

# A CRITIQUE OF ESTABLISHMENT ENVIRONMENTALISM IN TURKEY

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**Özet:** Bu makalede, öncelikle, çevre sorunlarının 1970'li yıllardan itibaren dünyanın en önemli gündem maddelerinden birisi hâline geldiği, bu bağlamda ülkemizde de önemli gelişmelerin olduğu belirtilmiş; daha sonra, yerleşik çevrecilik olarak adlandırılan ve çevre literatüründe önemli bir yere sahip olan yaklaşım, ülkemizdeki çevreci literatürden de yararlanarak, nüfus artışı ve küresel ısınma ekseninde bir eleştiriye tâbi tutulmuştur. Eleştiri, çevre çalışmalarında varolan bir kısır döngü esas alınarak yapılmıştır. Sonuçta, iyimser bir bakış açısından hareketle, alışılmış çevrecilik anlayışının aksine, insanı merkeze alan ve piyasa ekonomisini de dışlamayan bir çevrecilik anlayışının geliştirilmesi gerektiği vurgulanmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Çevre sorunları, yerleşik çevrecilik, [çevre çalışmalarındaki] kısır döngü, nüfus sorunu, küresel ısınma.

**Abstract:** In this article, it has been mentioned that environmental problems become one of the most important subjects of the world in 1970s and that in this context highly considerable developments also occurred in Turkey. Then an approach, which is called establishment environmentalism and have an important place in the environmental literature, has been criticized by using either national or international literature with reference to excessive population growth and global warming. The critique has been done applying for a vicious circle in the environmental studies. In the end from the optimistic view, contrary to known environmental approach, it has been emphasized that a new environmental approach which is based on anthropocentrism and compatible with market economy.

**Keywords:** Environmental problems, establishment environmentalism, vicious circle [in the environmental studies], population problem, global warming.

## I. Introduction

The environment has been one of the most important political concerns in the world since 1970s. Within this period, some articles, books and reports about environmental disasters have been published, many environmentalist groups and organizations have been founded, a lot of political parties based on green politics have been established, and some regional and global conferences and submits have been held.<sup>i</sup>

Moreover, developed western countries have approached the environment as a public policy and established organizations for protecting and developing the environment at the state level. Solution efforts for the environment have been taken into consideration at the national level,<sup>ii</sup> because, at that time, reasons for environmental problems have been considered as a result of market failures (Anderson and Leal, 2001: 9-10; Smith, 2000: 41-42).

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But, this thought was a fallacy. In fact, even the quality of the environment in some countries has improved.<sup>iii</sup>

Since environmental problems have been accepted as market failures, communitarian ideas have had an opportunity in order to attack the market economy during that time. But this condition has been interrupted by two important developments in 1990s. The first development is the collapse of socialist regimes in eastern European countries. Contrary to common belief among environmentalists, there were very serious environmental problems in these countries (Machan, 1993: 88; Keles and Hamamci, 1997: 140; Anderson and Leal, 2001: 171-172). The second one is globalisation process. This process have made easier to observe the whole picture of these countries (Karaman, 2003: 147-150). After 1990s, state-level environmental policies have been criticized seriously (Bast, Hill and Rue, 1994: 201-224). Essentially, two different approaches (market-based and state-level) to the environmental problems had emerged in 1970s.<sup>iv</sup> But, market-based solutions were not regarded sufficiently. Because, prevailing attitude towards environmental problems during these years was opposite.

As to Turkey, the environment has become a part of public agenda in 1970's (Keles and Hamamci, 1992: 163). Most of the Turkish universities have established some institutes and research centres after 1980. In fact, the environment has been included in the curriculum of these institutes and universities for 20 years (Gormez, 1997: 122-123). In this context, it can be said that, more or less, the environment has been on the agenda of academic circles for almost 30 years.<sup>v</sup>

Moreover, at that time, some environmental associations and foundations have been founded. As a result of their initiatives and the other factors, an article for the environment has been given place in the 1982 Constitution and then the environmental law has been passed in 1983 (Uslu, O., 1996: v). While public policies are being made, warnings of environmentalist groups and organizations are being echoed, indeed.<sup>vi</sup>

Although the first wave of environmentalism in the western world was criticized and a new wave of, the market-based, environmentalism was taken into account in 1990s (Anderson and Leal, 2001: 159-169; Smith, 2000: 53-58), the same development has not begun yet, or is still at the beginning, in Turkey.

The aim of this article is a critique of Turkish establishment environmentalism. The scope of it is limited two environmental problems, excessive population growth and global warming. The selection of the problems is subjective. In other words, some other problems also could be chosen. However, we can say that the popularity of these problems in the environmental literature is the main motive of the selection of the subjects. The method of the study is positivististic. In the following part of this article we will argue that Turkish establishment environmentalism is far from market-based one. In order to verify this argument, at first we will indicate a vicious circle problem in the

literature in general. Then, the main arguments of establishment environmentalism about excessive population growth and global warming will be criticized by using environmental data collected from either national or international literature. In the end, it will be argued that a long way is waiting for us in order to hope for a different and more rational ways of dealing with the environment which would include market incentives because of the vicious circle.

## **II. The Vicious Circle In The Environmental Studies**

It is frequently indicated in the environmental literature that the population of the world has increased very rapidly, that the world resources have been exploited in a way never seen before, that the various species have become extinct, etc. For instance, the earth has undergone an unprecedented global warming after the industrial revolution (Kaplan, 1997: 44-47). There are a lot of scenarios about the future of the environment.<sup>vii</sup> In this context, it can be argued that neither communism nor capitalism is solution for environmental problems. What suggested is vague. For instance, it can be exalted the primitive life such as Indians life on the one hand (Uslu, İ., 1995: 15); it can be mentioned about solar energy based on information society on the other hand (Eryildiz, 1995: 42).<sup>viii</sup> It is paradoxical that most of the environmentalists attack the market economy and globalisation process but they also want to market the exotic Turkish villages to foreign tourists. They suggest organic agriculture and they also want to eliminate the poverty in the developing countries. Some of their arguments are not concerned with economic feasibility such as using of solar and tiding energy and are also exactly reflection of socialist rhetoric such as excessive emphasis on speed railway system instead of cars (Turan, 2002).

What is the problem here? In this article, it will be argued that the environment requires a new paradigm in Turkey. As Michaels and Ballings (2001: 211) put it, like the other nations, there is a vicious circle in the environmental studies in Turkey. To put it clearly, first, "scientific paradigms are determined by the existing body of refereed literature" as Kuhn indicated. Michaels and Ballings (2001: 211) sum up the situation as such: "Most scientists avoid rocking the dais, preferring the approval of their peers as they work to verify the existing paradigm." According to them, "this strategy brings federal funding [state funding in Turkey] and funding brings publications in the scientific literature, largely reviewed by fellow dais-steadiers". Development of the environmental literature in Turkey is the same as they described. For instance, the issue of what environmental problems are real problems in Turkey has not been questioned. Almost all of the development efforts have encountered opposition of environmentalists (Ozemre, 2002: 165-307). Scientific researches have accompanied with these oppositions to justify environmentalist arguments.<sup>ix</sup>

Secondly, "individuals who are rewarded by the amount of federal [state] funding they receive have an automatic incentive to behave in ways that enhance their chance of advancement" (Michaels and Ballings, 2001: 211). For instance, it can be said that as if there is a compromise between scientists about global warming in our country. Thus, the basic problem of studies is to focus on how do we reduce it (Kaplan, 1997: 185). Therefore, we should only focus on solutions. Moreover, environmental problems are being accepted as market failures. This is taken for granted.

The vicious circle works in the universities like that: (a) You need the approval of your peers and money for researches and publications as an academician; (b) you must prefer a commonly accepted problem such as market failures. (c) this preference can enhance your chance of advancement and also this strategy can bring new or additional funds.

To sum up, it will be maintained that, first of all, to abstain from the vicious circle problem mentioned above a sound environmental argument must include two important features; logical coherence and adequate evidence (Marsh and Stoker, 1995: 13). But, when the arguments of the environmentalists are analysed, none of them (namely logical coherence and adequate evidence) can be found. In the following part of this article, some deficiencies of their arguments will be mentioned with reference to excessive population growth and global warming. However, it cannot be said that this article is inclusive of the subject. But it is hoped that this article may make some modest contribution to that objective.

### III. A Critique of Establishment Environmentalism

Environmentalists argue that natural resources are being used up too much, that there is an excessive population growth in the world and this causes in scarcity of resources, that species will be extinguished within a few generations, that forests and fishes are unnecessarily being exploited, that the quality of air and water are permanently deteriorating (Lomborg, 2001: 63).<sup>x</sup> According to them, the most important (and single) reason for these developments is human action. And, in their view, this means that human beings are digging their graves by their own hands.

The leading books of disaster scenarios including this sort of arguments appeared first in *The Limits to Growth* (Roma Club, 1972) and *The Population Bomb* (Paul Ehrlich, 1968). But we cannot have enough evidence in order to prove fears and anxieties indicated in these works. From the 1970s to now, it has been proved that energy production and the other natural resources have increased, that food production also increased to the highest level unimaginable before. Moreover, it must be accepted that few species have been extinguished but it is not possible to definitely determine that 25-50 % of all species will be extinguished in fifty years. A more realistic estimation shows that 0,7 % of all species will be extinguished in that period.<sup>xi</sup> In addition, the deterioration in the quality of air and

water has been exaggerated in previous decades (Lomborg, 2001: 63-64).<sup>xii</sup> In fact, related figures are too high and, As Singer (2001: 1-2) indicated, they are being used to support zero growth.<sup>xiii</sup>

The oppositions of market economy do not know what they demand. They want to stop economic growth; they indicate that we should get prepared for a cruel authoritarian and totalitarian government. It is very possible to make contrary arguments about environmental problems. But, here, we can only mention two general environmental problems. As mentioned before, the basic reason for selection of these two problems are their popularities in the world agenda. In this sense, the selection is quite subjective and open to criticism.

#### *A. Excessive Population Growth*

Thomas Malthus argued that while the food was increasing arithmetically, the population was increasing geometrically. The same logic has been accepted by modern Malthusians since 1970s. Both Thomas Malthus and his followers have made a mistake in their estimates. Because, when people have a higher income or living standard, families are becoming smaller and therefore the population is decreasing.<sup>xiv</sup> According to the medium scenario of United Nations (2004: 7), "world population rises from 6,1 billion persons in 2000 to a maximum of 9,2 billion persons in 2075 and declines thereafter to reach 8,3 billion in 2175".

According to new Malthusians, it is necessary to reduce the increase of population down to a level that can live on current increase pace in food. After this general proposition, they differ partially. While some of them argue that the increase of population should completely be prevented, others, by the same token, argue that the population of the world should be reduced such a level that is ideal for the earth in order to sustain its existence. For instance, according to James Lovelock, if the needs of non-human beings are taken into account, it is necessary to keep the population of the world at the level of 500 million. The ideal amount of population for earth is 100 million in view of Arne Naess (Ferry, 2000: 116). In other words, people should reduce the population of the world at the level stated above in order to reach a human target. It is impossible to say that this will be easy and the population of the world will be reduced within a way that based on unanimity of six billion people in the world.<sup>xv</sup>

However, if there is a scarcity in a place, we can have two different solutions in order to overcome it. The first solution is inventing (rarely discovering) a new resource or searching was to increase present resources (Bast, Hill and Rue, 1994: 184-187). And the second one is to reduce the population. Human beings have been trying to put the former solution into practice for a long time. With a higher income level, the population of the world is diminishing as mentioned before. It can be said that decreasing in population is based on voluntary human action. However, it is indispensable to use a coercive action in the latter solution. For instance, samples obtained from the

present hunter-gatherer societies provide important evidence about how their ancestors could survive in various conditions of the world. According to these findings, both present and old hunter-gatherer societies have been controlling their population not to use more resources available than their ecological systems can sustain. This control is used by means of their common traditions. Some of them are as such: To kill one of the twins, psychically harmed persons, and some of the girls. (Studies conducted about Inuit society in 1930s have showed that they killed about 40% of the girls.) (Ponting, 2000: 21). Moreover, the other ways of reducing the population in these societies are weaning the babies rather early, leaving ill and old persons alone. Moreover, the other ways of reducing the population in these societies are weaning the babies rather early, leaving ill and old persons alone.

In history of human being, resources have never become adequate to meet the wants and needs (it is called scarcity problem). People have tried to overcome the scarcity problem by ways of increasing and differing resources or decreasing the population. Without doubt, we will encounter scarcity problem in some areas such as energy sector. The way of overcoming the scarcity problem mainly based on subjective evaluations as mentioned before cannot be to kill the people. Instead, we can search for more efficient use of new resources or inventing new ones (Bast, Hill and Rue, 1994: 192-199).<sup>xvi</sup>

In short, arguments about excessive population growth scenarios contain authoritarian and totalitarian ideas (Ferry, 2000: 134 vd.).<sup>xvii</sup> Positive economic and political outcomes of last years have been disregarded in these scenarios. In other words, it is necessary to learn to look at all aspects of the subject (Harrison, 1993: XVIII. Bölüm).

### *B. Global Warming: Is It Really a Problem?*

There are two different ideas or approaches about this subject. First, some people say that if we continue to use present energy resources, the world will be warmer in the near future. Consequently, we will see unwanted developments in climatologic conditions. For example, as a result of global warming, the iceberg in Antarctic will melt and coast of some countries will be covered by water of melting iceberg (Kislalioglu and Berkes, 1997: 67-68). In addition, according to these people, this process has begun and recently we have been experiencing its effects in our life. They argued that this phenomenon is an unprecedented event in history of human being.

The second approach is not well known in the literature. It says that present global warming is not new or non-routine. The earth had become warming and cooling before. This is a feature of the earth. In short, contrary to former approaches, we can say that there is a global warming today but this is not an unprecedented event in the history.

Supporters of the former approach argue that the global warming should be prevented; otherwise, the earth will not sustain its basic features that help us

for surviving. Thus, for instance, sub-urbanisation or urban expansion, deforestation, and pollution should be prevented.<sup>xviii</sup> Contrary to this argument, supporters of the latter approach say that there is nothing to worry about the future. For example, prevention of economic growth has not sufficiently been justified. Therefore, if we accept their propositions, we are misled (Heberling, 2001: 12).

Did the earth experience another global warming event in the history? The answer is "yes". We can sum up the situation following Heberling (2001: 12-13) as such: The earth become warming in one period and cooling in the other period. For example, the earth has undergone a global warming period in the seventh century. It has lasted until fourteenth century. Indirectly obtained evidence shows that the temperature of the earth was about 1,5 C higher at that period compared with the present. After that period, the earth has become, in turn, cooling (until 1850s), warming (until 1940s), cooling (until 1970s),<sup>xix</sup> and warming (until now).

To sum up, until now, the earth has become cooling and warming respectively. It can be argued that one of the causes of global warming is human activity. But we cannot say that the only reason for global warming is human activity. Global warming is a basic feature of the earth. In fact, Heberling argues that perhaps our present activities are resulting in slowing down of next period of global cooling (Heberling, 2001: 13). Here, it will be mentioned some deficiencies of the arguments related to global warming.

First, there is a vicious circle in global warming studies, as mentioned before. Secondly, computer modelling is used to project about the future of the environment. If we accept these projections, we will suppose that these computer modelling contain all variables, affecting the global warming. This task is difficult. The only litmus test of these models is whether evidence is proving them or not. Unfortunately, we have not enough evidence to support these models. In any case, it is not easy to speculate about the future of the climatologic events in advance.<sup>xx</sup> Moreover, we know that these computer modelling are not containing all variables.

Thirdly, satellite data are not used in global warming studies. According to satellite data, as Singer (2001: 1) said, "the climate is currently not warming". And also, sea level rise is given an evidence to support the global warming idea. In reality, the melting in the Antarctic as a result of the end of the Ice Age is still going on today. According to estimates, the percentage of sea level rise is eighteenth centimetres per century. As a result of the melting, the sea level rise will go on next centuries. This is an irreversible feature of the earth. There is nothing we can do to stop it, as Singer (2001: 1-2) said.

Fourthly, some scientists explain the causes of the global warming with human activity.<sup>xxi</sup> In other words, industrialization and its components are blamed. Because of this reasoning, it is deduced that the only guilty in that matter is western developed countries. However, evidence is not proving this

idea wholly. For instance, according to James Hanson, “what is really causing climate change is not carbon dioxide from burning of fossil fuels, coal, oil, and gas, but methane, another greenhouse gas” (Singer, 2001: 2). How do human activities produce methane? As Singer put it “the human production of methane comes not from people directly but cattle, from cattle raising and from rice culture. In other words, most of the methane comes from the developing world: India, China, Asia, Africa, and South America” (p. 2).

Fifthly, as Michaels and Balling (200: 209) indicated, global warming debates do not take into consideration human imagination. For example, “one hundred years ago no one knew an atom was ... or what an air plane was”.

#### IV. Conclusion

The aim of this article was to criticize Turkish establishment environmentalism and the scope of it was limited two environmental problems, excessive population growth and global warming, and the method of the study was positivistic.

In this context, at first, it was indicated that the environmental literature in Turkey as in the case of developed nations consists of communitarian ideas. It is argued that the reason for this tendency is an ongoing vicious circle in environmental studies in the world. According to this tendency, if you want to get more fund from state you should say that the environmental catastrophe is at the door. A new researcher also prefers the approval of their peers to get a degree. In this way a vicious circle sustains itself.

We argued that in order to abstain from the ongoing vicious circle in the environmental studies in the world a sound environmental argument must include two important features; logical coherence and adequate evidence (Marsh and Stoker, 1995: 13) and two environmental arguments, excessive population growth and global warming, were analysed in term of these criteria. As result of the analysis we can say that none of them (namely logical coherence and adequate evidence) can be found in two aforementioned environmental problems. For the world population is diminishing voluntarily though the environmentalists say the opposite. And also we indicated that in order to diminish the world population the most important factor is the economic growth.

Moreover, we found that the statements about global warming is reflecting the half of the reality. In other world, the environmentalists overestimates the global warming. In reality the world is warming but this phenomenon is not new. And also the analysis about global warming is speculative in part.

It is true that some things are not going well. To be a sound environmentalist, logical coherence of an argument and adequate evidence for it are necessary. If the environmentalists base on emotion, feelings, and intuitions



in order to justify their propositions, they should prepare for unintended consequences.<sup>xxii</sup> But, we must base our arguments on rational considerations.

In this article, we indicated some evidence about arguments of environmentalists in order to question conventional wisdom in Turkey. Actually, they have very little evidence. But, prejudice is not changing easily. The environmental literature in Turkey has been created during the last three decades. If we want to be success to overcome some prejudices, we must be patient and provide more evidence in order to persuade our opponents. In this context, it can be argued that in order to overcome the vicious circle problem the critical studies should be increased in the future.

The last but the most important point is that the beginning of the new paradigm means to prefer optimistic view for future to gloomy one. Thus, Turkish environmentalists must change their attitudes and try to understand “the simple fact that is that dynamic, growing economies, like ecosystems, are more resilient in coping with unanticipated environmental problems” (Anderson and Leal, 2001: 169). If they ignore that fact, incoherent deductions will be indispensable.

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**Notlar:**

<sup>i</sup> For a collection of some classical articles, see (Baden, 1998); for environmentalist groups and political parties, see Keles (1992: 154-171); for regional and international conferences, see Keles and Hamamci (1997: 153-168).

<sup>ii</sup> For a detail information about the centralization of American air pollution control, see Goklany (1999: 31-41).

<sup>iii</sup> Although some environmental problems such as air and water quality have indeed improved dramatically, other environmental problems such as waste management have not. But these improvements have been gained at the expense of a high cost. The cost of command-and-control, see *The Economist* (2001); Lee (2001b: 41-42).

<sup>iv</sup> For instance, in Britain, Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution was founded in 1970. This commission made a report about some environmental problems in England. Prevailing idea of this report was state intervention. Only two, Lord Zuckerman and Wilfred Beckerman, of the members of the Commission objected to the main report, and therefore, they wrote a minority report to that report. See Beckerman (1990: 11).

<sup>v</sup> For a detail information, see Keles and Hamamci (1997: 212-219, 221-242);

<sup>vi</sup> For a detail information about the environment and environmentalists in Turkey, see Keles and Hamamci (1997: 241-242); Keles (1992: 163-171); Gormez (1997: 124-127).

<sup>vii</sup> For such scenarios, see Karaman (2003: 15); Karaman (1997: 46-47); Kislalioglu and Berkes (1997: 67-68)

<sup>viii</sup> Actually, this is a fallacy. As Louis S. Warren said, "to claim that Indians lived without affecting nature is akin to saying that they lived without touching anything, that they were a people without history" (cited in Anderson, 1996: 1). And also, in order to understand the real aspect of primitive life stories, see Whelan (1999: 59-67).

<sup>ix</sup> Actually, most of the environmentalist groups are using the same literature, especially socialist one (Sahin, 2003). Unfortunately, state universities in Turkey are still dominant and the other universities are also subsidized by the state. This situation is also encouraging the vicious circle.

<sup>x</sup> For a contrary view with these subjects, see Sanera and Shaw (1999). Moreover, in order to refute gloomy picture for future, lots of evidence can be found in this book.

<sup>xi</sup> The basic problem about estimation is methodological one. See Lomborg (2001: 64).

<sup>xii</sup> For evidences supporting these ideas and evaluations related to these developments, see Lomborg (2001: 63-64).

<sup>xiii</sup> For a similar assessment, see Jones (2001: ix).

<sup>xiv</sup> The higher level income, the cleaner environment. See Sanera and Shaw (1999: 147). And also, in order to get informatin about the relationship between economic development and the environment, see Sahin (2000).

<sup>xv</sup> It is not difficult to predict that these proposals lead us to authoritarian and totalitarian government. For an evaluation in this context, see Under (1996: 276); Hamowy (1996).

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<sup>xvii</sup> In this context, for an alternative viewpoint based on property rights, see Bast, Hill and Rue (1994).

<sup>xviii</sup> For a critique of these authoritarian ideas, see Under (1996: 272-280).

<sup>xviii</sup> They tacitly argue that we should not do anything. For example, as Lee (2001a: 44) clearly indicated, "it would be nice to eliminate pollution, but reducing pollution always requires doing less of something else that is desirable, and long before we reduced pollution harm to zero, the marginal benefit would be less than the marginal cost". Because of scarcity, following Lee, we can say that an attempt to eliminate all harm caused by pollution is not sensible.

<sup>xix</sup> For instance, some scientists had argued that the earth is undergoing a new Ice Age (Heberling, 2001: 13). See also Soon et al. (2001: 3-4).

<sup>xx</sup> For a brief information about Edward Lorenz and his findings related to climatologic events, see Gleick (2000: 1-29).

<sup>xxi</sup> For a contrary view, see Soon et al. (2001: 3-4).

<sup>xxii</sup> For example, Goklany warns us about unintended consequences of our good intentions in precautionary principle context. See Goklany (2001).