

Written Response:

Statement

During our first group meeting, we quickly decided to center our research around the rights of nature, particularly after studying cases wherein legal personhood was granted to rivers. We observed that many countries that have passed nature rights laws possess vibrant indigenous cultures, suggesting that the concept of Rights of Nature (RoN) could be viewed as an imaginative evolution within the current legal framework, responding to climate change.

Subsequently, in the visual experimentation, we chose to work independently at first and then compile our individual work together. The interesting part was that, despite agreeing on a common starting point (that is to visually represent/translate the legal text) and establishing a few guiding rules to work, the final outcomes varied, which showed our multi-perspective observation on the same piece of legal text.

I extracted letterforms from various sources including the Provincial Government of Loja Appeals Decision in 2011, a Google image updated in 2015, and a personal video posted on YouTube in 2024. Recognizing a strong intertextual relationship among these sources, I curated an incomplete alphabet from them. Using this alphabet as a filter, I represented the text, drawing inspiration from the cross section of a riverbank. I saw the transformation of the riverbank as physical evidence of the dynamic relationship among human activity, the community, nature and the legal system in the Vilcabamba-River case. Meanwhile, my group members each approached their work from a mapping perspective and a first-person narrative. Later we wrapped our diverse experiments into a case folder. Surprisingly, it looked like streams of overlapping voices discussing the same case, providing us with direction to collect more voices from the local community through recorded documents related to this case.

Annotated bibliography:

Stone, C.D. (1988). *Should trees have standing? Toward legal rights for natural objects*. Palo Alto: Tioga Pub. Co.

This reference provided me with the historical context and fundamental legal knowledge necessary for understanding the concept of Rights of Nature. At the beginning of the book, the author asserts, 'The history of the law suggests a parallel development...It is no answer to say that streams and forests cannot have standing because streams and forests cannot speak.' Prior to this, nature had never been regarded as a rights holder. The idea of granting rights to nature, as proposed by Stone, was a remarkably imaginative hypothesis in the 1970s. Half a century later, when our group encountered laws concerning Rights of Nature, we still found it to be fresh and imaginative, as the perspective of viewing nature as an entity is still something not widely recognized by the mainstream public. Also, being inspired by Stone's theory of nature law, I came to realize the importance of paying attention to the development of the legal framework, and recognize it as the outcome of the invisible feedback loop operating between the law and broader social, cultural influences.

Mihnea Tănăsescu, Macpherson, E., Jefferson, D. and Julia Torres Ventura (2024). *Rights of nature and rivers in Ecuador's Constitutional Court*. The International Journal of Human Rights, pp.1–23.

I began my research with a question regarding how the rights of nature were recognized within the national law, especially under the influence of indigenous culture and the actions taken by local communities. This historical and cultural context prompted me to further investigate how individuals, or a river guardian (a legal term for giving a person the rights to act on behalf of a river), actively defended the rights of rivers after the establishment of the legal framework. Subsequently, our group decided to narrow our focus down to a specific case in 2011 involving the Vilcabamba River in Ecuador, aiming to explore the dynamic and intricate relationship between nature, human, and the condensed legal text by analyzing this specific lawsuit. Through this inquiry, this article has provided me with valuable insights into the implementation of nature laws in Ecuador. It offers a thorough explanation of the concept of nature as used in the Court's reasoning and traces the relationship between human rights and the rights of nature.

Biennale of Sydney. (n.d.). *Vilcabamba River*. [online] Available at: <https://www.biennaleofsydney.art/participants/vilcabamba-river/>

During an interview with one of the plaintiffs, Norie Huddle, involved in the Vilcabamba River lawsuit, I had the opportunity to hear the voice speaking on behalf of the river: Where did this voice originate, and at what moment were the river's rights defended? Through the narrative of a still film, with plain and direct visual language, as well as other legal documents from the case, I observed how the legal text from Article 71 of the Constitution of the republic of Ecuador in 2008 was applied, providing the foundation for people's actions. The rights to the natural flow of the Vilcabamba River were recognized by the court through the collaborative efforts. Throughout this process, as described by Norie Huddle, there were instances of contingency in human will, and it was by no means a smooth journey. From here, I began to perceive the intimate relationship between human action and the Rights of Nature.

Colomina, B. and Wigley, M. (2016). *Are we human? Notes on an archaeology of design*. Zürich, Switzerland: Lars Müller.

At the time when our group began to consider how to construct our visual experiments based on the legal text and the lawsuit case concerning the Vilcabamba River, we initially faced challenges in establishing a direct connection, given that these materials were highly text-based. However, with the insights from this reference, particularly when it mentions that the imprint of the human is everywhere and that 'there is no water whose temperature, movement, and chemistry have not been affected', I realized that both the legal texts and the voices arose among the community could be seen as another form of human imprint left on the river. My visual experimentation could be seen as an iterative process enabling me to position myself within this context. Through various experimental approaches, our group decided to visually translate the legal texts as a means of weaving together the connections between humans, communities, nature, and the legal system.

Maurer, L., Edo Paulus, Puckey, J. and Roel Wouters (2013). *Conditional design workbook*. Amsterdam: Valiz.

The brief of Method of Contextualising challenged us to explore our positions as a group of graphic designers in relation to the context of climate justice. It led us to ponder: what lies between a national legal document and the flowing river? Where do humans stand in this context? To collectively explore these inquiries, our group used the

cooperative working method outlined in the Conditional Design Workbook as a guidance. As each of us have different viewpoints on the same piece of legal text and lawsuit case, we want to ensure maximal freedom for individual experiments. So we created some co-written rules, to let everyone bring out their own perspectives while maintaining a relatively consistent pace. For me, it was an efficient approach to combine the individual iterations at any point and foster mutual responsiveness among our works. It was surprising to see new possibilities generating along with the collaborative process.

Kampanjat.hs.fi. (n.d.). *Climate crisis font* | *Helsingin Sanomat*. [online]
Available at: <https://kampanjat.hs.fi/climatefont/>

A unique typeface can assist to make easier access for people to see and understand climate change, as the climate issue is often a lengthy and abstract phenomenon that presented through basic fonts. The introduction of the climate crisis font states that it can be used by anyone who wishes to 'visualize the urgency of climate change.' In my experiment, I interpreted the transformation of various materials on the river bank as visual evidence of human (in this case the compilation and implementation of legal text) leaving imprint on nature. Based on this context, I replaced the original fonts with letterforms that I extracted from three relevant sources, aiming to provide a visual prompt for people to recognize the complex and fluid nature of legal text. But the current outcome appears abstract without detailed context explanation. Therefore, my next iteration of the experiment can focus on establishing more comprehensive rules for selecting letterforms and make making the process more transparent for audience to engage.