

Article

Ecological Citizens with a Movie Camera: Communitarian and Agonistic Environmental Documentaries

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Abstract: Environmental documentaries attained wider public and academic attention, especially in the aftermath of Al Gore’s prominent documentary on climate change *An Inconvenient Truth*. Making environmental documentaries is a cinematic form of political advocacy. However, there is a lack of research on the broad range of such films from Germany. While earlier works tended to an accusatory style, newer environmental documentary seems to be more constructive and aiming at spreading information about feasible alternatives. This article pursues three objectives: first, to gain a deeper understanding of the shift from accusatory to constructive documentaries; second, to connect film studies to the political change-making role and therefore to theories of ecological citizenship; and third, to explore the question of what citizenship with a movie camera means. The accusatory and constructive style are associated with agonistic and communitarian ecological citizenship. A sample of two films from the German context, namely *Leben ausser Kontrolle* produced by Bertram Verhaag in 2004 and *Voices of Transition* produced by Nils Aguilar in 2012, is analyzed comparatively. The interpretive research method combines methods of studying audio-visual rhetoric with the framing approach from social movement studies.

Keywords: ecological citizenship; environmental documentary; video activism; media; environmental movement; social movements

1. Introduction

If it is taken into account that most people learn about ecological problems from the media, the rising importance of environmental documentaries such as *An Inconvenient Truth* (Guggenheim 2006) in the last years cannot be neglected. More recently, there seems to be a remarkable shift from accusatory, sometimes apocalyptic sorts of films towards more constructive documentaries which present sustainable alternatives and which are more hopeful in tone (Hughes 2014; Duvall 2017).

This article addresses the question which political role both the accusatory and constructive environmental documentaries play. For this purpose, the starting point for my analysis will be the basic distinction between agonistic and communitarian forms of citizenship (Mouffe 1992). Following Mouffe, Kenis (2016) identified two mutually exclusive forms of ecological citizenship. Agonistic ecological citizenship refers to implacable protest activism that opposes existing power structures in discourses and actions, while its communitarian counterpart practices and spreads the word about attractive alternative modes of living, consumption and production.

Obviously the distinction between agonistic and communitarian citizenship seems to correspond with findings about a shift from accusatory to constructive styles of environmental documentaries in recent years (Hughes 2014, pp. 123–24). Against this backdrop, documentary shouldn’t be understood as a value-free image of reality but as an audio-visual rhetoric through which movie-makers perform politically. I suggest to call this communicative performance: ecological citizens with a movie camera.

As audio-visual conduct of ecological citizenship, environmental documentaries also provide a stage for the depicted environmental activists who together with the movie maker may address and motivate a larger public to take action on environmental issues.

The research perspective I suggest allows to combine approaches from the study of ecological citizenship with methodologies that help to reconstruct the political messages of environmental documentaries. The literature review presents existing works in this direction but stresses that a systematic study of environmental documentaries as audio-visual forms of ecological citizenship is missing and that particularly the vibrant German scene of environmental documentary is largely neglected so far (Klein 2017, p. 187).

Given the state of the art, the research design part presents a new methodology which translates the two ideal types of ecological citizenship into a more open-ended framework to study ecological citizenship with a movie camera. Since films don't act and speak as citizens, it is necessary to study them as the political rhetoric of engaged ecological citizens, for such are the film-makers and depicted protagonist. Correspondingly, this methodology relies on Kanzog's (2001) approach of studying films as audio-visual rhetoric. This rhetoric supports the attempt to persuade the audience of a "collective action frame" (Benford and Snow 2000, p. 614) that constructs a culturally meaningful call for action which either focuses on more communitarian and constructive, or more agonistic and accusatory elements.

The empirical part of this article shouldn't be mistaken as simple application of existing understandings of either agonistic or communitarian forms of ecological citizenship but an investigation into the agonistic and communitarian elements in the rhetoric and framing of environmental documentaries and their relationships. Two environmental documentaries which focus on either of the two perspectives are selected for a more in depth analysis. *Leben ausser Kontrolle* (English: Life Running out of Control, Verhaag 2004) provides an example for agonistic ecological citizenship with a movie camera, while *Voices of Transition* (Aguilar 2012b) is included as a communitarian documentary.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Forms of Ecological Citizenship

The literature on ecological citizenship is growing since the mid 1990s and more extensively since 2003 (Gabrielson 2008). Different concepts have been advanced such as environmental citizenship, ecological citizenship, green citizenship, climate citizenship, ecofeminist citizenship, sustainable or sustainability citizenship (Gabrielson 2008; Mason 2013, pp. 143–46; Vihersalo 2016, pp. 344–46). These works usually try to combine thoughts from the general political theory of democratic citizenship with green political theory and have resulted in numerous ways to conceptualize ecological citizenship, normatively. From an empirical point of view, this article instead tries to elucidate which forms of ecological citizenship environmental documentaries put forward. Therefore, most helpful is the basic distinction made by Kenis (2016) between "communitarian" and "agonistic" forms of ecological citizenship in the real-world. She derives this distinction from her field research within Transition Town-initiatives and the Climate Justice Action network within Belgium. While the former is categorized as communitarian, the latter is related to agonistic ecological citizenship. She argues that the collectivity of the two types differs fundamentally in regards to five aspects. Four of them are used in this study as a heuristic to guide the view on the collective action frames in the documentaries, namely the movement's boundaries (geographical or political), its social relations to society (especially the central conflict), the strategic practices for social change, and the kind of common good aimed for.¹ The agonistic type of ecological citizenship starts from Chantal Mouffe (2006) basic definition of the

¹ The fifth aspect, social relations and decision making within a movement, is left out here because the two film examples give little evidence on this. Other documentaries, however, might place a stronger focus on the internal democratic processes in a group or movement.

political as conflict between us and them and states that power holders are to be made responsible for environmental degradation. Correspondingly, agonistic ecological citizens self-organize within social movements in order to mobilize for protest and to challenge existing political hegemony. Communitarian ecological citizenship instead understands the problem as the unsustainable status quo that needs to be overcome, cooperatively. Therefore, it urges to establish resilient communities in which new and sustainable forms of consumption, production and lifestyles are cultivated. Transition Towns (Kenis 2016), citizen's energy cooperatives (Islar and Busch 2016), ecovillages or community supported agriculture (CSA) would be examples of this. Related practices shall provide for a new, widely consented model of the common good. These sustainable communities include other concepts of ecological citizenship that emphasize socio-material practices such as alternative modes of production, including sustainable entrepreneurship (Barry 2016, pp. 339–40) as well as sustainable consumption or pro-environmental behavior, as long as these practices follow underlying ethical-political principles (Kenis 2016, p. 956; Dobson 2003; Micheletti and Stolle 2012).

This article takes Kenis' distinction rather as a starting point than a fixed model since the resulting concepts reflect two specific cases from Belgium. Transition Town initiatives are only a small part of the newer scene of environmental activism. Indeed, Brand (2008, p. 242) identifies the rise of a more professionalized and proactive environmental movement with a strong emphasis on strategic cooperation and lifestyle-questions. This new movement promotes sustainable consumption, sustainable products, energy-efficient technologies, green forms of housing and mobility. Particularly, around the issues of food and urban life, numerous new initiatives such as urban gardens, community supported agriculture, food policy councils or slow food initiatives have emerged (Müller 2012; Schlosberg and Coles 2016; Boddenberg et al. 2017; Kropp and Stinner 2018, pp. 29–30). Regarding this diversity, it can be assumed that documentaries covering this new development might appear to be multi-faceted in terms of ecological citizenship so that more detailed analysis is in need that also looks out for the limits of theoretical dualisms and the relationships between communitarian and agonistic frames and rhetoric.

2.2. Political Documentary, Video Activism and Environmental Documentary

Typical acts associated with citizenship are the participation in elections, membership in political organizations, protest and more lately political consumerism. Kenis' juxtaposition of agonistic and communitarian citizens has been applied to other forms of environmental activism, e.g., energy cooperatives (Islar and Busch 2016). However, a comparable detailed analysis of environmental documentaries as parts of these forms of citizenship does not exist so far, although environmental documentaries play an important role for spreading knowledge about ecological issues worldwide. They are thus an increasingly important part of educating larger publics about the necessity of socio-ecological change. Therefore, I suggest to consider this politically engaged filmmaking as citizenship with a movie camera and explore the forms it can take.

Film studies provide helpful research approaches for the study of political and environmental communication. Documentary film, as a subgenre of non-fictional film, constructs a version of reality by using material from preexisting events, actors and circumstances (Lipp 2012, p. 29; Hohenberger 1998, pp. 20–21; Heinze 2013, p. 307; Keutzer et al. 2014, p. 288) in contrast to fictional narratives that make use of constructed material and professional actors. Beyond this dominant perspective German film studies have discussed the characteristics and the nature of this reference to reality for a long time. Eventually, most scholars emphasize that full objectivity in the depiction of reality cannot exist since every step of the documentary production involves subjective decisions (Hattendorf 1999, p. 218; Nichols 2010, p. 104; Keutzer et al. 2014, p. 288; Wember 1972, pp. 9–11). This opens up the space for commenting on reality, for the expression of a subjective attitude and political opinion, and for the attempt to persuasion of the audience. Film analysis can be an attempt to understand a film's explicit and implicit argumentative structure and the filmmaker's attitude towards an issue. However, the audience's perception and meaning making may differ from this and can be

quite heterogeneous (Hall 1993; Hattendorf 1999, pp. 69–71; Binter 2009, p. 23). Future reception studies might be interesting in comparison to the conclusions of this analysis.

Among political documentaries, expository documentaries (Nichols 2010, pp. 210–11) are a common form. These are documentaries that rely on a continuous argumentation so that the viewer is guided throughout the film by a rhetoric that combines visual evidence, sounds, text, and speech. The material often comes from different places and times. The film's aim is to impart knowledge and communicate a filmmaker's opinions about a complex issue or abstract idea. Generally, while some environmental documentaries fit well into this expository mode, others are closer to one of the other documentary modes differentiated by Nichols: poetic, observational, participatory, reflexive, and performative (ibid.). However, choosing two documentaries of the same mode for this analysis allows for a better comparison of the argumentation in regards to their agonistic and communitarian characteristics. With their emphasis on the author's voice, environmental documentaries of the expository mode allow analyzing the argumentation as a form of political rhetoric of ecological citizens with a movie camera. Nevertheless, there is more than one voice in these films. It is therefore important to distinguish the filmmaker's voice and the voices of the different protagonists. Within the research design part, it will be explained how Kanzog's (2001) methodology for studying film rhetoric can be used in order to investigate ecological citizenship with a movie camera in combination with the framing approach from social movements studies.

Documentary film has a long history of political expression. The title of this article, *Ecological Citizens with a Movie Camera*, in this regard refers to Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (Vertov 1929) which is commonly assumed as one of the key origins of political documentary. The film, belonging to the Soviet art movement of Constructivism, visually celebrated everyday life in a socialist city in order to strengthen the political system and Soviet community. According to Nichols (2010, p. 217), Vertov wanted to catch fractions of life and then put them together in a new order that constructs "a vision of the new society in the process of emergence." In this emphasis of strong community and the prefiguration of a new society, *Man with a Movie Camera* can be understood as an early proponent of communitarian citizenship with a movie camera.

Ecocritical perspectives on film (all kinds and genres), film production and film-related technologies came up in the mid-1990s (Rust and Monani 2013, p. 2). However, interpretations in terms of ecological citizenship are scarce. DeLaure (2011) presented an interpretation of the documentary *No Impact Man* (Gabbert and Schein 2009) that identifies its citizenship model with Andrew Dobson's ideal of ecological citizenship. Again similarities exist to the general understanding of communitarian forms of citizenship but in contrast to Kenis' understanding this model deviates from the strong focus on communities found among Transition Town initiatives but urges for individual responsibility taking.

Furthermore, concepts such as "video activism" (de Miguel-Wessendorf 2009, p. 57) or "cinema activism" (Duvall 2017) suggest that documentaries are manufactured as a tactical means for the protest politics or as expressions of solidarity with social movements (Zutavern 2015, p. 13; Stickel 2015, p. 54). Thus it seems that agonistic citizenship is another driving motive for filmmakers. This holds particularly true for the subgenre of environmental documentaries which in Germany is deeply rooted in the protest movements against nuclear energy in the 1970s.

More recently, Zutavern (2015, p. 262) has found for video activism within Germany and Switzerland that there was a general shift from rebellious political films that emerged in the 1960s out of squatters', feminist, and youth activism towards less accusatory but instead prefigurative works which stress alternative modes of living within social and cultural niches. Similarly, both Hughes (2014, p. 126) and Duvall (2017, p. 257) noted that earlier environmental documentaries with their apocalyptic rhetoric gave way to more positive and constructive films that propose viable solutions to ecological problems. Food and its production has been a particularly important topic of politicization in recent years (Mauer 2009; Murray and Heumann 2014; Pilgeram and Meeuf 2015). Hughes (2014, pp. 123–24) pointed out that argumentative (that here are called expository) environmental documentaries can be viewed on a spectrum between two models of democracy. They either advance a consensus-

and process-oriented deliberative model or a conflict-oriented agonistic understanding of politics. This finding suggests that the shift within German speaking environmental documentary can be understood in terms of advancing either communitarian or agonistic models of ecological citizenship. However, existing studies rather point at these two types of documentaries but they have studied them neither systematically nor comparatively, especially not from a perspective of ecological citizenship. Where Hughes points to a continuum between the two models of citizenship, [Kenis \(2016\)](#) sees an irreconcilable dualism. Therefore, the following analysis will explore how the two film examples relate to such categorizations as communitarian or agonistic and how frames and rhetorical elements of either mode of citizenship interact. Against this backdrop, this article understands the distinction between communitarian and agonistic ecological citizenship rather as a heuristic that motivates for a more detailed and reconstructive analysis of ecological citizenship with a movie camera. For this purpose, a new analytic methodology will be presented in the following.

3. Research Design

In the following, I will outline a qualitative, interpretive research method to reconstruct the communicative performance with which the filmmakers and protagonists enact and try to mobilize different types of ecological citizenship. I use a combination of rhetoric and framing analysis to examine the communicative performance of documentaries.

Rhetoric is strategic communication with the objective to persuade an audience so that they voluntarily agree with the communicator's values, actions, views or political aims ([Kuypers 2010](#), p. 288; [Kanzog 2001](#), p. 158). [Kanzog \(2001\)](#) shows that films of all kind can be analyzed in terms of the rhetoric that results from the interplay of speech, pictures, camera movements, lighting, sounds, music, montage etc. Rhetoric needs to be analyzed on the macro level of the film's argumentative structure as well as on a micro level, through recognizing and interpreting rhetorical elements in relation to the whole. Successful persuasion of the audience relies on intellectual as well as affective elements ([Kanzog 2001](#), pp. 9–11; [Weik von Mossner 2017](#)). From [Kanzog's](#) theories about film rhetoric I focus on the two most important locations where argumentation can manifest: the visual and the verbal, and their relations. For example, an argument can be communicated: verbally, in the speech of protagonists or in a voice-over commentary; visually, in the interplay of images, camera movement and perspective and focus, speed, and the montage ([Kanzog 2001](#), pp. 54, 156). Following [Kanzog \(ibid., p. 124\)](#) in his semiotic understanding of images, I suggest that an image can refer to a frame and thus visual rhetoric can support the framing of ecological citizenship.

The framing concept is used to operationalize environmental citizenship for this research. Framing is generally understood as a process where communicators consciously or unconsciously "construct a particular point of view that encourages the facts of a given situation to be viewed in a particular manner, with some facts made more noticeable than others" ([Kuypers 2010](#), p. 300). Particularly the framing approach by [Snow and Benford \(1988\)](#), which has its origins in social movement studies, will be used to identify the type of ecological citizenship that is communicated through the film. Framing is a process in which social movement actors debate and collectively shape and structure meaning, in order to mobilize action and support from their adherents and demobilize their opponents (*ibid.*, p. 198). [Snow and Benford](#) distinguish three functions of framing (*ibid.*, pp. 200–202): Diagnostic framing identifies a problem and attributes fault and causes. Prognostic framing suggests solutions to the problem, strategies and tactics to come to this solution, and it identifies targets who should act. It also rejects solutions supported by opponents, a process called "counter framing" ([Benford and Snow 2000](#), p. 617) or in [Kanzog's](#) terms "refutatio" ([Kanzog 2001](#), p. 162). The success of mobilizing people to act also depends on motivational framing, which provides reasons to get active, e.g., a "moral call to action" ([Snow and Benford 1988](#), p. 202), or "severity, urgency, efficacy, and propriety" ([Benford and Snow 2000](#), p. 617). There could also be appeals to participation that are based on a promise of community, extraordinary experiences or aesthetic experiences ([Baringhorst 2000](#), p. 176).

In order to analyze ecological citizenship within documentaries, the main assumption is that it will appear in the form of “collective action frames” (Benford and Snow 2000, p. 616) which include all three functions. The medium of documentary provides for specific rhetorical tools that culturally construct environmental issues in such a way that the audience is persuaded to take on political claims and is motivated to take actions.

Table 1 systematizes the goals of this article’s analysis. It is therefore not to be understood as a model but as a heuristic that explains on which aspects I will focus in the following. The heuristic includes in the rows of the table three framing functions. Sequences and their framing are studied for their communitarian or agonistic aspects. Sequences of diagnostic framing identify ecological problems and hold someone responsible. According to the communitarian logic, society as a community is the cause, whereas the agonistic world-view assigns responsibility to power elites or structures of domination. Prognostic framing is about the strategies for change. Both forms of citizenship prefer and argue for different practices and forms of organizing. Agonistic citizens protest against consumer society and power elites, and they establish social movement organizations, while communitarian ecological citizens will promote sustainable consumption, production and green community building. While agonistic social movements have political boundaries distancing them from others, the constructive communities have geographical boundaries within which they get active locally. Finally, motivational framing includes specific sorts of the common good which inspire ecological citizens to get active. While communitarians hope for forming a new consensus about the way we all should live, agonistic citizens try to end the existing hegemony and hope to establish ecology as the new dominant political voice.

Table 1. Analytic Heuristic for Studying Ecological Citizenship with a Movie Camera.

	Communitarian Ecological Citizenship	Agonistic Ecological Citizenship
Diagnostic Framing		
- problem definition	Society as a Community	Power Elites/Structures
- causes		
- responsible parties		
Prognostic Framing		
- solutions	Sustainable Consumption	Protest
- strategies		
- agents of action	Sustainable Production	Organizing Social Movements
- refutation of opponent’s solutions	Constructing Local Communities	
Motivational Framing		
- call for action	New Consensus	New Hegemony
- rationale for action		

Note: Analytical Scheme.

4. Method and Data

Two films were chosen for an in depth analysis: *Leben ausser Kontrolle* (English: Life Running out of Control, 2004) directed by Bertram Verhaag and *Voices of Transition* (2012) directed by Nils Aguilar. Several criteria guided this case selection: The films share the characteristics that they are environmental documentaries from Germany with an expository style (Nichols 2010, pp. 210–11). Their argumentative structures refer to issues of agriculture and food production. Each should, on their first impression, suit one of the two modes of ecological citizenship suggested by Kenis. *Leben ausser Kontrolle* was selected as a potential case of agonistic ecological citizenship whereas *Voices of Transition* was included since it seemed to argue for a communitarian type of ecological citizenship. In comparison to the popular documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*, both examples analyzed here stand closer to social movements and are oriented more towards collective actions. Bertram Verhaag is an important filmmaker in the field of German environmental documentary with a long history of engaged films against genetic engineering.

In the German context, the issue of genetic engineering was heavily debated during the 1980s, 1990s and in 2004 (Rucht et al. 2008, pp. 35–36). Nils Aguilar poses an interesting contrast as a young and non-professional filmmaker with a clear aim to support the Transition Town movement—the movement which is Kenis’ role model of communitarian ecological citizenship. Since the Transition movement comes from Great Britain, this example also shows that a documentary can be used in order to spread a movement in other regions. In order to compare and contrast both examples in detail, the DVD versions of these movies were gathered. Afterwards, full transcripts of the films were manufactured. Hereafter, the visual, acoustic and verbal rhetoric was analyzed according to the following steps:

1. Film context: Media interviews, websites and social media channels were examined to reconstruct the political objectives, the context of production and distribution as well as the personal background of the respective filmmakers.
2. Sequence protocol: Following Leonarz (2006, pp. 167–68) the full transcript was analytically divided into sequences. A sequence was defined as a unit which separates from other sequences through change of speakers, depicted locations or through lettering or any sort of signal that needs to be understood as drawing a boundary between any two sequences. Hereafter, all sequences were transposed into a spreadsheet whose columns contained information about: time code of each sequence; spoken text; written text; elements of visualization, including camera movements; acoustic effects and music.
3. Coding/Interpreting the framing functions: After interpreting the interplay of spoken, written, further visual and acoustic elements of a sequence, each sequence’s single or multiple framing functions were coded as diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational functions. Each sequence was qualified through a short written interpretation of the framing.
4. Macro structure: The distribution of the framing functions throughout the film was analyzed to see whether there is a dominance of a certain function or a pattern, e.g., first demonstrating the problem followed by strategies and solutions. Are there distinguishable chapters in the film? What is the overall structure of the rhetoric in reference to Kanzog (2001, pp. 11–13)?
5. Summary Interpretation: The frame interpretations for each sequence then were clustered (Leonarz 2006, pp. 163–64) into distinctive summary frames. The documentary was watched another time in order to double check the summary interpretation. The original aim of the study was to reconstruct the framing and rhetoric as such, but for this article a re-interpretation and focus was set on those results which relate to the question of ecological citizenship. The summary of these respective frames is provided in the Appendix A (Tables A1 and A2). The framing and rhetoric were analyzed according to the analytical scheme displayed in the research design.

5. A Comparison of Two Environmental Documentaries

5.1. Film Example 1: *Leben Ausser Kontrolle*

Bertram Verhaag studied social sciences and macroeconomics and later completed film academy in Munich (Denkmal Film Verhaag 2019a). In 1976 he founded the film production collective DENKmal-Film. As a professional director, producer and writer he produced numerous films for cinema and television about nuclear energy, genetic engineering, ecological agriculture, and racism. His broad understanding of ‘environment’ explicitly includes the “political space that humans act in” (Denkmal Film Verhaag 2019b)². He openly states that his reporting is subjective (Verhaag 2017, p. 49). On the one hand, he shows pro and contra arguments, on the other hand, he takes position through his films. Encouraging his audience to act as citizens is a key motivation of his filmmaking:

² Translated by the author.

My films are supposed to encourage people to change things and not give up, thinking that there is nothing one can do. (Denkmal Film Verhaag 2019a)³

Verhaag became alert to the topic of genetic engineering in the late 1990s (Verhaag 2017, p. 48). He criticizes the lack of democratic involvement before the introduction of genetic engineering which spurred his motivation to engage and oppose as a filmmaker. However, he also addresses the audience as consumers encouraging them to get more informed about the origin of their food. His cinema activism combines both types of ecological citizenship: criticism and constructive solutions. Some of his films fundamentally oppose genetic engineering as well as the multinational agricultural industry (agro industry). More recently, his documentaries also advocate ecological food production.

Leben ausser Kontrolle (LAK)⁴ premiered in 2004, a year in which genetic engineering was widely discussed in Germany (Rucht et al. 2008, pp. 39, 86). Environmental organizations, political parties, youth organizations and schools screened and discussed the film (Denkmal Film Verhaag 2019c). It was also screened in direct relation to protest events against the Agricultural Biotechnology International Conference (ABIC) in Cologne in September 2004 (Leprich, Volker M. “Naturmais vom Aussterben bedroht.” taz, September 14, 2004, Köln aktuell, p. 1). LAK depicts genetic engineering as risky, immoral, and serving only the agro industry’s profit. Filming took place in America, Europe and India. 15 out of the 21 interviewees present arguments and frames against genetic engineering, while 6 speak in favor of it. The relation already indicates Verhaag’s partisan stance. Nevertheless, he does not seem to directly confront the supporters of genetic engineering with criticism in his interviews (e.g., a Canadian farmer, a fish breeder, and the CEO of a biopharmaceutical company).

Interviewees’ names, professions or functions are inserted frequently which conveys a kind of journalistic authenticity. Verhaag’s voice-over commentary is a tool to steer the argumentation and provide background information about the interviewees and their narratives. With this tool he frames resistance against genetic engineering as credible and support as questionable. The film’s central conflict is introduced right at the beginning: Industrial agriculture and its biotechnologies transforms food production into a business of multinational corporations. It threatens both traditional and ecological agriculture which are associated with nature, biodiversity, healthy food, economic independence, and cultural identity.

Central diagnostic frames in the first minutes structure the audience’s expectation according to the leading affects of anxiety and indignation, emotions that call for taking an agonistic view on industrial agriculture. The following sections of the film focus on different areas of genetic engineering: seeds, livestock and fish breeding, effects along the food chain, and finally human genetics. Diagnostic and prognostic framing are spread across all the sections. The film’s overall objective and thus its prognostic framing is dominantly agonistic: a ban on genetic engineering and industrialized food production and a rejection of the agro industry. Concrete demands, however, strive for more democratic decisions about technology, more transparency, labeling of products, and independent risk research—against the interests of the industry and their lobby. Several ecological citizens in the film support an agonistic strategy that includes juridical resistance, protest, and the organization in social movements. The film’s closing, though, concentrates on different prognostic and motivational frames. Solutions like Vandana Shiva’s ecological farm and seed bank strike a hopeful tone. This is followed by political demands for consumer information and calls for consumer responsibility. The closing statement, however, is another argument against the opponent. It claims that the majority of gene-scientists are sponsored by the industry. This claim is a final call for the audience not to trust the opponent’s arguments and again shifts to the leading affect of indignation and the agonistic framing.

The conflict with the main adversaries—multinational agro industry, pharmaceutical industry and uncritical genetic scientists—is central to the framing. Even though Verhaag’s interview style is

³ Translated by the author.

⁴ An overview of the frames in *Leben ausser Kontrolle* can be found in Table A1 of the Appendix A.

not offensive towards his interviewees, he reveals their pursuit of power and their profit-seeking as the main cause for problems such as environmental contamination, endangerment of people's livelihood and immoral treatment of animals. The other side of the conflict is represented by protagonists who are negatively affected by these industries as well as activists. The verbal rhetoric of several activists with an agonistic stance takes an apocalyptic tone. Genetic engineering is said to be fundamentally unnatural, uncontrollable, and destructive. Proponents of gene science are entitled with terms that evoke associations of danger: Portrayed protesters call the agro industry "farmer killers" (LAK 00:13:22)⁵; an interviewee compares gene scientists with "vampires" (01:14:34). One technical process within genetic engineering is characterized as shooting with a "gene gun" (00:17:50), another as spreading "plant cancer" (00:18:03). In the Indian activist context, Monsanto's seeds are called "suicide seeds" (00:12:34). This focus on conflict and the uncompromising rejection of the opponent indicate an agonistic rhetoric and framing. This rejection also is communicated through the voice-over commentary and through editing. For example, a vehement criticism by attorney and environmentalist Andrew Kimbrell directly follows a company's presentation of their genetically modified salmon:

It's a technology that cannot exist with nature. It's a technology that invades, pollutes, contaminates and ultimately destroys the natural species. (00:44:50)

In another case, two Indian promotional videos for genetically engineered cotton seeds by Monsanto are dismissed. The visual and verbal introduction preceding the promotional videos and the following explanations by Vandana Shiva and a farmer consultant demystify both adverts. She and the farmer consultant represent Indian farmers who fell victim to corporations like Monsanto who sold them genetically modified cotton seeds for which many farmers had to raise a credit that they could not pay back later. The film's rhetoric makes those seed companies responsible for the suicides of Indian farmers, accusing the companies of false promises, bad seeds, and a business model that profits from farmers' misery. Depictions of farmers' hardship at cotton fields provide a visual rhetoric that contradicts the first video's images of a woman in rich jewelry who embodies the promise of prosperity through genetically engineered seeds. While both advertisements audio-visually promise that genetically modified cotton is resistant to pests and farmers would save money for pesticides, the interviewed farmers present infested cotton plants and report the occurrence of several diseases in the plants and crop losses.

Providing visual evidence like this is important for the film's rhetoric since the genes themselves are invisible to the human eye. Thus, visual rhetoric concentrates on esthetic effects. In another sequence genetically engineered animals are used to shock the audience or evoke compassion, e.g., a pig with some skin of a cow or an ox with bizarre muscle proportions. Visual rhetoric is also used to expose governmental regulations about buffer zones between fields with and without genetically modified canola. Seeds are blown off a hand or it is shown that strong wind blows tumbleweed across a street so that it becomes evident that genetically modified organisms will disseminate, uncontrollably. This diagnostic framing relies on an apocalyptic rhetoric that leads to the conclusion that a total ban of the technology is necessary.

In the prognostic framing, the ideal solution would be a total ban on genetic engineering. Frequently demands for democratization, independent risk research, labeling, and ecological agriculture are put forward as well. These objectives are less agonistic but seem to be more realistic and immediate compared to a full ban. Nevertheless, the framing of strategies concentrates on agonistic activities. The most prominent ecological citizens in the film are people who engage through lawsuits, demonstrations, boycott, and public awareness raising. The voice over commentary presents Vandana Shiva and the Canadian farmer Percy Schmeiser as central figures of the international movements that

⁵ Timecode: hours:minutes:seconds.

oppose the multinational agricultural industry. Vandana Shiva is introduced by Verhaag with the following words:

Vandana Shiva, with a PhD in physics and winner of the Alternative Nobel Prize, has dedicated herself to small Indian farmers and the preservation of biodiversity for almost 20 years. In the meantime she has become a formidable and loathed opponent of internationally operating chemical groups such as Monsanto, Syngenta, Conagra, Cargill, Bayer and others. (00:12:54)

This way her political activity is legitimized and her person is attributed with qualities like: a scientific degree, international recognition, experience and perseverance in her activism, commitment to support the weak against the powerful, and protection of a common good. Her adversaries loathe her which indicates that she is recognized as a serious threat. Later, Verhaag informs that she won some “long and bitter lawsuits” (00:34:28) against patents on seeds. She characterizes herself as someone with a “passion for fighting” (00:34:48) that stems from her “love of biodiversity” (00:34:51) and her will to protect the Indian peasants which she identifies as “the embodiment of resilience, of strength, of hope” (00:35:08) and the “heart and soul of India” (00:35:18). This rhetoric not only claims for a protection of the powerless but also of a homogeneous and heroic national identity which allegedly is threatened by multinational corporations.

The rhetoric is heroic, too, in the example of Percy Schmeiser, a Canadian farmer who was sued by Monsanto for illegally growing patented canola seeds while he insisted that the disputed seeds emerged from the fact that Monsanto’s plants disseminated from neighboring farms uncontrollably. His narrative is characterized by unequal power relations, similar to the case of the Indian farmers. Verhaag presents Schmeiser as practically innocent and heroically “refusing to be intimidated by the chemical giant” (00:09:22).

In their acting against a specific opponent Vandana Shiva and Percy Schmeiser both enact agonistic ecological citizenship. Like Shiva, Schmeiser is recognized internationally by movement organizations:

International environmental organizations are competing to gain Percy Schmeiser as a speaker to warn farmers in the US, Europe and also the so-called third world about chemical multinationals. In the last two years alone, he has visited over 40 countries. (00:09:53)

This constructs the image of a multinational movement network competing with the equally multinational industry for hegemony. The unequal power relations are a key element of the verbal rhetoric throughout the film and contribute mainly to the primary affect of indignation. While the legal actions against the adversary are present only in verbal rhetoric, the visually dominant activities consist of demonstrating Indian farmers.

However, the film also provides examples of communitarian ecological citizenship in form of alternative production and demands for sustainable consumption. Ecological farming is proposed as the better form of agriculture. In presenting Vandana Shiva’s ecological farm and seed bank, the verbal rhetoric of a beautiful biodiversity and the Indian farming culture is mirrored in the visual rhetoric of slow camera movements. A colorful diversity of seeds as well as paintings of vivid farm scenes are shown. In Canada, an organic farmer explains that his work of producing healthy food is about creativity, understanding and protecting nature, and respecting his fellow humans. Two chefs, who claim to use their knowledge and their market power to boycott genetically engineered products, are presented as responsible producers in a situation where the consumers have no chance to make an informed decision. Boycott, though possibly part of a sustainable consumption strategy, could also be part of a social movement strategy that accuses a particular target and excludes it from being part of a solution. Chef Larry Bain rhetorically positions himself against the interests of the industry and their powerful lobby—a more agonistic stance. This suggests, that boycott might be an example for a more hybrid activity that could be acted out either way.

Leben ausser Kontrolle focuses on the agonistic framing of the problem but the strategic framing combines agonistic protest with communitarian activities, even represented by the same protagonist.

Finally, what kind of citizenship is emotionally encouraged and what is the rationale for them to get active? An apocalyptic rhetoric is used by the activists Vandana Shiva, Andrew Kimbrell and Percy Schmeiser. On the emotional level, this rhetoric tries to evoke fear of the risks as the leading rationale for action: fear of uncertain health effects and of a total loss of control, once there is a legal admission for genetically modified organisms. The expressed emotion of urgency suggests that it is necessary to democratically control the technology before it is too late to try to regain control. For example, the Canadian farmer Percy Schmeiser explains: “We don’t have no choice left, our choice is gone. But the people in many parts of the world still have the choice” (00:10:58). Here the audience is addressed as agonistic ecological citizens who have to fight for their democratic rights to choose whether the technology is officially approved or not. This implies a democratic struggle for hegemony between the genetic industry and citizens who oppose genetic engineering. However, Verhaag’s rhetoric in the verbal commentary is critical but not apocalyptic.

Immorality is another important motivational frame that tries to evoke a leading affect of indignation. Andrew Kimbrell explains his motivation as a lawyer, author and founder of the Center for Food Safety, an environmental advocacy organization in Washington, D.C.:

These plants, these animals deserve their genetic integrity. They are things of great beauty. They are things that were made either through divine intervention or millennia and millions of years of evolution. We have no right, for profit or research, to change them fundamentally. They deserve to be loved and protected. And that’s why I do what I do. (00:39:06)

Like Vandana Shiva, his motivation is based on the fear for a valued good (biodiversity, a natural integrity of life) which is presumed to be threatened by the adversary’s immoral actions. With the stories of Kimbrell, Shiva and Schmeiser, the film gives examples of passionately engaged citizens who mostly use an agonistic rhetoric.

While for the most part of the film consumers are not directly addressed, several statements at the end of the film highlight their role: “Everywhere people are asking for labeling. Everywhere people are asking for the right to choose and the right to information” (01:29:51) claims Vandana Shiva and thus stresses consumer rights. Finally, Andrew Kimbrell addresses the audience directly and emphasizes their consumer responsibility given a situation characterized as a “moral crisis” (01:30:54).

The agonistic rhetoric of the activists in the film leaves neither room for reconciliation nor the recognition of opponents’ interests. Their engagement against the technology and the agro industry is framed by Verhaag as reasonable, even heroic option. However, the film shifts between agonistic and communitarian elements. Several farmers, chefs, scientists, and a doctor, use a critical but more moderate rhetoric and put forward demands for better governmental regulations, transparency, and independent risk research. The actors who are called to action are consumers *and* citizens, as well as food producers and scientists. And Verhaag’s non-confrontational interviews with some proponents of genetic engineering are also a more communitarian element.

5.2. Film Example 2: *Voices of Transition*

Nils Aguilar was born in 1980 and studied sociology and political philosophy in Paris. He is an autodidact in filmmaking and *Voices of Transition* (VOT) is his first and so far only film. It was produced in large parts by Aguilar himself between 2007 and 2012. Financial support came from two public scholarships, private donations and crowd funding (Aguilar 2015). VOT was distributed via streaming on the film’s website, DVDs, film festivals and through public film events organized by Transition Town initiatives and nongovernmental organizations. The decision to make the film relied on various sources of inspiration (Aguilar 2012a, pp. 378–79): Some of his friends were engaged in a food cooperative or dealt with permaculture. In Argentine he and some video activists experienced local protests against agricultural corporations and the displacement of indigenous people. He also read a book by soil scientist Claude Bourguignon who is also included in the film and he learned about the Transition Town movement and Rob Hopkins.

In an interview Aguilar states that he intended to foster interaction among the audience at film screenings:

“When all people in the cinema get together and start to think, what can we do with this positive energy that the film conveys? That’s when I get the feeling that the film has accomplished its goal. From the start, it was meant to be a tool in the service of the social-ecological movement, a kind of catalyst for change.” (Aguilar 2015)⁶

The intended interaction is spurred by a constructive, positive attitude and aims at finding consensus about what to do which exemplifies the film’s communitarian message. The film’s target audiences are those who already have some analytical knowledge, but are looking for solutions (Aguilar 2012a, p. 384). According to his Label Milpa (2014), VOT contributed to the foundation of 18 Transition initiatives, and many volunteers translated the film into 17 languages. To sum up, filmmaker Nils Aguilar actively supports the Transition Town movement by offering his film as a tool for local community building. Moreover, he and Rob Hopkins use film screenings to discuss the ideas of the movement beyond its boundaries with politicians and the public, e.g., as part of the Green Lectures at the Heinrich Böll Foundation in 2013 (Dubro, Lukas. “Transition Town.” taz, 28 February 2013, Bewegung, p. 7).⁷

The argumentation in *Voices of Transition* consists mainly of interviews with additional material like diagrams, photos, or historic video footage. Filming took place in France, Great Britain, and Cuba. All interviewees are actively involved in what the film frames as solutions. Therefore, Aguilar does not distance himself from some protagonist’s opinions like Verhaag does. Protagonists are either active citizens on the local level or they are professionals in the field of ecological agriculture. Rob Hopkins, founder of the Transition Town movement, features prominently in the film and contributes to major parts of its framing functions.

No voice-over commentary but written text gives additional information and contributes to the argumentation structure. Compared to the first film, VOT has a clearer problem-solution structure—a typical form in environmental rhetoric (Johnson 2009, p. 30). This furthermore means that diagnostic framing is followed by prognostic and motivational framing.⁸ The problem is diagnosed in the first two minutes: Globalization, industrial agriculture, and the dependency on mineral oil threaten food security as well as the livelihood of farmers worldwide, and they cause ecological problems. The first chapter displays the history and current problems of industrial agriculture. The subsequent chapters, and thus the majority of the film, are hopeful in tone, tell stories about possible solutions, and people who are engaged in creating change locally. The first of those prognostic chapters focuses on alternative agricultural practices: agroforestry, forest gardens, and permaculture. The next focuses on the Transition Town movement in Great Britain with urban gardening and local economy. And the last chapter is about urban agriculture in Cuba and its path towards food sovereignty. The last minutes focus on the motivational framing. The vivid music during the closing credits places a final emphasis on the film’s leading affects: hope and joy.

Particularly in the first chapter, the diagnostic framing uses diverse materials for visual rhetoric: A diagram about the fact that prices for food follow prices for oil, and historical photographs that illustrate chemical corporations’ want for industrializing agriculture in France. Later several diagrams imply a close relation between a growing gross domestic product (GDP) and growing social and ecological costs for the British society while the population’s satisfaction does not rise together with the GDP. A modernization narrative in television news is refuted. Climaxing images of a muddy stream of

⁶ Translated by the author.

⁷ A podcast of the discussion at the Heinrich Böll Foundation is available online: Rob Hopkins, performance and discussion with Barbara Unmüßig and Renate Künast, *Green Lecture mit Rob Hopkins: Transition—Modell für eine zukunftsfähige Lebensweise?*, podcast audio, 28 February 2013, <https://soundcloud.com/boellstiftung/green-lecture-rob-hopkins-transition>.

⁸ Please see Table A2 in the Appendix A for an overview of the frames in *Voices of Transition*.

water, that washes soil away from the fields, visualize the ecological damages. The enormity of food transportation is presented with aerial shots, a time lapse of driving trucks and huge piles of waste from packaging. Landscapes of industrial agriculture stand in visual contrast to those attributed to the preferred practices: e.g., gardens with high biodiversity. While the audience is visually engaged with signifiers of the high demands of energy, written text informs about the side effects of this system: greenhouse gas emissions, risks for food security and high ecological as well as social costs.

The problems are blamed on two interconnected factors: industrial agriculture that relies on monocultures, mechanization, chemical fertilizers, and pesticides, and the global agricultural system which aims for profit and endless economic growth and therefore establishes globalized markets, long distance transport systems, and monopolies. The industry's agenda is revealed in combining two promotional videos by Monsanto and Bayer:

Global demands call for an agricultural revolution. Introducing the genuity brand—Monsanto's family of breakthrough traits across corn, soybean, cotton and specialty crops. It's innovation we pursue for only one reason (00:06:02) maximizing profit. Growing with ProSaro—it's like growing money. (00:06:22)

In this act of "culture jamming" (Lasn 2008), VOT unmask the promise of these corporations towards their customers: The hidden agenda is about maximizing profits. Similar to the first film, this rhetoric constructs the agricultural industry as an antagonist. However, transnational organizations like the World Trade Organization and the European Union support this economic model with their policies. Overall, specific opponents are not central to the critique—the problematic status quo needs to be overcome by better alternatives. Also, protagonists in VOT are not presented as victims of the industry, as is the case in LAK. This makes their actions seem more proactive.

The prognostic framing emphasizes strategies that are associated with communitarian ecological citizenship: sustainable consumption, sustainable food production and citizen's engagement in local community building. The film advocates specific practices for ecological food production as solutions. Experts from agro forestry, forest gardening, permaculture and agricultural ecology highlight the ecological value of their practices but also point out their efficiency in terms of resource input and productivity. These examples support the hopeful attitude of the film. There are feasible alternatives to the criticized industrial food system. I will give two examples here: in the first, individual actors aim to change their practice despite the surrounding system; in the second, governmental policy has supported change.

One interview with a farmer and his son informs the audience about the difficulties that farmers face in France under the conditions of current policies: dependence on EU-subsidies, high prices for arable land. With a comprehensive strategy of permaculture practices, cooperative work, collective ownership, food processing and direct marketing, the son plans to take their future into their own hands. In his framing, this is a way to put up resistance and free themselves "from the tyranny of multinationals" (00:16:33). Such a strategy of leaving the system in order to build alternative economic structures implies a strong pessimism regarding political and institutional change. The second example refers to the objective of food sovereignty which affords to withdraw farming from the regulations of the World Trade Organization. These regulations aim for worldwide market liberalization. A possible path to food sovereignty is presented in the narrative of Cuba's urban agriculture. Here, political decisions have supported the transformation from a system that depends on mineral oil, chemical fertilizer and pesticides towards a food system which includes ecological urban agriculture and thus averts a food crisis. Again, ecological and social objectives are brought together: agricultural ecology and self-governed cooperatives. Cuba is presented as a case to learn from, where political decisions support a necessary transformation. However, where hegemonic policies are undesirable in this film, the citizens do not strive to change them but they make themselves independent as far as possible. Whether and how to scale up such practices in democratic procedures is not debated, apart from briefly demanding a new ministry for agriculture and ecosystem services. In comparison to the organic farmers from Canada in the other film, whose attempts to produce apart from the mainstream were

hindered by the direct influence of the hegemony of genetically modified crops on neighboring farms and insufficient regulations, the European farmers in VOT seem to be in a slightly better situation to produce differently.

Activities for citizens are presented in the chapter about the Transition Town movement in Great Britain. The main objective of the movement is local resilience against shocks from an oil crisis or from an economic crisis. While capitalism is criticized, Rob Hopkins rejects fighting against it in favor of building alternatives for system change. Behind this strategic decision stands the prognosis that peak oil will inevitably lead to major changes in the economy:

Many aspects of globalization simply will become unfeasible and simply have no future. My sense is that the worst elements of capitalism are inevitably numbered in days of how long they can last. So we can choose to invest our energy in whether we campaign against something which is in demise or whether we focus our energy on building up systems that we will need here, so that we can step off and onto another system. (00:25:35)

This prognosis implies a disbelief in technical solutions and the adaptability of the hegemonic economy. In a single and very short sequence V shows an agonistic activity: the protest against a new Tesco supermarket. While the opponent generally represents supermarket chains and the non-local economy, the reason for this protest is a local issue. The strategy of the Transition movement takes a different approach: strengthening local community and local economy, sharing practical knowledge, implementing practical projects, and creating plans for more self-sufficiency in the community. The communitarian ecological citizens in VOT are engaged in community gardening, plant trees, grow their own food and collectively work out ideas for local transition. One woman involved with an action plan for energy transition describes participation in Transition Town groups:

Very quickly people could see that by being creative in their thinking there was so many ideas we could come up with and how this would link in with all sorts of other very good things happening. And this was a very important part of the process for people to recognize that becoming creative and opening up was actually essential to making a really good plan. So with that in mind, within the process the next day, we just said: 'Ok, we've created these visions. If we put the visions in the middle of our plan now, how do we get there—from food, from transport, energy—what do we need to put in place?' Often we think that we have to know so much—we have to be experts on transport, we have to be experts in wind turbines—to be able to say what we should be doing. And actually, you know, we need to, as a community, say that this is the main way we need to move. And then the experts come in and just tinker with our plans. (00:29:18)

Here expert knowledge is not denied its role, but the process is bottom up and inclusive. The statement also implies the idea that a consensus about this common vision in the local community is possible. Internal and external conflicts of interest seem to be absent—at least in this phase. The movement's strategies are not fixed a priori. Movement founder Rob Hopkins says:

I don't even know if yet we can say, we know what 'Transition' is. Transition is really a process of exploring what's best practice in terms of how to set up currencies or food systems or local energy or companies, these kind of things. And gathering people together who are similarly passionate about it. (00:30:17)

While the agonistic ecological citizens in the previous film acted within a rather clear legal setting in which they wanted to intervene against their opponent, the communitarian ecological citizens experiment with strategies to prefigure solutions which are not (yet) structured by legislation and where political boundaries are (yet) unclear. An important function of the verbal rhetoric is creating a positive vision of how the future could be and encouraging the audience to join in this collective envisioning of alternatives. Despite the movement's local focus, ideas are gathered and shared worldwide. Local communities and economies neither are isolated nor fully self-sufficient.

What are VOT's calls for action and how does it try to motivate the audience? The film refers to common motives in environmental communication: the responsibility for future generations, urgency for change. The latter is connected to the idea that major changes are about to happen anyway, and it is much better to design the transformation early on. Participation in this transformative process is described as a meaningful and joyful activity:

Moving from where we are to where we want to go isn't something that we do because we have to. It's something that we do because it nourishes us. It feels like the right thing as human beings to be doing. The key thing is actually, that the people who I meet, who do it, are happier for having done it. (00:31:47)

Passion for engagement is directed to the collective process of creating a new common good and not so much to the protection of a seriously endangered one. During the course of the film, the initial problems are pushed to the background. The inclusive character of the transformation seems to invite everyone to be part of this avant-garde and enjoy an increasing quality of life. Rob Hopkins stresses this in the final minutes of the film:

Actually, it could be fantastic over there. You know, we could have more time for each other. We could be more relaxed. We could actually learn how to use our hands again, be more creative and more useful. We could be less in debt. We'd have more time to play and to celebrate life. (01:03:58)

This is a strong closing statement for the film that emphasizes once more the key affects of hope and joy. It picks up popular motives of unease in current industrialized societies, like stress, financial debt, loneliness and a lack of meaning in one's work life while bringing up a positive vision. The film tries to motivate the audience through the promise that 'you can start right now'. Part of this particular promise is directly fulfilled in the interactions following the film screening at public events.

6. Results and Conclusions

This article translated the idea of empirically observable types of ecological citizenship to the production of environmental documentary films. The films are the product of ecological citizens with a movie camera who use their documentary as a tool for public intervention. As such, the films can also take on different forms: communitarian and agonistic ecological citizenship. However, the demarcation line is not fully clear. The two film examples, which were analyzed comparatively, *Leben ausser Kontrolle* and *Voices of Transition* stood for two different approaches to environmental problems, accusatory/agonistic and constructive/communitarian. But the close analysis also showed mixing of diagnostic and strategic frames that are associated with both forms of ecological citizenship. Particularly LAK is more hybrid, while VOT is more clearly communitarian.

Both films share a diagnostic framing that is concerned with economic, political and cultural structures that cause ecological and social problems. They both express, though in a different amount, opposition against the agricultural industry and disappointment about policies. LAK emphasizes unequal power relations and the struggle of victims of the industry and insufficient governmental regulations. This framing indicates agonistic ecological citizenship. In contrast, the communitarian ecological citizenship in VOT is proactive. It centers around inspiration to motivate a collective search for the right steps to move beyond the problematic status quo. Citizens in both films are passionately engaged, but the leading affects that motivate them and that the films try to evoke in the audience differ significantly. However, when comparing the communitarian activities of ecological agriculture in both films, rhetorical similarities become evident, particularly the appreciation and protection of nature and biodiversity.

Most protagonists in *Leben ausser Kontrolle* oppose genetic engineering and the industry behind it. However, other protagonists argue in favor of genetic engineering. Therefore, LAK shows more than VOT that the common good for humanity is contested. Verhaag himself clearly positions against genetic engineering, but his style of interviews and the rhetoric in his comments is not as clearly agonistic as the apocalyptic rhetoric of some activists he portrays. Confrontations are more present in LAK, particularly in narratives of court cases and images of a demonstration. Several of Verhaag's ecological citizens are passionately engaged in social movements, protecting what *they* see as endangered democratic, social and ecological common goods. On the other hand, Verhaag is also interested in constructive solutions like ecological agriculture. Some farmers and restaurants produce in a way that takes responsibility for their consumers' and the environment's wellbeing, beyond legal requirements. Consumers have a right to information as well as a responsibility for the effects of their behavior. These orientations towards sustainable production and consumption imply a communitarian citizenship approach. However, sustainable production and consumption are not enough to effectively address the problems. First and foremost, there need to be political solutions. These are not achieved on a local level but through the activities of larger social movements that demand political regulations, transparency, labeling, and independent risk research—against the interests of the industry and their lobby. In this sense, the film's main function is to spread the word about the harms of genetic engineering in Germany.

With his film *Voices of Transition*, Nils Aguilar wants to support the Transition Town movement. He spreads their ideas of ecological food production and about establishing new local Transition groups. In comparison to the previous film, these protagonists are homogeneous in their positions. The communitarian ecological citizens are farmers who do not wait for policy changes but opt out of the conventional food markets and assemble collectives of co-producers and customers. Other communitarian ecological citizens consume locally, produce their own food and cooperate on the local scale. They strive for a local consensus through bottom up initiatives. However, the film shows one brief example of an agonistic protest activity, too. And, like in LAK, the film's rhetoric uses promotional videos by the agricultural industry to unmask their economic interests. These examples show that there clearly is a "constitutive outside" (Mouffe 1992, p. 30), and they imply that conflicts might arise in the relations between the movement and other actors in society. But the key is that in communitarian ecological citizenship conflicts are not inherently part of the strategy. The movement functions as an avant-garde and the communitarian ecological citizen hope to overcome the status quo by demonstrating to everyone the advantages of their vision of the common good. The common good therefore is not to be seen as substantive, but as a "social imaginary" (Mouffe 1992, p. 30), an unattainable horizon which guides engagement but does not threaten the pluralistic character of modern democracy. The open, deliberative, experimental approach of the Transition movement supports this interpretation. Participation is presented as an inclusive, creative, meaningful and joyful activity to envision and build a society with harmonious relations among humans as well as between humans and nature while the exact nature of these relations is not modeled in advance.

Both film's framings also partly diverge from Kenis (2016, pp. 958–59) conclusions regarding the boundaries of the collectives which agonistic and communitarian ecological citizens respectively form: In VOT the local is framed not only as the preferred action scale of communitarian ecological citizens but localization and participation, in opposition to globalization, are an essential part of their political vision. And with the topics of local and sustainable food and energy there is a common theme as well as knowledge and practices that transgress the boundaries of local Transition Town groups and indicate an international movement. While the communitarian protagonists in the film do not visibly engage with political institutions, the narrative about food sovereignty and the transformation in Cuba provides some propositions for political change on a larger scale. At the same time, activists in LAK initially get active in reaction to local issues, too (e.g., genetically contaminated fields), or rhetorically refer to a national identity (the case from India). Both films show the existence of networks beyond geographical boundaries and with a uniting political vision. Finally, it can be concluded that both films show some elements of agonistic as well as communitarian framing, while *Leben ausser Kontrolle* is more

hybrid but still focusing on an agonistic position, and *Voices of Transition* is more clearly communitarian. The analysis of the two films also showed, how ecological citizens with a movie camera use the medium of environmental documentary to spread movements and frames internationally. More generally, the research method developed in this article could be used to approach other research questions about political and environmental documentary or other audiovisual media. But one particularly interesting set of questions cannot be answered through such film analysis. It revolves around how viewers perceive a film and whether they accept or reject certain frames and the rhetoric with which they are presented. Are viewers motivated by a documentary and do they actually perform as ecological citizens? Film and media studies point to the heterogeneity of ways in which viewers can see a film and make their own meaning, which can depend on factors like personal interests, prior knowledge or the situation of reception (Hall 1993; Hattendorf 1999, pp. 69–71; Binter 2009, p. 23). Research methods that work directly with the audience, like participation in public screenings and discussions, or reception studies with interviews or focus groups (e.g., Crespo and Pereira 2013) could contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the different perceptions and the meaning-making in the audience.

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Appendix A

Table A1. Framing in the film *Leben ausser Kontrolle*.

Framing Functions	Frames (with Examples of Frame-Elements in Brackets)
Diagnostic Framing	Problem Definition:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • environmental contamination (uncontrolled spreading of genes, no coexistence with natural species) • threat for livelihood (of traditional and organic farmers, of food security, and of biodiversity in food and other plants, dependence on large agricultural corporations, farmer's indebtedness and farmer's suicides in India) • undemocratic (no democratic legitimation, admission procedures are not transparent, hardly any independent risk research and monitoring, tax money for research, traditional species are turned into a commodity, personal medical data is turned into a commodity, false promises) • immoral treatment of life (against creation/evolution, patents on life, suffering of animals, life is made sterile, alien genes, adaptation of life to technology and a mechanical worldview, human genetics threatens identity) • health risks
	Causes:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • corporation's unregulated pursuit of power and profit
	Responsible Parties:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • multinational agricultural corporations, pharmaceutical corporations • genetic scientists

Table A1. Cont.

Framing Functions	Frames (with Examples of Frame-Elements in Brackets)
Prognostic Framing	<p>Solutions/Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • primarily: full prohibition of genetic engineering • democratization (of admission procedures and application and monitoring, transparency, obligatory labeling) • independent research and risk research • ecological agriculture (understanding and protecting nature, creative farm work, healthy and natural products, protecting biodiversity, protecting cultural identity) <p>Strategies/Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrations • juridical resistance (class action lawsuits, legal action against patents on life, denying one's data) • public awareness raising • boycotts (by restaurants, consumers) • Building alternatives (ecological agriculture, seed banks) <p>Targets/Agents of Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • governments • professionals (farmers, scientists, restaurants) • citizens & consumers
	Motivational Framing

Table A2. Framing in the film *Voices of Transition*.

Framing Functions	Frames (with Examples of Frame-Elements in Brackets)
Diagnostic Framing	<p>Problem Definition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • food security is threatened worldwide (by dependence on mineral oil, by global economic crisis, by rising food prices, by ecological crisis) • dependence on mineral oil (peak oil, global transportation of food, dominant agricultural practices depend on machines and chemical fertilizers etc.) • ecological damage (climate change, soil depletion and erosion, loss of biodiversity) • threat for livelihood of farmers (loss of good arable land, high land prices, farmer's debts, difficult generational succession, dependence on EU subsidies, dependence on agricultural corporations) • negative consequences for 'developing' countries (malnutrition, poverty, land grabbing, dependencies) <p>Causes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • industrialized agricultural practices (monocultures, chemical fertilizers and pesticides, genetic engineering, mass production, specialization, mechanization) • global industrial agricultural system (liberalization and globalization of agricultural and food markets, privatization of research, monopolies, patents, pursuit of profit and economic growth, long distance transportation, system of subsidies) <p>Responsible Parties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • agricultural industry • European Union agricultural policy • World Trade Organization
Prognostic Framing	<p>Solutions/Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ecological agriculture (without mineral oil, not industrialized, harmonious and diverse systems, methods like agro forestry, permaculture, agro ecology) • food sovereignty • objectives of the Transition Town Movement: resilience, fair local economies, local community • objectives of permaculture: earth care, people care, fair share <p>Strategies/Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • building and practicing alternatives (small farm collectives, Transition Town initiatives, urban gardening, urban agriculture, food coops, community supported agriculture, local economy) • spreading knowledge about ecological food production (creating a new ministry, learning and teaching, system thinking) • telling inspiring stories • strengthening community • minor: demonstrations <p>Targets/Agents of Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • professionals in agriculture and horticulture • citizens & consumers
Motivational Framing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • responsibility for future generations • urgency (change is better by design than by disaster) • participation in designing the change (everybody can do something, not having to wait for politicians, no need to be an expert) • more quality of life (joy, healthy and fresh food, aesthetic places, community, creativity, meaningful work, more spare time)

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