

Public discourses of Alternative Food Organizations: Codebook for frame analysis on web content

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Codebook for frame analysis

The general goal of a framing analysis is to understand “what is going on here” (Johnston & Alimi, 2013). It allows capturing systematically how people make sense of the world around them on a given social, economic, and/or political issue.

In this project, we code different textual material discussing the existing and future food systems in Geneva (at the local level but also as part of a broader national context). The textual material includes: documents related to the elaboration of the agricultural policies for the years 2022-2015, the websites of alternative food organizations, and campaigns for and against three popular initiatives related to food (food security, food sovereignty, and fair food). The goal is to code this textual material identifying the kind of framing procedures at play (the definition of a problem, the identification of solution, the mobilization strategies, and the collective identities at play) and reducing its textual content to a simple basic structure allowing statistical analyses. The basic structure includes three components: the actors, the subject, the object (Franzosi, 1989; Johnston & Alimi, 2013). We code all the sentences that point at: a) an assessment of the current situation (diagnostic); b) a proposition of alternatives (prognostic); and a call for action (mobilization). In each case, we indicate who is the subject of the sentence, what is the verb, and what is the object.

The procedure is the following: 1) identify the relevant webpage(s) for the coding of frames; 2) read the text once to familiarize with its content and code the contextual variables; 3) read the text again with three questions in mind (what is the problem, what is the solution, who should act), these questions allow identifying the relevant textual material. All the sentences that allow answering one of these questions have to be coded; 4) Report the relevant sentence in an excel file and code the content of the sentence.

1. Identify the relevant webpages

For the website, there are two important questions. Which websites to code and which parts of the website content. Regarding the former, we mapped all the alternative food organizations in Geneva and we code the websites of food organizations that have participated in a survey that we did of these food organizations. In total, we identified 227 organizations and 113 have answered our survey. We code the websites of all those who answered the survey questionnaire. Among those who did not answer the survey, 64 have a web page, we code their websites as well.

Turning to the second question, what is the relevant content on the webpage of the organization? This question is much more complicated, in particular if aiming at an approach that can be used on different websites (with more or less content). The guidelines to code the websites are the following:

- Start with the homepage (welcome page¹)
- Look for more information about the organizations (about us, who are we, the association, the federation, the participants, etc.)²
- Look for information about our project, our goals, our values, our ideas, etc.
- When annual reports are available download the annual report

¹ La page d'accueil.

² Les onglets suivants : la coopérative, l'association, la fédération, qui sommes-nous, les collaborateurs, à propos, etc.

2. Read the text and code the contextual variables

Carefully read the text to get a good sense of what the organization is talking about, how they discuss food related issues. Fill in the excel file information about the contextual variables. Note that the contextual variables are the same for all the different sentences identified in a single source.

Variable 1 – Website URL		
Code	Label	Examples
string	URL	
Variable 2 – Source		
Code	Label	Examples
1000	CSO website	See specific list of codes for CSOs
2000	Newspaper article	
2100	Le Courrier	
2110	Courrier – fair food	
2120	Courrier – food sovereignty	
2130	Courrier – food security	
2200	Le Temps	
2210	Temps – fair food	
2220	Temps – food sovereignty	
2230	Temps – food security	
2300	La Tribune de Genève	
2310	TdG – fair food	
2320	TdG – food sovereignty	
2330	TdG – food security	
3000	State document	
4000	Interview	See list of interviewees
5000	Supermarket	
6000	Voto	
Variable 3 – Coder name		
Code	Label	Examples
1	Catalina	
2	Guillaume	
3	Orlane	
4	Simon	
5	Jasmine	
Variable 4 – Coding date		
Code	Label	Examples
DMY	date	12/12/2012
Variable 5 – Document date		
DMY	date	12/12/2012 (for website same as coding date)
Variable 6 – Author type		
1000	CSO	Use list as above
2000	Journalist	Create list while coding
3000	State office	
3100	OFAG	Office Fédéral de l’Agriculture
4000	Supermarket	
5000	Citizens	
Variable 7 - Location		
1000	Website	
1100	Welcome page	
1200	About us	

1300	Our values, goals, etc.	
2000	Newspaper	
2100	Editorial	
2200	First page	
2300	Opinion	
2400	Page number	Write the page number in the last two digits
3000	State website	
3100	City of Geneva	
3200	Canton of Geneva	
3300	Federal government	
4000	Other website	
5000	VOTO	Electoral survey, open questions
Variable 8 – Document ID		
num	Document ID	See list of document ID
num	Respondent ID	For VOTO use respondent ID
Variable 9 – Number of words		
num	Number of words	Numerical information based on word count
Variable 10 – Speaker		
string	Name & function of speaker	

3. Identification of relevant sentences

When you read the text for the second time, you want to identify the sentences that refer to framing processes. We are interested in four framing processes: a) the definition of the problem (diagnostic), b) the presentation of solutions (prognostic), c) the call for action (mobilization), and d) the constitution of a collective identity (identity). Select all the sentences that allow you to answer one of these four questions.

Diagnostic – the sentence refers to an assessment of the existing/current situation and present what needs to be changed. The definition of the problem involves the identification of the problem – the assessments of what is wrong with the current situation, the description of problematic events, and the presentation of concrete problems.

Key question: What is/are the problem(s)?

Prognostic – the sentence refers to a possible alternative, something that is seen as a potential solution. The sentence might discuss three types of elements a vision (imagine, dream of, envision), a solution (improve, reduce, restrict, implement, etc.), and specific goals to attain.

Key question: What is/are the potential solutions/alternatives?

Mobilization – the sentence engages the reader to act, it presents what the reader can/should do to solve the identified problem and/or to contribute to the possible solution. The call for action refers to concrete actions (do, act, engage, resist, change, subscribe, participate etc.).

Key question: How can social actors act?

Identity – the sentence presents the actor(s), its characteristics, and its belongings. It sets boundaries between different types of actors, such as those who suffer from the problem³, those who cause the problem⁴, those who act to solve the problem, and those who are responsible to change something⁵.

Key questions: What are the collective identities at play?⁶

Note that those who are responsible and those who cause the problem might be the same or different groups. Consider the example of a firm contaminating a river (blamed actor) and the action might be directed at the firm (to change this behavior) and/or public authorities (to prevent, ban, or punish this behavior).

Variable 11 - Frames		
Code	Label	Examples
1	Diagnostic	“Farmers do not earn enough”; “organic food is too expensive”; “Public authorities do not...”
2	Prognostic	“The social and solidary economy promotes fair wages”; “states’ subsidies for organic farming”
3	Mobilization	“consumers subscribe to a food basket”; “citizens sign a petition”; “consumers buy fair trade”
4	Identity	“we are a family farm” “we have an organic label” “we belong to a federation”

4. Copy and code the relevant sentences

The identified sentences have to be copied into an excel file in extenso and coded. Then, code the content of the sentence needs to provide information about the frame type (diagnostic, prognostic, mobilization, or identity based on the question that the sentence allows to answer) and the subject-verb-object triplet.

Note that we code multiple times each sentence that contains more than one verb and/or more than one object. In this case, you can copy the contextual information and the sentence string.

Variable 12 – Sentence string		
Code	Label	Examples
String	Sentence string	Copy the sentence in extenso from the source. String should include the full sentence, starting with a capital letter and finishing with a dot.

Identify the Subject

Each sentence contains a subject, this is the case not only for identify frames but also for diagnostic, prognostic, and mobilization sentences. In each sentence, the subject relates to “who we are” (as discussed in Johnston & Alimi, 2013) but it can also relate to “who the others are”. The others can be both opponents (those who cause the problem, those who should solve the problem) and potential

³ The definition of the victims (suffer from, harmed by, etc.).

⁴ This relates to the attribution of blame (the actors who are responsible, cause, harm, etc.).

⁵ The state (who should offer new regulation, sanction, etc.) or opponents (whose action need to change).

⁶ Question that allow identifying collective identities: Who are the members of the group? Who are the opponents those who cause the problem? Who should act to solve the identified problem? Who suffers from this problem? Who is responsible for the current problematic situation?

allies (those who suffer from the problem, those who sympathize with the cause, or those who should act to change the situation). Hence, we are interested in different actors.

Note that the subject is not necessarily the author of the written material that we code. They might refer to others whom they encourage to act in a certain way or refrain from doing something.

Note that sometimes the subject is implicit (for instance, when a pronoun replaces a specific actor as in I, he, she, we, they, etc.). In this case, you need to use the broader context of the whole text to report the specific actor that the pronoun is referring to in the sentence.

Variable 13 – Subject string		
Code	Label	Examples
string	Subject string	Subject as mentioned in the text
Variable 14 - Subject		
Code	Label	Examples
1	Food producers	Farmers, peasants, fishermen, bakers, butchers, etc. ¹
2	Food distributors	Supermarkets, restaurants, kitchens, waitress, cooks, etc. ¹
3	Consumers	Consumers, buyers, shoppers, etc.
4	Citizens	Citizens, Activists, Engaged persons, etc.
5	Individuals	Individuals, persons, etc.
6	CSOs	Association, organization, etc.
7	Public institutions	Government (GE/CH), parliament (GE/CH), city council, etc.
8	Natural forces	Climate change, weather hazards, etc.
9	Market forces	Insurance, companies, industries, etc.
10	Society	The world, the people, society in general
11	The country	Switzerland or any reference to the nation
12	World regions	Europe, Africa, Asia, etc.
13	Initiative committee	Popular initiative or referendum committee
14	food	L'alimentation

¹ Workers should be coded according to the sector of activity – either the production or the distribution of food.

Identify the Verb(s)

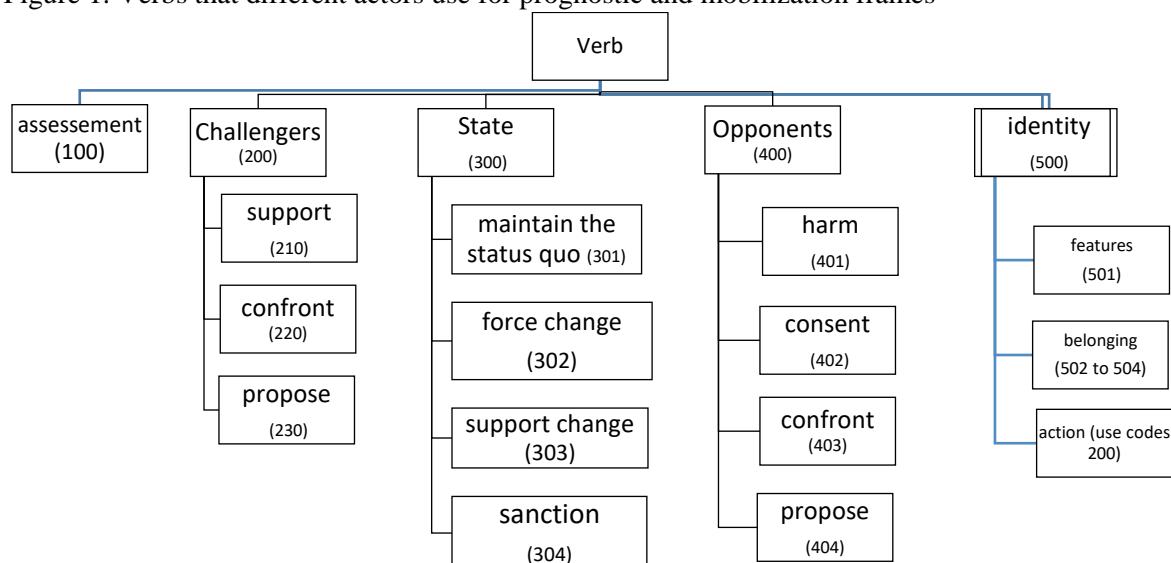
Each sentence contains one or more verbs. When the sentence contains more than one verb, we code it multiple times in order to provide information about each of its separate components. The verb refers either to an action (doing something), a speech (saying something), or a political imaginary (imagining something). First, we code the verb as a string variable reporting the exact verb that appears in the coded sentence. Second, we classify the verb according to the following categories.

Diagnostic sentences – verb is an assessment of the current situation, presents what the problem is, what the opponents do that is problematic.

Prognostic & mobilization sentences – the verb denotes the types of action, speech, and political imaginary that they are calling for (what ought to be done) and they depend on the actors. So first, go back to the actor and then decide what they are doing, saying, or imagining.

Identity sentences – the verb delimits the boundaries of the group. Defining who “we are”, but also who “the others are” (opponents), potential allies, and bystanders.

Figure 1. Verbs that different actors use for prognostic and mobilization frames



Note

Support = Positive relation to an actor or object (ex. agree, sustain, support, encourage, etc.)

Confront = Confrontation relation to an actor or object (ex. oppose, resist, challenge, etc.)

Propose = Imagine or experiment something new (ex. make a proposition, dream, foresee, imagine, test, etc.)

Variable 15 – Verb string		
Code	Label	Examples
string	Verb string	Verb as mentioned in the text
Variable 16 – Verb		
Code	Label	Examples
100	Assessment	
101	Danger/risks	Suffer, face, risk
102	Something not working	
103	Something missing	
104	Factual statement	
200	Challengers' verbs	
210	Support	agree, consent, support, improve, promote, advocate, finance, help
	212 - Information	Write leaflets, flyers, booklets or talk to people
	213 – Create contacts	Put people/organizations in contact
	214 – Financial support	Support financially, donate money
220	Confront	fight, oppose, resist, disagree, disapprove, dispute
	221 - Protest	Demonstration, strike, boycott, etc.
	223 – Defend rights	Represent and defend the rights
230	Propose	Imagine or experiment
	231 – Insitutional partici.	Initiatives, referendum, associations
	232 – Create new narratives	
	233 - Direct action ⁷	Give time, work, contractual agriculture
	234 – train others	Train youth, apprentice, interns, etc.
	235 – market action	

⁷ Prefigurative politics = engage in the changes you would like to see happening on a larger scale (e.g. change modes of production, change consumer-producer relationships, etc.)

300	State's verbs	
301	Maintain status quo	Do nothing / Oppose change
302	Force change	Legal regulation (explicit mention)
303	Support change	Financial aid, technical assistance
304	Sanction	Reduce, limit, intervene, cut, stop, sanction
400	Opponents' verbs	
401	Harm	Harm, pollute, exploit
402	Support	agree, consent, support, improve, promote, advocate, finance, help
403	Confront	fight, oppose, resist, disagree, disapprove, dispute
404	Propose	Imagine or experiment
500	Identity verbs	
501	Self-definition	Who is the "we" (include, partake)
502	Opponents	Who is the "they"
503	Sympathizers	Who could be like us; who we work with (partners)
504	Bystanders	Neutral others, general audience
600	Encourage others to act	Invite to act, encourage to act, to engage

Identify the object(s)

The object includes a target and/or an issue. The target is an actor or an entity who does/should do something, a desired mode of action, or an event. Whereas the issue is an assessment of the situation, an idea, or a proposition. The first question to ask is whether there is a target?

The target may be another actor (person/group/institution) or an abstract entity such as the system. In this case, the question is who is the target of the action?

The target can also be a desired mode of action or an event. In this case, the question is what is the target of the action?

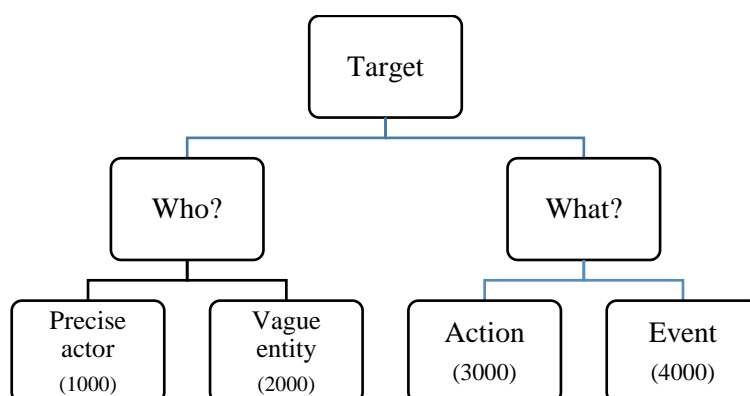
The second question is what is the issue at play? The issue can be related to the identification of a problem, the definition of a goal, or the presentation of an ideal. See below.

Note. It can be tricky to decide whether there is or no a target. Ask yourself, is the issue accompanied by a clear support someone (who should act for that issue) or some action (taken to support the issue)?

Example: "We want to reduce our ecological footprint by limiting transport and plastic."

- « we want to reduce our ecological footprint » → this part of the sentence has a goal defined in term of an issue but not clear mode of action or actor responsible. So we do not have a target.
- ➔ "we want to limit transport to reduce ecological footprint" → here we have a preferred mode of action (limit transport = the target) and the issue we take from the overall sentence ("reduce our ecological footprint")

Figure 2. Identifying objects: is there a target and which kind?



Note

Target is an object that defines “who should do something” or “what should be done”

Issue is an object that presents a problem, a goal, or an ideal

Action = a specific action done or planned

Event = something that happened or will happen

Variable 17 – Target string		
Code	Label	Examples
string	Target string	Write the target as it appears in the text
Variable 18 - Target		
Code	Label	Examples
1000	Actor	
1001	Producers	Farmers, peasants, fishermen, bakers, butchers, etc.
1002	Distributors	Supermarkets, restaurants, kitchens, waitress, cooks, etc.
1003	Consumers	Citizens, individuals, persons, etc.
1004	Citizens	Citizens, Activists, etc.
1005	Individuals	Individuals, persons, etc.
1006	CSOs	Association, organization, social movements, etc.
1007	Public institutions	Government (GE/CH), parliament (GE/CH), city council, etc.
1008	Labels	Labels, certification (bio, demeter, fair, etc.)
1009	The country	Switzerland or any reference to the nation
1010	World regions	Europe, Africa, Asia, etc.
1011	Youth	Young people, youth
1012	Vulnerable groups	Precarious, Poor, Vulnerable groups
1013	Community	Neighbors, inhabitants, etc.
1014	Animals	
1015	Experts	Professional expertise / scientific expertise
1016	Workers	generic
2000	Vague entity	
2001	The System	
2003	The Economy	All references to the economy or the market
2005	Society	
2006	The Environment	Climate change, weather hazards, etc.
2007	Legislation	
2008	Agriculture	
2009	Alternative values	
2011	Places	
3000	Action	
3001	Protest	Demonstration, strike, boycott, etc.
3002	Participatory democ.	Citizens’ assembly, horizontal governance, deliberation...

3003	Information	Leaflets, flyers, booklets, stands, events
3004	Institutional politics	lobbying
3006	Direct action ⁸	Give time, work, contractual agriculture
3007	Training/education	
3008	Financial support	
4000	Event	
4001	Natural disaster	
4002	Pollution	
5000	Features	Characteristics, traits of the subject
5001	Birth/creation date	
5002	Size	Size of the farm/the exploitation, number of members

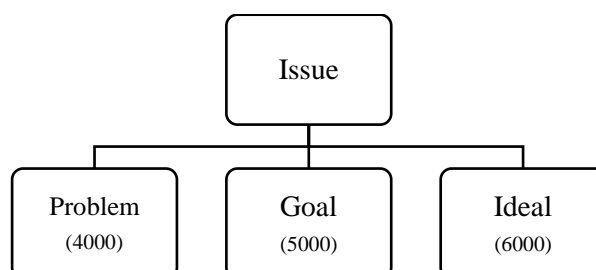
Issue identification

When the object is an issue, we first need to define whether the issue relates to the description of a problem, the proposition of a solution / a goal, or the discussion of an ideal.

Note that when the object is a target (actor, vague entity, action, or event) it may include additional information about the issue. In this case, we code information about what the actor do/should or should not do, what are the goals of the action, what are the causes of the event.

Note that for the issue codes, we use a bottom-up approach for the coding. We develop additional categories as we advance with the coding. When coding an issue, decide what the specific issue is, check whether it exists in the open-ended codes file. If you cannot identify a precise code, use the general ones below.

Figure 3. Identifying the issue: are we talking about a problem, a goal, or and ideal?



Problem = something that does not work

Goal = a concrete objective

Ideal = a general value/ideology

Variable 19 – Issue string		
Code	Label	Examples
string	Issue string	Write the issue as it appears in the text
Variable 20 - Issue		
Code	Label	Examples
4000	Problem	
4100	Environment	Water pollution, Global warming, Death of bees
4200	Inequalities	Poverty, Racism, Sexism, Disable discrimination

⁸ Prefigurative politics = engage in the changes you would like to see happening on a larger scale (e.g. change modes of production, change consumer-producer relationships, etc.)

4300	Health	Cancer, Diabetes, Obesity, Heart disease
4400	Market	Power concentration, low wages
4500	Democracy	Power of lobbies, lack of representation
4600	Localism	Protectionism, lack of diversity
4700	Specism	Animal exploitation, animal suffering
5000	Goal	
5100	Environment	No pesticide, more wildlife, less transport
5200	Inequalities	Quality food for poor people, female farm ownership
5300	Health	Children health, elderly's health, families health
5400	Market	Free market, state intervention
5500	Democracy	Citizens' participation, vote turnout
5600	Localism	Producers-consumers strong ties, local economy
5700	Specism	Animal well-being, vegetarianism, veganism
6000	Ideal	
6100	Environment	Biodiversity, degrowth, sustainability
6200	Inequalities	Gender equality, Anti-racism, fight poverty
6300	Health	
6400	Market	Anticapitalism, liberalism, social and solidary economy
6500	Democracy	Direct, participatory, representative
6600	Localism	Short food chains, local economy
6700	Specism	Animal rights, animal liberation

References

- Franzosi, R. (1989). From words to numbers: A generalized and linguistics-based coding procedure for collecting textual data. *Sociological Methodology*, 19, 263-298.
- Johnston, H., & Alimi, E. (2013). A methodology analyzing for frame dynamics: The grammar of keying battles in palestinian nationalism. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, 18(4), 453-474.