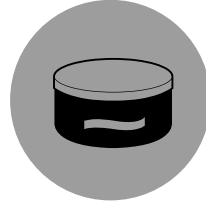
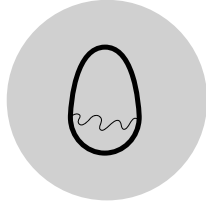
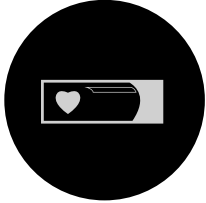
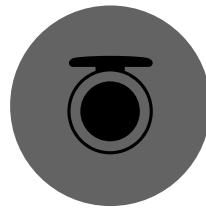
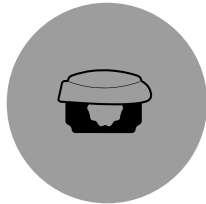
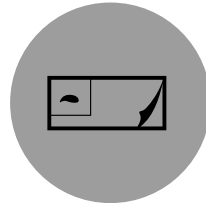


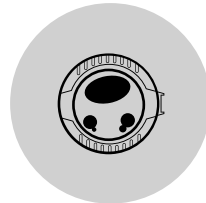
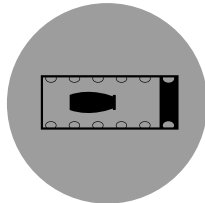
MASTER THESIS



2019-2020



CÉLINE VAN BAKEL



#SAYNOTOPALMOIL

The palm oil industry explained through the eyes of a graphic designer

This master's thesis came about (in part) during the period in which higher education was subjected to a lockdown and protective measures to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The process of collection information, the design research method and/or other design research work could therefore not always be carried out in the usual manner. The reader should bear this context in mind when reading this Master's thesis, and also in the event that some conclusions are taken on board.

Thesis / Research Article originally submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the MA Reading Type and Typography (READSEARCH), University College PXL-MAD (Media, Arts & Design) School of Arts, 2020.

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The palm oil industry explained through the eyes of a graphic designer

Céline van Bakel

Research Article

2019-2020

International Master in

Visual Arts Graphic Design:

Reading Type and Typography

— READSEARCH

MAD- Faculty

Supervisors

Ann Bessemans

María Pérez Mena

Carl Haase



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ABSTRACT

Today there are many different industries damaging the environment.

#SAYNOTOPALMOIL is a project about the risks surrounding the destructive nature of the palm oil industry, communicated through a graphic designer's point of view. Throughout this design led project the readers will be confronted with the products that some of us use daily and are contributing to this harmful industry.

This will be explained to the consumers of palm oil readers through three mediums; a series of posters, a book, and followed up by a website. By utilizing these platforms the destructive nature of certain products can be featured alongside the very products that can replace them (giving the reader a possible solution), and a place for what one can do to save the Orangutans.

In highlighting the harmful products, they are categorized into four categories; starting with the products that contain palm oil but are not directly damaging for the fauna and flora, to the extremely destructive products to entire ecosystems. Each of the categories has a page color, starting with light grey, turning to a medium grey, dark grey, and ending in black. This color code has been used throughout the three platforms allowing for a consistent message and system for the reader to follow.

Currently the vast majority of products in current use contain some percentage of palm oil. If we do not stop buying these harmful products, the market will not change, leading to the further and continued destruction of fauna and flora, the natural habitat of the Orangutan. #SAYNOTOPALMOIL

1. CONTEXT

The palm oil trees are native from Africa, but 100 years ago, they were brought to South-East Asia as an ornamental tree crop. Indonesia and Malaysia make over 85% of the global palm oil supply; 42 other countries also produce this oil.

Palm oil is an edible oil that is extracted from the fruit of the oil palm trees. Two types of oil can be produced, namely crude palm oil and palm kernel oil. For the first, the fresh fruit is squeezed. For the second, that also produces more oil, the kernel or the stone of the fruit is squeezed.

The palm oil industry is one of the largest damaging industries that destroys the earth. If we talk about palm oil, we should have our eyes directly on Indonesia, because it is the largest producer of palm oil in the world. Therefore Indonesia's palm oil industry¹ forms the focus of my design project. Palm oil is Indonesia's main export product, and the industry is providing a large number of employment opportunities. Since the 1980s the production has steadily increased, due to the increase in the plantation area. The biggest concerns that are coming along are deforestation and peatland destruction, protections of the animals, and protection measurements from palm oil product-producing countries.

Palm oil products are everywhere to be found in many various industries. These include cosmetic products, cooking oil, soap, pharmaceutical products, and biodiesel. Besides palm oil, many other plants can be sources of oil and fats, such as soybean oil, sunflower, rapeseed, and others.

The palm oil plantation has been growing in Indonesia since 1967. In 1988 the private sector surpassed the government in terms of plantations area. In 2012 the plantation area counted nine million hectares. In 2006 Indonesia surpassed Malaysia as the most significant world producer of palm oil, and in 2011 the production accounted for 45% of world production further in just one year in 2012; the production will rise to 70% of palm oil export. After the rapid growth, the Indonesian government realized the palm oil sector's potential and made it his priority sector.²

The biggest concerns of this palm oil industry are deforestation and peatland destruction. If this industry keeps



Image 1: Palm oil fruits, James Morgan / WWF-International



Image 2: Deforestation Borneo, Simon Rawles / WWF-Canon

logging forests at this speed, most of the national parks will disappear in the next two decades. The second-largest and oldest forest is disappearing, and this must end. We have to protect this forest as its disappearance will have a massive impact on the world, namely it is another factor that is causing global warming.³ Other than that deforestation and peatland destruction is damaging the people and animals that live and are needed by the forest to maintain healthy. The industry is causing the extinction of many animal species and foreign tribes.

This situation is now acute for both the Bornean orangutan and the Sumatran orangutan. I'm fascinated by the orangutans and so should you. They share share 97% DNA with us. For that reason their name means 'the humans of the forest'. The orangutans are classed as Endangered and Critically endangered repetitively by the World Conservation Union (IUCN). They are listed on number 1 of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of wild fauna and flora (CITES). The removal of food trees, murdering orangutans dis-

¹ <https://www.wwf.org.uk/updates/8-things-know-about-palm-oil>

² Prassetya, R. P. (2013). *Palm oil industry in Indonesia: Moving up the value chain*. University of Tokyo

³ Ancrenaz, M., E. Meijaard, S. Wich, J. Simery. (2016). *Palm Oil Paradox: Sustainable Solutions to Save the Great Apes*. second edition. UNEP / GRASP.

played by logging and plantation development, and fragmentation of remaining intact forest constitutes conservation emergency. More than thousands of orangutans that have been saved are kept in Borneo's rescue centers, with maybe never having the chance to return to the wild.⁴

Due to the troubles that the palm oil industry causes for Orangutans, the topic has popped up earlier and brought me to environmental websites like WWF, Greenpeace that were explaining why the palm oil industry is this harmful. Most of the palm oil campaigns that have been held, tell their story by making use of images.⁵ But there was not a campaign that used other graphic elements than just images. Greenpeace took it a little further in their campaign in November 2018 by bringing a scene of the destruction featuring a lifelike Orangutan. This scene was placed in front of the entrance of the corporate headquarters of Mondelez to bring awareness.⁶

When most consumers think about palm oil, they think that it is used only in food. This is for sure not true. Palm oil products are everywhere to be found in many various industries. These include food products, cosmetic products, pharmaceutical products, and biodiesel. Palm oil is used in cosmetics because it holds the color well. In food mainly because it does not melt at high temperatures and are free of trans fats⁷, this too – applies for cosmetic and pharmaceutical products – it adds a smooth application without adding extra taste. The reason why palm oil is used in biodiesel is because it is the cheapest oil that they can use. But there is a negative side, it releases three times the greenhouse gas emissions of fossil diesel.⁸

Besides palm oil, many other plants can be sources of oil and fats, such as soybean oil, sunflower, rapeseed, and others. The submit of palm oil plantations is much higher than other oils. Palm oils yield per hectare is 11 times of soybean oil, ten times of sunflower, and seven times of rapeseed oil. Since 2011 there has been a massive gap between the demand for palm oil which was twice then all other oils.⁹

When I was searching why the problems created by the palm oil industry are not known by many consumers,

⁴ UNEP, Nellemann, C. N. (2007). The last stand of the Orangutan: State of emergency: illegal logging, fire and palm oil in Indonesia's national parks. Norway

⁵ <https://www.greenpeace.org/nl/natuur/11405/timeline-greenpeace-palm-oil-campaign-2007-2018/>

⁶ <https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/news/greenpeace-brings-scene-forest-destruction-featuring-lifelike-orangutan-headquarters-oreo-cookies/>

⁷ Khatun, R. K., Reza, M. I. H. R., Moniruzzaman, M. M., & Yaakob, Z. Y. (2017). Sustainable oil palm industry: the possibilities. Elsevier: Renewable and sustainable energy reviews

⁸ <https://www.transportenvironment.org/what-we-do/biofuels/why-palm-oil-biodiesel-bad>

⁹ Greenpeace, (2018). The final countdown: now or never to reform the palm oil industry, Greenpeace International



Image 3: Bornean Orangutan, naturepi.com/ Edwin Giebers / WWF-Canon



Image 4: Sumatran Orangutan, Fletcher & Baylis / WWF-Indonesia



Image 5: Campaign against Mondelez, Chris J. Ratcliffe / Greenpeace

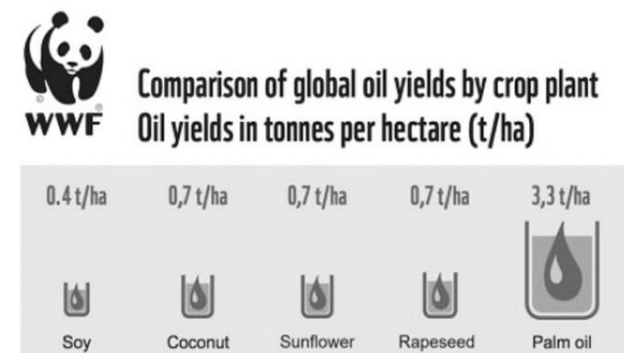


Image 6: Comparison palm oil and other crops / WWF-International

there seemed to be no clear answer. You can find a good amount of articles why palm oil is bad and what we can do about it, but the articles hardly seem to reach the consumers of palm oil. I was not aware of the size or the diversity of the palm industry until I became more interested and focused on Orangutans. Searching through more information about this species confronts you with the simple fact that the palm industry is the direct cause in the push to extinction of the Orangutans.

After gaining in depth information about the palm oil industry, I slowly became more and more aware that everybody is participating in this damaging industry. Only a few are aware of this world problem.

The reason why consumers are not aware of this problem because they do not know how harmful palm oil is to the world. Therefore they stick to their habits of buying their favorite daily products. On top, it seems like if consumers want to take action and reduce the amount of palm oil in bought products, palm oil is covered up in other descriptions. There are more than five hundred ways to say palm oil, and most of the time it is processed in other ingredients.

As a consumer, I don't want to participate in this industry anymore. Even more, as a graphic designer, I would like to make people/consumers aware of how they are quietly participating and would like to change their attitude towards buying products that contain a lot of this harmful oil. How can a designer contribute in communication of a world problem like this?

2. COMMUNICATING SOCIAL/CULTURAL PROBLEMS AS A DESIGNER

2.1 Graphic design and protest

Poster design has had an essential role in the history of Europe and America. This is largely due to their ability to be produced fast and in vast quantities through easy means of equipment. And their inherent capability for bold and forceful messages, statements of impact upon a wide audience. Lending to why posters have come to occupy a special place in the hearts of most graphic designers. Poster designs tend to have a sense of immediacy that lends an irresistible urgency to the message.¹⁰ For example, political protest and social discontent have been visually and verbally expressed throughout the ages.¹¹ When political propaganda communications are made, they are expected to affect opinions and actions.¹²

People have been using their bodies, symbols, identities, and practices that are full of emotion to express themselves.¹³ The reason why people protest is that they do not agree with specific rules or how certain situations are handled in their government or even in other countries in the world. A protest without emotions is inconvincible; these emotional feelings give us the idea, ideologies, identities, and these feelings to motivate our power to protest. This is why social movements are the carriers of meaning, and organizers to create moral outrage to provide a target which they can protest about.¹⁴

The visuals of early protests were most of the time designed by painters and illustrators.¹⁵ The divergent paths between graphic design and art lead to believe that a new model of writing its history was required, because of the digital revolution and the rise of the internet. Graphic design mediums unfold faster than before and have always been a responsive medium. This is an

¹⁰ <https://www.pixartprinting.co.uk/blog/protest-poster/>

¹¹ McQuiston, L., (2019). *Protest! A history and political protest graphics*, Princeton University Press

¹² Frascara, J. (1997). *User-Centred Graphic Design, mass communications and social change.*, Taylor & Francis

¹³ Pabón, F., (2017). *Protest campaigns and civil wars*, University of Hong Kong

¹⁴ Van Troost, D. V. T., van Stekelenburg, J. V. S., Klandermans, B. K. (2013). *Emotions of protest*. VU, University Amsterdam

¹⁵ Pigalskaya, A. P. (2014). *Visual traces of individualization practices in the 1960-70s posters of the BSSR*. Vilnius, Lithuania

Image 7: Extinction Rebellion Protest, SOPA Images/igittocket © Getty Images



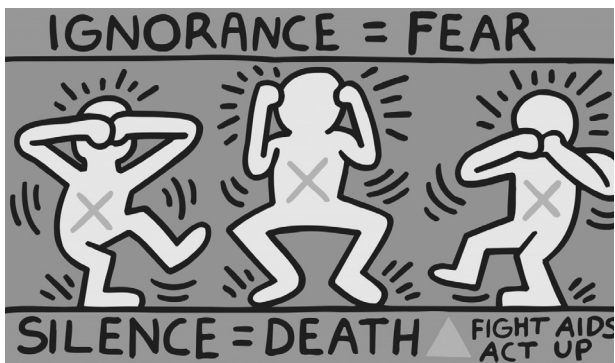
Image 8: BLM Breonna Taylor, © Jim Lo Scalzo / EPA



Image 9: feminists demonstrate outside the Versace show against the pressure on young models to be skinny size zeros / © Splash



Image 10: Keith Haring artwork, Ignorance = Fear, 1989 © Keith Haring Foundation Collection Noirmontartproduction, Paris



important factor now trends fall in and out in spans of minutes.¹⁶

What does it mean to be a designer in a time where everyone can be reached?

It is easy for everyone to express themselves and let the world know what they think, how they feel, but it is not only about expressing yourself. It is reaching out to the right people and trying to make an emotional connection to understand each other.¹⁷

Some people like to go out on the street and protest against rules they do not agree with for some reason. But what if words are not affecting enough? Can we move the audience more through the use of pictures, drawings, or design?

Protest for me is not going on the streets and showing how I feel, protest for me is bringing awareness to others. This project's main goal is to make more people aware of the palm oil industry, and understand what the consequences are when we participate in it.

To visualize #SAYNOTOPALMOIL the products are visualized more abstractly. Products are displayed differently than the readers are used to, this to get people's intentions, and make them aware of their actions. And if they become aware of their actions these companies will become less strong, and hopefully, remove palm oil as an ingredient for their products. But this project is not forbidding people to purchase products with palm oil. It is explaining the problem to see if they will think about the problem and change their mind.

¹⁶ De Smedt, C., De Bondt, S., (2012). Graphic Design: History in the making., The University of Chicago Press

¹⁷ <https://www.lynda.com/Graphic-Design-tutorials/Design-emotion/769107/796825-4.html>

2.2 The role of a graphic designer, contributing in the well-being of society

In today's modern industrial societies, design plays a crucial role. Problems or opportunities that involve the human condition serve as communicative challenges to designers to position the discipline of graphic design as a tool of relaying information between a given problem and its possible solutions, ending in a message to a chosen audience, and lending to the needs of the market. Designers are the translators and visualize the human environment, giving form to objects, experiences that inform, persuade, and entertain us.¹⁸

The designs do not only have explicit practical functions but besides that, they too have implicit social functions. We as designers create not only useful products and images, we further produce and reproduce the cultural meanings through certain chosen products and images.¹⁹

The choices the designer makes within their ideas depend on the social and cultural context they operate in. Designers can only fulfill their own roles if they understand these contexts. They contribute to the production of our cultural 'mindscape', always considering their actions or the impact of their work. For a 'good design,' the designer must take into account the aesthetics, possible innovation(s), lending to the right approach for the targeted audience. The consumer needs, wants to be convinced to buy or not to buy a specific product, this has become a part of our cultural conditioning. These insights lend in the producing visual and verbal narratives that support the given the message providing the chosen audience a direction.

Designers are constantly exploring the meanings and effects that come with their design.

Not only the aesthetic or commercial criteria but as well by social and cultural context. A 'social' designer examines how they have to transmit certain subjects and situations, not only about the products, but about any possible societal and environmental effects. Designers must reject what they have been taught, to use the cultural context subconsciously only and interact with their projects like other artists interact with their canvas.²⁰ Sometimes printed information is for reference, persuasion, and all of it is processed into a format determined by current technology.²¹ Visual persuasion is using graphics; photos, illustrations and graphics to intensify

¹⁸ McCarthy, S.M., Melibeu, C.M. (2002) Self-Authored Graphic design: A Strategy for Integrative Studies, University of Illinois press

¹⁹ Berger, J., (1972). Ways of Seeing. Harmondsworth, Penguin/BBC

²⁰ Grant, L.J., (2007). Understanding the role of the designer is society., Journal of Art & Design Education, Dalhousie University

²¹ Butler, F.C., (1984). Eating the image: The Graphic Designer and the starving audience., The MIT Press

a message in order to motivate the reader to act a certain way.²² A variety of studies suggest that during integration, negative information often receives a greater weight and influence than positive information does.²³

When an advertised product is not bought by the public the designer knows his or her way of advertising has failed, regardless of the aesthetic beauty of the ads. This is similar to what we see when we look at political propaganda communications, they are expected to affect opinions that then lead to action.

When we talk about graphics that are made to communicate information, we see them as things that help, assist, aid us with simple tasks such as data cleaning and exploration, before getting to the serious task of interference. Graphics have become popular to innovate visual appearances on the web and in the New York Times. The graphics that are mostly used in presentations are all about care, specifics and singular view. Presentation skills are useful to communicate to others.²⁴ A lot of our activities today are supported by signs and symbols, but so far, they are only used for visual communication and information.²⁵

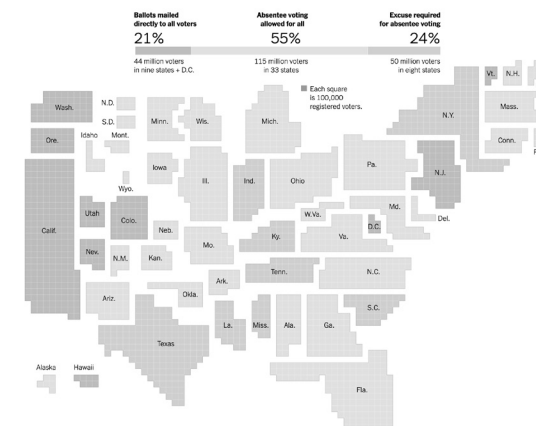


Image 11: A Record 76% of Americans Can Vote by Mail in 2020
By Juliette Love, Matt Stevens and Lazaro Gamio for NYT

²² <https://medium.com/visual-persuasion/what-is-visual-persuasion-2923f264b>

²³ Maheswaran, D., Meyers-Levy, J., (1990). The influence of message framing and issue involvement. Sage Publications, Inc.

²⁴ Gelman, A.G., Unwin, A.U. (2013). Infovis and statistical graphics: different goals, different looks, Taylor & Francis, Ltd.

²⁵ Munari, B. M. (2008). Design as art. p.73, Penguin Classics, The Penguin Group

As I was looking further on how to communicate with symbols/dingbats as part of the graphic design toolbox, I came across research²⁶ were participants between the age of 18 to 49 where asked different questions as 'have you ever used graphics to communicate?', 'When do you think graphics are most often used as a form of communication?', 'What kind of graphics do you think are most used in communication?', 'Which industry do you think uses graphic the most?', and 'Why do you think graphics are used as a form of communication?'. 76% of the participants have used graphics to communicate about a certain topic and 82% say it is most often used in the advertisement world, and the most used kind of graphics? While 35% says symbols are most used to simply tell the information.

²⁶ Louie, H.L., (2013). Graphics as a form of communication, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology

2.3 Approaching people through different communication platforms

When a designer starts with a design project, as an individual or a team they generate ideas for changing a physical environment and try to form a guide on how to start their project. First, there is the consideration of the project's parameters, for example, an open space plan, or an object.²⁷

In today's environment, it is expected of designers to know how to use different ways of informative communication platforms within the design.²⁸

Each of the chosen platforms in this project has the ability and opportunity to reach a specific type of buyer through their different approaches with ready to consume information. Allowing for awareness and can influence the consumer to buy either fewer products with palm oil or a more environmentally stable product.

It all started with posters, everywhere we go, we will at least see one poster that is informing us about a certain message; a political message, a product, or an event that is coming up soon. The poster is one of the most important communication tools. When a poster is designed, it has to be clear for the reader in just a moment of time. When we see a poster, for the most part, the reading time is limited, because we see it from the car, bus, or train. This is why there is more of a preference towards images, use of bold colors and large type.²⁹

It is important that a poster is focused on communicating a single idea, it can be read easier than when there is too much information to process.³⁰ Because most of the time we just only catch a glimpse of a poster, leading to the use of only one medium not having the ability to spread the message far and wide enough, the public perception would just be too limited. Posters function to make people think or have limited awareness about a thing. But this project is designed for more than just letting people think, lending to the need for more than one platform to communicate and interact with.

New and innovative forms of media are rising all around us, yet we are definitely not destroying or moving away from the book (printed or not). Today there are more books on sale and being read than ever before. It has shown that a new medium of verbal communication does not wipe out the old but acts to reinforce those mediums or media. It transforms the old, and books will

²⁷ Zeisel, J., Inquiry by design, Harvard University

²⁸ Cezzar, J., (2018), The AIGA Guide to Careers in Graphic and Communication Design, p.37 Bloomsbury Academic Publishing

²⁹ Lee Kaid, L., Holtz-Bacha, C., (2008). Encyclopedia of political communication, SAGE Publications

³⁰ Ramachandran Nair, P.K., (2014). Scientific Writing and Communication in agriculture and natural resources, Springer Switzerland

no longer be what books used to be.³¹ Physical books are meant to be enjoyed over time, the reader will have control over the pace and sequence of the experience. In books, content comes usually before designs while for example: magazines, the design is the structure to which the content most fit into.³²

Products that we buy are usually displayed in an advertisement leaflet, to give the audience something that they are familiar with. I chose to add a second medium.

The second medium is not an advertisement leaflet nor as a book, it is something in between. In the publication for this project provides information about the products that are seen on the poster to spread more information and act as a bridge between the posters and the website.

As I mentioned before, today they expect designers to know how to work within and across different mediums. As we live in these technological times, it is essential to work across many platforms to spread the word even further. When we look at news flashes, the fastest way to inform people about the latest news is through the use of the internet, in seconds it is live. This is why using the web is one of the key strategies you take into account, to reach as much of an audience and get the information in front of the right people.³³ Nowadays almost everyone has a smartphone and because of that websites need to be compatible with them. If websites are not made compatible with other devices the information will be read the wrong way or not at all.

The third platform used in this project would be the website, for this part I collaborated with Laurens Vijnck, a codewriter. As Laurens was focused on the development or framework of the site, based on my initial designs, allowing me to equally focus further on content. Due to the collaborative nature of this part of the project I was able to have the time to pick-up some basic coding experience of my own. Once the framework of the site was finished it became my task to populate it with the content I created: adding the products information, video(s) and links.

The website provides the same information we see in the book with all the products that contain palm oil. People can share their knowledge of the palm oil industry, making them a part of the process and become more

aware of this industry. Because it is impossible for just one person to know everything about a subject that has such a global impact. By using a website, the approach will spread much further and faster than the printed mediums. But to not exclude the other mediums, they will be added on the website for the audience that they can print the poster and book on-demand. There will be a downloading fee for the poster and book. If they chose to download one of them they will immediately support one of the organizations that help the Orangutans survive. When the audience starts to converse and donate to the organization's my project would have achieved its goal and then it is all of us against the industry.



Image 12: re-inc poster by Pentagram



Image 13: Delusions and Errors: The Telling Poster Designs of an Overlooked Region, New wife! New life!, Mahmud Şahan

³¹ Silverstein, A., (1974). Human Communication: Theoretical Explorations, Routledge Library editions
³² Cezzar, J., (2018). The AIGA Guide to Careers in Graphic and Communication Design, p.16 Bloomsbury Academic Publishing
³³ Barker, D., (2003). Getting the message out: a step by step communication guide for environmentalists. Sustainability Network, Impacs.

2.4 Campaign: #SAYNOTOPALMOIL

Graphic design has played an essential role in dictating and reacting to major political moments of our times, and simply one design can change the face of a campaign forever, it can bring hope or fear or even war.³⁴ There is a difference between protest and campaigns. When it comes to the design aspect, protests are signs that someone made by themselves when in campaigns the visuals have a stronger base related to the subject.

Protests are seen as rallies, demonstrations that are hollow, unsustainable and do not form a problem for the elite. If we look at campaigns, we see that they actually build movements because they are built for sustainability and most of the time escalation.³⁵

The storytelling of a campaign is the foundation of human culture and has always been the central success of social change.

The story-based strategy is seen as an evolving approach in numerous sectors. The framework catalogues practices that have always been part of transformative victories, while updating the timeless art of social change storytelling for the contemporary context.³⁶

This project is not a formal objection by a specific group, this is me trying, using these different mediums, to explain to the palm oil consumers why the palm oil industry is harmful.

Not just signs or posters made for just a protest day. This project is not made for just one day use.

The information and visuals have a strong base and can be used as long as the harmful industry will exist. With this campaign I want people to spread the word with me if they feel the same way as I do. Because the audience is needed to start this campaign. How more people tell the story, the more people know.

We only can change this industry when it forms a problem for the elite. What would happen if we stop buying the products that made them the elite?

³⁴ <https://medium.com/@yinks0067/the-visual-language-of-protest-how-graphic-design-can-fuel-protest-and-change-government-bcfa115a74c>

³⁵ <https://www.commondreams.org/views/2016/10/29/why-campaigns-not-protests-get-goods>

³⁶ Canning, D., Reinsborough, P., Smucker, J.M., (2017). Re:Imagining change-how to use story-based strategy to win campaigns, build movements, and change the world., PM Press Oakland

2.5 Other designers and their project for social change

At the beginning I must admit that there was struggle for a long time to find the right way to communicate. The first designs held too much information and this could confuse the reader and the message would not be delivered the way it should. How do other designers communicate their envisioned problems or their solution to the world?

A recent project is for example 'A-Z Coast to Coast Shore to Shore' by Johan Elmenhag. This is a book where he is introducing a typeface where the design is based on the danger that comes along when ice caps will melt. He said that the idea was born because climate change is somewhat abstract and difficult to address to the people.³⁷ I think taking a problem and visualizing this in a typeface the way he did is interesting because it is working and still readable.

The second one is 'Made in Fukushima.' This is a collaboration between US-German manufacturer of sensors for agriculture and environmental science METER, communication agency Serviceplan Innovation and digital design studio Moby Digg and photographer Nick Frank, all based in Munich.

With the publication of Made in Fukushima, METER hopes to elucidate its research by turning a complex and data-heavy scientific topic into something digestible. As Moby Digg puts it: "The researchers identified the problem that no one understands the depth of the data and the effectiveness of their work. We turned this abstract data into something visually appealing but easy to understand. We use basic forms: the grid is always square, and all the data points are circles in different sizes. This very reduced visual language focuses the attention on what's important."³⁸ This project was, for me, the most interesting. That is because of the data information that has come together and has visualized into book design. The design is well taught through, clear, and interesting. It showed me more how to handle a lot of data information into designs without over educating the audience.

We all know that plastic is one of the biggest harms for the environment. 'Plasticaplastica'³⁹ is a book that deals with plastic: What is plastic and where does it come from? In this book, readers may find hundreds of different objects of plastic in various colors that have

³⁷ <https://eyeondesign.aiga.org/a-typeface-to-visualize-climate-change-and-the-future-of-our-coastlines/>

³⁸ <https://www.itsnicethat.com/articles/meter-serviceplan-moby-digg-made-in-fukushima-graphic-design-publication-sponsored-content-120619>

³⁹ <http://www.plasticaplastica.com>

been found on the beach in/across Italy. The book displays all found objects by means of age and lifespan. Plastic will never rot and is a huge threat for the environment because plastic waste will find its way into the ocean and harm sea life. This project shows how they visualize all these products through photographs.

An innovative idea we see at 'The Guardian Weekly' with their experimental campaign on the streets of Berlin. The campaign is made like fire alarm boxes that people walking by can break to claim free copies of the Guardian weekly magazine. Each of the boxes features slogans like "In case of injustice, break glass" or "In case of corruption, break glass" and include a tiny hammer to aid the smashing. Spread across a number of locations in Berlin, the campaign features some of Guardian Weekly's iconic covers from the last year with a copy relevant to the themes found within. The "In case of corruption" box features a cover relating to President Trump's impeachment hearing, while "In case of climate inaction", houses the Kids V Climate Change cover from February 2019, where Guardian Weekly art director Andrew Stocks invited children to set the magazine's visual agenda. Alongside the experiential campaign, Oliver as well created a series of print ads featuring the fire alarm boxes that were flyposterred around the city.⁴⁰ After I discovered this project, it made me think about how I should present my project in an open space. Because not only the mediums are important but the way how it is presented in different places to the readers.

'Witness' is a new brand Identity made by Pentagram, it is for an organization which helps people use video and technology to protect and defend human rights. In these modern times, almost everyone has a smartphone and video technology is obviously more widely available. WITNESS still has a crucial role to play in training a new generation of human rights defenders in the safe, effective and ethical use of video. It carries out important research and publishes resources on emerging human rights issues such as deepfakes and cyber violence.⁴¹ As I was working with different mediums and struggling to keep the same aesthetic it is interesting to see how they combined different mediums but keeping the same language to communicate the problem.

⁴⁰ <https://www.itsnicethat.com/news/oliver-guardian-weekly-berlin-experiential-advertising-210220>

⁴¹ <https://www.pentagram.com/work/witness-1?rel=discipline&rel-id=11>

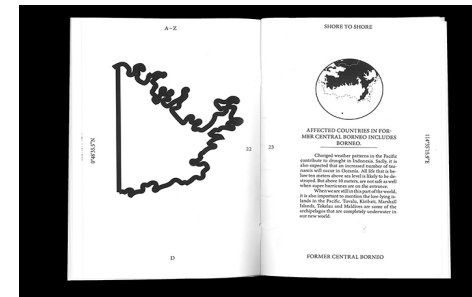


Image 14: 'A-Z Coast to Coast Shore to Shore', Johan Elmehag

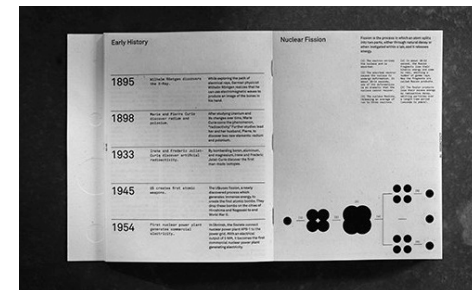


Image 15: 'Made in Fukushima', METER x studio Moby Digg and photographer Nick Frank

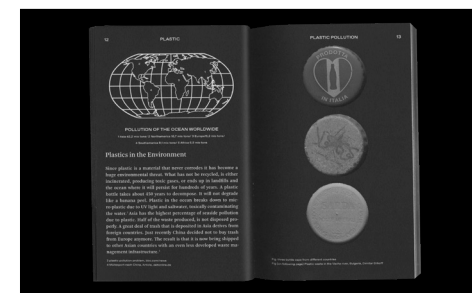


Image 16: 'PLASTICAPLASTICA', Elsa Müller



Image 17: Oliver: Guardian Weekly poster and experiential campaign



Image 18: 'WITNESS', Pentagram

2.6 Symbols, signs and dingbats

'Good language alone will not save mankind. But seeing the things behind the names will help us to understand the structure of the world we live in. Good language will help us communicate with one another about the realities of our environment, where we now speak darkly, in alien tongues.' (Stuart Chase, The Tyranny Of Worlds)

Humans strongly depend on a complex of symbols in their daily life. We know the visual cues of traffic signs, advertising, film and television. We trust signs and them unhesitatingly. But when these signs and symbols are to guide and inform us, they must be clear and unmistakable.⁴² Designers use symbols in obvious and subtle ways to communicate a certain message. Symbols exist everywhere and we read them without realizing that we are reading them. For example if we see a red symbol for stop, we stop and respond to words that are not there.⁴³ This is something that applies for a lot of traffic signs.

The view of a sign has become simple, and most are a two-dimensional graphic.

Signs are made with many contrasts and can be reduced in different groups. One of the groups is the black and white contrast. This contrast is the most impressive one. The most important lines of dark and light produce the most extremely sharp edges and therefore give the form each their most absolute expression.⁴⁴ Besides symbols and signs there is a thing called dingbats.

A dingbat is a decorative element available in a font family. They can be graphic elements such as a triangle, squares, arrows, stars and many more. But they can be a small abstract illustration of anything you can imagine like for example a scissor. When we look at dingbats in the world of printing, there are dingbats known as an ornament that end a chapter or section in a book.⁴⁵

I started off illustrating these products in an abstract way, using the color black on a white surface.

You immediately could see the sharp outline of the product form. Because contours would be too abstract, and a lot of products have the same shape (e.g. candy bars, soda cans, bottles), they need to be more distinguishable. Therefore details that identify the product's unique visual appearances were added, like labels.

On top different weights of lines were used.

⁴² Krampen, M.(1965). Signs and Symbols in Graphic Communication, Walker Art Center

⁴³ <http://designintense.com/symbolism-in-design/>

⁴⁴ Frutiger, A. F. (1989). Signs and Symbols: Their Design and Meaning. New York, U.S.A.: Van Nostrand Reinhold.

⁴⁵ <https://www.fonts.com/content/learning/fontology/level-3/signs-and-symbols/dingbats>

⁴⁶ <http://thelearningcoach.com/media/graphics/using-dingbats-for-illustrations/>

A unique set of stylizations assured that the products were recognized in their abstraction. There was a big contrast of color between the black symbols and white background. But the products had the same tone because of the way they were illustrated. To prevent the same tone between the products, half of the products are visualized by using more filled up black shapes instead of just lines. There is no specific reason why that one is black, and the other one just outlines. A part of the products were stronger in just lines and while the rest of them were stronger if they were represented blacker. The products need to be grabbing the attention of the reader. That is one of the reasons I chose not to use color but the strength of only the shapes of the products, shapes of things they are not used to see.

Now how can I, as a graphic designer, contribute in a campaign against the palm oil industry?

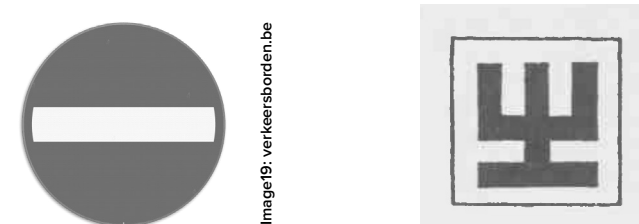


Image 19: verkeersborden.be

Image 20: Frutiger, A. F. (1989). Signs and Symbols

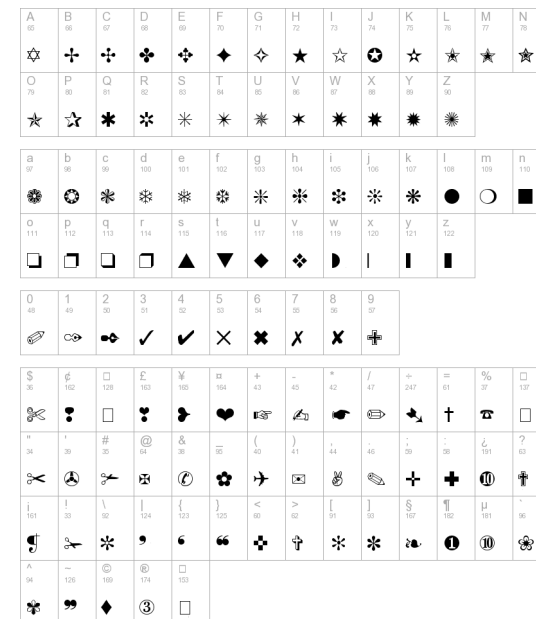


Image 21: ITC Zapf Dingbats Medium true type font

3. PROJECT: #SAYNOTOPALMOIL

3.1 Visual communication system

Personally I prefer to communicate in a visual way than with words. As a graphic designer, I'm continuously observing objects and situations. For that reason, I am interested in the shapes of objects and their situations and environments. For example, if the majority of people look at a chair, they mainly see the surface, backrest, and chair legs. That is far from the only thing I see: I see the unique shape of all these components with or without the background, the differences in weight compared to each other.

Starting from a manufacturer's scorecard list, all harmful products were listed out. It is easy to search the product on the internet and use just the picture to show everyone the products that contain palm oil visually. In this project, the goal was to attack these manufacturers not by using obvious images and logos but point them out in a more subtle way. The next question was, if there is a way to visualize these products in a more subtle way, because then people would not immediately recognize the product. That is why the decision was made to visualize the products how I see them.

It is crucial that when a message is going to get across people with different languages and backgrounds, the message mustn't lend itself to wrong interpretations.⁴⁷ Because I do not want people to get the wrong intentions, I needed to change the way of visualizing things in an abstract way. First, collecting all the products and one by one make them in an abstract form, but with more details than just the silhouette of the product. In this case, the products need to be visually strong because they have the main role in this project when they are not interesting, who's attention will the project get?

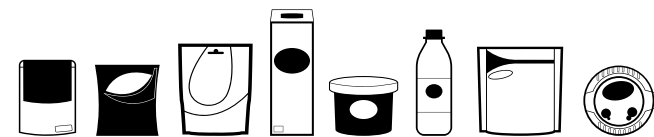
The most important visuals in this system are the unique abstractions of the products I created. My personal abstractions have arisen by means of black shapes, the thicknesses within lines in combination with several forms as I mentioned before. This infinite set of abstractions forms an independent abstract graphic language where words are barely needed to mention which brand and/or product is envisioned. As a support for the products there is a color code used to strengthen the feeling of how harmful specific products are. The palm oil industry is serious, and keeping

the booklet white would make the situation almost 'normal', but how could I express the harmfulness even more in the booklet visually? As we all learned from a young age, colors are used to express feelings, situations, or when something is good or bad. In the scorecard, the products were categorized in four stages of harmfulness.

At first, we had the products that are leading the way, the ones who are well on the path, the products that are the middle of the pack, and at last the ones who were lagging behind. They used four colors to divide these categories on the website, dark green, light green, yellow and red. As someone who is no fan of bright colors, I tried another way to visualize it, this by using three different tones of grey till black. Starting with light grey pages to visualize the products leading the way and end with black pages for the products that are seriously lagging behind. By adding this extra layer, readers would be more conscious of how harmful the product is.



1. System color code



2. Abstract products



3. Palm oil free products

⁴⁷ Munari, B. M. (2008). Design as art. p.41 Penguin Classics, The Penguin Group

3.2 Poster

The project started with designing a set of posters that would explain the true story behind the palm oil industry (e.g. deforestation, endanger the Orangutans) At this point, I felt like I wanted to start a protest, but had trouble communicating the problem. What do I add to the poster? What has to be on the poster? What can not be forgotten? These were questions that always were crossing my mind.

One of my biggest inspirations for the poster series is designer Patrick Thomas. The way he uses abstract forms and typography stays interesting in every poster he makes, none of them are boring to me. He made a protest poster stencil kit for people who want to make their protest posters in a faster way. This kit has an uppercase alphabet, numbers, and well-known icons as the dollar sign, peace sign, world sign.

The next question was, how and what do I need to make an influential poster series?

Starting the research looking for facts about how Orangutans are dying, and how much forest is disappearing every day. Coming across the grid, how they planted the palm oil trees and made me think about how the forests are disappearing, maybe there is a way to use this grid in the poster. The trees that are displayed as dots could be smaller than other dots or larger to create more contrast.

With a poster, you need to tell the story with the right elements for people to understand what you are trying to say and how you feel about this topic.

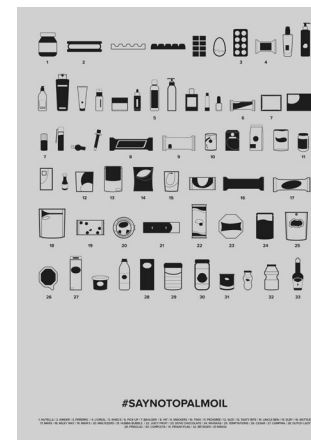
After creating the abstract language of products, I chose to keep a simple layout almost identical as the book where all the products from the same categories were placed together on one poster. Under each product there would be a number and below the poster the audience could read about which product it was exactly in case they would not recognize it yet. That is why there are four different tones of grey to black.



Image 22: Film poster (1/3) for MUBI, Patrick Thomas



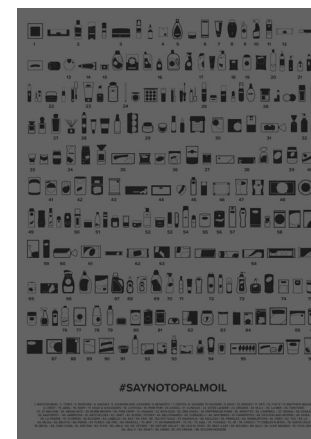
Image 23: Protest Stencil Toolkit, Patrick Thomas



Poster 1: Products stage 1



Poster 2: Products stage 2



Poster 3: Products stage 3



Poster 4: Products stage 4

3.3 Book design

When I started with the design of the book, the initial idea was that the book would be a support for the posters that I was trying to make. The visuals of the posters would be processed in the book, after there would be a part of the book that would explain the problem of the palm industry more in-depth. As I was having problems designing a well-communicated poster and stayed repeatedly stuck with the design, I started with rethinking the book. I asked myself, where and how do consumers come in contact with these products?

The first thing that will maybe cross your mind is that we come in contact with these products in the shop where we buy them. But for me, this is when I open my mailbox and find all these advertising leaflets from various shops. I started looking at these advertising leaflets, going through them one by one. Of course, I wouldn't say I like the design of these folders, for me the design and colors are too chaotic and distracting. I went through the ones I found in my mailbox because I was working with this scorecard with global products. I searched for other leaflets in different countries online.

At this time, the products that were illustrated came from the retailers' scorecard. Why not make an advertisement leaflet? But instead of using photos of the products they would be visualized as abstract symbols. If people hold the leaflet, they will pay more attention because it is not what they are used to see.

The book contains no are no bright colors, no chaotic layout, and products that are visualized in a way people have never seen before. Would this be a benefit to get people their attention while communicating this world problem?

The book's design had to be functional, informative, and the attention needed to be focussed on the palm oil that is in each product. As a person who is always observing objects and situations, I developed a way of looking more abstractly. To bring my illustrated language to the foreground, I decided to keep a simple layout that displays five rows with every three products side to side.

Below each product, I added the product brand and the manufacturer keeping it simple, it to keep it clear for the readers. Next to the product, the score is added to give more information on how harmful the product is and highlight the score by putting it in a small dot.

At this point there was a layer of information missing, I had these illustrated products, the information about these products but that was just white paper beneath it. That is why there is a color code added in the system that explain how bad the products

This project is not only made to inform the consumers of the bad products, but show them that there are enough alternatives without palm oil. By adding non-palm oil products the people that are interested have a base group of products ready to try.

These products are not abstractly visualized but here there was made use of photos to advertise them.

This gives another contrast between the products with and without palm oil.

The layout is the same as the layout of the products that do contain palm oil. A small change in the design is that there is not a score displayed next to the product, now the price is displayed in a dot. The page color is white because there comes no harm to these products.

Here the products are categorized for what use they are, all food with no palm oil will find together the self-care products without palm oil. Palm oil has many different names as mentioned before, after displaying the products in the book there will be a section of all the different names that are used to cover up the name 'palm oil'.

The reason it all started and pushed me to do this project are the Orangutans. To add an extra informative layer,, the last part is dedicated to these beautiful creatures, how they live, what they eat, and the latest and most important thing about how we contribute to the industry that destroys their home. This part of the books is built with this informative text to give a more in-depth view of the palm oil industry's role in the Orangutan's life.

At the end of the booklet, there will be a product index to give a clearer view of the product categories and scores. To visualize this index, I have chosen to start with the least damaging products and end with the most harmful products. The company categorizes them, and below that, the reader can find the brands they own, under that are the illustrated products are visualized. And on the right on the page, you will find the scores and a small dot with the same color of the page you can find the products.

Now that we have talked about the inside of the book, it is time to talk about the second and an important feature, which is the size of this book. As I mentioned before, I wanted to give people the feeling that they are holding a kind of advertisement leaflet but more luxurious.

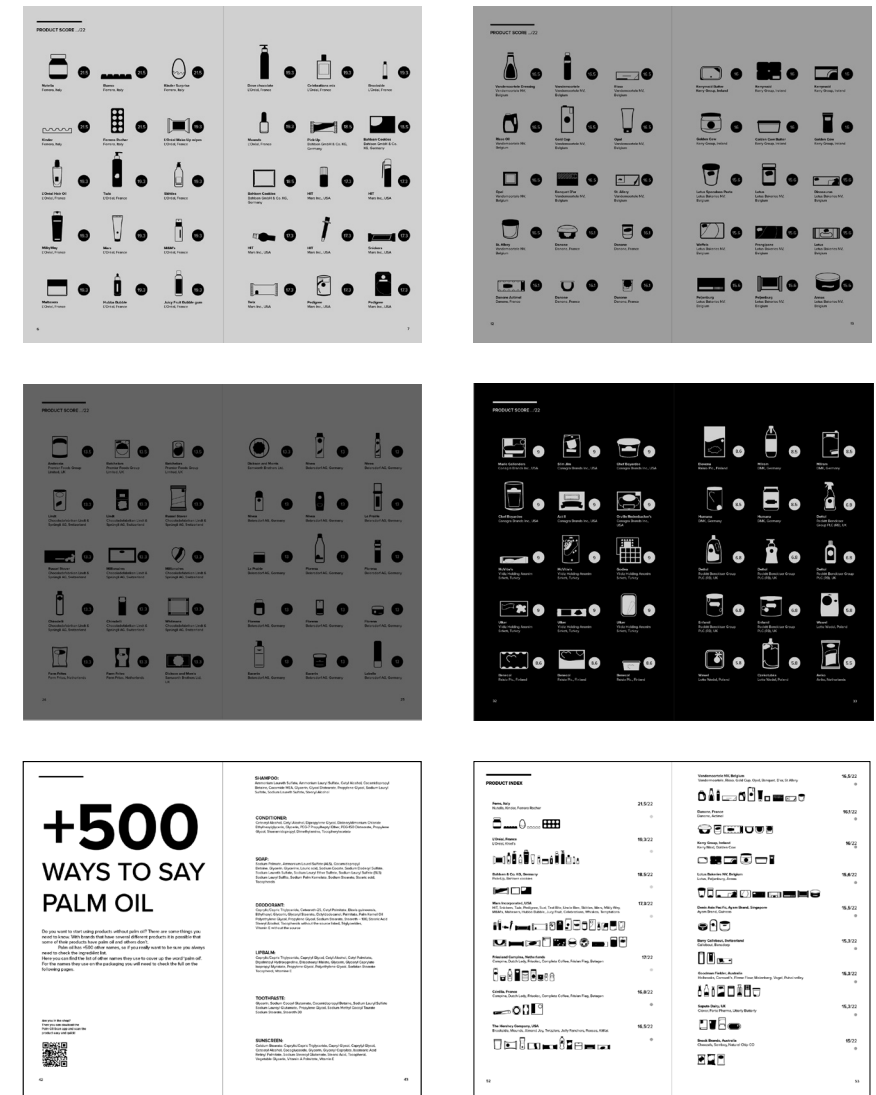
The book's size is based on the advertisement leaflets that are available through the mailbox at home. The sizes varied from squares too small long rectangles and almost literature book sizes. I was not too fond of the square sizes it is hard to hold if you want to go through the books you best lay it down on the table to look in it, but I wanted it to be more comfortable in hand. I did not want it to look at a typical book size because it is not just another book. The size that grabbed my attention the most was this weird small long leaflet of the Albert Heijn. But I have to admit the width of the pages was too small. The size of the pages is 140x297mm.

When I started designing, I enlarged the book's width to 160mm and kept the height of 297mm. After test printing the first spreads, I noticed the page's width still was not how I wanted it to be. For the next test print, I enlarged the width again to 160mm, the width felt right, but the proportion of the page was still not it. I started with an advertisement leaflet size and experimented until I found the correct size. The right size for me was when I printed the design on a 160x270mm spread. Here the book still has this rectangle shape but is not too small and uncomfortable when you hold it. Now it would even have an advertisement touch in, form but it is not a typical book size. It is something between an advertisement leaflet and a book.

Last but not least the design of the cover. As this is a campaign, we always have posters. I tried to implement a poster in the book's printed design. By adding a poster to the printed book version readers would get a free poster on top. For the cover poster, I decided to work with the typography logos of the brands that contain palm oil. I mentioned before that I illustrated the products to not fully attack the brands, now using the logos, I had to find a way to change the logo in a way people do not immediately recognize the logo. Still, if they look closely, there is a chance they may recognize the logo.

I start designing the logos using the outlines and leaving a few of the letters behind. At this point, the logos were easy to recognize, not how I wanted it. It had to be unrecognizable at first sight. I did not know how to manipulate these logos at first. Instead of looking at it as letters as we know them I looked at them as I looked at the products, just shapes. I used the same way of working to transform the logos as I did with the products. By doing this the products and logos would have more the same appearance.

Spreads booklet #SAYNOTOPALMOIL



3.4 Web and mobile

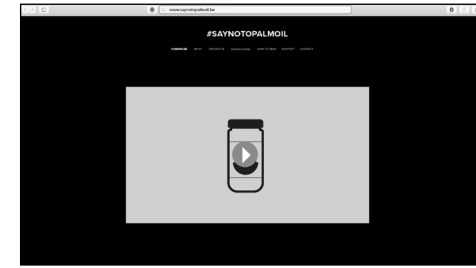
After doing my research about the different mediums that are written, I learned that a website cannot be missed in a campaign in this time of digitalisation and online life. The first visual the audience will see is an animated gif that will visualize the products and color schemes that I have been using in the posters and book.

When doing my research about the Orangutans, I learned that they are very vocal.

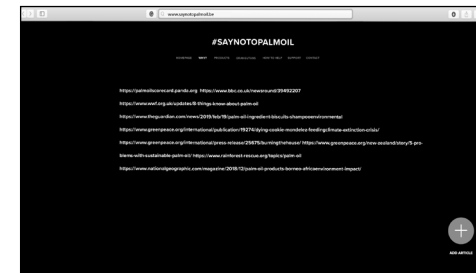
For example, when they feel threatened, they will make the sound called 'Kiss-Squeak.' Because I am working with products that threaten their way of existence, I chose to use the Orangutan's voice, in order that it looks like they are warning the people about the damaging scale of the product.

There are a lot of organizations that take care of the orangutans that are hurt or lost their home, to support them the posters are sold on the website and will go to one of the organizations. The buyer did not only support one of these organizations they now can print the poster as much as they want and hang them in their neighborhood, this way the projects will spread worldwide.

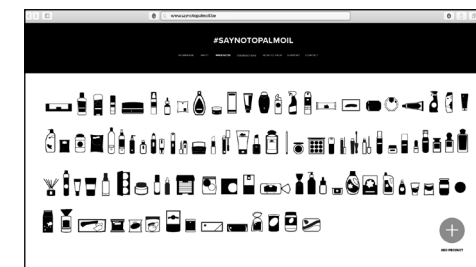
Further the website will be a place where everyone who knows anything about the palm oil industry can add information. Accordingly people can educate themselves better about this problem. Because there is no person who knows everything we all can learn from each other everyday.



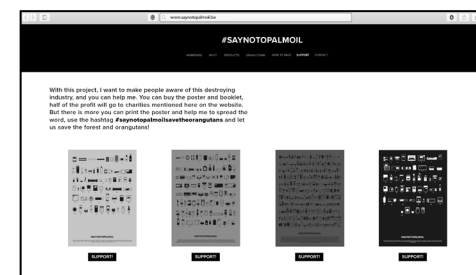
Homepage: www.saynotpalmoil.be



Homepage: discussion page



Homepage: product page



Homepage: donate page

4. CONCLUSION

Communicating a specific problem to an audience is a challenge; the same for visualizing any data in an informative, yet well-designed way. Taking an amount of information, scaling it down into various layers for the three platforms has been challenging. To find the parts that carry specific information, weight that will help the reader understand why the palm oil industry is important.

I learned that communication is not that simple and seamless as it may look. It's not just getting the information out; it's more about how you communicate within a certain certain topic. You have to take many angles into account, that need to make sense for the audience to understand and maybe, hopefully be moved by what you are telling in a certain visual way. Knowing exactly what you want to tell and how you want people to react to this message, as it may be very clear for you, but it can easily be a blur to another.

A protest is not always the right word to use if you explain how you feel; for me, this is how I feel about the palm oil industry. It felt that I was protesting in a kind of way when starting this project through 'exposing' all of these brands and companies, but it was not. I am not forbidding, forcing anyone not to buy products containing palm oil. I am not imposing anyone to change their minds as I mentioned and stated before. Instead I want people to be informed, think and make their own decisions. People need the space to consider the provided information if you want them to understand your side of the issue, and you should give them the time they may need. Lending more towards a discussion, debate than one side dictating to the other.

The graphic process within the platforms was as hard as telling the problem in an informed and structured manner. Visually it had to be appealing to the audience, otherwise they would not even take the moment to read what it is really about. There is missing a part of design research on the visual parts that go more in depth about signs, symbols, and dingbats. Mainly the things you need to take into account when as a designer you are creating signs for a campaign.

It is unfortunate that there are no results yet of how many people are interested in this campaign or num-

bers of how many times a good cause is supported. As I can not wait to find out what others think of this project and the palm oil industries impacted.

What is for sure, is that this project did not only change me as a designer, through tackling the problems of transforming data into posters, a book, and a website design that communicates loud and clear this current issue at our collective doorstep. This topic changed, affected me as a person and consumer. The palm oil industry was not always an easy topic to read about, the amount of destruction and death surrounding one industry just for products. The research at times, truly made me feel terrible about my personal participation in this awful industry. Leading to some serious changes in my personal style of living and that of what and as a consumer. It is my hope that this project grows and a few more people will and can learn more about this topic.

I am grateful to have chosen this topic, as a designer. I am now more aware of how you need to through and around ways of communication within my filed, and leading to successful designs that are, can be understood by a group of people that are unaware of a given topic.

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5.3 Images

- Image 1: Palm oil fruits, James Morgan / WWF-International
- Image 2: Deforestation Borneo, WWF-Canon / Simon Rawles
- Image 3: Bornean Orangutan, naturepl.com/Edwin Giebers / WWF-Canon
- Image 4: Sumatran Orangutan, Fletcher & Baylis / WWF-Indonesia
- Image 5: Campaign against Mondolez, Chris J Ratcliffe / Greenpeace
- Image 6: Comparison palm oil and other crops / WWF-International
- Image 7: Extinction Rebellion Protest, SOPA Images / lightrocket via Getty images
- Image 8: BLM Breonna Taylor, JimLoScalzo / EPA
- Image 9: feminists demonstrate outside the Versace show against the pressure on young models to be skinny size zeros / Splash
- Image 10: Keith Haring artwork, Ignorance = Fear, 1989 © Keith Haring Foundation Collection Noirmontartproduction, Paris
- Image 11: A Record 76% of Americans Can Vote by Mail in 2020 By Juliette Love, Matt Stevens and Lazaro Gamio for NYT
- Image 12: re—inc poster, Pentagram

- Image 13: Delusions and Errors: The Telling Poster Designs of an Overlooked Region, New wife! New life!, Mahmud Şahan
- Image 14: 'A-Z Coast to Coast Shore to Shore', Johan Elmenhag
- Image 15: 'Made in Fukushima', METER x studio Moby Digg and photographer Nick Frank
- Image 16: 'PLASTICAPLASTICA', Elsa Müller
- Image 17: Oliver: Guardian Weekly poster and experiential campaign
- Image 18: 'WITNESS', Pentagram
- Image 19: verkeersborden.be
- Image 20: Frutiger, A. F. (1989). Signs and Symbols
- Image 21: ITC Zapf Dingbats Medium truetype font
- Image 22: Film poster (1/3) for MUBI, Patrick Thomas
- Image 23: Protest Stencil Toolkit, Patrick Thomas



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