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# "Mediating Climate, Mediating Scale"

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Pasek, Anne. "Mediating Climate, Mediating Scale." *Humanities* 8, no. 4 (2019). doi:10.3390/h8040159

Climate communication is seemingly stuck in a double bind. The problem of global warming requires inherently trans-scalar modes of engagement, encompassing times and spaces that exceed local frames of experience and meaning. Climate media must therefore negotiate representational extremes that risk overwhelming their audience with the immensity of the problem or rendering it falsely manageable at a local scale. The task of visualizing climate is thus often torn between scales germane to the problem and scales germane to individuals. In this paper I examine how this scalar divide has been negotiated visually, focusing in particular on Ed Hawkins' 2016 viral climate spiral. To many, the graphic represents a promising union of political and scientific communication in the public sphere. However, formal analysis of the gif's reception suggest that the spiral was also a site of anxiety and negative emotion for many viewers. I take these conflicting interpretations as cause to rethink current assumptions about best practices and desirable outcomes for scalar mediations of climate and their capacities to mobilize a wide range of reactions and interpretations—some more legibly political and some more complicatedly affective, yet all nevertheless integral to the work of building a holistic response to the climate crisis. (Abstract)

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**Print date:** 28 November 2026 07:03:43