustainability innovation due to its colonial history, leading to a system which fails to provide truly fair sustainable results due to earlier frameworks that "Controls objectivity", "reifying representations" and "monopolising quantifications". The authors insist that in order to see change, innovation in sustainability transitions must be decolonised through an approach which includes recognising different cultures, knowledge, and practices to remove those restrictive practices.

This article presented a series of arguments which made me reflect on the ways that innovation surrounding sustainability is geared towards a select few pockets of society, and question whether publishers have a responsibility to help and support in reframing that system? A system which can, whether inadvertently or not, cause harm through innovative solutions which neglect the problems and the needs of the unrecognised and unaccounted for.

*Arora, S., Ghosh, B. and Stirling, A. (2025). Decolonising innovation in sustainability transitions for pluriversal justice and wellbeing. Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions, [online].*

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OUTSIDE READING LIST

Ben & Jerry's regenerative agriculture scheme contained an advertising campaign which confronted other companies, service providers and manufacturers that proclaimed to be "Carbon-neutral"; The ad insisted that the phrase was a marketing gimmick, stemming from the act of "green-washing", in which a company "exaggerates their commitment to climate change". This ad further went on to showcase the efforts made by Ben & Jerry's (Homemade Holdings Inc) using "Science Based Targets" to produce real results.

I found this campaign notable during my research due to the use of language and the subsequent data provided in the Ben & Jerry's sustainability report; It led me to question what that kind of critical approach implies? Does this make the brand appear more credible and trustworthy? And are their claims substantiated by their own records? Could this be considered an example of climate data being politicised?

*<https://www.benjerry.co.uk>. (2023). Here's Why Ben & Jerry's Is Taking Direct Climate Action Instead of Going 'Carbon Neutral'. [online].*

**Feral Atlas**, Anna L. Tsing, Jennifer Deger, Alder Keleman Saxena and Feifei Zhou

Feral Atlas: The More-Than-Human Anthropocene is a digital project which presents a reinterpretation of the Anthropocene periods, providing users with the opportunity to explore the ecological worlds that are produced when human infrastructures affect other living organisms and their physical surroundings. The project allows users to take a look at field reports supplied by "scientists, humanists and artists" that shows how to "recognise 'feral' ecologies that have been encouraged by human-built infrastructures, but which have developed and spread beyond human control".

Feral Atlas was a fascinating project to explore and possibly the most influential of them all because the project was an interactive piece that allowed users to explore seventy-nine field reports through non-linear mapping. The use of mixed-multimedia to create these data visualisation was both aesthetic led and functional; Supplying research data in an exciting and lively container, as opposed to traditional static mapping.

*Tsing, A.L. (2021). Feral Atlas: The More-Than-Human Anthropocene. [online] feralatlas.org. Available at: <https://feralatlas.org/>.*

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PROJECT/CAMPAIGN