

**Biennale
Warszawa**

+ RATS Agency

How

A INTRODUCTION

B STRATEGIES

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to talk about the climate and pandemic crises?

The climate crisis has been with us for decades, we have got used to it. This is probably due to the fact that its repercussions are not always spectacular, or can be felt only in the short term. But the crisis affects all spheres of life at all latitudes. So far, its paralyzing effects have mostly been visible in the countries of the global South, and not worldwide, as is the case with COVID-19.

Almost instantly, the Coronavirus became the principal reference point in news concerning health, politics, economy, culture, and sports. Faced with this threat, countries began to intervene, not only in their citizens' lives, but in the market as well. What once seemed impossible no longer is.

After the Coronavirus, the world will probably never be the same. This is a moment to act and clearly communicate your vision for the future when it comes to the climate crisis, politics, or social issues. Civil liberties we lose in fighting the pandemic may never be restored.

We must act!

How to talk about the climate crisis?

As a starting point, you can use seven principles prepared by **Climate Outreach**, which turn out to be just as relevant in the pandemic crisis:

- 1. Show real people, not staged photo-ops**
- 2. Tell new stories**
- 3. Show climate causes at scale**
- 4. Climate impacts are emotionally powerful**
- 5. Show local (but serious) climate impacts**
- 6. Be very careful with protest imagery**
- 7. Understand your audience**

We would like to add
three more principles:

8.

Remember the context

Graphic design, photos, videos, or reportage are never created in a vacuum. We filter them through stereotypes, or mental shortcuts, we relate them to the history of a genre, or our familiarity with the medium. If you want someone to read a brochure you leave in their mailbox, forget extreme colors and art paper. This is what a pizza flyer looks like, so you reduce the chances of someone reading a message presented in this way. Maybe it would be better if your flyer looked like a package notification?

We would like to add
three more principles:

9.

There is no universally understandable message

Select your target audience and use a language they will understand, including the visual language. The climate crisis is a systemic, global, and multi-layered phenomenon, but not all of its aspects must be always presented at once. Sometimes it can be more beneficial and quite sufficient just to convince some people to create a flower meadow.

We would like to add
three more principles:

10.

Act ethically

Always check if what you communicate is based on reliable information. Be aware of your own biases, stereotypes, or projections that can affect your message. Remember the people who appear in your materials are individuals, too. Make sure that the people on whose behalf you are acting always have the right to decide about their image and are informed about the form of its publication.



Journalism and activism can be done on a small budget, and often even from home. The pandemic crisis has forced journalists to broadcast from their home offices, recording on regular smartphones or tablets. Background noise in interviews does not surprise anyone these days. There is no precedent to this situation of private citizens using the same equipment and similar distribution channels as large media companies. We should profit from this moment by creating content tailored not only for display on specific devices (e.g. a vertical smartphone screen determines the use of vertical photos and videos), but also for various audiences.

Visual communication strategies:

1.

Infotainment

An effective message is appropriate and appealing, giving it a greater chance of drawing the audience's attention.

Visual communication strategies:

2.

Important things first

Most of us do not read entire articles.

Make sure to place the key point of your message
in the introduction, and not in the epilogue.

Visual communication strategies:

3.

Social media

In our day, platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, or even Tinder can serve as carriers of important, meaningful content. Try to use their reach and specific communication style.

4.

Recycling

Use existing content and materials. Compile and create your own *found footage* (many media libraries are available under the Creative Commons license) in the digital world, and in the real world, create a board, a poster, a banner, or a leaflet from something that was meant to be thrown away. This can be a manifesto in itself.

Visual communication strategies:

5.

Use # and @

1. Algorithms cluster information. With this in mind, you can use them creatively. A compounded message can have an impact on reality (**#MeToo**).

Visual communication strategies:

6.

Act locally

Talk about global problems with examples from your immediate surroundings. Even small actions can lead to huge changes.

Visual communication strategies:

7.

Share

Sometimes you do not even have to create anything. Sharing reliable information can be more essential, as it spreads an important message.

Visual communication strategies:

8.

Small things matter

Everything can be your weapon. Remember that one of the most recognizable messages for climate change is a cardboard sign proclaiming *Skolstrejk för klimatet* [School Strike for Climate].



Reading:

John Berger
Ways of seeing

inspiring thoughts to understand what and how we see

Naomi Klein
*This Changes Everything:
Capitalism vs. The Climate*

threats stemming from global warming and other climate-change issues
in the broader context of global political, social, and economic changes

Tobias Leenaert,
*How to Create a Vegan World:
A Pragmatic Approach*

a pragmatic approach to ideological issues

Yates McKee
Strike Art: Contemporary Art and the Post-Occupy Condition

contemporary protest strategies at the intersection of activism and art

Reading:

Nicholas Mirzoeff,
How to See the World

on how visual culture works and changes

Victor Papanek
Design for the Real World:
Human Ecology and Social Change

not just for designers, a book about how to focus
on meaning instead of form

Linda Polman
The Crisis Caravan:
What's Wrong with Humanitarian Aid?

explaining that empathy can also be a business and has a darker side

Reading:

Save the Children's Resource Centre

The People in the Pictures.

Vital perspectives on Save the Children's image making

a publication explaining how to talk about humanitarian aid,
created in consultation with the protagonists of media messages

Susan Sontag

Regarding the Pain of Others

an analysis of images of suffering in the media

WWW:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/26/reader-center/yemen-photos-starvation.html>

<https://www.worldpressphoto.org/programs/contests/photo-contest/code-of-ethics/28580>

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<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/06/technology/myanmar-facebook.html>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/nov/22/vanuatu-says-it-may-sue-fossil-fuel-companies-and-other-countries-over-climate-change>

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