

NARRATIVES OF SUSTAINABILITY: FRAMING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT THROUGH THE NATIONAL BROADCASTER'S SOCIAL MEDIA

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Abstract: This article explores how the Lithuanian public broadcaster's programme *Veranda* frames sustainability in its television episodes and related social media content. Sustainability research often focuses on climate crisis, policy or technological change. *Veranda*, however, offers a different perspective. Its stories usually begin with buildings, interiors, neighbourhoods and cultural memory, allowing environmental meanings to emerge from familiar settings. The material includes all 24 episodes of the first season (2019–2020), together with the social media posts connected to them. We examined the material qualitatively, combining lexical-semantic observation and thematic clustering with a close reading of the corpus. Three recurring frames were identified: heritage, aesthetics and social engagement. They come together through ideas of preservation, durable design, local surroundings and shared practices. Sustainability is therefore presented not as a separate environmental demand, but as an ethical and cultural orientation embedded in everyday life. The case demonstrates how public-service media can make sustainable thinking recognisable by expressing it through familiar social and emotional forms.

Keywords: sustainability communication, framing, public-service media, cultural heritage, aesthetics, civic engagement

Introduction

Research on sustainability communication in contemporary media usually begins with climate change, environmental policy, technological innovation or crisis. Not surprisingly, risk, urgency, conflict and responsibility dominate many of the frames identified in this literature. Political institutions, experts, policy responses and threats operating on a global scale also tend to occupy the centre of attention (Badullovich, Grant, & Colvin, 2020; Guenther et al., 2023; Lück et al., 2018). This work has given us a strong account of how environmental concerns become visible in public debate. It says rather less about what happens when sustainability enters media content without first being announced as an environmental problem.

That question matters because people also encounter sustainability in ordinary and sometimes unexpected places. A discussion of a home, an old building, a repaired object or a neighbourhood may carry assumptions about care and responsibility without using the language of environmental crisis. Taste, continuity, preservation and routine can therefore communicate environmental values indirectly. These quieter encounters remain difficult to see in a literature built mainly around

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explicitly environmental formats, although they may be important for the way sustainability becomes part of everyday understanding.

Framing theory helps to make these indirect meanings visible. Entman (1993) defined framing through the selection and salience of aspects of perceived reality: frames define problems, identify causes, evaluate them morally and point towards possible responses. We use this definition as a starting point, but not as a checklist that every item in the corpus must fulfil. Later framing research has shown that meaning may be organised and stabilised across a discourse and connected with wider interpretative structures (Guenther et al., 2023; Van Vuuren-Verkerk, Aarts, & van der Stoep, 2021). This is especially useful here. In Veranda, environmental meaning often travels through design, domestic life, consumption, heritage and shared space rather than appearing as an isolated subject.

Public-service media have a particular relevance here. Besides reporting events and reflecting current debates, they participate in the formation of cultural orientations and social norms, including ideas about what responsible living may involve (Välvirronen, 2006; Drašković, 2023). They are therefore more than information channels. Through their choice of subjects and modes of presentation, certain lifestyles and forms of conduct become culturally recognisable and publicly legitimate.

Veranda was selected because this movement between subjects is typical of the programme. Produced by the Lithuanian public broadcaster, it covers architecture, design, culture, nature, everyday practices and the built environment. An episode may place several of these concerns beside one another without explaining their relationship in formal environmental terms. The social media material adds another step: fragments, summaries and hashtags select which elements of an episode are repeated and made easier to circulate. Television and social media therefore perform somewhat different framing work. Recent research on multimodal framing also points to the need to follow meanings across formats instead of locating a frame within one text only (Geise & Maubach, 2024).

The question guiding the article is how sustainability is framed when it enters the programme not primarily as a technical or political problem, but through heritage, aesthetics and social relations in everyday life.

Our argument is that Veranda makes sustainability culturally familiar before it makes it explicit. The programme seldom tells viewers how to behave in the manner of an environmental campaign. It tells stories about preserved buildings, domestic order, attractive spaces, neighbourhoods and materials that last. Environmental responsibility is carried by these stories. Earlier research gives good reason to take such presentation seriously: frames may support engagement and agency, but may also create distance, resignation or helplessness (Clarke, Roman, & Conway, 2020; Enjolras, 2024). The case examined here relies comparatively little on alarm. Familiarity, desirability and cultural value do much of the persuasive work.

The article therefore moves in three directions. It looks beyond hard news and overt political communication; it follows sustainability across several cultural domains rather than searching for one isolated issue frame; and it includes social media as analytical material in its own right. The posts are short, but they are not insignificant promotional leftovers. By selecting and repeating certain motifs, they shape what remains visible after an episode has ended.

This focus fills a specific gap. We know considerably more about sustainability framing in news, advocacy, controversy and institutional communication than in programmes about architecture, heritage or lifestyle. Yet these less declarative formats may have an advantage: they allow environmental responsibility to be encountered in situations that viewers already recognise and value. Veranda makes it possible to study this quieter route into sustainability discourse.

Literature review: Framing Theory in Research Communication

Framing theory continues to hold a central place in media discourse analysis. Entman's (1993) influential formulation describes framing as the selection and increased salience of aspects of perceived reality for defining problems, identifying causes, making moral evaluations and suggesting responses. Although this formulation still provides a common starting point, the concept has since travelled across many research settings and has acquired a wider range of uses.

The success of framing theory has also made its boundaries less clear. Cacciatore, Scheufele, and Iyengar (2016) warn that framing sometimes becomes difficult to separate from agenda-setting and priming. This criticism is relevant, although breadth is not necessarily a weakness in every study. Guenther et al. (2023), for example, use framing to connect psychological, sociological and communication perspectives in climate research. Van Vuuren-Verkerk, Aarts, and van der Stoep (2021) go further by treating frames as meanings negotiated in interaction rather than stable cognitive objects. We adopt this more process-oriented view because the meanings in Veranda develop through combinations and repetitions, not through a fixed vocabulary alone.

There is a similar variety in framing methods. Manual content analysis remains widely used (Guenduez et al., 2016; Lück et al., 2018; Ahmad et al., 2025), but corpus and computational techniques now allow researchers to notice patterns across larger bodies of material. The approaches are not mutually exclusive. Zeng and Ahrens (2023) use corpus evidence to study metaphor, while Badullovich et al. (2025) combine paragraph-level coding with automated classification. Their findings are relevant to our decision to work with smaller thematic units: frames that disappear in full-text coding can become visible at paragraph or segment level. Xu (2020) likewise combines qualitative interpretation with semantic analysis when frames are spread across a text and are not named directly.

Within sustainability communication, these methods have produced several issue-specific typologies. Scientific, economic and environmental frames are prominent in the systematic map by Badullovich, Grant, and Colvin (2020). Guenther et al. (2023) identify climate action, harmful effects, responsibility, accountability and moral obligation among the recurring frames, while comparative research adds victims of global warming, political conflict, sustainable energy and common sense (Lück et al., 2018). The studies differ in material and scale, but together they demonstrate that sustainability communication has developed recognisable interpretative patterns and normative concerns.

The consequences of framing are equally important. An issue can be described in a way that leaves people with a possible role, or in a way that makes action appear distant and futile. Clarke, Roman, and Conway (2020) found that militaristic and fatalistic climate framings can encourage helplessness. Enjolras (2024), working with Facebook communication by civil-society organisations, observed stronger engagement when mobilisation was linked with care and justice. Moral emphasis also matters (Brugman, 2024), and multimodal framing can affect both responsibility attribution and

support for policy responses (Geise & Maubach, 2024). Frames thus influence more than the arrangement of facts. They help to establish what kind of response seems reasonable or even possible.

Television research supports this argument. Väliverronen (2006) shows that televised science is organised not only through facts but also through symbolic roles and interpretative positions. Drašković (2023) identifies context-specific ideological framing in television reports, while comparative studies indicate that institutional settings can lead broadcasters to apply different causal and moral logics to similar issues (Lembang et al., 2022; Fatima & Ameen, 2025). The point is especially relevant to public-service media because their remit includes, implicitly or explicitly, the cultivation of publicly legitimate understandings and values.

Nevertheless, most sustainability-framing studies still begin with news, political communication, climate advocacy or public controversy. Far less is known about audiovisual formats that connect sustainability with architecture, interior design, heritage and lifestyle.

The missing case is not simply another media genre. It raises a different analytical question: what does sustainability look like when crisis and institutional responsibility are no longer the most visible organising principles? The answer offered by Veranda is built around heritage, aesthetics and social life. These meanings are quieter and less confrontational, but they may be well suited to shaping understandings of sustainable living precisely because they are close to ordinary experience.

Methodology

We approached the corpus through qualitative media content analysis. Lexical-semantic observation and thematic clustering supported, but did not replace, repeated close reading. Framing theory guided the interpretation. The objective was not to calculate media salience or infer effects on viewers; the available material would not support either claim. Instead, we asked how the programme organised sustainability meanings and how those meanings came to appear ordinary or desirable. This combination of close interpretation with attention to semantic recurrence follows integrative approaches proposed by Xu (2020) and Guenther et al. (2023).

The material covers all 24 episodes in the first season of Veranda, broadcast by LRT in 2019–2020, as well as publicly accessible posts and excerpts connected with those episodes.

The database contained 92 thematic units across the 24 episodes, each lasting about 25 minutes on average. We included social media because it changed what could be seen most easily in the programme's communication. A title, a brief summary or a hashtag cannot reproduce an episode, but it can foreground one subject and leave another in the background. The posts were consequently treated as a selective layer of communication rather than simply as evidence of a larger audience reach.

The audiovisual material was initially transcribed with Go Transcribe. We then checked every transcript manually. Spoken language created practical problems: speakers repeated themselves, abandoned sentences and relied on fragments whose meaning was clear in the video but less clear on the page. These features were smoothed only where they obstructed analysis. The purpose was to make the corpus workable without turning spontaneous speech into a polished written script.

After this work, the corpus contained approximately 50,000 words, or about 215 transcript pages. Social media entries were logged separately. They served, first, to clarify which themes the programme emphasised beyond the broadcast and, second, to show how the broadcaster publicly signalled sustainability-related subjects (Table 1).

Table 1: Corpus of analysed material

Unit	Coverage	Source	Analytical role
Television corpus	24 episodes; first season (2019-2020)	LRT Mediateka (media library)	Primary audiovisual corpus
Thematic units	92 themes across the season	Compiled programme database	Mapping recurring motifs and episode structure
Text Corpus	Approx. 50,000 words; approx. 215 transcript pages	Episode transcripts	Qualitative content analysis and lexical-semantic observation
Cross-platform layer	Social media posts, titles, summaries, hashtags, excerpts	Public broadcaster social media	Tracing public framing and circulation of sustainability motifs

We began by reading the corpus several times and recording motifs, repeated semantic associations and larger topic areas. Open coding was used at this stage because a fully predetermined frame list would have hidden some of the programme's less explicit connections. Four broad domains gradually became stable across the readings: material practices related to sustainability, aesthetic experience, social relations and continuity of cultural heritage.

The next step was interpretative. For each domain, we asked what the programme treated as desirable, which judgements were expressed or implied and what kind of viewer position followed from them. We then returned to the complete corpus for a synchronous reading across episodes and platforms. This last reading was especially useful. It showed that meanings which looked incidental within one segment became more substantial when they reappeared elsewhere.

The design the authors have adopted has clear limits. It considers one media case and does not conduct audience research. This means the findings cannot be transferred mechanically to sustainability communication as a whole.

The study does not claim statistical generalisation. Its strength lies elsewhere: television and social media are read together, and individual observations are checked against semantic patterns in the full corpus. The result is a grounded interpretation of one public broadcaster's way of bringing sustainability into everyday practice.

Results and Discussion

Framing sustainability as continuity through heritage

The association between sustainability and cultural heritage appeared early in the analysis and remained visible across the corpus. Heritage in Veranda is not a self-contained cultural topic. Discussions of restoration, preservation, continuity and public memory repeatedly raise a present-day question: how should inherited environments be used and cared for? Historical buildings, wooden architecture, monuments and adapted urban spaces are not presented as objects whose value belongs exclusively to the past. Their value depends on whether they can be preserved without removing them from contemporary life.

Two social media summaries illustrate how this association is built. The post of 24 November 2019 moves from monuments to plastic-straw replacement, tree-house architecture and greenwashing. The 15 December summary places waste reduction and interior colour beside the wooden architecture of Žvėrynas. None of these posts states that heritage and ecology are the same issue. Their juxtaposition nevertheless matters: it repeatedly locates preservation and environmental responsibility within one field of everyday choices.

Preservation is therefore not treated as a refusal of modern life. It is valued when it allows continuity, adaptation and use. Table 2 shows how this logic develops across the relevant communicative units.

Table 2: Heritage-related sustainability framing in Veranda

Episode/ communicative unit	Heritage-related element	Heritage-related element	Framing logic
2019-11-24 social media summary	Monuments; tree-house architecture	Plastic straw replacement; greenwashing	Heritage and environmental concerns are grouped within one shared interpretive frame
2019-12-15 social media summary	Wooden architecture in Žvėrynas	Waste reduction; interior colour and domestic practices	Preservation is linked to sustainable everyday living rather than treated as separate from it
Episodes on historic/adapted spaces	Historical buildings; urban environments; adapted spaces	Reuse; continuity; responsible maintenance	Sustainability is framed as preservation through continued use
Episodes on restoration and modernization	Architectural heritage; inherited environments	Functional adaptation; durable value	Modernization is legitimised when it protects meaning, identity, and function

The programme's treatment of modernisation makes the same point from another direction. New use and inherited identity can coexist, but only when adaptation respects the meaning and function of a place. Once this condition is accepted, sustainability cannot be reduced to energy efficiency or lower waste. It includes the less measurable work of caring for material memory and finding responsible uses for what is already there.

This is why stewardship is an appropriate description of the heritage frame. The present receives buildings, places and memories from earlier generations. It may change them, but it is also answerable for what remains available to the next generation.

Framing sustainability through aesthetics

Aesthetics formed a second, somewhat less obvious, pattern. Veranda often turns to harmony, colour, light, atmosphere, materials and thoughtful design. At first glance, these subjects may seem only loosely connected to sustainability, particularly if aesthetics is reduced to surface decoration. Yet the programme treats interiors and buildings as spaces in which values and choices become visible. Environments that are durable, well proportioned and carefully maintained are also shown as appealing places to live. Sustainable living is therefore linked not simply to using less, but to creating surroundings that people genuinely value and want to preserve.

This connection becomes particularly clear on social media. Posts about sofas, lighting, interior colours, feng shui and decorative styles sit alongside discussions of waste reduction, ecology, greenwashing and wooden architecture. These subjects are not presented as identical, but their appearance within the same feed quietly brings them into conversation with one another. As Table 3 indicates, this proximity allows ideas of taste and responsible material choice to reinforce one another.

Table 3: Aesthetic framing of sustainability in Veranda

Episode/ communicative unit	Aesthetic element	Sustainability-related element	Framing logic
Social media posts on interior colour / lighting / decorative style	Colour, light, atmosphere, decorative order	Everyday responsible choice, liveable environment	Aesthetics make sustainability feel inhabitable rather than abstract
Episodes on interior design and materials	Design, furniture, spatial arrangement, material quality	Durability, reuse, long- term value	Good design is framed as lasting, responsible, and not merely fashionable
Discussions of wood / natural materials	Adaptable colour, natural material, visual warmth	Reuse, safety, recyclability, sustainable material choice	Aesthetic appeal and material responsibility are presented together
Reflections on carpets / long-term design	Beauty, craftsmanship, timelessness	Longevity, resistance to short-lived trends	Sustainability is framed as enduring value rather than novelty

Aesthetic framing performs a practical translation. Rather than leaving sustainability at the level of obligation, it gives the viewer something that can be pictured: a room, a material, a quality of light, an object worth keeping. Responsible practice becomes sensorially credible and emotionally plausible. This does not prove that viewers will act differently, but it helps explain why such communication may be easier to identify with than abstract instruction.

The analysis also cautions against dismissing this as superficial lifestyle content. Novelty and luxury are not the only standards applied to kitchens, decorations or built environments. Durability, restraint, appropriateness and usefulness over time recur as criteria of good design. Beauty is valued, but so is the capacity of a choice to last.

Aesthetics, in other words, is one of the means by which sustainability enters the language of taste, judgement and care.

Framing sustainability as social engagement

The third dimension concerns social engagement. Many sustainability messages address the individual: consume less, sort waste or select a better product. Veranda repeatedly widens this perspective. Neighbourhoods, public atmosphere, safety, work culture and shared environments enter its discussions of architecture and design. The spaces people build and inhabit are shown to affect collective life, which gives sustainability a civic dimension beyond the private household.

Urban lighting is a useful example precisely because it appears modest. The programme links it with the appearance of architecture, but also with whether people feel safe in public space. Decoration raises a comparable question. Once it enters a shared environment, a stylistic choice also becomes a decision about collective value, temporary consumption and aesthetic excess.

The boundary of sustainability is widened in this way. Household ecology remains present, but it is joined by the organisation of common space and the management of symbolic resources that no single person owns (Table 4).

Table 4: Framing sustainability as a social aspect in Veranda

Communicative focus	Social element	Sustainability-related meaning	Framing logic
Neighbourhoods and shared living	Community ties, collective habits, everyday interaction	Responsible living is presented as socially embedded rather than individualised	Sustainability is framed through community and mutual responsibility
Urban lighting and public atmosphere	Public safety, shared urban environment	Built environments affect quality of life and collective well-being	Sustainability includes the social management of common spaces
Decoration and public space	Collective value, symbolic meaning, aesthetic excess	Consumption and design choices are linked to public consequences	Sustainability extends beyond household behaviour to shared symbolic resources
Architecture and design	Work culture, inclusion, quality of life	Space shapes social practices, belonging, and participation	Sustainability is framed as civic rather than merely technical
Viewers' implied role	Reflective subjects in shared environments	Everyday choices carry public consequences	Sustainability is connected to everyday citizenship

The implied viewer changes with this frame. He or she is still a potential consumer of advice, but is also a participant in environments shared with other people. A choice about a building, a light or a public decoration can have consequences beyond personal taste. Civic engagement here is ordinary rather than institutional: it takes place through participation in the environments and norms that organise common life.



Figure 1: The suggested model of sustainability framing in Veranda content

Figure 1 summarises the relationship between the four dimensions identified in the corpus. The concept of *culture* (seen through *heritage*) deals with continuity and stewardship. Whereas *aesthetics* showcases sustainable practice as something attractive and liveable. *Social engagement* connects it with the social life and responsibility. In this case, *everyday experience* is not simply the fourth topic beside the others, not simply a context. It is the setting in which heritage, aesthetics and social relations are brought together and transformed into recognisable choices.

Discussion

The sustainability frame found in Veranda has no sharp boundary. It is dispersed through heritage, aesthetics and social engagement, sometimes without sustainability being named at all. This makes the case different from crisis-oriented climate communication. The programme does not ask audiences to begin with an urgent external demand; it begins with environments and practices that already have cultural value. Its influence, if it occurs, is therefore likely to come through familiarity rather than confrontation.

This finding adds a quieter case to research on framing and public involvement. Previous studies show that frames may diminish agency or make engagement more likely (Clarke et al., 2020; Enjolras, 2024). Veranda lowers the distance between the environmental issue and the setting in which it is encountered. A local building, a neighbourhood street, a durable material or a domestic interior provides an immediate point of recognition. We cannot infer an audience effect from the corpus, but we can identify a communicative condition that may support one: sustainability is given forms that are easy to imagine as part of one's own life.

Public-service media authority is relevant here, although in Veranda it is exercised quietly. As comparative studies suggest, media institutions play a part in establishing which values and which responsibilities come to be recognised as legitimate in public life (Lück et al., 2018; Fatima & Ameen, 2025). The programme seldom adopts an openly instructive tone. It does not need to. The

decision to feature one building, neighbourhood or practice rather than another already involves a judgement about what deserves attention and, ultimately, what is worth valuing.

This helps explain why *Veranda* links sustainability with aesthetics, heritage and social responsibility. The aforementioned elements are projected as parts of a more complex whole. People take interest in and care for places as they value their history and enjoy living in them. This in turn, makes them assume responsibility for the future of the place. The function of social media, in this case is to communicate the relationships between places and people living in them by turning longer stories from the programme into images, short comments or practical examples. As a result, some detail is lost in the transition, but the main idea becomes easier to remember for the public.

Yet another role that the programme fulfils is educational. Although it rarely teaches in a direct way, instead it uses little policy language and does not tell viewers what they should think. Experts share their knowledge, but other voices are also heard. For instance, residents speak about daily life in these places, designers explain their choices, and local communities share memories and personal experience.

The programme often raises direct and practical questions. Should a particular site or object be kept, and why? Why in, some cases, repair is better than replacement? What makes a shared public space more useful to the people using it?

These questions may seem practical, but, in fact, they also look into life in a community. Solutions related to preserving, repairing and sharing show how people understand their duty to others and to their surroundings. Programme *Veranda* therefore brings sustainability closer to everyday life. Making sustainability more of a concept that is not trendy, but relevant to contemporary people. Sustainability, in this case, becomes less about policy or expert debate and more about the choices through which people either care for their environment or allow it to decline.

Conclusion

In this study we examined how programme *Veranda* presents sustainability in its television episodes and social media content. While it is true that the programme does not treat sustainability as a separate environmental topic or explain it through direct advice, it helps viewers develop the idea of what sustainability actually is gradually through stories about historic places, design choices and people's relationships with their surroundings. Sustainability is found in homes, buildings and neighbourhoods, settings that viewers may first see as cultural or domestic rather than environmental.

The authors have discovered three broad tendencies that recur throughout the first season. All of these tendencies are related to sustainability. The heritage frame centres on continuity, preservation and the responsibility to care for what has been inherited. The aesthetic frame suggests that responsible choices can also be attractive, comfortable and compatible with a good life. The social frame, in turn, connects personal decisions with neighbourhoods, shared spaces and civic responsibility.

These frames rarely appear as standalone ideas. Instead, they overlap throughout the programme, and much of *Veranda*'s perspective comes from the way they work together. Sustainability is therefore

presented less as a set of rules to be followed and more as a broader cultural and moral orientation rooted in familiar places and ordinary decisions.

The case of *Veranda* also offers some insight into the role public-service media can play in sustainability communication. Environmental responsibility does not always have to be introduced through the language of crisis, regulation or expert intervention. It can also be approached through architecture, design, memory, neighbourhood life and questions about which objects, buildings and practices deserve to endure. This may be the programme's most important contribution to sustainability discourse. *Veranda* acknowledges that sustainability demands action, but it also presents it as a practical and cultural question: how do people want to live in, care for and share the world around them?

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The authors declare that they have no conflict of interests.

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