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Environmental Advocacy and Visual Framing: Social Documentary Filmmaking as a Tool for Legitimation and Change

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of narrative technologies on the perception of environmental advocacy. The aim is to evaluate how the social documentary "Brazil: Seeding Sociobioeconomies" acts as a strategic device for communication and social mobilization. The research question investigates how visual narrative strategies and compositional structuring deconstruct traditional framings of the climate crisis, reimagining the relationship between biocultural memory, innovation, and sustainable development. The methodology is based on the conceptual distinction between narration and storytelling, applying the method of Visual Narrative Analysis (VNA) to interpret the translation of discourse into moving images and its capacity to construct social reality, complemented by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and, more specifically, its multimodal evolution, Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA). The expected results aim to demonstrate that social documentary works as a legitimizing tool, accrediting the socio-bioeconomy not as a nostalgic regression, but rather as an updating of memory and an evolution of identity capable of guaranteeing sustainability and global climate justice.

Keywords: social documentary filmmaking; environmental advocacy; visual narrative; biocultural memory; social change; eco-justice; Brazil

1. Introduction

The digitalization of communication has impacted not only sociocultural and political issues, but also the forms of communication and information promoting sustainability and combating the environmental and climate crisis. In recent years, attention to the environment, and therefore what we commonly refer to as nature, has become not just a consumer choice, but also a form of social distinction, capable of communicating—through narrative—membership in groups sensitive to ethical and responsible issues, oriented not only toward eco-justice (White, 2013). This growing interest in sustainability creates a framework in which these communication ecosystems have the potential to significantly lead the fight against the climate crisis, countering misinformation and generating greater environmental awareness and responsibility. The integration of new digital communication technologies has been accompanied by forms of extra-textual experiences (photography, performance art, video, etc.), expanding narrative genres by adding iconic ones based on images that can transform feelings into passions to the point of suppressing the individual's critical thinking.

Within this scenario, information processes become fluid and pervasive, often unfiltered and tending to standardize, characterized by an overexposure of content and the

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uncontrolled diffusion of a quantity of information—information epidemic or infodemic (Rothkopf, 2003)—which produces the paradoxical effect in which individuals have difficulty orienting themselves on a given topic, as in the case of the environmental and climate crisis. The infodemic phenomenon exploits disinformation by focusing attention on carefully packaged fake news packages, thus aiming to influence public opinion to orient it towards feelings and behaviours that serve specific objectives, such as generating panic or changing the perception of a situation by promoting interpretations that fuel fear and insecurity and, more generally, a sense of distrust towards others and institutions due to "conspiracy" theories fuelled by fake news, as often happens with climate change (Uscinski et al., 2017), thus constituting the main manifestation of post-truth (Maddalena & Gili, 2020), to be understood as the circumstance in which individuals appeal mainly to their own beliefs and feelings—confirmation bias (Westerwick et al., 2017)—rather than to the facts in their objective reality. This leads us to affirm that the strong interdependence between society and technology has favoured the creation of new forms of interaction, participation, and collectivity. Nevertheless, reflection on this form of power assumed by communication ecosystems cannot ignore the awareness that information is not "neutral".

Based on this, the proposed reflection is to consider the production of social documentaries as an important agent of change (Borum Chattoo & Feldman, 2017) to counter misinformation and protect the planet and marginalized communities (most affected by the effects of climate change and environmental disasters), thanks also to the capacity for co-participation of these latter communities (Saputra, 2024). In this sense, the objective of this paper is to analyse the impact that a social documentary made in a region of Brazil ("Brazil: Seeding Sociobioeconomies" [*Semeando a Bioeconomia*]), through complete and accurate information, becomes an activator of social practices that can also influence political decisions regarding the environment and sustainability. It is no coincidence that during COP 30 (Belém, 12 November 2025), 13 countries signed the *Declaration on Information Integrity on Climate Change*, marking a turning point in the identification and promotion of multilateral initiatives and strategies to combat disinformation, greenwashing, and denialism to support action to combat climate change. Transparency is a cultural and democratic pillar, so much so that in January 2026, the European Union (EU) signed the same declaration: "This endorsement comes at a time when the information environment can be difficult to navigate, especially on climate matters. According to the 2025 Eurobarometer on climate change, while 84% of Europeans agree that climate change is caused by human activity, 52% say traditional media fail to provide clear information on the topic, and 49% report difficulty identifying reliable content on social media" (Directorate-General for Climate Action, 2026). Complete and accurate information is considered a fundamental precondition for building credible responses to the climate crisis, and the production and dissemination of social documentaries addressing this issue undoubtedly constitute a fundamental tool for raising awareness of the need for change.

2. Social Documentary Filmmaking as a Tool for Legitimation and Change

The contemporary climate crisis represents a sociocultural and communicative problem, taking the form of a complex hyperobject (Morton, 2013) that challenges traditional categories of human perception, temporality, and space. Social perception of the ecological emergency is mediated by processes of social construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), in which the media, digital platforms, and advocacy campaigns play a structuring role. Framing (Goffman, 1974) not only determines the understanding of a problem or phenomenon, but also the emotional, political, and behavioural response of the community. In the narration of political-environmental issues, strategic communication becomes a space

of hegemonic contestation (Gramsci, 1971) where different social actors struggle to define and signify what constitutes progress, sustainability, development, and wealth. The dominant framing of the climate crisis in the mainstream media has been characterized by two opposing and limiting approaches, respectively centred on catastrophism and the sense of ecological paralysis (eco-anxiety) generated by the quantification of damage (Ereaut & Segnit, 2006; O'Neill & Nicholson-Cole, 2009; Pihkala, 2020), and on welfarism aimed at portraying populations of the global South as passive victims (Belfer et al., 2017; Roosvall & Tegelberg, 2018). The consideration of the welfarism paradigm as an interpretative key to understanding the negative media narrative oriented towards the Global South—and Latin America in particular—lies in the codification of the so-called *victimhood frame* within a paternalistic and neocolonial logic (Chouliaraki, 2013). Although the specialized literature on climate communication identifies multiple interpretative frameworks beyond catastrophism and welfarism (Boykoff, 2011; Nisbet, 2009), the latter effectively epitomizes the constant underestimation of political agency and knowledge of local culture. Focusing on Latin America, the ecological crisis—from the deforestation of the Amazon to extreme weather disasters in the Caribbean and Central American states—is structurally articulated according to an asymmetrical dichotomy: on the one hand, the Global North represents itself as the actor with the financial, scientific, and moral capacity to "save" or "help"; on the other, Latino populations are reproduced as passive, vulnerable subjects in need of charitable assistance or compensation funds (Escobar, 2011). This approach objectifies the vulnerability of rural and indigenous communities and deliberately erases their historical agency and practices of socio-environmental resistance (Ulloa, 2017). Welfarism thus acts as an ideological device because it absolves the extractivist responsibility of the global North by transforming ecological debt into welfare benevolence, and it also neutralizes the political charge of alternative practices born in Latin America, such as socio-bioeconomy and the rights of nature (Ulloa, 2017). While not exhausting the full range of media representations, in our opinion, the concept of welfarism fully captures the reductionist and welfarist roots of the mainstream discourse on Latin America, demonstrating that the dominant narrative continues to perpetuate epistemological asymmetries (Boykoff, 2011).

The traditional structure of environmental journalism has long been based on linear textual or televisual logics, oriented towards the reporting of critical events, which today prove inadequate in the face of the complex and global nature of climate change, and which require new forms of information coverage (Boykoff, 2011) and narrative models capable of conveying both the systemic and global interconnections of phenomena and their human and emotional impact (Cottle, 2009). According to Harper (2012), for example, visual sociology considers images as empirical data to be deconstructed through precise theoretical framing, and despite the differences in methods and target audiences, visual sociology dialogues with social documentary and field observation because both use images to explore social reality. Stott (1986) specifies that the purpose of social documentary is to influence conscience, thus moving away from the scientific abstraction of data to push public opinion towards empathy and action. For the author, therefore, social documentary does not address social and human problems in a neutral way, that is, as a collection of facts, but treats them as an emotional experience to which a response must be given.

According to Nichols, "Documentaries of social representation are what we typically call non-fiction. These films give tangible representation to aspects of the world we already inhabit and share" (Nichols, 2001, p. 1). For the author, social documentary filmmaking favours the exploration of complex social problems and the interpretation of reality by the spectators, and is characterized by the fact that, unlike the fictional genre, the people filmed are not theatrical actors, but social actors who continue their struggles and claims even in the absence of cameras. Winston (1995) critically deconstructs the tradition of British social

documentary filmmaking, highlighting that the definition "Documentary, or the creative treatment of actuality, is a new art with no such background in the story and the stage as the studio product so glibly possesses" (Grierson, 1933, p. 8) undermines the subversive power of denunciation and transforms the social problem into an object of cultural consumption based on an ideological-rhetorical and paternalistic construction of the narrative to satisfy the reformist agenda of the elites. According to Bogre (2019), social documentary is not a formal category or an aesthetic genre, but an intentional practice of civic and political engagement. Visual narration aimed at social change is not exhausted in a single shot or a single shot but is defined by its impact strategy and its ability to integrate with advocacy, and in this sense, social documentary and visual narration become critical tools to interrogate power structures, hold public opinion accountable, and serve as a catalyst for social justice.

In this scenario, social documentary filmmaking—as a form of strategic communication oriented toward advocacy and social justice—takes on a transformative function. Social communication campaigns no longer merely raise awareness but aim to redefine the conceptual categories of transnational ecological politics (Pezzullo & Cox, 2017). Through the reconfiguration of symbols and visual codes, strategic narratives can dismantle the founding myth of neoliberal capitalism, based on the idea that progress and economic development necessarily require the destruction or degradation of the environment (Dryzek, 2013). In this sense, visual and documentary communication takes on a political significance because it acts as a bridge between decision-making centers of power and marginalized territorial realities, enabling the legitimation of alternative economic models based on local specificities. To understand the communicative effectiveness of documentaries and, more generally, of contemporary advocacy campaigns, it is essential to place the analysis within the changed media ecosystem. The advent of digitalization and media convergence (Jenkins, 2006) have radically transformed journalistic narratives and social communication. In this hyperconnected and fragmented landscape, documentaries no longer function as simple informational entertainment products but are now strategic tools for raising awareness and social mobilization. The communicative effectiveness of contemporary environmental documentaries lies in their ability to combine the rigor of empirical evidence with the emotional charge of lived experience, transforming global macro-problems into tangible, accessible, and understandable human stories for a diverse audience. The mere presentation of macro-scientific data, however empirically rigorous, often fosters cognitive paralysis or apathy (Nisbet & Scheufele, 2009), while a solely emotional narrative risks slipping into sensationalism or paternalism. The model proposed in the documentary analysed overcomes this contradiction because it integrates the scientific rigor of the macro scale (climate models, economic indicators) with the micro-narrative dimension of embodied experience and biocultural memory. From this perspective, transforming data into lived history enables the activation of processes of awareness and critical empathy, making complex systemic dynamics comprehensible without sacrificing accuracy (Leiserowitz, 2006). The model proposed in this documentary deserves further analytical exploration as it provides an interpretative framework for evaluating the effectiveness of critical eco-documentary—and more generally, progressive eco-cinema—in constructing counter-narratives capable of mobilizing public opinion, promoting a form of climate justice that is simultaneously informed, accessible, and grounded in the recognition of human and territorial rights.

This has a dual impact from an advocacy perspective, as documentaries can function as a catalyst for public agency and a negotiating tool for decision-makers. Indeed, by bridging the psychological and geographical distance that often separates viewers from ecological drama, documentaries convert feelings of impotence and *eco-anxiety* into a sense of ethical urgency and a propensity for active advocacy, from concern to action (Howell, 2011).

Furthermore, as highlighted by Nisbet and Kotcher (2009), narrative-intensive visual media can influence institutional agenda-setting, offering a platform for public legitimacy to community demands that would otherwise remain on the margins of international summits. In the following pages, we will analyse the social documentary "Brazil: Seeding Sociobioeconomies" [*Semeando a Bioeconomia*], part of the "Nature in Action" series, produced in Brazil by the global coalition of environmental organizations *Nature4Climate* (N4C) with the aim of assessing the transformative impact of emerging narrative technologies on the perception of environmental advocacy. To this end, the research question guiding this work is: How do visual narrative strategies and compositional structuring in the social documentary "Brazil: Seeding Sociobioeconomies" deconstruct traditional framings of the climate crisis, reimagining the relationship between biocultural memory, technological innovation, and models of sustainable economic development?

Starting from the concept of biocultural memory understood as "those consolidated languages that still survive in the minds and hands of members of rural cultures, a mnemonic arsenal of immeasurable value. Ultimately, it is in these age-old wisdoms, long ignored, devalued, or misinterpreted, that we find the keys to overcoming the current ecological and social crisis unleashed by the industrial revolution, the obsession with profit, and rationalist thought" (Toledo & Barrera-Bassols, 2008, p. 14), the hypothesis is that this documentary, which features Brazilian *açaí* producers from *Uasei*, an indigenous association from *Oiapoque* (Amapá state), focuses on the economic transition in Amazonia by promoting alternative solutions to resist the effects of climate change. It deconstructs the narrative of unbridled progress by highlighting the importance of memory and local knowledge to address, from a different narrative angle, information on climate change as a social problem (Picarella et al., 2026). In this sense, the documentary's narrative structure fosters a perceptual shift in the viewer toward prosocial commitment. The findings emerging from this analysis demonstrate how the social documentary tool takes the form of strategic communication for legitimacy. The coordinated narrative between political agenda and indigenous knowledge allows us to accredit the "socio-bioeconomy" (Abramovay, 2019; Nobre & Nobre, 2019) not as a nostalgic regression, but as an updating of memory and an identity and technological evolution capable of guaranteeing economic sustainability and global climate justice.

3. Materials and Methods

From a methodological perspective, this article draws on the difference between narrative and storytelling (Mangone, 2023; Han, 2024). More precisely, narrative unites past and future (Arendt, 1961), preserving individuals' memories of actions over time and allowing them to become models to be imitated and/or surpassed in the creation of a new world. Storytelling, on the other hand, is the antithesis of narrative because, due to its persuasive function, it flattens the temporal dimension towards the presentification of the here and now, without contributing to the construction of impactful transformations in society, as it offers no alternatives, being reduced to mere marketing and consumption.

Considering this distinction, it will be applied to the social documentary "Brazil: Seeding Sociobioeconomies" (available at the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LXK-oim9Fug&t=22s, accessed on 20 July 2026) the method of Visual Narrative Analysis (VNA) (Riessman, 2008), taking as an explanation of narrative what defines it as a structure of meaning that organizes events and human actions in an orderly way, attributing importance to individual actions and events based on their effect on the whole as a whole, and which differs from chronicles since these limit themselves to listing events based on their temporal placement (Polkinghorne, 1988). This methodological choice is justified because narratives are closely linked to agency and are socially constructed through the interaction between interpersonal, social, and cultural relationships; furthermore, they

enable the construction of social reality and, when configured in this way, generate multiple interpretations (Mangone, 2022). This type of approach must consider not only the story itself as the unit of analysis, but also the way it is told and translated into moving images, thus acquiring meaning and significance both for the teller and for those who listen and view it (Esin et al., 2014). To fully grasp the communicative complexity and symbolic charge of the audiovisual text, visual narrative analysis is integrated here with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and, more specifically, with its multimodal evolution, Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis—MCDA (Machin & Mayr, 2025). In this way, a methodological synergy is established that is indispensable for decoding the power structures and ideological frames underlying images (Fairclough, 2010). The adoption of MCDA is in fact essential since contemporary media texts never entrust their meaning exclusively to verbal or isolated visual language, but rather to intersemiosis (O'Halloran, 2003), that is, the dynamic interaction between different codes (images, words, music, sound effects, and editing). While visual narrative analysis allows for the deconstruction of the compositional grammar, camera angles, and spatial organization of images (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), and CDA offers the analytical categories to reveal the ideological frames underlying discourse (van Dijk, 2001), MCDA unites these levels by analysing how the simultaneous combination of visual and verbal codes constructs relations of power and discursive legitimacy.

The integration of these approaches is justified because the object of analysis does not represent reality neutrally; this multimodal methodological framework therefore allows us to demonstrate how editing choices, the spatialization of bodies, and framing are not simple aesthetic or narrative expedients, but rather climate advocacy tactics designed to undermine neoliberal rhetoric and establish the socio-bioeconomy as a solid and politically authoritative socio-ecological model.

Finally, the proposed integrated narrative analysis can be understood as a tool that delineates the role and meaning of social action: it serves as a vantage point for both observation and listening. When employed as a product, it implies that researchers themselves assume the role of narrators (Merton, 1980) in producing accounts of social life—an interpretive process characteristic of the qualitative analyses proposed here. Indeed, the narrative does not reach scholars already fully formed; rather, they construct representations of social action, which may itself constitute an act of narration. The qualitative approach based on case study analysis (mentioned above)—utilizing moving images and text—ensures conceptual validity, explores in detail the operation of causal mechanisms in individual cases, aids in formulating new hypotheses, and possesses the capacity to account for complex causal relationships (George & Bennett, 2004). Furthermore, combining process tracing with typological theorizing offers significant advantages for studying the complex, relatively unstructured, and infrequent phenomena that are the focus of this article.

Subject Matter and Visual Style of the Documentary

Within the scholarly debate on political ecologies, sustainable transitions, and the decolonization of knowledge (Escobar, 2014; Mignolo, 2007; Castro-Gómez, 2007), an analysis of the documentary "Brazil: Seeding Sociobioeconomies" (2022)—co-produced by *Nature4Climate* and *If Not Us Then Who* in collaboration with the *Articulación de los Pueblos Indígenas de Brasil* (APIB) [Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil]—offers a compelling avenue for exploring how documentary storytelling can reconfigure the visual representation of subalternity and sustainability in the Amazon region. The film examines the shift from a colonial, extractive economic model toward a regenerative socio-bioeconomy paradigm rooted in valuing biodiversity and the *Selva en Pie* (standing forest). It aims to highlight a counter-hegemonic renegotiation of the narrative, grounded in the decolonization of knowledge, the reclamation of territories, and the legitimization of historically

marginalized epistemic systems. Indeed, the film focuses on empirically demonstrating that preserving the Amazonian canopy is a fundamental prerequisite for generating distributed socio-economic value, creating local jobs, and mitigating climate change on a global scale. The documentary's narrative core focuses on the agroforestry value chain of the açaí fruit (specifically from minute 02:26 to 03:45), documenting its entire cycle: from land-use planning and planting using ancestral management techniques (minutes, 01:23–02:25) to industrial processing and community-led marketing via the *Uasei Açaí* social cooperative in the municipality of *Oiapoque*, Amapá state (minutes, 03:07–05:50). The documentary portrays various stakeholders through a careful integration of institutional and community actors, thereby breaking down the traditional dichotomy between academic knowledge and local, ancestral knowledge. Indeed, the film interweaves testimonies from indigenous leaders of APIB and local executives from the *Oiapoque* cooperative (minutes, 00:16; 01:21–02:10; 02:46–03:50; 8:32–9:27) with the voices of workers and technicians in the processing chain (minutes, 03:28–05:00), political and institutional figures from decision-making centers in Brasília and São Paulo (minutes, 00:40–01:20 and 07:44–08:30), and representatives from the scientific and research communities (minutes, 06:22–07:40). The combined presence of these actors creates a horizontal epistemic network in which indigenous populations do not appear merely as informants or passive categories, but rather assume the role of political agents driving self-determination and territorial development.

The documentary's structure is thus characterized by a clear departure from the conventions of documentaries focused on victimization or exposé. Indeed, the narrative structure symbolically shifts the story's timeframe from a passive phase (the "before") to a moment of rupture, reappropriation, and community self-determination situated in the present (2022). This reversal is conveyed through a rigorous depiction of the technological, organizational, and accounting control exercised by Indigenous communities over the *açaí* supply chain. The sequence spanning minutes 02:46 to 03:16 provides a detailed look at the fruit's sanitization, the operation of pulp-extraction machinery, and the standardized processing and packaging. This visual sequence highlights that the Indigenous community is not a passive victim but an active agent of ecological transition; it further demonstrates that traditional knowledge is not limited to mere folkloric practices but fosters progress and development for Indigenous communities by transforming into the infrastructure of a complex, sustainable economy. This visual–conceptual architecture finds another pillar in the aforementioned *Selva en Pie* iconography; in the documentary under analysis, this becomes an aesthetic and political construct articulated visually through the opening sequence, the landscape transitions (between minutes 00:19–00:35 and at 01:20), and the concluding aerial shots starting at minute 09:46—which represents the short film's spiritual finale. Indeed, starting with this latter sequence (minutes, 09:46–10:40), aerial drone footage reveals the vastness of the Amazon rainforest canopy, accompanied by an ancestral chant—typically performed by indigenous elders—that expresses a spiritual connection to the forest (both visible and invisible), gratitude to nature for the fruits it yields (such as *açaí*), and a reaffirmation of the indigenous community's presence on its ancestral lands. The interplay between the aerial shots of the living forest, the indigenous chant, and the superimposed awareness-raising messages—highlighting the need for "significant investment in sociobieconomies are needed to transform communities and protect nature's inherent climate solutions"—reinforces the documentary's political, cultural, and ecological message.

In these segments of the documentary, the use of panoramic shots and drone footage establishes a striking visual contrast between the seemingly pristine landscapes of the Amazonian forest canopy and the macro-level details of anthropogenic "forest gardens" managed through traditional agroforestry techniques. These sequences do not aim to romanticize the narrative of untouched nature; rather, the goal is to visually demonstrate

that Amazonian biodiversity is the product of a millennia-long co-evolution between the ecosystem and sustainable human practices. This visual-narrative tone shifts the focus from the emotional overwhelm caused by the ecological threat toward the empirical viability of a socio-bioeconomic alternative. In this context, the seeds—captured in close-up during the opening sequences that introduce *açaí* in its natural state and show its initial manual sorting by Indigenous workers (minutes, 01:30–02:40), as well as in the central scenes focusing on the product's economic transformation and the community processing machinery operated by the cooperative (minutes, 05:10–06:30)—emerge as dense, multimodal signs. Indeed, these sequences establish a narrative framework in which the seeds symbolize the ecosystem's genetic reservoir while simultaneously representing political acts of territorial sovereignty and cultural resistance. Through these sequences, the documentary redefines the concept and act of sowing, transforming it from a simple agricultural gesture into a tool for economic decolonization—grounded in the recognition of communities' territorial sovereignty over their own economies and resources—and for the preservation of identity, based on acknowledging Indigenous community members as economic and social agents capable of proposing alternative solutions for their territories to address the impacts of the global climate crisis. The documentary highlights the importance of integrating audiovisual technology with biocultural memory (Toledo & Barrera-Bassols, 2008); images serve as discursive and educational resources aimed at reaffirming ancestral identity and Ibero-American cultural heritage (Daza Orozco et al., 2018). In this context—particularly regarding the final sequence—the overhead shot combined with the singing aims to subvert the narrative of colonial conquest, fostering an understanding that nature and Indigenous culture are not resources to be dominated or modernized, but rather represent complex, advanced systems of knowledge and culture. Ultimately, the short film "Brazil: Seeding Sociobioeconomies" embodies what Escobar (2014) defines as the dynamic of "re-existence", wherein the visual representation of communal practice subverts global cultural hegemony and transforms the Amazonian territory from a space of extraction into a sacred, political, and scientific space of ecosystemic resilience.

4. Results

The *Manifiesto de Santa Fe* (Birri, 1964) regarding the role of social documentary in Latin America pioneered the imperative for documentary cinema to position itself not merely as an aesthetic exercise, but as a critical instrument for bearing witness to, challenging, and transforming socio-political reality. Within this historical and epistemological framework, contemporary audiovisual production is evolving toward advanced forms of strategic communication advocacy focused on sustainability and environmental justice. Latin American social documentary no longer merely records the ecological crisis and its impact on vulnerable communities; instead, it discursively reorganizes reality to legitimize alternative development models, effectively renegotiating regimes of visibility and symbolic power.

This approach is paradigmatically exemplified by the social documentary "Brazil: Seeding Sociobioeconomies"; indeed, amidst global climate challenges—with Brazil at the center of international debate as the host of the 2024 G20 summit and COP30 in Belém in 2025—integrating the three aforementioned methods (VNA, CDA, and MCDA) for analysis (Table 1) demonstrates how every detail (whether visual or textual) was carefully selected to foster climate advocacy.

Table 1. Summary of the application of the three analysis methods *.

Analytical Perspective	Theoretical and Methodological Focus	Empirical Application to Documentary	Sociopolitical and Discursive Function
Visual Analysis	Spatial Composition; Shots; Video editing.	Spatialization between centers of power (Brasilia, São Paulo) and territory (Oiapoque); Close-ups and visual emphasis on hands, products (*açaí*), traditional clothing, and seeds; Scenography of the *Selva en Pie* and visual contrasts between landscape and Workmanship.	Visibility of the connection between political decisions and territory; Transformation of corporeality and seeds into visual archives of biocultural and genetic memory.
CDA	Decoding power relations, hegemonic ideologies and subject positioning.	Deconstruction of the capitalist discourse (value = exploitation/deforestation); Redefining the concept of progress and wealth; Reconceptualization: local populations from passive victims to environmental experts/decision-makers.	Power Asymmetry; Accreditation of ancestral knowledge as a driver of the value chain and economic infrastructure.
MCDA	Synergistic integration of different codes (visual, verbal, sound, material).	Narrative Polyphony: Interweaving the Voices of Policymakers and Communities (*Uasei Açaí*); Overlaying Images of Traditional and Transformed Agricultural Practices; Modulating the Visual-Narrative Tone (From Ethical Urgency to Transformative Action).	An integrated and convincing counter-discourse; Democratization of the climate narrative.

* Authors' own elaboration.

VNA reveals how this socially impactful documentary transforms into a strategic communication tool capable of reshaping the framing of ecology, the economy, and cultural identity. The audiovisual text is structured around a precise spatial arrangement of shots, with editing that constantly alternates between urban centers of political and economic power (Brasília and São Paulo) and the indigenous territory of *Oiapoque*. This spatial movement serves not merely as a geographical backdrop but creates a visual and conceptual link between macro-politics and grassroots community action; meanwhile, the detailed depiction of the açaí production process—from manual harvesting to final processing—makes the living economic resource visible within its own ecosystem. Furthermore, the camera employs a framing grammar based on close-ups and details (ranging from harvesters' hands to local seeds) that highlights natural elements and physicality as symbolic archives of biocultural memory.

Through CDA, the documentary highlights the power asymmetry inherent in capitalist market logic, which historically links value creation to intensive exploitation and deforestation: "Before, all of our products we would get it to Oiapoque, the middleman would want to get a large quantity but set the price he wanted. In 2022, we created this Association. We created it with this vision of not delivering our açaí at a lower price. We work with managed açaí forests, so you're getting a quality product. This model contributes to nature preservation and management, and also income" (minutes, 02:46–3:16). Indeed, this fragment deconstructs market-based power relations by challenging post-colonial dependency—the reference to the figure of the "middleman" evokes capitalist extractivist dynamics—and effects a repositioning of power through language; the use of verbs such as "we created"

discursively reorganizes labor in terms of vision and community empowerment (the community does not merely harvest the fruit for its own survival but constructs an alternative economic strategy of resistance). This is further confirmed by the deconstruction of the dominant narrative of progress; the documentary dismantles the scientific and economic premises of this narrative, demonstrating that true progress lies in safeguarding biodiversity and the biocultural memory that preserves it—rather than in their commodification, as the fragment illustrates, "We would be able to work to better maximise the potential of the product but always with respect for culture, tradition and maintaining the biodiversity of the standing forest" (minute, 8:43). And, likewise, "It's essential that we look at what are actually nature-based solutions" (minute, 1:18).

In this same vein, another key fragment is found in the direct testimony of indigenous women "what a resilient economy really is, one that preserves biodiversity, that preserves the forest, that preserves populations and their associated traditional knowledge" (minute, 1:25).

Furthermore, integrating MCDA highlights how the convergence of visual, audio-verbal, and symbolic-material dimensions creates a polyphonic and persuasive text. This makes the integrated approach a potential methodological and expressive model for the new generation of ecological documentaries, as it moves beyond mere quantitative denunciation and conveys biocultural complexity through the convergence of audiovisual languages.

The multimodal architecture combines the voices of policymakers with those of representatives from the indigenous association *Uasei*, balancing institutional discourse with community self-representation to lend full visual legitimacy to bioeconomic practices, as illustrated by this segment of the documentary: "Guaranteeing indigenous lands, extractive reserves and quilombola territories, in order to guarantee the great socio-biodiversity that exists in these areas, is a key response to the climate crisis. I often say that society is doing its part. Science is doing its part. Those who have to do their part are governments and companies" (minutes, 9:14–9:30).

Finally, the documentary repositions climate change within the social and communal fabric and envisions the Amazonian landscape as a sustainable biocultural landscape, framing the destruction of the ecosystem not merely as an ecological crisis but also as a violation of rights and a threat to the survival of local identities. This new conceptualization of sustainability and economic transition as acts of political and cultural resilience highlights that the socio-bioeconomy is the mechanism that averts the destructive effects of invasive development practices, and that the fight against climate change is waged by defending the invisible foundation of biocultural memory. Visual analysis thus demonstrates that the socio-bioeconomy is not an ecological utopia but the natural evolution of the identity and sovereignty of Amazonian peoples, establishing memory as the primary infrastructure upon which to build sustainability and global climate justice.

Indeed, in the documentary "Brazil: Seeding Sociobioeconomies", this dynamic clearly emerges as the indigenous community articulates its relationship with the territory through relational categories that challenge the neoliberal reification of nature: the assertion "Açaí is life for us, it's blood, as our ancestors say. Açaí gives to us, it gives us its blood. Our açaí, it's 100% natural and native. We don't cut down nature to plant açaí. Just as she is strengthening us and giving us her nourishment, we take care of her so that she can help us" (minutes, 1:45–02:08) restores the forest's systemic agency. Furthermore, "The Emporio Uasei shop was created almost two years ago with the aim of bringing income into the community itself and to value the local culture of traditional communities and bring together stories of our ancestors" (minute, 05:08–05:18) demonstrates how ancestral memory transforms into a form of social emancipation. The core of the legitimization process lies precisely in the reconceptualization of the socio-bioeconomy and indigenous knowledge.

In conclusion, the analysis of the social documentary "Brazil: Seeding Sociobioeconomies" demonstrates how, in Latin America, this form of documentary filmmaking continues to serve a fundamental counter-discursive function: "Our concept of bioeconomy begins with biodiversity" (minute, 0:59).

5. Discussion

An interpretation of the evidence from the documentary "Brazil: Seeding Sociobioeconomies" reveals how, within today's hyper-communicative media ecosystem, the function of counter-discourse in Latin America acquires new strategic dimensions. Environmental documentaries here do not merely document inequalities or denounce the damage caused by extractive capitalism; instead, they employ visual syntax and multimodal convergence to construct alternative economic development models. These models serve as mechanisms for decolonizing dominant economic thought, validated by community practice and cultural diversity. In the documentary under analysis, this decolonization manifests as concrete visual semiosis from the very opening sequences (minutes, 01:30–02:40), where extreme close-ups of seeds and açaí berries—held and selected by the hands of Indigenous workers—reject the narrative of nature as a mere commodity. The seed is not depicted as a passive resource to be quantified, but rather as a genetic and relational archive, wherein the farmer's physicality and the plant matter co-produce the very structure of the socio-bioeconomy.

The intersection of NVA and CDA finds an ideal epistemological setting in the documentary "Brazil: Seeding Sociobioeconomies", manifesting not merely as a methodological convergence but as a decolonial imperative. While CDA has traditionally prioritized the linguistic-textual dimension, the evolution of contemporary visual regimes necessitates the integration of the iconic dimension as a primary sociopolitical text (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). In Latin America, visual semiotics plays an active role in both constructing and contesting hegemonic discourses; images—ranging from historical archives to emerging audiovisual productions—function as discursive practices wherein power asymmetries, forms of erasure, and acts of counter-narration are either crystallized or challenged. Applying the intersection of these two methods to the documentary in question—specifically within the key sequence spanning minutes 02:46 to 03:16—verbal testimony denounces and deconstructs power asymmetries and post-colonial dependency through the direct voices of community actors. CDA highlights how the use of verbs denoting action and reappropriation (e.g., "we created", "we work") shifts the indigenous community from a passive, subaltern position to that of a self-determined political and economic subject. Camera framing and spatial composition provide visual evidence of this reclamation of sovereignty. Indeed, from an NVA perspective, sequences depicting industrial processing, close-ups, and macro shots (minutes, 02:46–03:16 and 05:10–05:35) focus on indigenous technicians, thereby rejecting folkloric representations of indigenous knowledge. At the same time, the VNA maps out a precise political spatialization through editing that alternates between the decision-making hubs of macroeconomic power (Brasília and São Paulo) and the operational territory of *Oiapoque*, visually linking legislative decisions to the territorial praxis of the *Selva en Pie* movement and vice versa (specifically, the focus on indigenous territory at the 00:16 mark, followed by the major metropolises at 00:40, and an overlap between the two between 01:20 and 01:21). Within this dynamic of discursive reconfiguration, the documentary intriguingly fuses visual analysis with critical discourse analysis. Indeed, the camera does not merely observe from the outside; instead, it becomes an endogenous tool for self-representation and the assertion of narrative sovereignty (Shohat & Stam, 2014). The visual grammars of Latin American militant social documentary integrate oral memory and corporeality as critical texts; they do not simply record reality but discursively reorganize

it, transforming into a vital instrument for social advocacy and strategic communication aimed at legitimizing sociocultural change.

The analysis of "Brazil: Seeding Sociobioeconomies" further demonstrates that the synergistic convergence of multiple semiotic codes—visual, verbal, auditory, and material—produces an integrated and epistemologically dense counter-discourse. From this perspective, MCDA decodes visual grammar as a socio-semiotic system oriented toward the negotiation of hegemony, wherein the image reveals its ideological opacity, suspended between what it renders visible and what it relegates to the margins (Machin & Mayr, 2025). In the specific case of the documentary in question, this dialectic between the visible and the invisible is resolved by subverting the classic dichotomy between Western technology and Indigenous knowledge. In the central sequences depicting the industrial processing of açaí (minutes, 02:46–03:16 and 05:10–05:35), the pulping machine and standardized packaging equipment are presented not as agents of alienation or a break with tradition, but as tools imbued with new meaning. Shots of Indigenous technicians managing accounting flows and the pulp extraction chain visually demonstrate that the technological infrastructure has been subordinated to the community sovereignty of the *Uasei Açaí* association; this deconstructs the colonial stereotype that relegates Indigenous practices to the realm of pre-modern subsistence.

The multimodal discursive reorganization achieves its greatest effectiveness through the convergence of audio, visual, and textual codes in the closing sequence (minutes, 09:46–10:40). In this sequence, the sweeping aerial view is imbued with new meaning: it is not merely an aesthetic of contemplation but a supporting element for a vision of decolonization—a vision further reinforced by the inclusion of an ancestral ritual chant. Here, the chant acts as an epistemic interweaving that repopulates and re-sacralizes the Amazonian canopy; the forest appears rich in biocultural memory and non-destructive human presence. On-screen text detailing economic and ecological benefits—such as the restoration of 24 million hectares and the growth of regional GDP—firmly links the spiritual and identity-based dimensions with the political-economic feasibility of the model presented in the documentary. Furthermore, the documentary "Brazil: Seeding Sociobioeconomies" functions as a catalyst for collective action, dismantling institutional narratives and constructing counter-discourses capable of influencing public opinion as well as regulatory and legislative agendas. This discursive reorganization is underpinned by rigorous impact planning: visual imagery is strategically employed to highlight systemic fractures, extractivist violence, gender inequalities, and human rights violations, thereby transforming individual lived experiences into matters of public and community concern. Through the targeted use of firsthand testimonies, recontextualized archival footage, and visual grammars rooted in specific territories, the documentary operates as a multimedia advocacy platform capable of engaging with diverse audiences and stakeholders. In the regional experience, communication processes gain political effectiveness when they succeed in democratizing the public sphere and promoting the self-determination of marginalized groups, enabling them to independently define their own problems and the corresponding solutions (Gumucio-Dagron, 2011).

In the documentary under analysis, this participatory democratization manifests in the choice to avoid imposing any externally directed or Eurocentric voice-over. In the opening sequences (minutes, 01:45–02:08), it is the local women and leaders who set the pace and define the categories of the ecological discourse, articulating the concept of the bioeconomy through the ontological metaphor of açaí as "blood". The camera thus ceases to be an instrument of paternalistic inspection and transforms into a tool for the self-archiving of biocultural memory. This approach aligns with the tradition of Latin American activist documentary filmmaking, which seeks to shift subjects from being objects of study to becoming

co-authors of political discourse; the images serve as both material and symbolic evidence to support awareness campaigns, international legal disputes, environmental justice summits, and grassroots mobilizations. From this perspective, the strategic communication of the documentary "Brazil: Seeding Sociobioeconomies" does not aim to homogenize the message according to Western persuasive marketing standards; instead, it employs a bottom-up convergence strategy, where an alliance among independent filmmakers, local activists, and social movements ensures that the critical discourse resonates far beyond the film's screening (Villanueva, 2018; Alfaro Moreno, 1993). The analysis of "Brazil: Seeding Sociobioeconomies" thus reveals a potential for cultural legitimation that endures amidst the proliferation of digital communication forms, as it demonstrates a persistent capacity to reshape the interpretive frameworks surrounding the community's history and rights. However, in the era of digital platforms and ecosystems, the circulation of these works through alternative distribution channels, traveling festivals, and open-access platforms further amplifies their structural impact, challenging the information monopoly held by commercial media conglomerates (Carretero, 2019). This model of strategic communication harnesses the emotional and epistemic potential of the visual to generate empathy, moral outrage, and, ultimately, political mobilization. Through the reclamation of historical memory and the valorization of Indigenous and Afro-descendant ontologies, social documentary in Latin America establishes itself as a living, dynamic archive capable of decolonizing the collective imagination, redistributing discursive power, and legitimizing new forms of citizenship and development models.

In this documentary, the experience of the Emporio Uasei cooperative (minutes, 05:08–05:18) precisely embodies this ontological rupture, as the bioeconomy in question arises not from the external application of green capital, but from the extension of care-based relationships between the community and the *Selva en Pie*. The documentary's multimodality politicizes this bond, elevating the voices of women and local leaders to the level of technical-scientific arguments that directly challenge the capitalist market asymmetry embodied by the figure of the middleman. The creation of a space for local trade is visually presented as a form of decolonial social emancipation, as well as the foundation for building economic, political, and symbolic self-sufficiency aimed at breaking free from the logic of extractivism. Furthermore, this multimodal interplay firmly situates the documentary "Brazil: Seeding Sociobioeconomies" within the tradition of Latin American critical eco-documentary filmmaking—specifically the more militant wing of progressive eco-cinema—by linking it inextricably to demands for social justice, territorial defense, and the rights of subaltern communities, thereby positioning it as a decolonial, community-based, and political practice (Aprea, 2015; León, 2023; Vanegas-Toala, 2023; Fornoff & Heffes, 2021). Indeed, through the convergence of VNA, CDA, and MCDA, the documentary seeks to restore the socio-bioeconomy paradigm to the political praxis of its ancestral guardians, establishing itself as a compelling example of decolonial communication in which visual self-representation becomes a counter-hegemonic narrative and a guide for climate justice. Image and discourse thus cease to merely observe the Amazon and transform into a political infrastructure through which the local community redesigns its future, moving towards forms of global sustainability.

6. Conclusions

The contemporary climate and ecological crisis does not merely represent a technical-scientific or biological challenge, but is first and foremost a social, communicative, and political phenomenon of global significance. In the sociology of communication, environmental problems do not exist in public space as immediately evident objective data, but are structured through complex processes of mediation, negotiation, and symbolic contestation

(Hansen, 2019). In a social context characterized by deep mediatization, everyday reality, institutions, and forms of collective action are shaped and recreated through and within digital media infrastructures (Couldry & Hepp, 2016). Therefore, strategic communication emerges as the key variable for social legitimacy, risk perception, and the transformation of development models.

Over the past few decades, the prevailing media discourse on the environment has often been confined within rigid interpretative frameworks that have selected and highlighted only certain aspects of reality, thus defining the problems, causes, and related moral evaluations (Entman, 1993). This has produced dysfunctional consequences on social and cultural processes because it has fostered the spread of a sense of impotence among public opinion and political de-responsibility. The media's construction of dominant frames risks sterilizing the observer's ethical commitment and political response, transforming the ecological tragedy into a mere media spectacle (Silverstone, 2006).

To disrupt this dynamic, strategic communication geared toward environmental advocacy proves to be an important tool for symbolic reappropriation. In the era of the "global risk society", in which environmental crises require new forms of social reflexivity (Beck, 1999), advocacy cannot limit itself to passive awareness-raising but must propose alternative framings that combine structural denunciation with practical action. Building awareness-raising counter-narratives on the environment, climate, and sustainability therefore requires a qualitative leap in methodological and technological terms, because the ecological crisis must be relocated to the heart of citizenship rights, redistributive justice, and transgenerational equity. The documentary featured in this article ("Brazil: Seeding Sociobioeconomies") offers interesting insights, although it requires necessary caveats regarding its replicability. The operationalization of awareness-raising counter-narratives requires moving beyond passive denunciation and focusing attention on media co-design with local communities, the integration of accessible technologies for territorial monitoring, and the reframing of the concept of sustainability. In the documentary analysed, this technological–methodological transition is visible when media investigative tools and scientific data are put at the service of indigenous self-representation, demonstrating that technological evolution does not coincide with technocracy, but with the democratization of the means of informational and managerial production. However, elevating the Brazilian case of *Oiapoque* and *Uasei* to a "universal model" for other regions of the Global South or the Mediterranean requires precise epistemological and methodological cautions. These must consider the risk of institutional and cultural decontextualization, the danger of neoliberal co-optation/greenwashing that would neutralize the power of counter-discourse, and the trap of local exceptionalism. Transforming a situated and positional experience into a rigid model risk flattening political complexity and concealing the structural asymmetries of power in each region. In conclusion, while "Brazil: Seeding Sociobioeconomies" is not an uncritically reproducible formula, it charts an important trajectory in highlighting that true ecological progress lies in the convergence of technology, redistributive justice, and bioculturally preserved memory.

In this transformative framework, emerging technologies and alternative narratives play a crucial role. Digital convergence, open access sharing platforms, highly immersive audiovisual formats, and socially impactful documentary devices are redefining the boundaries of mediated public space. While social systems theory has shown how traditional mass media codify reality according to logics of attention and entertainment that often trivialize ecological complexity (Luhmann, 1989, 2000), the development of new digital grammars allows us to break the monopoly of industrial gatekeepers. Emerging narrative technologies enable a bottom-up restructuring of public discourse, transforming audiovisual languages into vectors of agency and mobilization. The integration of multimodal codes influences

the viewer's perception with a cognitive-emotional effectiveness unknown to text alone or traditional television news (Hansen, 2019).

The analysis of the social documentary "Brazil: Seeding Sociobioeconomies" offers empirical evidence of how this convergence can generate processes of genuine consciousness-raising, because its symbolic resignification highlights that sustainability is not an abstract formula or a market reserve, but a process of democratizing discursive power. Emerging visual technologies, when guided by a strategic advocacy plan, become living archives and instruments of ethno-ecological self-determination, capable of translating ancestral knowledge and the protection of biodiversity into internationally legitimized economic and political resources.

No effective ecological transition can occur without a parallel transition in regimes of visibility and social signification. Strategic communication processes, fuelled by the expressive potential of emerging narrative technologies, represent the fundamental lever for overcoming the paralyzing framings of catastrophism and paternalism. By constructing alternative, multilevel, and polyphonic narratives, contemporary environmental advocacy demonstrates that the fight against climate change is won by reconfiguring the collective imagination and accrediting the biocultural memory of territories as the primary infrastructure upon which to build a fair, just, and globally sustainable future.

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