

## Persuasion Through Visual Metaphors: an Analysis of Non-photographic Resources in Environmental Documentaries

### Persuasão através de metáforas visuais: uma análise de recursos não fotográficos em documentários ambientais

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#### Abstract:

This paper aims to discuss the status of a specific type of images (non-photographic) as a persuasive tool in documentary films, specifically through its ability to build visual metaphors. Moreover, we seek to understand the construction of senses in these elements and their interdiscursive/intericonic connection to what we call an anti-industrial agriculture discursive formation (DF). Our empirical object of analysis are documentary films that explore the issue of industrial agriculture from an environmental perspective. Through our analysis, we show how non-photographical elements can expand the possibilities of representation and construction of meaning for both documentary film and environmental discourse. Our paper also pointed out that some of these visual and multimodal metaphors were employed to overcome the difficulty of representing invisible environmental problems.

#### Keywords:

Environmental Documentar; Visual Communication; Visual Metaphor; Interdiscourse.

#### Resumo:

Este artigo tem como objetivo discutir o status de um tipo específico de imagens (não fotográficas) como uma ferramenta persuasiva em filmes documentais, especificamente através de sua capacidade de construir metáforas visuais. Além disso, buscamos entender a construção dos sentidos nesses elementos e sua conexão interdiscursiva/intericônica com o que chamamos de formação discursiva (FD) da

agricultura anti-industrial. Nosso objeto empírico de análise são os documentários que exploram a questão da agricultura industrial sob uma perspectiva ambiental. O corpus de pesquisa é composto por quatro filmes: *Food, Inc.* e *OGM OMG*, dos EUA, *O veneno está na mesa*<sup>2</sup>, do Brasil e *Bientôt dans vos assiettes*, da França. Através de nossa análise, mostramos como elementos não fotográficos podem expandir as possibilidades de representação e construção de significado para o documentário e o discurso ambiental. Nosso artigo também apontou que algumas dessas metáforas visuais e multimodais foram empregadas para superar a dificuldade de representar problemas ambientais invisíveis, como a toxicidade de agroquímicos.

**Palavras-chave:**

Documentário Ambiental; Comunicação Visual; Metáfora Visual; Interdiscurso.

## 1 Introduction

Discourse constructs the very idea of nature, rather than explaining nature and ecological issues. Thus, nature is established by discourse, whether that discourse includes the verbal, the visual, or both (Dobrin and Morey, 2009).

The metaphorical character of environmental discourse has been explored by different scholars (Dryzek, 2005; Skinnemoen, 2009; Romaine, 2009). Some rhetoric figures function as key concepts for environmentalism because they are commonly present in statements by this specific discursive group, such as the idea of an ongoing “war against nature,” the personification of Earth as female (as in all the metaphors related to the concept of “Mother Nature”), and expressions like “greenhouse gases” and “ecological footprint.” Through their ability to conceptualize one mental domain in terms of another (Lakoff, 1992), metaphors function as essential elements of persuasion.

The role of images in representing the world and the different ideas and thoughts about it is as significant as that of language. Therefore, we can say that images have a semantic value and that they are able to disseminate discourses.

With regard to all these theoretical assumptions, this paper aims to discuss the status of a specific type of images (non-photographic) as a persuasive tool in documentary films, specifically through its ability to build visual metaphors. Moreover, we seek to understand the construction of senses in these elements and their interdiscursive/intericonic connection to what we call an anti-industrial agriculture

discursive formation (DF). In other words, we want to study how these visual metaphors connect to the sayable of the DF and expand the ways it can be said.

Our empirical object of analysis are documentary films that explore the issue of industrial agriculture from an environmental perspective. The research corpus is composed of four films: *Food, Inc.* and *GMO OMG* from the US, *O veneno está na mesa 2* from Brazil, and *Bientôt dans vos assiettes* from France.

Documentary films were selected as objects of analysis because of their strong connection to a rhetoric tradition. One of the main characteristics of the genre is the possibility of an open expression of a point of view. The aim to convince the audience that a certain point of view is more valid than other points of view entrenches these films in a rhetoric arena. According to Bill Nichols (2001), documentary films often intend to affect the historical world. He adds, “We take not only pleasure from documentary but direction as well” (p. 2). Given that the documentary film is a genre that has a strong connection to persuasion finalities, it generally employs figures of speech, such as metaphors. “The value of figures of speech like metaphor and metonymy is precisely that they offer a more vivid and compelling image of something, whether this image corresponds to any larger truth or not” (Nichols, 2001: 54). Given its alignment with a rhetorical tradition, the documentary film is wielded as a political tool that is utilized by different activist groups, like environmentalism itself.

Our discussion on anti-industrial agriculture DF mainly uses the concept developed by Michel Foucault in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) as a reference. According to Foucault, discourses are dispersions; once a priori they do not connect, they do not compose a unique figure. The description of this dispersion enables us to discern a certain regularity between its elements, “an order in their successive appearance, correlations in their simultaneity, assignable positions in a common space, a reciprocal functioning, linked and hierarchized transformations” (p. 37). According to Foucault, we have a DF whenever we can detect this regularity among the discursive dispersion. With the concept of DF, Foucault intended to “designate sets of enunciates that can be associated to the same system of historical determined rules” (Charaudeau and Maingueneau, 2012: 241). In a previous research (Medeiros, 2017), we mapped certain regularities in disperse discourses that are

critical to the industrial agriculture. These regularities allow us to discuss an anti-industrial agriculture DF. We understand that images can carry these regularities (iconically or semantically) as much as language does, thereby making them part of the repertoire of the DFs.

Delimiting what we mean when we talk about “non-photographic resources” is also important. In general, we want to focus on images that challenge the indexicality of photography. Having been released of the charge of a visual likeness to the physical world, non-photographic elements can expand the construction of meaning in environmental documentaries. However, this idea does not mean that photographic images are incapable of creating visual metaphors. Such a statement would ignore the fact that all images have two levels of meaning, namely, the denotative (descriptive meaning) and the connotative (depending on cultural and historical context), according to Roland Barthes (1961). With our selection of non-photographic images, we intend to explore the additional possibilities of a type of visuality that has long been considered incompatible with the documentary genre, as we will discuss later. Essentially, composite images and animations are the resources that we explore in this paper.

Finally, we need to state that the documentary film, as an audiovisual genre, works with multimodality. Because of that, some of the metaphors we analyze in this paper are multimodal metaphors, once the construction of meaning depends on both text and image.

## **2 Documentary film and the myth of photographic truth**

Common sense once dictated that the documentary film can be distinguished from fiction given that the former is connected to reality and truth, whereas the latter creates imaginary worlds. In fact, the word “documentary” conveys the concept of photography as a document, “in the sense of the image being accurate and faithful evidence of what is before the camera’s lens” (Winston, 2011: 84). Michael Renov (2004) argues that the nonfiction film is historically linked to the scientific project. The author explains that this historical linkage, which is manifested in different ways,

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such as the use of observational methods and protocols of journalistic reportages, has prompted the community of documentary filmmakers to perceive subjectivity as a contamination that should be minimized. “Only recently has the subjective/objective hierarchy (with the later as the favored term) begun to be displaced, even reversed” (p. 174).

In the field of documentary film studies, scholars have been to argue that distinguishing between documentary and fiction based on the concept of proximity to truth or reality or in the pursuit of objectivity is a misconception. Nichols (2001) states that every film is a documentary once it gives evidence of the culture that produced it. According to the author, the difference between fiction and nonfiction resides mostly in the expectation they generate. “Fiction may be content to suspend disbelief (to accept its world as plausible), but nonfiction often wants to instill belief (to accept its world as actual)” (p. 2). For Eitzen (1995), what distinguishes documentary from fiction is that the former revolves around questions of trust, being susceptible to the question ‘Might it be lying?’” In a previous work (Medeiros and Gomes, 2014), we argued that, despite the differences in the authors’ conceptualizations, most theorists seem to believe that the distinction originates from the social interactions around the films rather than from the content itself or from a particular aesthetic.

Favero (2013) believes that despite the shift in the perceived relations between documentary and truth, “the notion of ‘reality’ is still at the center of the practices and debates that characterize the world of documentary filmmaking” (p. 261). The author argues that documentary films kept the ‘myth of photographic truth’ alive, a concept that was explored by Sturken and Cartwright (2001). According to them, all camera-generated images, including cinematic ones, bear the cultural legacy of still photography and the claims of objectivity over it. In their attempt to explain that the power of photography lies both in its denotative status of photographic evidence and in the fact that it connotes culturally specific meanings, the authors state that “myth thus allows the connotative meaning of a particular thing or image to appear to be denotative, hence literal or natural” (p. 19). The creation of any image through a camera lens will necessarily carry some degree of subjectivity once choices are involved with regard to the selection or framing of the photographed object.

In the documentary films we studied, we noticed that the visual distinction between industrial agriculture fields and agroecological fields is commonly made through the presence or absence of heavy machinery in the frames. The photographs of industrial agriculture fields contain these machines, whereas the images of agroecological fields exclude machines or agricultural vehicles and instead show mostly humans working the land. This difference is obviously not a coincidence. Rather, the directors made a conscious choice to frame the machines in the industrial agriculture field images. Such a choice clearly intends to persuade, given that the images recall a discursive memory of dehumanization connected to a critique of modernity and the ideology of progress. This example shows that the photographic images carry subjectivity and ideology despite their indexicality.

The understanding that the photographic image does not guarantee objectivity even though it has a referent in the real has allowed recent documentaries to explore new possibilities. Addressing the issue of new formats like the hybrid documentary, the mockumentary, the meta-documentary, and the animated documentary, Machado (2011) suggests that we face an expansion and, in a way, an overcoming of the concept of the documentary.

Even documentary films that follow traditional modes and formats are employing elements that would not find a place in films conceived based on claims of objectivity. As mentioned previously, we are interested in analyzing two non-photographical resources, namely, composite digital images and animated images.

A composite digital image is obtained when we digitally combine visual elements from diverse sources into a single image. The final image has no referent in the physical world. Thus, it disrupts the indexicality of a photograph, and such disruption is what expands the possible combinations in the creation of meaning. The creation of images without a referent in the physical world is not something that was born only out of digital technologies; even analogic tools made such images possible. “But there is no doubt that extensive reworking of photographic images to produce seamless transformations and combinations is technically difficult, time consuming, and outside the mainstream photographic practice” (Mitchell, 1992, p. 6). Digital technologies made the process of combining visual elements from different sources easier. William J. Mitchell (1992) explains that images created through different

techniques (captured, painted, or synthesized pixel values) can be digitally combined. “The digital image blurs the customary distinctions between painting and photography and between mechanical and handmade pictures” (p.6).

The other type of element we are interested in is the animated image. Documentary and animation have long been conceived as opposite genres in the scope of the cinematic tradition, representing the conflict between fact and fiction, indexicality and imagination, truth and fancy, and naturalism and expressionism (Skoller, 2011). Hybrid forms that integrate animated images in documentary films are becoming increasingly popular by the day because of the shifts in the understanding of the relation between documentary and truth. Such integration has two main advantages. First, it allows the filmmaker to recreate situations for which no images are available. Second, and most importantly, it expands the possibilities of representation and construction of meaning in the films. “While all documentaries purport to teach us something about the world, animated documentary broadens the epistemological potential of documentary by expanding the range of what and how we can learn” (Honesty Roe, 2011).

With the liberation from the limits of the photograph, the possibilities of the creation of visual metaphors are expanded because placing different mental domains in the same scene has become easier.

### **3 From conceptual metaphors to visual metaphors**

Some scholars have been trying to define what a visual metaphor is, but considerable disagreement exists not only with regard to the concept but also the applicability of the term, given that “metaphor” has been historically studied as a verbal rhetorical figure (Philips and McQuarrie, 2004).

Although we recognize that the construction of meaning in visual metaphors carries more relevant differences compared with the same process in verbal metaphors, we will adopt the theoretical background of cognitive metaphor theory, which argues that metaphor is a propriety of thought rather than of language. Human thought processes are largely metaphorical (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003); therefore, metaphors

exist in any form of communication. According to Lakoff and Johnsen, metaphorical concepts are “ways of partially structuring one experience in terms of another” (Lakoff and Johnsen, 2003: 78). Metaphors have two parts: the source domain and the target domain. The target pertains to the topic about which something is predicated, and the source pertains to the predication (Forceville, 2008). The word “partially” in Lakoff and Johnsen’s statement is relevant because in every metaphorical process, we highlight certain features of the source domain and mute other features that do not fit the intended construction of meaning.

If metaphors are propriety of thought, then visual metaphors are visual representations of metaphorical thoughts. The definition may seem simple, but the conceptualization of visual metaphor is challenging, as shown by Elizabeth El Refaie (2003). The author points to two main difficulties: the first one concerns the problem of plurality of readings, because meaning is not inherited in a text or a visual text but rather result from negotiations between production and reception instances. “Consequently, the analyst can only ever point to a meaning potential or preferred reading and cannot assume that this will correspond exactly to the actual readings of a text” (El Refaie, 2003: 81). The second difficulty is the problem of distinguishing between a literal thought and a metaphorical thought. The author states that such distinction cannot be made by recognizing an objective distance between the two concepts that are being associated. Instead, it is a matter of how conventional such a connection is in our conceptual system. A metaphoric thought that is widely shared by members of a community can become accepted as the natural way of expressing an idea, that is, what makes the idea move away from being a metaphor and become closer to literality. As many scholars have already argued, metaphoricity is a matter of degree. “The boundary between the literal and the metaphorical is fuzzy rather than clear-cut” (Semino, Heywood and Short, 2004: 1277).

Following El Refaie, we are more interested in the conceptual level of visual metaphors than in the formal level. Visual metaphors can take various shapes. Thus, focusing solely on formal patterns based on fusion and juxtaposition techniques, among others, would be limiting. Conceptual metaphor theory provides a wider scope of what can be considered a visual metaphor.

Documentary films employ metaphorical thoughts in many ways, with the clear goal of persuading their viewers. Such thoughts appear verbally in statements in the film, and they also appear visually through images shown on the screen or multimodally, that is, through an interchange between pictures, words, movement, and sound (Forceville, 2008). Some metaphors can even be at the center of the film's argumentation. Nichols (2001) provides examples of the centrality of conceptual metaphors in the filmic conception. With "family" as the target domain, two audiovisual products are built upon completely different assumptions; the TV show *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* suggests that a family is a haven in a heartless world, whereas the documentary *A Married Couple* (1970) suggests that the family is a battlefield. Both metaphors have the same target domain but very distinct source domains (heaven and war), thereby steering the argumentations in totally different directions. According to Nichols, "metaphorical understanding is often the most meaningful and persuasive way of convincing us of the merit of one perspective over others" (Nichols, 2001: 75).

#### 4 Environmental issues and visual representation

Before we proceed to our analysis, one last topic deserves theoretical attention: the problem of turning often-invisible environmental problems into visible ones. Some scholars in the field of ecocriticism have already addressed this problem.

Schoonover (2013) wrote about the challenge faced by filmmakers in their efforts to represent toxicity, which is a characteristic that cannot be captured by a camera. Sean Cubitt (2013) drew attention to the difficulty of the filmic representation of global warming. According to the author, the evidence of climate changes is mainly statistical, not visual, and numbers are not intrinsically photogenic. "Global events like climate change do not occur in humanly perceptible scales or time-frames. They demand forms of representation that can capture massive but slow change" (Cubitt, 2013: 280). Some widely employed representation strategies include the use of graphics, simulations, and time-lapse photography. Climate change is commonly represented by using images of events connected to causes and consequences, such as

industrial chimneys or melting glaciers. Julie Doyle (2009) states that photographs of melting glaciers are powerful and persuasive signs of the visible impact of climate change because they function as documentary evidence and as indexical proof. However, she points to a dilemma: while such photographs acquire status of truth and prove that a particular incident took place in that location, they also create a problem of temporality because they present evidence of “what has been,” thereby showing failure in the prevention of such events. Doyle argues that environmental groups face a crisis of representation of global warming.

Concerning our object of study, we will see in the analysis that the films that examine industrial agriculture are also faced with the difficulties of representing invisible problems, such as the toxicity of pesticides or the growing resistance of weeds. Another challenge is the creation of a visual differentiation between industrial and agroecological crops or between fruits and vegetables grown with or without pesticide pulverization. In an attempt to make such a distinction, digital and animated images are frequently used to build visual metaphors that could provide the necessary representation and at the same time create connections with an anti-industrial agriculture DF. As an element of a DF, “ecosee cannot be understood only in terms of images but must also be considered in terms of the relationship between image and text – how the two interact with each other by informing, conflicting, and contaminating each other in the Barthesian sense” (Morey, 2009: 533).

## 5 Visual metaphors and interdiscourse

*GMO OMG* is a documentary that frequently employs animation. Picture 1 presents frames of an animated scene that shows signs associated with war (soldiers with guns, war tanks, and a war airplane) being gradually replaced by signs associated with industrial agriculture (workers with hand sprayers, agricultural tractors, and agricultural aircraft). The target domain of the visual metaphor is industrial agriculture, whereas the source domain is war.

Picture 1 - Frames from GMO OMG.



Source: screenshots.

The metaphor “industrial agriculture is war” appears visually and verbally throughout the film. During the above animation, the narrator says, “After World War 2, the battle with nature became an all-out war. Chemicals produced for explosives and nerve agents were reformulated as fertilizers and pesticides, then rained down on farmland around the world.” The persuasion movement is clear; the literal sense of war (as in World War 2) comes to recall the origin of industrial agriculture inputs. This origin legitimates the war metaphor “battle with nature.”

Scholars have already proven that the war metaphor is commonly used in environmental discourse (Dryzek, 2005; Skinnemoen, 2009; Romaine, 2009). Even if *GMO OMG* is the only film that uses a visual metaphor with war as the source domain, the war metaphor is also employed verbally in *O veneno está na mesa 2*. The literal sense of war, to recall the origin of agricultural inputs, is used in both films and also in *Bientôt dans vos assiettes*. Therefore, we can say that both uses of war (the literal to recall inputs’ history and the metaphor “war against nature”) are part of the anti-industrial agriculture DF, given that they are contents of a repertoire of arguments against conventional agriculture practices. Approximating the domains of war and agriculture to build the metaphor is easy and recurrent in language. However, putting

these domains together in the same photographic scene is difficult. Animation makes the task easier given the freedom from photographic indexicality.

Picture 2 shows a scene from *Food, Inc.*. With the use of digitally composed motion pictures, cows are shown standing on conveyor belts traveling toward a factory (we recognize it as a factory mostly because of the chimneys). The cows' bodies are stamped with the logos of different food multinational corporations. This sequence creates different metaphors, such as "cows are products" or "industrial livestock is a factory."

Picture 2 - Frames from Food, Inc.



Source: screenshots.

The chimneys recall a discursive memory related to pollution. In environmental communication, smoke coming from factory chimneys has become a symbol of climate change and environmental damage. In this visual metaphor, we have visual evidence of one environmental problem (factory pollution) being used to convince the audience of the gravity of another environmental problem (industrial livestock). At the same time, branding the cows with corporate logos evokes a discursive memory connected to animals' rights advocacy. Unlike the example in Picture 1, the conceptual metaphors that are visually presented in Picture 2 are not common in the verbal mode.

Picture 3 is a screenshot from *O veneno está na mesa 2*, showing the logo of a Brazilian campaign against pesticides and herbicides; this campaign is connected to the production of the movie. This logo is shown a couple of times in the documentary and is a digitally created still image that shows the skull and crossbones symbol inside a dish (we can recognize it as a dish because of the fork and the knife beside it). The construction of the metaphor here has two phases. First, the skull and crossbones represent toxicity. Similar to verbal metaphors, visual metaphors can also become conventional. When the sign was first chosen to label poisonous materials in the nineteenth century, it had a stronger metaphorical sense, with toxic substances being

the target domain and death the source domain. A strong movement of intericonicity (Courtine, 2013) made the sign conventional, weakening its metaphorical origin and causing it to approach a literal sense. The conventionality is so strong that we can find the symbol on pesticide bottles. The second phase of the metaphor is that the toxicity symbol replaces the food that would have been placed in the dish. A verbal translation of the metaphor would be “food (made with ingredients treated with toxic substances) is toxic and hence is death.”

A detail that is important to emphasize is that we are dealing with a multimodal metaphor, given that the verbal text in the logo also facilitates the construction of meaning. The word “agrotóxico” (pesticides), as much as the fork and the knife, contextualizes the metaphor; in a different context, the skull and crossbones by themselves could refer to piracy.

Picture 3 - Frame from *O veneno está na mesa 2*.



Source: screenshot.

Also from *O veneno está na mesa 2*, the frames in Picture 4 were taken from a sequence in which different fruits and vegetables are rotting digitally. Picture 4 is also a multimodal metaphor, because both the verbal and the pictorial are necessary to the construction of the meaning. For each fruit or vegetable, we first see its regular version along with a text that shows the name of the fruit/vegetable (in Picture 4, “laranja” means “orange”) and its health benefits. The same text is simultaneously read by the narrator. The fruits/vegetables then start to change colors and appear rotten. The text

also changes. The health benefits of the fruit/vegetable are no longer shown, having been replaced by the health hazards posed by consuming fruits and vegetables grown with agrochemicals. In Picture 4, the target domain of the metaphor is agrochemicals, and the source domain is rot.

Picture 4 - Frames from *O veneno está na mesa 2*.



Source: screenshots.

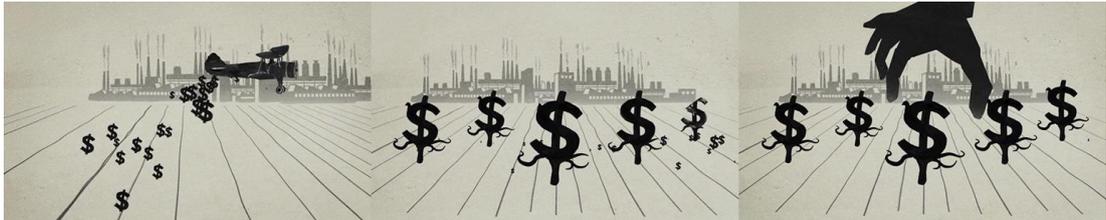
An important regularity that composes the anti-industrial agriculture DF is the employment of dualisms in the argumentation. The life and death dualism is an important one; while industrial agriculture is discursively connected to signs of death and degradation of life, organic agriculture is discursively connected to signs of life (MEDEIROS, 2017). The metaphors in Pictures 3 and 4 follow this logic, using visual death signs (skull and crossbones and rot) and verbal death signs, like the verb “to kill” (in “agrotóxico mata” and words like cancer, abortion, and infertility).

Pictures 3 and 4 share another characteristic: their metaphors present the possibility of visualizing invisible distinctions. A dish of food grown with agrochemicals would look exactly the same as a dish of organic food. Thus, placing food in the dish in Picture 3 would have no persuasive effect. Similarly, photographically distinguishing between fruits grown with agrochemicals and those grown without agrochemicals is impossible.

The frames in Picture 5 were taken from an animation sequence in *GMO OMG*. In the sequence, we can see an airplane that is throwing small dollar signs on an industrial agriculture field as if they were seeds (the presence of a factory in the background is a central element to make us understand that the image refers to industrial agriculture). The dollar signs start to grow until a hand comes to take them. The base of the dollar signs resembles the base of a corn, which shows us that they are

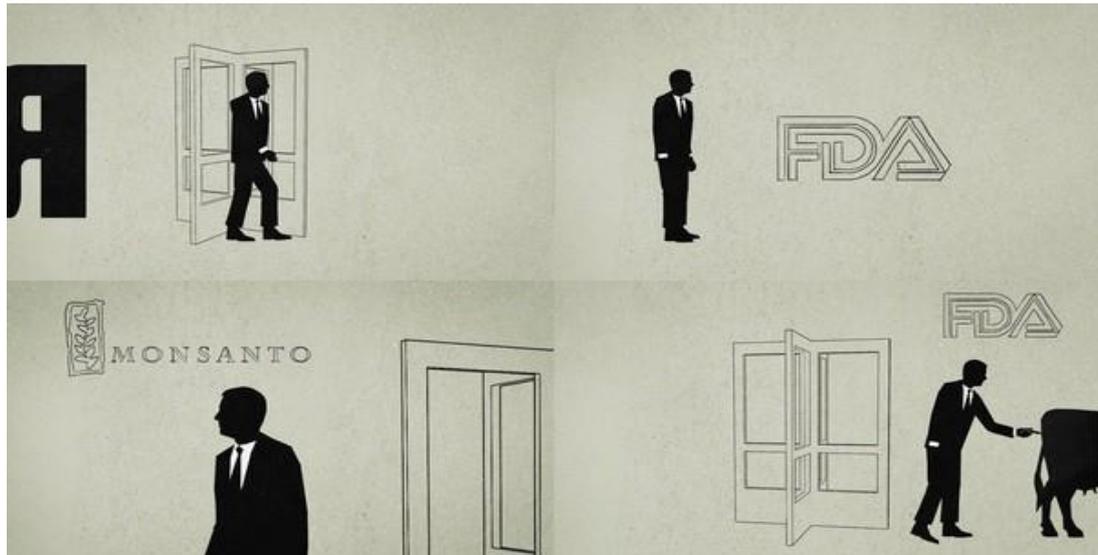
a replacement for corn. In this visual metaphor, the target domain is industrial agriculture crops, and the source domain is money. By replacing food for money, the image reinforces the argument that the industry is concerned about profit only, not about feeding people. This argument is recurrent in environmental discourse.

Picture 5 - Frames from *GMO OMG*.



Source: screenshots.

The documentary films that examine industrial agriculture often approach the relations between governments and corporations. The sequence in Picture 6 shows a visual representation of the revolving door metaphor, which is largely used in political discourse. According to Wikipedia, “In politics, the ‘revolving door’ is a movement of personnel between roles as legislators and regulators, on one hand, and members of the industries affected by the legislation and regulation, on the other.” The right side of the revolving door in the sequence in Picture 6 shows the initials FDA (which stands for Food and Drug Administration, an American regulatory agency). The left side of the revolving doors shows the logo of Monsanto, the biotechnology corporation. In the last frame, we can see a man passing from one side to the other through the revolving door. The man then gives a cow an injection brought from the other side of the door. Here, the target domain is the relationship between FDA and Monsanto, and the source domain is the revolving door. The central argument of the metaphor is that regulation agencies work for the industry.

Picture 6 - Frames from *GMO OMG*.

Source: screenshots.

Picture 7, from *Bientôt dans vos assiettes*, also refers to the relations between governments and corporations, but in a different way. The film also presents the US government as a collaborator to enterprises but portrays the French government as resistant to industry lobbyists, because French legislation forbids the growth of GMOs. The sequence from which Picture 7 was taken appears while the narrator is talking about the possibility of the approbation of the Transatlantic Free Trade Agreement. After an interview with the French Minister of Agriculture is shown, we hear the narrator say, “If the agreement is signed, the French minister will discover a new world, where multinationals will be able to attack governments in fights of equals.<sup>1</sup>” The statement presents the fighting metaphor in its verbal mode, while the images show the metaphor in its visual mode.

Picture 7 shows two fighters and a referee in the center. We can identify them as fighters because one of them is wearing boxing gloves, and the other is wearing a Mexican *lucha libre* mask, and they both have their arms in a fighting stance. The face of the fighter in the left is a digital collage of François Hollande’s face, who was the president of France at the time the film was made. Hollande is wearing a beret, a stereotypical element that is frequently used to characterize French people, just like

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<sup>1</sup> Si le traité est signé, le ministre français va découvrir un monde nouveau, ou des multinational pourront attaquer des gouvernements dans de combats d’égal à égal.

the striped shirt he is wearing. The shorts of the other fighter is decorated with the logos of multinational companies, such as McDonald's and BMW, thereby showing that he represents multinational companies.

Picture 7 - Frame from *Bientôt dans vos assiettes*.



Source: screenshot.

Picture 7 does not propose that François Hollande and a *Lucha Libre* fighter are actually fighting. Rather, it is showing a fight between the French government and the multinational companies. The beret and the striped shirt are the elements that detach Hollande from his singularity and make him part of a bigger group, that is, the entire community of French people. Here, we have what El Refaie (2003) showed to be an important difference between the verbal and the visual mode: the visual “is restricted when it is used to portray ‘plurals, so that groups of people are often reduced to one stereotypical image which purportedly represents the essence of this group’” (El Refaie, 2003: 91).

Another relevant issue in Picture 7 is that talking about political disputes in terms of war or fighting is a mental operation that has already become conventional in its verbal manifestation, approaching literality. In other words, an expression like “the fight between right and left” is accepted as the ‘natural’ way of representing the functioning of the political field. However, when elaborated in the visual mode, the same operation shows its metaphorical feature clearly.

## 5 Conclusion

Through our analysis, we hope to have shown how non-photographical elements, by facilitating the linkage of physically disconnected phenomena and hence the construction of visual and multimodal metaphors, can expand the possibilities of representation and construction of meaning for both documentary film and environmental discourse. Such facility lies in the detachment of these elements from photographic indexicality.

Even if visual and multimodal metaphors can broaden the ways meaning can be constructed, they are not detached from the sayable of the DFs. In other words, even if they offer new ways to transmit a message by proposing new combinations and relations between target and source domains, the message will still reproduce the regularities that characterize the beliefs of a certain community (such as environmentalists).

Among the visual and multimodal metaphors that we have analyzed, some are commonly found in the verbal mode, like the war metaphor, the revolving door metaphor, and the fight metaphor. Others propose relations between the target and source domains that are seldom explored in the verbal mode, like the rot metaphor.

The fight metaphor in this paper shows a clear distinction in the functioning of the different modes of metaphors; even if a cognitive metaphor becomes conventional in its verbal mode that does not mean that it will also be conventional in the visual mode. The opposite is also true; even if a toxic product becomes conventionally represented by the skull and crossbones symbol, referring to pesticides as “the death liquid of Monsanto,” for example, is certainly not conventional.

Our paper also pointed out that some of these visual and multimodal metaphors were employed to overcome the difficulty of representing invisible environmental problems, such as the toxicity of agrochemicals. Turning such toxicity metaphorically visible can reinforce the persuasive effect of the films, thereby increasing the likelihood that the audience will subscribe to the point of view presented by the documentaries.

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