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To cite this version:

Ambre Assor, Arnaud Prouzeau, Pierre Dragicevic, Martin Hachet. Augmented Reality Waste Accumulation Visualizations. 2023. hal-03907474v3

HAL Id: hal-03907474

https://hal.science/hal-03907474v3

Preprint submitted on 8 Mar 2023 (v3), last revised 18 Jan 2024 (v4)

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Augmented Reality Waste Accumulation Visualizations

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Fig. 1. A user looks at the amount of waste produced by his corporate restaurant in a week. The waste is represented by virtual trash bags which are displayed directly in the restaurant using augmented reality.

The negative impact humans have on the environment is partly caused by thoughtless consumption leading to unnecessary waste. A likely contributing factor is the relative invisibility of waste: waste produced by individuals is either out of their sight or quickly taken away. Nevertheless, waste disposal systems sometimes break down, creating natural information displays of waste production that can have educational value. We take inspiration from such natural displays and introduce a class of situated visualizations we call *augmented-reality waste accumulation visualizations* or ARwavs, which are literal representations of waste data embedded in users' familiar environment. We implemented examples of ARwavs and demonstrated them in feedback sessions with experts in pro-environmental behavior, and during a large tech exhibition event. We discuss general design principles and trade-offs for ARwavs. Finally, we conducted a study suggesting that ARwavs yield stronger emotional responses than non-immersive waste accumulation visualizations and plain numbers.

CCS Concepts: • **Human-centered computing → Information visualization**; **Visualization theory, concepts and paradigms**.

Additional Key Words and Phrases: Augmented Reality, Eco-Feedback, Embedded Visualizations, Concrete Scales.

1 INTRODUCTION

The adverse impact humans have on the environment (through, e.g., air pollution, plastic pollution, soil erosion, or damage to biodiversity) is one of the biggest challenges currently faced by our society. Although the causes are complex and numerous, individual behavior and lifestyles have been identified as among the key contributors [2, 29]. In particular,

current consumption habits in industrialized countries[1] far exceed what humans can sustainably manage without damaging the environment. A factor that likely contributes to the excessive consumption and unnecessary waste production in those countries is the *invisibility* of waste there: when we buy a new smartphone, we do not see the metal mines that went into its construction; Even when we directly create waste, it quickly goes away and becomes invisible: dirty water moves to the water treatment plant right after we showered or flushed our toilet, and the garbage we throw away in our homes is conveniently taken away to a landfill site every few days.

Modern society is organized in such a way that our waste is hidden from our view. However, accidents sometimes happen that cause waste to accumulate and unexpectedly come back to our attention: bathtubs and toilets get clogged; Garbage gets scattered in the streets during large public gatherings (Figure 2a) or piles up during garbage collector strikes (Figure 2b). In such cases, waste piles serve as visualizations of our waste production that are physical [18], literal [33], and situated [45]. Perhaps because such waste accumulations are so effective as displays of information, they are sometimes created and displayed on purpose. For example, some collective restaurants use transparent bread garbage cans to raise their customers' awareness about food waste (Figure 2c), and a designer has made a toilet with a transparent water tank to act as a preview of the amount of waste water that will be produced (Figure 2d). Waste accumulations like these act as situated information displays that are unique in their ability to convey waste production in a way that is immediately understandable by a large audience and can carry emotional impact. However, they also have a very narrow range of applicability: creating physical waste accumulations can be difficult in practice, typically requires space, and can cause sanitary issues. In this article, we propose to use augmented reality to re-create virtual versions of such information displays and embed them in users' physical environments (see Figure 1). We will refer to them as *augmented-reality waste accumulation visualizations*, or ARWAVs for short.

We go through different use cases to illustrate how ARWAVs can be useful in a range of situations. We also explain why ARWAVs go beyond what has been explored in research so far. In particular, they fill a gap in eco-feedback research [22], where most systems convey resource consumption and waste production using units and visual representations that are useful but often abstract and potentially difficult to grasp intuitively. Because ARWAVs use literal representations of waste amounts [13] (e.g., 300 litres of garbage can be represented with ten 30-litres trash bags), and embed those representations in the user's familiar surroundings, we expect them to give a more visceral sense of quantities and stand as more engaging representations. A user study with 20 participants, that we will describe later in this paper, outlines that indeed ARWAVs tend to elicit higher emotional intensities than other more classic visualisations. As such, we see them as a useful potential complement to more standard information displays in eco-feedback systems, and we hope they will inspire future research in this area.

Our contributions are:

(1) Identifying and naming a family of eco-feedback visualization techniques (ARWAVs) that have received very little attention so far, and presenting scenarios illustrating the different situations in which they can be useful;

(2) Describing prototypes that implement such visualizations techniques, and that were tested in initial feedback session, both with experts and with a larger public during a tech exhibition event;

(3) Introducing a terminology and a set design trade-offs for ARWAVs.

(4) Reporting a user study suggesting that ARWAVs are emotionally more engaging compared to less immersive display modalities (3D on screen) and simpler information representations (numerals).

[1]A developed country, or a sovereign state that has a high quality of life, developed economy and advanced technological infrastructure relative to other less industrialized nations (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Developed_country)

(a) (b) (c) (d)

Fig. 2. Examples of physical waste accumulations. (a) Street of London during the 2009 marathon (source: Paul Simpson, flickr.com) (b) Street of Marseille in 2010, during a garbage collector strike (credit: pxhere.com, public domain). (c) Transparent bread garbage can to raise waste awareness (source: https://www.chef-eco.fr/). (d) Toilet with transparent tank to raise awareness of water usage (photo taken in a Parisian restaurant).

2 BACKGROUND

In this section, we review previous work related to augmented-reality waste accumulation visualizations (ARwavs). A highly relevant research area is the study of *eco-feedback* systems, i.e., "*technology that provides feedback on individual or group behaviors with a goal of reducing environmental impact*" [22]. Research on eco-feedback is vast and has been conducted both in psychology (with a focus on cognition and behavior) and HCI (with a focus on technology) [22]. We will cover both, and will also review related work in information visualization.

2.1 Eco-Feedback Technologies

Simple eco-feedback displays have long been available. For example, in 2007, most UK residents with solar panels had a device that displays energy output and the total CO_2 mass saved since their installation [24]. Today, several eco-feedback apps are available on mobile devices, to support self or group consumption awareness – for example, the MyImpact app[2] helps users log their plastic reducing and recycling actions, and displays the total amount of plastic reduced and recycled, which they can compare with friends.

While researchers in environmental psychology have mostly focused on the efficacy of simple eco-feedback displays like these, HCI researchers have put more emphasis on exploring richer and less conventional information displays [22]. Examples include representing energy consumption as waves on a kitchen wall [7], or designing public trashcans that project their content and history of use on the sidewalk [34]. Researchers have also started to explore the use of virtual reality (VR) for eco-feedback, although mostly for the purposes of testing research hypotheses in experiments [4, 44]. We will discuss these experiments in subsection 2.2.

While there have been some explorations in VR, augmented reality (AR) has rarely been considered for eco-feedback. Several near-AR eco-feedback systems have been proposed or studied, including appliances (e.g., trashcans [34] and fridges [30]) augmented with sensors and displays, AR overlays of energy consumption on physical building models [19], and heat cameras to visualize thermal loss [9]. But as far as we know, enhancing real-world environments with AR for eco-feedback purposes has been only discussed as a possibility (e.g., in [11, 21, 37]). A notable exception is a trash production visualization prototype designed by Nic Stark [40], which is the only example of ARwav we currently

[2] www.myimpact.com

know of. In this prototype, users can use their smartphone to visualize a year worth of trash bags in front of them. This prototype has directly inspired our work, but has not been discussed in the academic literature, nor has it been generalized to other cases or conceptualized. Our paper fills this gap by presenting a range of examples, mapping the design space and discussing design trade-offs, and presenting insights from early user feedback.

2.2 Eco-Feedback Studies

Many studies have been carried out both in environmental psychology and in HCI to determine whether eco-feedback systems are effective and how to best design them. Directly relevant to this article is the question of how to display quantities, such as electricity consumed or amounts of water used. Studies have found that units used by commercial eco-feedback monitors (e.g., kWh or tons of CO_2) are often not meaningful to users [41]. One study compared people's preference for simple quantitative displays (i.e., numbers or charts) vs. qualitative displays employing metaphors (e.g., a polar bear on a melting iceberg), and found that STEM students tended to prefer the former, while non-technical students were more comfortable with the latter [6]. In contrast with metaphor-based or qualitative displays, the goal of ARwAVs is to offer faithful representations of quantities. However, such representations significantly differ from simple charts, and focus on efficiently communicating magnitude rather than precise numbers.

Eco-feedback displays can either use a negative framing (e.g., show energy consumed) or a positive framing (e.g, show energy saved). Studies overall suggest that negative emotions such as regret and guilt lead consumers to choose sustainable products and services [25], and to engage in sustainable behaviors like recycling and using public transportation [12]. This confirms that negative framing, which is used in many eco-feedback designs, is effective. At the same time, an overly negative framing can backfire. For, example Bao et al. [5] showed different eco-feedback designs to participants, including one where a polar bear was pictured decapitated when the light switch was on; While some participants liked the design, most of them found it inappropriate, and some found it manipulative. Similarly, a study found that people preferred to see their CO_2 consumption expressed in terms of trees necessary to offset it than the number of polar bears whose habitat it will destroy or the number of Earths needed to support humanity if everyone consumed the same (i.e., more negative framings) [35]. While the types of designs we discuss in this paper (waste accumulations) naturally lend themselves to a negative framing, we also explore positive framings (e.g., waste avoided).

Two eco-feedback studies used a design similar to ARwAVs, but implemented in VR. In one study, participants were asked to take a virtual shower and were shown the amount of heating energy they used in terms of pieces of coal (each piece stood for 100 watts or 15 sec. of shower) [4]. After the experiment, participants used less hot water to wash their hands when they saw virtual renditions of actual piles of coals than when they saw the number of pieces of coals expressed as text. Another VR study asked participants to repeatedly use a water bottle to fill a tank with enough water for a toilet flush or a 1-minute shower, after which they were shown multiple water bottles representing that quantity [44]. They found a positive effect on self-reported attitude towards water usage. Although both studies suggest that the kind of visual representations used in ARwAVs can be effective, they each only consider very specific instances and do not discuss how they can be employed in actual eco-feedback systems, for example using augmented reality.

2.3 Information Visualization

The use of collections of icons or objects to convey numbers is common practice in visualization and infographic design.[3] A prominent example in environmental communication is the web article "Drowning in Plastic" [39], showing

[3]See, e.g., luizaugustomm.github.io/anthropographics and dataphys.org/list/tags/single-datum/.

computer-graphics renderings of gigantic heaps of plastic bottles situated next to prominent landmarks such as the Eiffel tower. It conveys how many plastic bottles are purchased worldwide on different time scales, from a single day to the last 10 years. Strategies like these for representing large quantities or unfamiliar units have been formalized in information visualization under the *concrete scale* framework [13]. This framework describes the trade-offs behind several design decisions, including which object or container to choose to represent quantities; For example, the amount of sugar in a soft drink can be represented with a pile of sugar cubes next to the drink, while larger quantities can be represented by familiar containers (e.g., a shovel or a dumpster) filled with sugar [13]. However, the paper does not discuss how concrete-scale visualizations can be used for eco-feedback, nor how they can be used in AR.

Inspired by the concrete scale framework, Lee et al. [27] introduced the concept of *data visceralization* as "*a data-driven experience which evokes visceral feelings within a user to facilitate intuitive understanding of physical measurements and quantities*". Immersion is a central component of data visceralization. For example, the authors propose to show the amount of people in a protest by having users immersed in a virtual reconstruction of the protest, or to convey US debt with a VR rendering of huge piles of dollar bills standing next to known landmarks. Again the article does not discuss eco-feedback as a possible application and focuses on VR, but it does identify AR as a possible direction for future work.

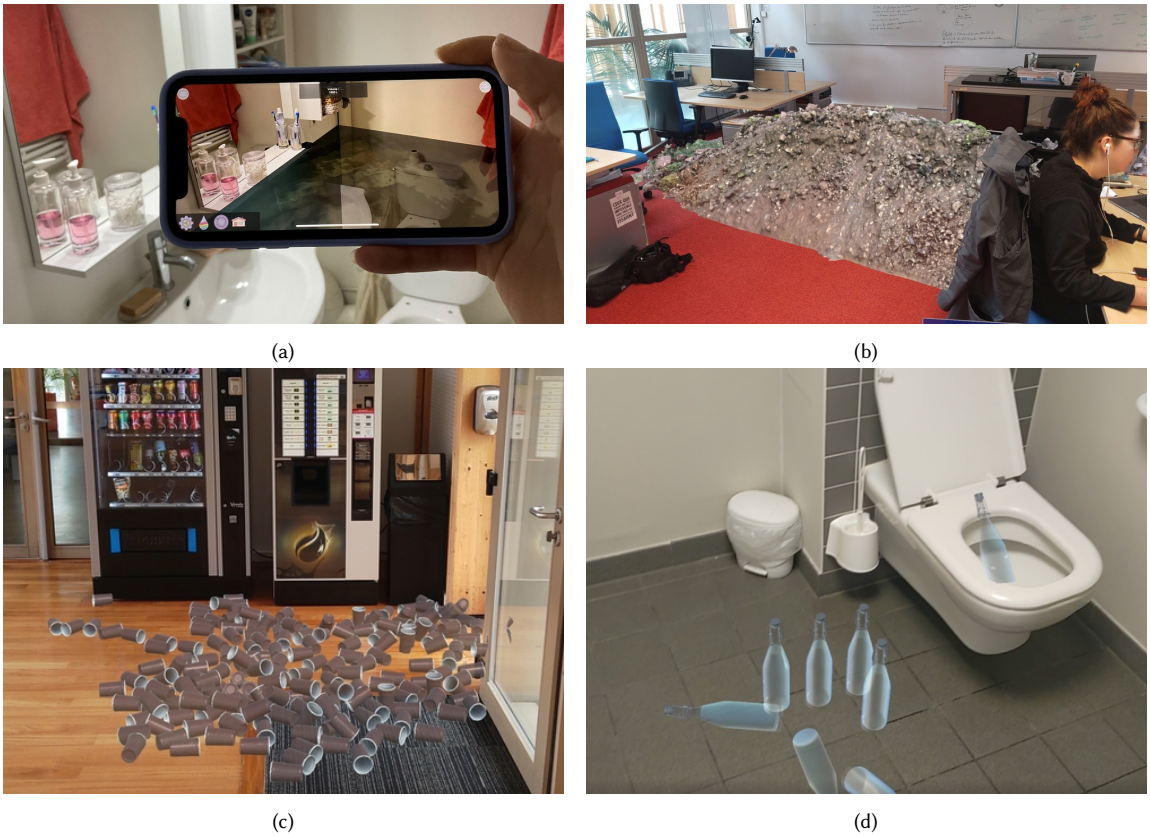
3 ILLUSTRATIVE SCENARIOS

Augmented-reality waste accumulation visualizations or ARWAVs aim to help people better perceive the quantitative impact of their actions and decisions in order to inform them, raise their awareness, or encourage them to change their habits. Figure 1 illustrates a scenario where employees can perceive directly in their corporate restaurant a week of collective waste production represented with virtual trash bags. In the following sections we present additional scenarios that illustrate the same concept.

Scenario 1: Personal motivation, water use. Water is a resource that many of us abundantly use at home when we take a shower, wash our hands, flush our toilets, or use appliances like washing machines. As water immediately disappears through the pipes, it can be hard to get a good impression of the amount we use over time. However, used water is waste that needs to be processed, and water can be scarce in lots of countries, where a drought can lead to a shortage with dramatic consequences. Knowing numbers is a good start, but is likely not enough. For instance, it might not seem a lot to consume 5 m^3 of water in a month, but it actually represents about 28 full bathtubs, or an average bathroom filled with water up to 2 m high. ARWAVs can literally show these volumes of water to make abstract numbers more concrete. Figure 3a shows an example where a user uses their smartphone to see the amount of water they consume in a week as a volume that fills his bathroom. They can for example compare their consumption across weeks by looking at where the water stops on the bathroom's wall, and try to lower this level little by little.

Scenario 2: Group dynamics, ecological rucksack. Computers and mobile devices are powerful tools with many useful applications, but they have a significant ecological footprint.[4] One way to capture this footprint is the concept of *ecological rucksack*, which is the amount of matter displaced to build an object.[5] A smartphone requires an ecological rucksack of about 70kg, which includes the amount of soil mined to obtain the metals that go into its fabrication, and the amount of CO2 emitted during transportation and manufacturing.[6] Since the metal mines and the CO2 emissions are typically situated far away from where the phone is purchased and used, it is hard for people to have a vivid picture

[4]The ecological impact of ARWAVs is an important issue that will be discussed in subsection 7.1.
[5]https://www.gdrc.org/sustdev/concepts/27-rucksacks.html
[6]https://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecoap/about-eco-innovation/experts-interviews/friedrich-schmidt-bleek_en



(a) (b) (c) (d)

Fig. 3. Illustrative examples of ARwavs we prototyped. (a) Volume of consumed water visualized in a bathroom. (b) Approximate amount of material displaced and emitted to manufacture 8 smartphones (captured from Hololens). (c) Quantity of single-use plastic cups accumulated for a given period of time (captured from Hololens). (d) 9 Litres of water represented using water bottle next to the toilets (average flush amount of water).

of them in their mind, even when they heard about them. In addition, computing devices often look clean and beautiful, so looking at them does not bring about any association with mines, soil, or greenhouse gases. With ARwavs, we can make those waste products more salient to users. For example, imagine a research team discussing whether to buy eight new smartphones for a project or use old ones. An eco-conscious member of the team could use AR to show them the size of the ecological rucksack necessary to build the new phones, as a pile of soil (Figure 3b). Having this heap of soil appear as if it was in the room (as opposed to, e.g., on a computer screen or a magazine) could give the team members a more visceral sense of quantity and size. It also adds a dramatic dimension, which can help make environmental issues more salient and more influential in the discussion.

Scenario 3: Support for policies, plastic cups. Single-use plastic cups have a negative repercussion on the planet. It is estimated that more than 50 billions are used in the US in one year.[7] Yet manufacturing them is costly in energy and resources, they are hard to recycle, and they are one of ten most commonly found waste items in European beaches[8].

[7]https://plastic.education/the-problem-with-disposable-cups/
[8]https://ec.europa.eu/environment/pdf/waste/single-use_plastics_factsheet.pdf

However, plastic cups are still routinely given away in cafés, shops and companies, and thus it remains easier for many people to use them instead of bringing a reusable cup. In this third scenario, a company chooses to ban plastic cups as part of a program to reduce its ecological footprint, but is afraid that not all of its employees will agree. The company has already communicated about the issue through figures and charts, but they went largely ignored. Therefore, the company decides to organize an event, with a booth in front of the coffee machine, where employees can observe through an AR-HMD (Head-Mounted Display) an ARwav composed of all plastic cups typically used over a week (see Figure 3c). With this immersive experience, most employees get a much better sense of the amount of plastic cups accumulated over time, and many become more willing to make the effort to bring their own reusable cup. Afterwards, some employees keep thinking of the virtual pile of cups every time they go to the coffee machine, and are happy that the policy was adopted.

4 PROTOTYPES AND INITIAL TESTING SESSION

In order to test ARwavs and get initial user feedback, we implemented the scenarios described in the previous section. We first go through implementation details, and then describe findings from our feedback sessions.

4.1 Implementation

The water use prototype (Scenario 1) was implemented with Unity 2020.3.2f1 on a smartphone, and used the ARFoundation framework (handling most of ARKit and ARCore functionalities). We implemented mesh created from selected points on the real-world detected planes. This surface is extruded from the ground plane, matching the desired volume of water (predefined values include an average bath, shower, toilet flush, hand and dish washing and washing machine). On rendering, we applied a 3D shader on each volume face with a material using the URP pipeline. [9] The final rendering takes the physical surroundings to render an adequate water color.

The trash bag prototype (shown in Figure 1) was previously implemented on a smartphone by Nic Stark[10] [40]. We re-implemented his prototype on a Microsoft Hololens 2, to be able to test and compare the two types of AR displays. The ARwavs described in Scenarios 2 and 3 (ecological rucksack, plastic cups) were also implemented on Hololens. We developed with Unity 2020.3.18f1 and used the MRTK toolkit[11]. We enabled hands, head tracking, occlusion, and set the spatial awareness module to scan the environment at start (update interval of 3.5 seconds). The objects making up the ARwavs (trash, bottles, mud and plastic cups) were either found on the Unity Asset Store or download and adapted from 3D models browsers as CGTrader, Turbosquid or Free3D. For collision detection between the objects, in order to support numerous objects, we added an assembly of basic colliders that closely match the shape of the objects (instead of the more compute-intensive mesh colliders), and we set a discrete collision detection. We pre-created several prefabs (at run-time) to pile objects in a natural way, making them fall from a 1 to 2 meters height. Audio sources have been scripted to match collisions.

The source code for the ARwav used in our controlled experiment (section 6) is available in our OSF repository. More extensive source code covering a wider range of prototypes will be shared on gitlab upon publication.

[9] https://docs.unity3d.com/Packages/com.unity.render-pipelines.universal@11.0/manual/
[10] We are grateful to Nic Stark for sending us his code.
[11] https://docs.microsoft.com/fr-fr/windows/mixed-reality/develop/unreal/unreal-mrtk-introduction

4.2 Think-aloud workshop with experts

To get initial feedback on our prototypes, we ran a testing session with collaborators on a related research project. The purpose was to gather spontaneous feedback and impressions, and to collect suggestions for improvement. All participants (P1–P5) are researchers whose work partly involves the study of pro-environmental behavior. P1, P2 and P3 are behavioral economists, P4 is a social psychologist, and P5 a phenomenology philosopher. For all of them except P1 who tested the prototypes 3 weeks prior, this was their first experience with AR-HMDs.

The testing session lasted about two hours and took place in a large meeting room, during a workshop. We demonstrated the ARwav prototypes (trash bags on HMD and smartphone, plastic cups on HMD, soil on HMD, and water with smartphone). We then conducted informal individual interviews, followed by a general discussion.

We found that participants were overall engaged, qualifying the experience as *"surprising"* (P4) and *"impressive"* (P2).[12] In the *Trash bags* HMD prototype, several participants stepped back when the trash bags started to fall, due to the impression that they may fall on them (P2, P3, P5). In the *Plastic cups* prototype, P4 commented on how real the cups looked when they happened to roll under a physical chair (and disappeared due to occlusion management). One participant reported that the sound associated with the falling of trash bags in the *Trash* prototype enhanced the understanding of the amount of trash bags. This comment later led us to implement sound in the *Cups* prototype too.

Participants commented on differences between the HMD and the smartphone. Overall, the HMD provided a stronger immersion and elicited more surprise, although the surprise factor may be largely due to a novelty effect. Participants also felt they could manipulate items more naturally using mid-air gestures on the HMD than using 2D gestures on the smartphone. On the other hand, one participant mentioned that *"if I want to share a visual, I have no other choice than use my phone as I don't always have a Hololens at hand, and it's already quite convincing."* (P1).

Some comments had to do with emotions induced by the experience. *"Guilt"* was mentioned several times, as well as other negative emotions such as *"anxiety"*, *"stress"*, and *"oppression"*. Positive feelings were also mentioned; For instance, P4 reported feeling satisfaction when seeing the *Plastic cups* prototype, as they do not use plastic cups anymore and could see the approximate amount of plastic they save. This is consistent with the common sense intuition that framing can impact the valence of emotions. This initial feedback encouraged us to study in more depth the emotions that ARwavs may generate (section 6).

Among limitations, several participants mentioned the narrow field of view of the HMD (but also of the smartphone), especially for the *Trash bag* and the *Soil* prototypes. P1 specifically complained that they were only able to see nine trash bags at a time from where they stood. This issue was likely exacerbated by the ARwavs being relatively close to observers while occupying lots of space in some cases. The viewing of large ARwavs would likely be facilitated if they could be placed further away, but supporting large spaces is challenging as we will further discuss in subsection 7.3.

4.3 Tech exhibition

We also had the opportunity to demonstrate ARwavs in a large-scale tech exhibition receiving (VIVA Technology [13], more than 90K visitors). This allowed us to test the robustness of our prototypes and collect additional user feedback. Moreover, exhibitions are among possible real-world applications of ARwavs, as deploying ARwavs in such spaces can help raise the general public's awareness on environmental issues.

We demonstrated our Hololens prototypes and added a computer monitor for other people to see. Based on feedback from our previous testing session, we implemented a miniature view, consisting of a 1:10 scale model of the ARwav

[12] The quotes are taken from written notes and translated from french, and thus they are only approximations of what has been said.
[13] https://vivatechnology.com/

with a human silhouette and a car standing next to it (see Figure 4). This view allowed observers to see the entire ARwav without having to move their head or step back.

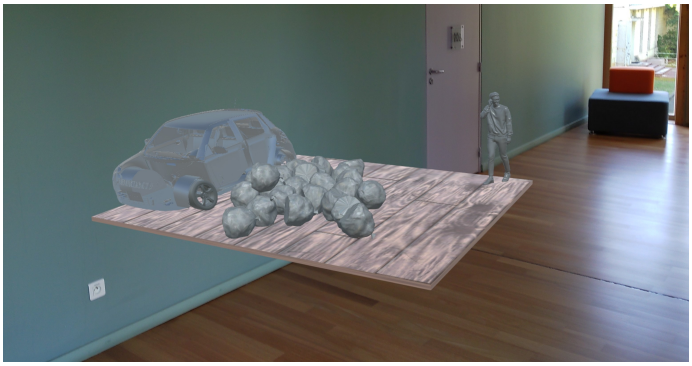


Fig. 4. Miniature view of an ARwav, with a car and standing man as reference points.

We met approximately 40 people in our demo booth, who were highly diverse in terms of age and professional background. Most of them have already tried VR systems before, and a few have tried AR-HMDs. Viewers were generally impressed and sometimes surprised by the quantities: *"All this for one person! It's huge!"*. On several occasions, they mentioned that this type of tool can be useful to raise environmental awareness.

A metal waste management professional was enthusiastic about the *ecological rucksack* demo: *"It's really great to be able to show this! In my daily life, I am confronted with large piles of metal and this has sharpened my environmental awareness. I have often said to myself that it is a public necessity to show this kind of place; with what you propose, there is no need to go there!"*. Two science communicators specialized in environmental issues and two teachers were also enthusiastic, and argued that this tool could be useful in primary schools, at environmental awareness forums or fairs, or as a pedagogical tool for ecology courses in higher education. According to them, a novel user interface like this can be more playful and more impactful. The teachers also commented that it would be interesting to embed the visualization experience in learning spaces (e.g., classroom or amphitheatre), where walls, screens and tables are already occupied by physical or digital course materials.

As before, several observers commented on the narrow field of view and expressed the need to step back. With them, we activated the miniature view. They found it useful to be able to walk around the ARwav and get a global overview of the volume. One observer made the point that the two objects of reference (the man and the car) were very important to get a correct idea of the size of the individual objects (trash bags and cups) and therefore, of the entire volume. It was also mentioned that the two views can be complementary: the miniature gives a better overview, while the 1:1 visualization presents objects on a familiar scale.

5 DESIGNING ARWAVS

In this section, we build on our experience prototyping ARwavs and our user feedback sessions to give a more structured account of the possibilities offered by ARwavs, and the different aspects that need to be taken into consideration when designing them.

5.1 Data

The data represented by an ARwav can have different origins:

1. Tracked: A lot of data on personal resource consumption and waste production is already measured, and can thus be connected to ARwavs. This data can either be measured in real-time (e.g., power consumption in the case of connected houses, or paper sheets for collective printers), or at intervals (e.g., water consumption, as described in *Scenario 1*). In any case, this data provides objective measurements that can be visualized with ARwavs.

2. Self-logged: When the data is not tracked, it can be reported by users, who can either enter the information into a system when they think about it, or answer questionnaires sent at intervals [42]. For instance, if the data is about personal food consumption, it can be easier to log it manually (e.g., [38]) than to try to automatically infer it through sensing or computer vision. Such data could be used in ARwavs, for example, to show the volume of water required to produce a meal, or accumulated amounts of food waste.

3. Estimated: In some cases, the data may be hard to measure or collect directly. For example, if we want to visualize the ecological rucksack (material displaced during manufacturing) corresponding to all smartphones owned by the population of a city, finding the exact number is impossible. However, it is also not useful, because the goal of ARwavs is to give a reliable intuition of magnitudes, not to communicate exact numbers. Thus, a rough estimate is sufficient, and can be made by combining data from multiple sources – for example, if the city is Paris, we can consider that 84% of French people over 12 own a smartphone[14], that close to 2 million of people over 10 live in Paris[15], and since a smartphone represents about 70 kg of ecological rucksack (see scenario 2 in section 3), this gives us about 120,000 tons of soil.

5.2 Visual representation

Visual representations in ARwavs can vary from highly realistic depictions of actual waste products to slightly more symbolic representations. We distinguish between four categories:

1. Literal: The most straightforward way to represent waste material in ARwavs is to use virtual representations that mimic the material itself. For example, waste water can be represented by water (Scenario 1, Figure 3a), and used plastic cups can be represented by plastic cups (Scenario 3, Figure 3c). The main difference between the actual waste and its representation is in the layout: presumably, the plastic cups have never been arranged like in Figure 3c, and the water has never taken the shape of the bathroom like in Figure 3a. Nevertheless, the waste objects or material are represented literally and remain easily recognizable.

2. Transformed: This category corresponds to waste material that is represented as if the material underwent some processing or transformation, although the real waste material did not. For example, flushed water can be shown as if it has been put in bottles (Figure 3d), or soil like in Figure 3b can be shown packed in bags. Such quantity-preserving transformations, also called "unitizations" [13], can help people make sense of large quantities.

3. Materialized: Some waste material is difficult or impossible to perceive. For example, CO_2 is a common waste material but it is an invisible gas. For the purpose of ARwavs, it could be useful to materialize CO_2 as, for example, a heap of coal or black smoke (as in [10]). Although this goes in the direction of metaphorical representations, it remains literal in the sense that coal is mostly made of carbon and smoke can contain a lot of CO_2. However, it is unclear if absolute volumes or masses are meaningful in these cases, and perhaps such ARwavs would be mainly useful to assist comparisons (e.g., CO_2 emitted this year vs. last year).

[14] https://multimedia.ademe.fr/infographies/smartphone-version-ademe/ ¸
[15] www.citypopulation.de

4. Metaphorical: There are many ways waste can be communicated through symbols and metaphors. However, doing so goes against the principle of ARwavs, whose goal is to convey actual waste quantities with representations that resemble the waste itself. We include this category for completeness nonetheless, as metaphorical distance is a continuum [46], and as we saw, *materialization* goes a bit towards metaphors.

Realism: Realism lies on a continuum and concerns all four categories. In all categories, the representations (water, bottles, smoke, etc.) can be modelled and rendered more or less realistically. High realism can bring advantages; For example, the plastic cups in Scenario 3 (Figure 3c) could be designed to be exact replica of the actual cups dispensed by the coffee machine. In that case, the cups would be immediately recognizable by people who regularly use them, which can contribute to make the ARwav more plausible or more provoking. But in many cases, closely mimicking the physical waste material may be difficult, and not necessary useful. For example, in Scenario 2 (Figure 3b) the soil probably does not look like typical soil extracted from mines. Similarly, the trash bags in Figure 1 may not be of the same color and appearance as the trash bags actually thrown away by the person whose data is visualized. However, the objects are close enough to be recognized for what they are, and to give a reliable intuition of the waste quantity.

5.3 Animation and Interaction

Visual representations of waste in ARwavs can be dynamic and even interactive. We distinguish between three levels:

1. Static: These are waste representations that maintain their shape and appearance over time. This is the case, for example, for our soil prototype (Scenario 2, Figure 3b). Users can walk around it but cannot interact with it. The main advantage is ease of implementation, especially for material whose physical behavior is challenging to replicate.

2. Animated: Adding physically plausible animations to waste representations can make them more realistic and increase the user's sense of immersion. For example, trash bags can fall down one by one to form a pile, or plastic cups can roll on the floor. This approach is easier for waste representations that consist of small to medium-sized collections of objects. Animations can be enhanced with sounds of objects colliding or crashing on the floor.

3. Interactive: Letting users interact with the waste representations may help enhance immersion and realism. For example, in our trash bag and plastic cup prototypes, users can pick and move objects; However, this is currently done through the standard Hololens pinch gesture and objects can only be moved one by one, which limits realism. Allowing physically more realistic interactions (e.g., shooting in plastic cups) would likely increase realism and immersion [23]. Besides aimlessly moving objects around, interaction opens up a range of possibilities, including in terms of gamification: VR systems already exist where users are invited to manually fill water tanks [44] or cut trees with chainsaws [1] to raise their awareness about water and paper usage. Similarly, it is possible to imagine ARwavs where users are asked to spend energy to create, rearrange, or destroy waste accumulations. Interaction also opens up endless opportunities for data exploration, some of which will be discussed in subsection 7.4.

5.4 Framing

As we already saw in subsection 2.2, eco-feedback displays can be framed either positively or negatively, with possibly different impacts on users' emotions, attitudes and behavior. Which framing is preferable is highly context-dependent and difficult to predict without user studies. But overall, framing is important to consider when designing ARwavs.

1. Negative: Guilt or fear-tripping visualisations showing the negative impact of users' behavior can be effective ways of encouraging changes in attitudes and habits. As ARwavs show waste accumulations, they have a naturally negative framing, which AR can be used to enhance: because people instinctively want to get rid of waste, showing it

in their personal spaces (e.g., their living room) can elicit a sense of discomfort, whether their actual waste has been already disposed of (e.g., trash bags), or has been produced in a remote place (e.g., a heap of soil from a mine).

2. Positive: It is possible to use ARwavs for positive framing, by having them represent waste saved rather than produced. For instance, our plastic cup prototype (Scenario 3, Figure 3c), could be used to show all plastic cups the user saved since they switched to a reusable cup. Such designs focusing on positive effects are more likely to elicit positive emotions such as pride and satisfaction.

3. Ambiguous: Some framings can be ambiguous, and depend on the user's interpretation. For example, imagine an ARwav showing plastic cups the user would hypothetically save if they changed their behavior. This visualization could be seen as either negative (especially if the behavior change is considered unlikely or too difficult) or positive (if the behavior change is easy to contemplate). Likewise, an ARwav showing collective waste can be interpreted differently depending on the user's perceived contribution (e.g., a user might feel proud of having produced less, or ashamed of having produced more), and how important fairness and collective action is to them (e.g., a user might feel annoyed that others are not trying as hard as them).

5.5 AR Display Technologies

Different display technologies can be used to implement ARwavs. We review them here, and the trade-offs involved.

1. Hand-held devices: Smartphones and tablets are widely used, and recent models provide sufficient capabilities to support AR applications. Hand-held devices are therefore a strong vector to provide ARwavs to a vast majority of people nowadays. For instance, Scenario 1 (Figure 3a) illustrates the use of a smartphone in a private bathroom, and can be extended to any place where water is consumed. Another important advantage of hand-held devices is that their content can be easily shared within small groups of colocated people to support collective experiences.

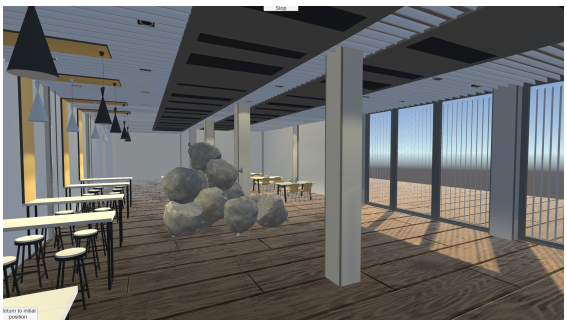
2. Head-mounted displays: Compared to smartphones, augmented-reality head-mounted displays (AR-HMDs) provide more immersive experiences [8]. Hence, they may enhance the visceral impression of quantities conveyed by ARwavs. However, they are more expensive, they only support a single observer, and current versions are still heavy with a small field of view. AR-HMDs are more appropriate for educative demonstrations, as the one described in Scenario 3. In the future, AR-HMDs may become much lighter and may have a murch larger field of view, which will extend the range of situations where they can be used.

3. Spatial AR: ARwavs can also be implemented with video-projectors, which can allow them to be smoothly integrated in physical environments as in, e.g., JETSAM [34], a trashcan that records trash people put in it and projects it on the floor. Like hand-held displays, spatial AR can support shared experiences, but with even larger groups of people. However, virtual objects can only be displayed on 2D surfaces, which greatly limits possibilities. Nevertheless, research on 3D spatial AR is underway [28], and may open up unprecedented possibilities for ARwavs in the future.

4. Tangible: The use of tangible and augmented objects can also be an interesting approach for creating ARwavs experiences. For example, in the Erlen project [14] a physical object equipped with LEDs shows accumulated power consumption over the day. Such interfaces are however dedicated to very specific cases, and currently lack versatility.

6 STUDY

There are many possible ways ARwavs can be evaluated. One important dimension is the choice of evaluation metrics. Broadly speaking, potential studies can look at the perceptual aspects of ARwavs (e.g., whether people get a better sense of the quantities compared to alternative representations), the affective aspects of ARwavs (e.g., whether people feel more emotions or feel more engaged), and the decision-making and behavioral aspects of ARwavs (e.g., whether



(a) Screenshot of the **3D** condition, where a pile of trash bags is rendered in a 3D environment representing a generic cafeteria, and displayed on a computer screen.

(b) Screenshot of the **AR** condition, where a pile of trash bags is rendered in the actual cafeteria where the participant is physically located and where most of the waste is produced.

Fig. 5. Two of the experiment conditions.

people adopt a more eco-friendly lifestyle). The behavioral aspects are arguably the most important, but also by far the most difficult to evaluate. As a preliminary study, we therefore chose to focus on the affective aspects.

Another important dimension to consider when evaluating ARwAvs is the choice of comparison baseline. Many baselines are possible, including the diverse representations of waste production used in eco-feedback research, ranging from simple digits to metaphorical depictions (see section 2). For this study, we chose two baselines of comparison: *(i)* a simple number conveyed in text form, and *(ii)* an interactive 3D representation similar to ARwAvs, but presented on a computer screen. We included those two baselines to make it easier for us to entangle the effects of the presentation format (accumulation visualization vs. numerals) from the effects of the presentation medium (AR vs. screen).

We now go through the experiment design in more detail.

6.1 Experiment Design

6.1.1 Visualized Data. We wanted the visualized data to be meaningful to the participants and to feel personal, in the sense that participants must have contributed – at least in small part – to the waste represented. Therefore, we chose to run the study in our lab building (about 400 employees), recruit building employees as participants, and show them the average amount of waste produced by all employees in a week (5 working days). We reached out to the building management which monitors waste output and estimates that an average of 2275 liters of waste is produced each week. This amount includes household waste (mostly from the cafeteria catering activity), cardboard, recyclables, paper and glass. 2275 liters make up approximately 46 trash bags of 50 liters each. This is the datum we convey in the study.

6.1.2 Physical setup. The experiment took place in the cafeteria of the building (visible in Figure 5b), outside meal hours. A desktop computer (Dell Precision 3640 with Intel Core i9 processor) was installed on a table to administer the two baseline conditions, which will be explained in more detail in the next subsection. The ARwAv condition was administered using a Hololens 2 headset.

6.1.3 Presentation formats. We convey the waste output information in three different ways:

Number shown on a screen. The number of trash bags produced is conveyed as numerals in a text sentence displayed on the desktop computer. The sentence is (translated from french): *"Each week, employees working in the Inria*

center at Bordeaux University's building produce 46 50-liter trash bags worth of waste (2021 data)". This condition will be referred as **Text** for short.

Accumulation visualization shown on a screen. The same number is represented as a pile of trash bags rendered in 3D on the desktop computer (see figure 5a). The surrounding environment is a 3D model of a generic cafeteria, which is comparable but different from the actual cafeteria. Before the 3D representation is shown, the screen displays the following prompt: *"Each week, employees working in the Inria Bordeaux's building produce the amount of waste you will see (2021 data)"*. Initially, a 30-second animation shows the 46 trash bags falling one by one from 3 meters above the camera viewpoint. Participants are invited to navigate in the 3D scene with the keyboard and computer mouse. This condition will be referred as **3D** for short.

Accumulation visualization shown in AR. The same pile of trash bags as in the previous condition is shown, but this time in augmented reality (see figure 5b). The same text prompt is displayed as before. Then, participants see the 46 trash bags fall one by one in the cafeteria. They are told that they are free to move in all the cafeteria area with the head-mounted display on their head. The miniature view described in subsection 4.3 was not included. This condition will be referred as **AR** for short.

6.1.4 Design. We used a within-subject design, where each participant sees all three conditions. The purpose was to increase statistical power by reducing the impact of inter-participant variability. The presentation order was fully randomized across participants, among four possible orderings: Text-AR-3D, Text-3D-AR, AR-3D-Text, and 3D-AR-Text. In other words, Text appeared either first or last. The reason is that we wanted to capture situations where people knew the exact figure before they saw the visualizations (3D and AR), as well as situations where they learned the figure only after having seen the visualizations. At the same time, we did not include the orders AR-Text-3D and 3D-Text-AR to avoid situations where participants have asymmetric information between the 3D and the AR condition.

6.1.5 Procedure and Measurements. The experiment unfolded as follows: first, the participant was invited to read and sign an information and consent form. Then, they were asked to indicate their age and gender (this data was entered on the desktop computer to be immediately aggregated, while all remaining questions were answered on a paper questionnaire). The participant was then invited to read a text introducing them to the data they were about to see (waste output in their building over a week). The text provided context but without giving the actual number. The participant was then asked how often they eat at the cafeteria. This allowed us to assess the extent to which they were familiar with the place and were responsible for the restaurant (and thus building) waste output. Answering the question also likely prompted participants to identify a bit more with the data and the place. A second question asked participants to provide a rough estimate of the number of 50-litre trash bags the building produces in a week. This question allowed us to assess the extent to which participants' prior beliefs were aligned with the information later shown to them, and also likely increased their curiosity and engagement with the information.

The participant was then shown the three conditions in one of the four orderings mentioned before. After seeing each condition, the participant was asked to fill the PANAS questionnaire [43], which is a standard questionnaire for self-reported affect that consists of 20 questions (10 about positive emotions, 10 about negative emotions). For example, the questionnaire asks participants to report the extent to which they feel interested, distressed, upset, etc. on a scale from 1 to 5. The participant was given the option to justify their responses using free-form text. To further reduce random variability, participants were allowed to review their responses to the previous conditions if they wished to.

At the end of the experiment, the participant was asked to rank the three techniques depending on *(i)* each technique's ability to elicit emotions, and *(ii)* how much each technique helped them to understand the data presented. Finally, they were given the option to provide general comments about the study.

This study was approved by the ethics committee of COERLE (aproval 2022-40)[16].

6.1.6 Hypotheses. We expected that participants would report feeling stronger emotions overall in the AR condition than in the other conditions, and would report feeling stronger emotions in the 3D condition than in the Text condition. The overall strength of reported emotions was operationalized by averaging the responses to all 20 PANAS questions, yielding a aggregate measurement on a scale between 1 and 5.

6.1.7 Participants. We recruited 20 participants (15 male, 5 female, mean age 27, SD = 10) using the lab's mailing list and word of mouth. As a selection criterion, participants had to be working in the building for more than three weeks. This allowed us to make sure that participants were familiar enough with the building, and were responsible for its waste output at least to some extent.

6.2 Results

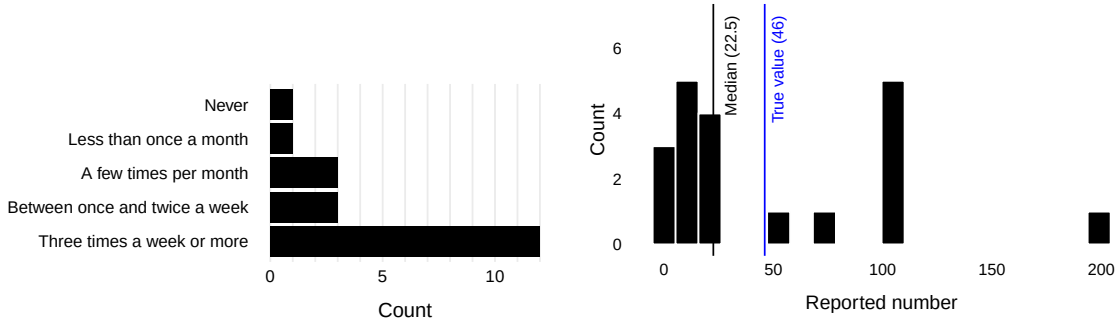
6.2.1 Planned Analysis. All analyses reported in this section were prepared and registered [15] with the Open Science Framework (OSF) before the data was collected.[17] Experimental data and the final analyses are also available on OSF.[18] We report and interpret all our inferential results using interval estimation [16, 17].

Complementary demographics. In addition to age and gender, we asked participants two questions to better understand our sample. One question asked them to report how often they eat at the building cafeteria, with responses shown in Figure 6a. The other question asked them to estimate the amount of produced waste, with responses reported in Figure 6b. Overall, the data suggests that most of our participants are regular users of the cafeteria (and therefore contribute to the building's household waste), and many underestimate the amount of waste produced by the building employees (with the median response being half the true value).

Overall emotion intensity. As we mentioned before, we define the overall emotion intensity as the mean response to the 20 questions of the PANAS questionnaire. Figure 7 shows the value of this aggregate metric averaged across all participants for each of the three conditions, with 95% confidence intervals (CIs). All CIs reported in this section are BCa bootstrap confidence intervals [26] unless specified otherwise. On average, participants report higher emotion intensities after having seen the AR condition than after having seen the 3D condition, followed by the Text condition. These trends are confirmed by estimating within-subject differences in overall emotion intensity, shown in Figure 8. All intervals are located far from zero, providing strong evidence and support for our hypothesis that people tend to report stronger emotions with AR than with 3D, and with 3D than with Text.

Positive vs. negative emotions. Are the differences in overall emotion intensity due to positive emotions or negative emotions? To answer this question, we broke down overall emotion intensity into positive emotions (10 questions in the PANAS questionnaire) and negative emotions (10 questions). The results are shown in Figure 9. Whether we consider only positive emotions or only negative emotions, the trends are the same as before. However, negative emotions are overall less intense than positive emotions, although this observation is highly dependent on the exact emotions included in the PANAS questionnaire. To get a more detailed picture, we look at individual emotions next.

[16] https://www.inria.fr/fr/comite-operationnel-devaluation-des-risques-legaux-et-ethiques
[17] Link to the preregistration: https://osf.io/v78ay/?view_only=193d16fbde7641c896018024130c9063.
[18] Link to the OSF repository with all the supplementary material: https://osf.io/v4yxs/?view_only=cd8b973f9df54d7590f8421be6b11098



(a) Cafeteria attendance.

(b) Estimated waste output.

Fig. 6. *Left:* Participants' reported attendance to the building cafeteria; *Right:* Participants' estimates of the number of 50-liter trash bags produced by the building every week; The blue line indicates the actual number.

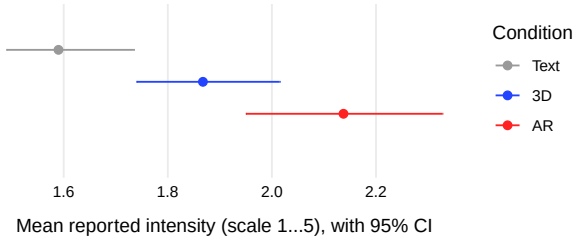


Fig. 7. Overall emotion intensity for each of the three techniques.

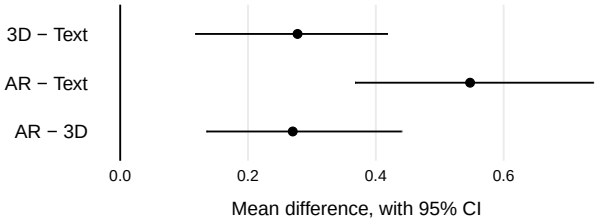


Fig. 8. Within-subject differences in overall emotion intensity.

Individual emotions. Figure 10 shows mean responses for each of the 20 questions of the PANAS questionnaire. For context, possible responses were labelled: 1 – "very slightly or not at all", 2 – "a little", 3 – "moderately", 4 – "quite a bit", and 5 – "extremely". If we only look at the point estimates, the trend we observed before (AR > 3D > Text) seems to hold for each emotion separately, except for emotions that most participants did not feel, namely *irritable*, *hostile* and *proud*. Here we focus on trends common to all conditions, and cases where differences between conditions are clear. Evidence of differences between conditions will be further discussed in subsubsection 6.2.2.

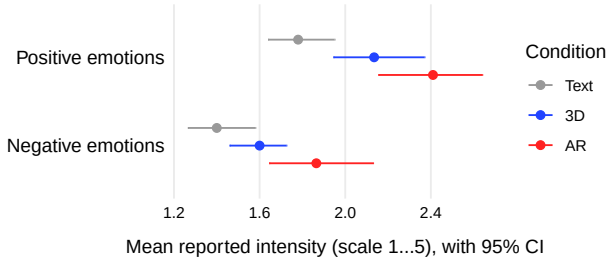


Fig. 9. Overall intensity of positive and negative emotions.

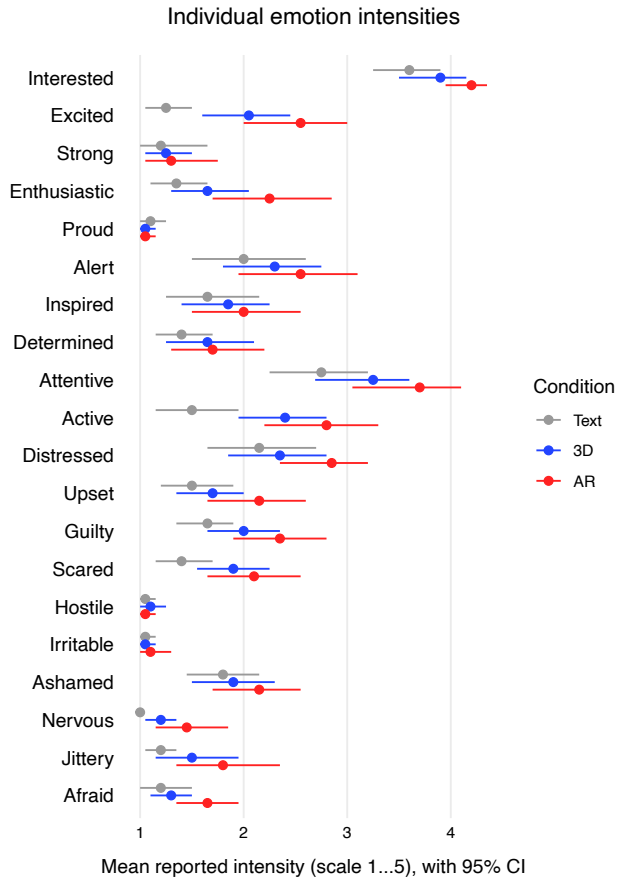


Fig. 10. Reported intensity for all 20 emotions of the PANAS questionnaire.

Among the positive emotions, those that participants reported feeling the most intensely are (in decreasing value of point estimate for the AR condition):

- *Interest.* On average, participants reported feeling "quite a bit" of interest. Responses are high across all three conditions, suggesting that interest was mostly intrinsic to the information presented. This confirms that our participants identified with and engaged with the information presented to them.
- *Attentive.* Participants also reported being attentive (on average, between "moderately" and "quite a bit"). Attention is similar to interest, but implies perhaps an even deeper cognitive engagement. There seems to be differences between conditions, which would mean that the degree of attention may depend on the presentation technique.
- *Active.* Participants reported feeling reasonably active for 3D and AR (on average, between "a little" and "moderately"), but substantially less so for Text. This is likely because the Text condition is non-interactive, while in the 3D and AR conditions, participants were invited to move virtually or physically.
- *Excited.* Participants reported being reasonably excited, but less so with Text, probably due in part to the interactive and entertaining nature of the 3D and AR conditions. In addition, there was likely a novelty effect at play with the AR condition.
- *Alert.* Similarly, participants reported feeling somehow alert, but without large differences between conditions.
- *Enthusiastic.* Overall, participants felt slightly enthusiastic, but more so in the AR condition.

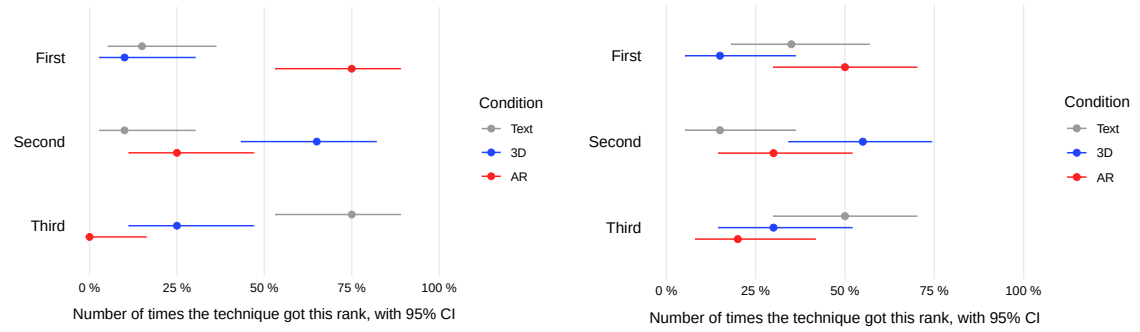
Among the negative emotions, those that participants reported feeling the most are (in decreasing value of point estimate for the AR condition):

- *Distressed.* No strong negative emotion was reported but distress was clearly on top, with an average rating between "a little" and "moderately". This is likely due to the negative nature of the information conveyed, and the fact that most participants did not think that the waste output was so high (see again Figure 6b).
- *Guilty.* Many participants reported feeling some degree of guilt (typically "a little"), with possible differences between techniques. This emotion is likely due to participants being aware of their contribution to the waste represented.
- *Upset.* This emotion yielded similar responses to the previous one, with likely higher responses for AR.
- *Ashamed.* Responses were comparable to the similar emotion *Guilty*.
- *Scared.* Finally, participants reported being a bit scared, but substantially less so in the Text condition.

Technique ranking. Again, at the end of the experiment, participants were invited to rank techniques according to two criteria, the first one being their ability to elicit emotions. Responses are shown in Figure 11a: the three dots and CIs on top indicate the percentage of participants who ranked each technique first (the 95% CIs are computed using Wilson's score method for independent proportions). The AR technique was ranked first by a large majority of participants (around 75%). The three CIs on the next row indicate that 3D was ranked second by most participants, while the last row indicates that Text was ranked last by most.

The second ranking was according to the techniques' ability to make the information understandable, with results in Figure 11b. AR was ranked first more often than 3D, but Text was also ranked first by many participants, almost as many as AR. Overall, there is much more variability in the rankings for this criterion.

6.2.2 Additional Analyses. Analyses in this subsection were not preregistered. As part of our post-hoc analyses, we estimated pairwise differences between the three techniques for all of the 20 emotions reported in Figure 10. Doing so allowed us to better examine the strength of evidence of differences between techniques. For space reasons, we only report results for the three positive emotions and the three negative emotions for which we found the strongest



(a) Ranking of techniques according to their ability to elicit emotions.

(b) Ranking of techniques according to their ability to make information more understandable.

Fig. 11. Technique rankings.

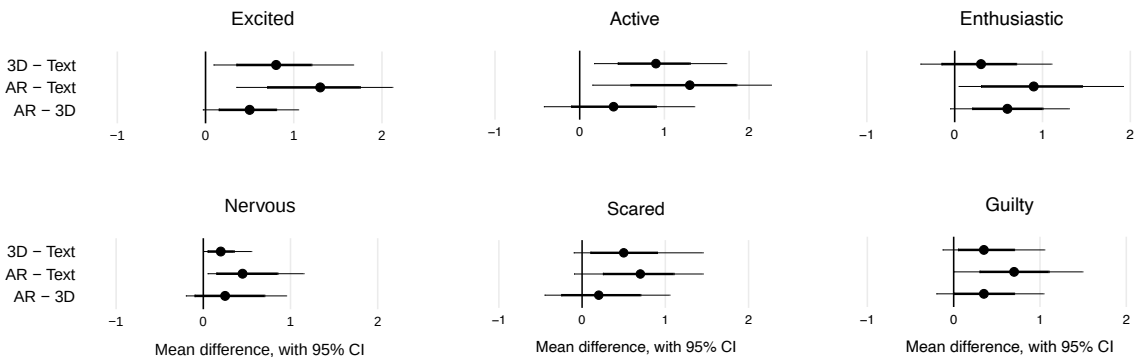


Fig. 12. Mean within-subject differences between techniques, for the three positive emotions (top) and the three negative emotions (bottom) for which evidence of an effect of technique is the strongest. The thin error bars are corrected for multiple comparisons.

evidence of differences between techniques. We operationalized strength of evidence as the p-value obtained by a one-way ANOVA omnibus test. The full results (20 plots) are available in the supplementary material on OSF.

Figure 12 shows the pairwise differences for the six emotions we selected. Error bars are two-tier confidence intervals where the thick interval is a regular 95% CI, and the thin interval is a Bonferroni-corrected 95% CI for $3 \times 20 = 60$ comparisons. A thin interval that does not cross zero provides good evidence of a difference, while thick intervals only provide tentative evidence.

Concerning positive emotions (top row on Figure 12), we can be reasonably confident that people report feeling more *excited* and *active* with 3D and AR than with Text. On top of that, people may report feeling more *excited* and *enthusiastic* with AR than with 3D, but the evidence is weaker.

The bottom row of Figure 12 shows the pairwise comparisons for the three negative emotions selected. There is some evidence that people report feeling more *nervous*, *scared* and *guilty* with 3D and AR than with Text. It is possible that those emotions are slightly stronger in AR than in 3D, but the evidence provided by our data is weak.

6.3 Discussion

In this section, we put our results in perspective using open comments from participants, and discuss the limitations of our study. Participants are numbered P1 to P20 and all quotes are translated from french.

Although participants did not experience particularly strong emotions when shown waste output data, they reported slightly more intense emotions with ARwAvs than with the two alternative formats. ARwAvs seem to have boosted both positive emotions such as engagement, and negative emotions such as guilt. This suggests that ARwAvs are a promising approach if the goal is to leverage people's affect, and that both the visual representation (literal visualizations of waste accumulation) and the medium (AR) may play a role.

The possible double role of visual representation and medium is consistent with comments from participants. In terms of representation, P9 reported that plain text was insufficient for them to *"realize what [the number] meant"*, and P4 mentioned that it was *"hard to imagine this quantity"*. Participants commented on the benefits of having a 1:1 scale representation, with an environment (physical or virtual) that acts as a visual anchor: P5 and P9 mentioned that surrounding objects helped them get a sense of the size of the individual trash bags, while P1 and P4 reported they helped them get a sense of the total volume of waste. These comments are consistent with previous speculations about the benefits of literal, object-based visualizations for conveying unfamiliar quantities [13, 27]. However, participants reported that the numeric format was useful too: P15 mentioned that it is *"more accurate on the precise amount of waste"*, P12 reported that it *"provides the clearest data, which I may be able to memorize"*, while P13 commented that it is the best tool to support understanding. Overall, participants had different opinions about which representation best supported understanding, which can also be seen in the technique ranking data Figure 11b.

In terms of presentation medium, participants commented on the increased immersion and realism provided by AR. P4 and P18 referred to the trash bags in AR as if there were *"in real life"*, P2 mentioned that their amount was *"enormous"*, and P13 mentioned that the animation was impressive and gave a good feeling of the volume. Meanwhile, P4 reported that *"being immersed in the simulation enhances emotions"*. Participants also commented on the possible benefits of having a visualization that is situated, i.e., embedded in an environment that is relevant to the data presented [45]. Although all three conditions were administered in the cafeteria (where a lot of the waste originates from), only in the AR condition was the visualization directly embedded in the cafeteria itself. P15 reported that *"concerning emotions, AR is more striking because it is the most concrete, the most real, and in a familiar place. 3D on a screen is less striking because it is less immersive and represents a generic cafeteria that is not the one at Inria center at University of Bordeaux."*.

This is only an initial study and there are many possible directions for future work. One is to design studies that entangle the effects of immersion from the effects of situatedness. Another one is to design studies that dive deeper into the causes of emotions. In particular, it is hard with the present study to know whether the reported feelings were reactions to the information presented, reactions to the technology itself, or a combination of both. For example, P2 reported being frustrated by the narrow field of view of AR and found that the natural light made it hard to see the trash bags. Such usability issues may have contributed to some of the negative feelings. Conversely, a novelty effect may have contributed to some of the positive emotions reported with AR. It remains to be seen whether the seemingly increased engagement provided by ARwAvs can be sustained, or wears out as users become familiar with AR.

One important limitation of the study is that it measures self-reported emotions, not actual emotions. The two may differ for several reasons, including social desirability bias [20] and good-subject effects [32]. Objective measurement methods such as skin conductance exist, but they are unlikely to be sufficiently sensitive to detect changes in low-intensity emotions. Another approach is to use a between-subject experiment design, which would require many more

participants but would greatly reduce possible good-subject effects. Finally, as we already mentioned, it is important to study aspects other than affect, such as perception and behavior.

7 GENERAL DISCUSSION

In this section, we discuss other important aspects of ARwavs to consider, as well as the limitations of our initial explorations and directions for future work.

7.1 The Ecological Impact of ARwavs

A seeming paradox with ARwavs is that they are meant to promote eco-friendly behavior, but they themselves are costly to the environment due to their reliance on AR hardware. However, it is possible that at least some forms of ARwavs are so effective at changing behavior that their benefits outweigh the environmental costs of the hardware necessary to run them. The net ecological benefit of an ARwav likely depends on a range of factors, including the type of AR display technology it uses. For example, most people in industrialized countries already own AR-ready smartphones, so running ARwavs like the one in Figure 3a is possible at almost no extra environmental cost. In contrast, AR-HMD devices and spatial AR installations are uncommon and require lots of hardware components. Nevertheless, a single device can be shared across people, and can reach hundreds of people in exhibitions and other public events (see, e.g., Scenario 3). In addition, the enhanced sense of immersion brought by AR-HMDs and spatial AR installations may make ARwavs more effective than smartphones, which could justify their use. Doing cost-benefit analyses like these will be crucial but will require empirical knowledge from user studies. It is possible that some ARwav designs (software and hardware) have a net ecological cost while others have a net ecological benefit, so not studying ARwavs just because of the environmental cost of AR hardware could cause us to miss important opportunities.

7.2 Exploring More of the Design Space

We laid out a design space for ARwavs and started to explore it through prototypes, but many areas remain to be explored. Regarding the type of visual representation for the waste material (see subsection 5.2), we mostly focused on literal representations, and only started to explore transformed ones (Figure 3d). It would be useful to explore transformed representations further, for example by trying other unitization approaches [13]. More work is also needed on materialization, i.e., ways of representing quantities without an obvious literal representation, such as electricity or greenhouse gases. Concerning metaphorical representations (e.g., using trees to convey paper saved), they are somehow outside the scope of ARwavs as we defined them, but it could be interesting to see how they compare with literal representations. Another promising area is the physically-realistic behavior of waste representations: our feedback session already suggested that animations and sounds (e.g., trash bags falling from the sky) can increase immersion and induce emotions. It could be interesting to explore other physical behaviors and ways people can interact more realistically with the waste representations. Finally, we have not experimented with spatial AR, which can be especially interesting when ARwavs need to be shown to large groups of people.

In all these cases, there is still a lot of research to be done not only in designing and implementing novel systems, but also in empirical evaluation and comparison. Studies can be centered around psychophysics experiments focusing on waste quantity perception, or, like we did with emotions, they can focus on other psychological impacts (e.g., attitude, engagement, or memorability), or they can be dedicated to the assessment of behavior change through the design of behavioral experiments.

7.3 Large-Scale ARwavs

The testers in our initial feedback session reported that viewing our larger ARwavs was uncomfortable because they could only see a small portion of them at a time, and they had to scan them as if they were looking at it through a peephole. This was likely caused by a combination of two factors. One was the relatively small field of view of the AR displays (52° diagonal for the Hololens 2, and about 20° diagonal for the smartphone if held at 40 cm), which is an important limitation of many current AR display technologies. The second factor was the relatively small distance of the ARwavs to the user. To address this, one solution could have been to invite our testers to move to a larger room or outside, and position the waste accumulation visualizations further away from them. However, supporting AR in large spaces is difficult due to limitations in scanning technologies [3]. The Hololens 2, for example, needs to scan its physical surroundings to properly anchor virtual content and manage occlusion, and the depth spatial mapping is currently limited to 3.1 meters. More research is needed to develop techniques that can realistically integrate virtual objects in the physical world far away from the user. But in principle, even very large-scale ARwavs should be possible using computer vision, 3D maps, and/or spatial anchors (e.g., Microsoft Azure Spatial Anchors[19]). Once this becomes possible, we will be able to design ARwavs that convey massive amounts of waste (see Figure 13). At present, we can explore fresh options in the design and implementation of novel systems that explore trade-offs for adapting to these current technical limitations; for instance, the miniaturized version we implemented for our second feedback session is a first step. However, it sure needs empirical evaluation and comparison.

Fig. 13. Photomontage giving a rough idea of the amount of material displaced and emitted to manufacture the smartphones for the entire population of Paris, placed next to the Notre-Dame cathedral. Image designed by Léana Petiot (https://www.leanapetiot.com/).

[19] https://docs.microsoft.com/fr-fr/azure/spatial-anchors/overview

7.4 Exploratory Data Analysis with ARwavs

In this paper, we have mostly focused on how to convey waste quantities when the data consists of a single quantity to be conveyed. However, waste data is dynamic in nature and can have rich attributes associated to it, such as the nature of the waste, where it was produced, and by whom. This opens up a vast array of possibilities for interactive data exploration. Interaction techniques used in traditional computer-based visualizations could be mapped to AR gestures involving remote or direct touch. For example, an ARwav could support zooming through a pinch gesture, and let users go back and forth between a 1:1 view and a miniature view. Gestures could also be used to change the time scale of an ARwav, e.g., to see the amount of trash produced in a week, a month, or a year; To facet the data by sub-categories, e.g., see the trash amount recycled or not, or the amount produced per person; Or to make comparisons, assess trends and distributions (e.g., see twelve piles of trash bags next to each other, one for each month – also see the device in Figure 2c, which supports comparison between two periods). Such interactions could help users understand patterns in their waste consumption, and perhaps help them find ways to reduce their waste output. As augmented-reality visualizations, ARwavs could support interactions that make a smart use of the physical environment and go beyond what is possible on desktop or virtual-reality displays. For example, an ARwav system like in Figure 3a could first show an overview of total water consumption in the house, and let the user break down this data by consumption source (e.g., bathroom shower, bathroom sink, toilet, kitchen sink, etc.). This transition could be shown with an animation of a large volume of water splitting into smaller volumes, each moving next to their respective source. Such a feature could help users identify activities for which changes in behavior are likely to be the most impactful.

We have also mostly explored the use of ARwavs made of collections of simple and identically-looking objects, but object appearance (color, shape) can be used to encode richer information. For example, a pile of plastic cups could be composed of crushed cups representing cups that have been used and disposed of, green cups representing the part that will be recycled, and new cups for the cups that have not been thrown away. Finally, the prototypes we have presented only implement basic audio effects, but work in immersive analytics has already demonstrated the use of haptics [36] and sound [31] to encode richer data and enhance data exploration.

7.5 Generalizations of ARwavs

Although ARwavs focus on representing waste, similar techniques can be used for other purposes than waste representation. For example, ARwavs could be repurposed to show the personal consumption of unhealthy substances which, just like waste production, tends to disappear and leave no trace. For example, a person may struggle to understand how much alcohol they consume over time. Although mobile apps exist to log this information, showing cumulative consumption as numbers or bar charts can lack impact for users who seek motivation to improve their behavior. Showing the same numbers using literal AR accumulations (e.g., piles of alcohol bottles in the kitchen) could help raise users' awareness of their consumption, make it more salient, and help them change their behavior. Similar ideas can be applied to other unhealthy habits such as smoking or eating sugar. Alternatively, ARwavs could be used to show the cumulative consumption of healthy substances like vegetables or water, and provide a positive feedback. Finally, ARwavs could be used to improve people's understanding of personal material consumption more generally. For example, when buying clothes (leaving aside the environmental concerns associated with it), it can be difficult to assess the amount of clothes bought, thrown away and sold over a period of time. Seeing them accumulated and organized in such a way as to have visibility of their life cycle may be interesting in the scope of personal behaviour analysis.

8 CONCLUSION

In this paper, we presented *augmented-reality waste accumulation visualizations* or ARWAVs, which are literal representations of accumulated waste embedded in users' physical environments. We went through several examples of ARWAVs to illustrate the variety of situations where they can be useful, and we discussed general design principles and trade-offs. Initial feedback sessions with experts and exhibition visitors suggested that ARWAVs can successfully engage observers. A controlled user study involving 20 participants provided further evidence that ARWAVs can increase emotional response compared to more standard ways of representing waste output. Further research is necessary to determine whether this could in turn promote pro-environmental behavior. This research would benefit from a multidisciplinary collaboration with environmental scientists, behavioral economists, psychologists, sociologists, and science communicators.

Minimizing the negative impact of humans on the environment is an incredibly complex problem, and the issue tackled by ARWAVs (giving individuals a better sense of the magnitude of their waste production) only represents a tiny subset of all problems that will need to be addressed. Nevertheless, ARWAVs could play a useful role if some designs prove to have a high net ecological benefit, or if they usefully inspire future research.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was funded in part by the ANR grant ANR-19-CE33-0012.

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