

Research Article | Araştırma Makalesi

An Analysis of the The Age of Stupid Documentary in the Context of Environmental Communication Çevresel İletişim Bağlamında Aptallık Çağı Belgeselinin Analizi

Serdar NÜKTE (PhD Student)



İzmir Bakırçay University, Institute of Social Sciences
İzmir/Türkiye
serdar.nukte@gmail.com

Başvuru Tarihi | Date Received: 30.12.2024
Yayına Kabul Tarihi | Date Accepted: 19.03.2025
Yayınlanma Tarihi | Date Published: 30.04.2025

Nükte, S. (2025). An Analysis of the The Age of Stupid Documentary in the Context of Environmental Communication. *Erciyes İletişim Dergisi*, (4), 69-91 <https://doi.org/10.17680/erciyesiletisim.1609943>

Abstract

In the post-1980 period, when industrialization accelerated, the studies in the field of environmental communication gained importance in order to raise awareness with the increase in environmental degradation. Increasing this awareness, the widespread use of mass media with developing technology has been effective. The Age of Stupid is one of the important films in terms of the creation of environmental awareness. Within the scope of this article, the film was examined with qualitative content analysis. In the findings section, 6 real story and archive videos shown in the film are examined through three environmental discourse. These are ecosystem discourse, environmental justice discourse and ecosocialism. It is emphasized that nature, which is deteriorated by the human hand emphasized until the end of the film, reached a dangerous dimension in 2055 due to climate change and global warming. As a result, it has been shown that rich companies and states that have power in The Age of Stupid will be faced with a humanity and nature that will disappear if they continue to exploit nature and poor countries without taking any precautions.

Keywords: Environmental communication, Qualitative content analysis, Ecosystem discourse, Environmental justice discourse, Ecosocialism.

Öz

Endüstrileşmenin hız kazandığı 1980 sonrası dönemde, çevre iletişimi alanındaki çalışmalar, çevresel tahribatin artmasıyla farkındalık oluşturmak amacıyla önem kazanmıştır. Bu farkındalığın artmasında, gelişen teknoloji ile kitle iletişim araçları kullanımının yaygınlaşması etkili olmuştur. Aptallık Çağı belgeseli, çevresel farkındalığın oluşturulması açısından önemli filmler arasında yer almaktadır. Bu makale kapsamında film, nitel içerik analiziyle incelenmiştir. Bulgular bölümünde, filmde gösterilen 6 gerçek hikâye ve arşiv videoları, üç çevresel söylem üzerinden incelenmiştir. Bunlar, ekosistem söylemi, çevresel adalet söylemi ve ekososyalizmdir. Filmin sonuna kadar vurgulanan insan eliyle bozulan doğanın, iklim değişikliği ve küresel ısınma nedeniyle 2055 yılında hiçbir canlı bırakmayacak şekilde tehlikeli bir boyuta ulaştığı ön plana çıkarılmaktadır. Sonuç olarak, Aptallık Çağı filminde elinde gücü bulunduran zengin şirketlerin ve devletlerin, herhangi bir önlem almadan doğayı ve yoksul ülkeleri sömürüye devam etmeleri durumunda yok olacak bir insanlık ve doğayla karşı karşıya kalınacağı gösterilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çevresel iletişim, Nitel içerik analizi, Ekosistem söylemi, Çevresel adalet söylemi, Ekososyalizm.



Introduction

In contemporary times, phenomena such as rapid technological advancements and increased industrialization have contributed to the escalation of environmental issues. While topics related to the environment and nature did not hold significant societal importance until the 1970s, especially with the acceleration of industrialization and its detrimental effects on the environment, awareness began to grow. Particularly through media channels such as films, documentaries, books, magazines, and newspapers, individuals and societies have become more conscious of environmental issues. The documentary *The Age of Stupid*, directed by Franny Armstrong and released in 2009, examines six different real-life stories. The protagonist, an unnamed archivist and the last person on Earth, uses authentic video footage recorded between 1950 and 2008 to emphasize that everything has been in plain sight, yet has been consistently ignored. The documentary highlights significant issues such as the reckless and unsustainable use of petroleum and natural gas reserves, particularly in the transportation industry, without considering future generations, as well as addressing global concerns like climate change and global warming. In addition to the real-life narratives, the film also incorporates animated sequences that provide crucial scientific information.

The aim of this study is to analyze the 2009 documentary *The Age of Stupid* through an environmental discourse lens, in order to raise awareness of environmental problems and show what kind of world we might face by 2055 if no preventive measures are taken. The literature section of the study outlines key concepts related to the environment, environmental sociology, environmental communication, and environmental movements. The methodology section explains the qualitative content analysis employed in the study and provides information about the film. In the findings section, environmental discourse themes such as ecosystems, environmental justice, and ecosocialism are identified through a detailed analysis of the film. Both direct and indirect narratives support these environmental discourses. The final section offers a comprehensive evaluation of the findings.

1. Literature

The environment is defined as “everything outside of the individual or group that stimulates and influences their behavior” (Kızılcelik & Erjem, 1996). Humanity’s domination over nature has led to the loss of the natural integrity of the environment (Giddens, 2009). In this regard, as Giddens also points out, “environmental issues, often arising from human actions, can never be entirely natural” (Giddens & Sutton, 2020). Therefore, the tendency of modern humans to disregard nature is based on the assumption that natural resources are unlimited (Çankal & Alkın, 2024). However, environmental issues arising from the reciprocal relationship between the environment and society are becoming more prominent in areas such as oil usage, air pollution, genetically modified foods, and global warming (Giddens & Sutton, 2020). In order to ensure the sustainable transfer of natural resources to future generations, the consumption patterns adopted by individuals must be shaped by an ecological mindset that minimizes environmental harm. The ecological approach refers to a perspective that emphasizes sustainability in the production and reproduction processes within the natural flow of life (Tekeli & Ataöv, 2017). At this point, it is essential to examine the environmental problems caused by rapid population growth and excessive consumption in a comprehensive manner.

It is argued that the most significant threat to ecological sustainability is rapid population growth. The environmental damage caused by population is claimed to stem from consumption patterns. In this context, environmental degradation is driven by both rapid population growth and the subsequent increase in consumption. In today's world, products used can be sourced either from nearby regions or from distant areas, which results in the consumption of resources from regions where these products are not produced. This phenomenon exacerbates the vulnerability of these regions (Tekeli & Ataöv, 2017). The vulnerability that emerges has become a critical issue for societies. Moreover, it leads to the emergence of complex, interrelated problems, influenced by multiple factors.

On the other hand, climate, the greenhouse effect, and global warming are phenomena closely linked to concerns about environmental degradation (Le Roy Ladurie, 2021). Climate change is closely related to many problems, either as a cause or as a consequence (Kaçmaz Akkurt, 2021). Rapid urbanization and the human activities associated with it are causing climate change at both micro and macro levels in urban areas (Kaçmaz Akkurt & Şemsiyeci, 2024). Therefore, climate change is a significant factor that directly and indirectly affects essential human activities, such as agricultural and livestock production processes and settlement preferences in social life (Alkin, 2022). Biodiversity, on the other hand, is steadily declining. The reduction in species is leading to large-scale ecological disruptions that result in irreversible damage to ecosystems (Ritzer, 2020). Rising temperatures are also contributing to the increase in sea levels. This situation will cause millions of people to be displaced as refugees, lead to crop shortages, famine, and many other issues. Another ecological problem is the acidification of the oceans. Oceans play a crucial role as carbon sinks, mitigating the greenhouse effect. However, human-driven activities and the escalating environmental damage are causing oceans to become more acidic. As a consequence, in the future, the foundational layers of the food chain will be compromised (Wall, 2010). The close relationship between current issues and future consequences is a matter that requires attention. This is because each of these problems should be viewed as challenges that transcend the present time.

One of the pressing issues is water pollution. Water pollution has reached critical levels in many regions of the world. Throughout history, humans have continually used water for various purposes, such as irrigation, fishing, cooking, and drinking. However, this valuable and natural resource is increasingly being degraded due to human-induced activities (Giddens, 2013). In the past, water was regarded as a common resource shared by all societies. However, the depletion of water resources and the diminishing availability of clean water have transformed water into a valuable and increasingly scarce commodity (Ritzer, 2020).

On the other hand, "while the primary consumers of the world are the wealthy, the most severe consequences of environmental harm caused by growing consumption are felt by the poor" (Giddens, 2013). Emerging economic inequalities should be regarded as a significant factor in hindering growth (Florida, 2018). While dispossession is not confined to specific environmental regions, its most ruthless and cruel practices are often observed in underdeveloped, vulnerable, and low-quality areas (Harvey, 2019). Environmental issues, such as climate change, are having widespread impacts across the globe. However, for Southern countries, combating environmental challenges is considerably more difficult due to their heightened vulnerability (Rochyadi-Reetz & Teng'o, 2022). A key reality that needs to be highlighted here is the active role that ecological threats play not

only in environmental degradation but also in the creation of an increasingly unequal world.

Individuals living in impoverished countries are often deprived of essential life services, including healthcare, proper nutrition, education, and a healthy environment. The world's poorest regions are predominantly located in the Global South, where people are the most vulnerable, facing severe water-related challenges. While projected data suggests that more than half of the world's population will face water scarcity by 2030, current conditions have already reached dangerously critical levels. One of the key issues regarding water is the melting of glacial mountains, which serve as a major source of freshwater. As glacial melt continues to increase, the water crisis will deepen further. This situation is likely to lead to the displacement of populations affected by water scarcity. In the regions they migrate to, conflicts related to water resources are likely to emerge (Ritzer, 2020).

The sources of relatively easily accessible fossil fuels are being rapidly depleted. Extracting more of these resources means accessing reserves that are "deeper underground, dirtier, and increasingly costly to extract, or those that will impose greater environmental costs" (Diamond, 2006, as cited in Ritzer, 2020). As a result, developed countries, by securing the majority of these resources, will exacerbate the exploitation of underdeveloped and developing nations. The economic-driven planning by developed countries, which affects developing societies, has become a critical issue for less developed nations, as significant as the environmental problems they face. Finally, potentially hazardous waste is produced across almost every part of the world. Among these wastes, e-waste, which has been discarded from use, is particularly prominent. The primary contributors to e-waste are northern countries. Products that are no longer wanted are disposed of as trash and shipped to underdeveloped and developing countries. These nations, often grappling with poverty, accept the waste as a means of generating income. However, e-waste contains many hazardous substances that pose risks to both human health and the environment. For instance, a mobile phone contains approximately 200 chemicals. The extent to which these chemicals are released during the process of dismantling such phones is not fully understood. As a result, the waste leads to the contamination of the local population, soil, plants, and animals (Ritzer, 2020). All of these issues are, in general, human-induced. Therefore, the field of environmental sociology is gaining increasing importance as an interdisciplinary domain in the scientific community.

The concept of sustainable development, first defined in the United Nations 1987 report *Our Common Future*, does not advocate for the limitation of economic growth but rather promotes the conservation of renewable resources and biodiversity, fostering an awareness that encompasses all aspects of environmental protection. In this context, sustainable development means that growth should be pursued in a manner that minimizes the consumption of physical resources and keeps pollution levels to a minimum (Giddens, 2013). The *Our Common Future* report represents a significant step within the field of environmental sociology.

For nearly four decades, environmental sociology, which has been striving to establish a significant place in both the world and Turkey within the discipline of sociology, developing its own concepts and theories, and applying them in studies on the society-environment interaction, is an important issue (Eryılmaz, 2017b). Therefore, environmental sociology has become a much more diverse field today. The fundamental principle of environmental

sociology is that environmental issues should be addressed not only from a technical perspective but also from a social perspective. As a result, economic, ecological, and social issues emerge as central themes (Overdevest, 2024). In pre-capitalist times, individuals lived in close proximity to nature. However, with the advent of capitalism, this system created a sharp division between human life and the natural world (Giddens, 2012). Understanding the true significance of this division requires a thorough analysis of the emerging relationship between human existence and the natural environment.

In general, strong relationships must be established between countries and, more specifically, between individuals to foster cooperation in the use of resources. Both natural processes and human interventions contribute to the degradation of environmental systems. This, in turn, leads to global inequalities in the use of natural resources. As a result, some regions experience environmental problems more profoundly than others. Notable examples of this include the damage caused by the Chernobyl disaster, pollution from countries bordering the Danube River, and the environmental degradation caused by Shell Oil in the Gulf of Mexico (Kılıç & Tok, 2014). At this juncture, the escalating environmental degradation and advancing technological developments have made it essential to integrate environmental and communication fields in addressing these challenges.

Art, with its qualities of understanding social life, observing the changes that occur, and providing a perspective on social life with its unique background, has become an important object of sociological research. Through art, it is possible to observe expectations for a new social design. Cinema like music, architecture, sculpture, and painting, is an important form of art that reflects the traces of society (Alkın, 2021). Indeed, issues such as deforestation, the loss of biodiversity, extreme weather events, environmental justice, and racism are among the fundamental challenges faced by humanity. People learn about these issues through various channels such as personal experiences, meetings, media, and film. These interactions form the foundation of the discipline of environmental communication (Takahashi et al., 2022a). At this point, environmental communication is based on a deeper understanding of the relationship between humans and nature (Roush et al., 2010). In addressing environmental problems, it is crucial to consider not only humans but all living beings, which highlights the significant role of communication (Opperman, 2019). Environmental communication has existed as long as humans have interacted with nature. However, as a formal discipline, environmental communication has a relatively short history (Roush et al., 2010). Therefore, while environmental communication is an important tool for understanding the true content of problems related to environmental issues, it is difficult to claim that it has a long-established history as a discipline. Nonetheless, environmental communication should be regarded as a crucial medium that continually manifests itself in both the individual and societal aspects of human life.

According to Pezzulo and Cox, every individual is engaged in environmental communication in their daily life. Wearing a t-shirt with an environmental message, using a recyclable water bottle, discussing the harms of hamburgers, participating in movements that critique the damage caused by fossil fuels, or biking home are just a few examples of how an environmentally conscious approach is reflected in our everyday activities. At this point, whether verbal or non-verbal, we are in constant communication to express our views on the environment. As defined by Kenneth Burke (1966), environmental communication is an interdisciplinary field that emerges as various forms

of symbolic action, such as language, visual elements, music, and scientific reports. Burke discussed even the persuasive power of language that does not carry emotion. In this context, communication focuses on both what is expressed and how it is conveyed to others (Pezzullo & Cox, 2010).

Environmental messages derived from research on issues like climate change may not always hold universal validity across all contexts and times. These messages can vary depending on factors such as the intensity of interdisciplinary approaches and the diversity of the fields on which the research is based (Takahashi et al., 2022a). In this regard, can words and symbols extinguish a forest fire? Can they mobilize endangered communities? Can they reverse large-scale environmental impacts like climate change or prevent the spread of an epidemic? Can they have an impact on the non-human world? (Schmitt et al., 2022). For example, interventions and public communication campaigns aimed at reducing plastic use, particularly single-use plastic bags, through strategies such as reuse, recycling, bans, or charges, have increased in recent years following a period of stagnation in the late 1990s. However, these campaigns are highly diverse in nature, and few have been thoroughly evaluated (Rice & Moxley, 2022).

Environmental issues such as climate change and pollution trigger discourses that spark debates in the public and political spheres. While some environmental problems can be experienced personally, a large portion of the population primarily acquires environmental information through various media channels. In this context, media not only serves an informational function but also raises public awareness about environmental issues, making people more sensitive to these problems (Klinger & Metag, 2022). In this regard, environmental movements have become integral to communication, as they require ongoing dialogue among individuals and communities to collectively form consciousness and collaborate on solutions to environmental challenges.

In contemporary terms, the environment refers to the general category of natural entities, including plants, animals, and ecosystems. Since the 1960s, the concept of the environment has been utilized by environmental movements. Moreover, these movements have evolved into a moral force advocating for the prevention of harm inflicted by humanity on the environment (Giddens & Sutton, 2020). The late 1960s and early 1970s marked a period of increased social change. During this time, millions of people organized protests for peace and social harmony. Although these environmental movements did not receive as much attention as anti-war messages, they led to improvements in environmental governance and legal frameworks related to industrial activities. The 1992 Rio Summit raised awareness of global environmental degradation, social justice, and population issues, contributing to an increase in global environmental consciousness (Roush et al., 2010). From the late 1960s onward, the environmental movement grew worldwide, becoming a significant part of the public, political, and media agenda. The increased public interest in issues such as climate change also reflected in academic research in the field (Takahashi et al., 2022b). In short, concerns about the unsustainable growth of this new industrial order, exceeding its natural resources, began around the 19th century. However, the genuine acknowledgment of these issues dates back only 30-40 years (Giddens, 2009). Therefore, while the roots of these problems lie in a more distant past, their true significance and content are grounded in more recent history.

The destruction of habitats in one region, the privatization of services in another, the sale of land abroad, and biopiracy are all situations that create their own internal

dynamics. The unequal development inherent in capitalist expansion has historically led to the revolution of environmental peoples (not specific classes). This revolution, being opposed to capitalist development, is inherently anti-capitalist. The struggle of the Ogoni people against Shell Oil's damage to their lands, long-standing resistances against World Bank-supported dam projects in India and Latin America, peasant movements against biopiracy, fights against genetically modified foods, wars to protect local production systems, defense of indigenous peoples' access to forest areas, political struggles against privatization, advocacy for workers' and women's rights in developing countries, campaigns for the conservation of biodiversity, and resistance to habitat destruction are part of a wave of protest movements that spread rapidly across the globe in the 1980s and beyond (Harvey, 2019).

Despite the anti-capitalist activities of environmental movements, consumption, one of the key drivers of capitalism, continues to increase globally. Examples such as "2 million plastic bags being discarded every 5 minutes, 20 million tons of car tires being produced annually, 106,000 beverage cans being consumed every 30 seconds, and 2.5 million electronic devices being discarded while still functional" illustrate the massive scale of consumption. This situation is transforming the world into a landfill. Moreover, the environmental damage is not only caused by the disposal of these products but also by the depletion of resources used in their production (Tekeli & Ataöv, 2017). Despite recent technological advancements, environmental problems continue to escalate. While there have been positive developments in areas such as material progress, improvements in health, and the shift toward democracy, issues like climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental degradation are intensifying (Boström & Lidskog, 2024). The increasing economic development in the world may signal progress in some respects, but it inherently presents a strong paradox. Economic advancement, driven by technological progress, often proves to be far from a solution to many environmental issues. Furthermore, it has become a fundamental problem regarded as the primary cause of the existing crises. This emerging situation should be seen as the most striking consequence of the paradox in question.

As a result, the damage humans have inflicted on nature has reached significant levels. The destruction of forests, contamination of water sources, and the decline in biodiversity are just a few examples of the harm humans have caused to the environment. Climate change, toxic waste, and acid rain increasingly threaten the world each day. In this context, scientists emphasize the need to abandon the human-centered perspective that has persisted for centuries and adopt an environment-centered worldview (Özdağ, 2017). Furthermore, the unequal distribution of wealth has created populations in many parts of the world that lack access to food and clean water. The decline in biodiversity, along with the constant desire for economic and industrial growth, has led to an increase in social, economic, and environmental injustices (Şen, 2018). At this point, raising awareness and ensuring a clean world for future generations highlights the importance of environmental communication. When it comes to environmental communication, one of the most striking tools is cinema. Cinema serves as a powerful technological medium to raise environmental awareness both visually and verbally. Many documentary films have been made on this subject. Documentaries such as *Arica* (2020), *Chasing Coral* (2017), *Wasted! The Story of Food Waste* (2017), *Tomorrow (Demain)* (2015), *Waste Land* (2010), and *The Cove* (2009) are significant global works aimed at increasing awareness on topics like the environment, sustainability, and climate change. In addition, important works

have also been produced in Turkey in the field of documentary films. *Buğday* (2017) directed by Semih Kaplanoğlu, *Bir Zamanlar Gelecek: 2121* (2022) by Serpil Altın, and *Büyük Menderes* (2018) and *Eber* (2019) by Yavuz Özer are notable award-winning documentaries and films with an environmental theme in cinema. Therefore, it is noteworthy that significant contributions from Turkey exist on such a topic, which is of great concern to all of humanity.

2. Methodology

Content analysis, a method of collecting and analyzing text content, dates back to over 100 years. It is widely used in many fields such as history, literature, psychology, and education. Content analysis refers to elements such as words, symbols, images, and themes in a message. It can cover various forms of communication such as films, books, newspapers, artworks, or photographs. As a non-reactive method, content analysis allows for the identification of concepts or messages in a text or transmitted to the reader without the researcher's influence during the analysis process. The researcher aims to uncover messages in any communication source (such as books, videos, or films) through content analysis. Researchers can utilize both quantitative and qualitative methods in content analysis. In qualitative content analysis, researchers examine texts containing statistical data and view these texts as cultural elements that convey social meanings (Neuman, 2014). This study uses qualitative content analysis. In this context, the analysis of *The Age of Stupid* documentary film is conducted through its environmental discourses.

This study provides an in-depth analysis using qualitative content analysis methodology. The film has been examined in detail. After a comprehensive review of the film, the prominent discourses highlighted throughout the film have been identified. These include the discourse of ecosystems, environmental justice, and ecosocialism. Subsequently, the film was manually transcribed into text. The dialogues from six different stories, the anonymous archivist, and the external voice were transcribed and divided into eight different sections. The three identified themes were analyzed through the transcribed dialogues. The categorization of these themes as ecosystem discourse, environmental justice discourse, and ecosocialism discourse was based on the most emphasized topics throughout the film.

The Age of Stupid, examined in this article, is a 2009 British documentary film directed by Franny Armstrong that blends drama, documentary, and animation. The film stars Pete Postlethwaite, Jehangir Wadia, and Layefa Malin, with a budget of €450,000. Additionally, the film's first screening was held in a cinema tent powered by solar energy, without the use of grid electricity. Furthermore, the film has won first-place awards at six different festivals. The IMDB rating is 7.0¹.

3. Findings

The film is set in a global archive established 800 km off the coast of Norway in 2055, in the middle of the sea. Due to climate change and global warming, all cities will have been destroyed and life forms will have vanished by 2055. In the film, an unnamed archivist (Pete Postlethwaite), who remains the last person on Earth, is assigned the task of safeguarding the archive, which contains the world's art, books, and scientific documents. The archivist, who mainly presents archived videos from the years 1950 to 2008, says, "we could have saved ourselves, but we didn't. It's amazing" (4:18), emphasizing that if action had been taken, there would still have been a chance to make a difference.

The film intertwines six real-life stories, connected in a narrative. These include the story of an 82-year-old mountain guide witnessing the melting of glaciers in the Alps, an investment expert in India striving to establish a low-cost airline, a wind turbine developer in the UK fighting to reduce carbon emissions, a Shell employee who saved hundreds of lives during Hurricane Katrina, a young woman in Nigeria trying to become a doctor while facing poverty in the country's richest oil region, and finally, the story of two refugee children separated from their families and exiled due to the war in Iraq caused by oil.

This entirely real-life based film highlights what the world could look like in the next 20-30 years if no preventive action is taken. It also discusses how, through global animation sequences, these catastrophes can be addressed with an equalitarian political approach worldwide.

3.1. Ecosystem Discourse

Ecosystems are systems composed of living organisms and non-living materials. These two components interact to form ecosystems (Tekeli & Ataöv, 2017). The definition of the ecosystem is, "a system in which the distribution of matter and energy, all events and experiences, are shaped by principles of solidarity, dependency, and limitation between living beings, non-living elements, and their environment" (Keleş, 2021). Within this system, humans are positioned in a way that continually increases their desires. As a result, technology is developed to alter the position of resources. This leads to the degradation and pollution of both the local and distant environments (Tekeli & Ataöv, 2017). The ecosystem discourse focuses on how we perceive nature and the environment, attempting to explain this through the concepts of ecology and ecosystems. Additionally, this discourse, which suggests that humans disrupt the natural balance, has transformed from a scientific model to understand plant and animal communities into a type of organizational weapon used to systematize, expand, and morally invigorate the environment (Hannigan, 2006).

At the beginning of the film, the depiction of London submerged under water, the fire of Sydney and the Amazon rainforest, Las Vegas turning into desert, nuclear war destroying India, and the complete melting of snow on the Alps (1:53) are presented as evidence of the exploitation of nature by humans, aligning with the ecosystem discourse. The visible evidence of climate variations by 2010 is conveyed through the following statements by news from the archive:

"101 degrees Fahrenheit, it's the hottest day ever recorded" (6:36).
 "People are in extreme fear due to the incredible autumn rainfall in India that killed 700" (6:40).

"Last year, Melbourne officially had its driest year on record" (6:47).
 "The desert is advancing at a nominal rate of 5 km per year" (6:51).
 "18 countries are underwater and one and a half million people are affected" (7:02)".

At the beginning of the film, the visible effects of climate change, such as rising temperatures, droughts, melting glaciers, increased greenhouse gas emissions, floods, and extreme rainfall, are highlighted. From an ecosystem discourse perspective, these serve as evidence of the damage humanity has inflicted on nature and the environment. Events like glacier melt, rising sea levels, and expanding deserts demonstrate the deterioration of the ecosystem. These are not only signs of disrupted natural balance but also signify social and economic threats. Environmental issues such as desertification and

the destruction of natural resources are also endangering human habitats. Despite being addressed by many news channels, these issues have been ignored by governments and politicians.

On the other hand, Mark Lynas, author of books such as *Six Degrees: Our Future on a Hotter Planet* and *Our Final Warning: Six Degrees of Climate Emergency*, highlights that the greatest challenge related to climate change is the impact of the emissions caused. According to Lynas, as a result of our evolution, we are a species prone to reacting quickly to situations such as attacking armies or wild animals. However, we are not prepared to respond to gradual changes, such as those caused by climate change. Therefore, we must begin preparing now for these dangers that will occur in the future. If we wait for the temperature to rise to the point of no return for our planet, it will be too late to stop it. If the temperature increase mentioned occurs, the system that balances all conditions for life will be disrupted. This will lead to massive carbon release from the soil and trees. As a result, for example, methane gas will be released from the frozen land in Siberia. This means that more greenhouse gases will be emitted than currently present in the atmosphere. For this reason, Lynas emphasizes the importance of being cautious. The European Union, multinational corporations, Greenpeace, and political parties are in agreement about stabilizing the temperature at pre-industrial levels. If the level of emissions released up until now is reduced, balanced, and 80% of the excess is withdrawn, the effects will begin to decrease by 2050. However, the transition to a less productive economy for all civilizations will be humanity's most difficult and greatest task so far (46:35). Therefore, in accordance with the ecosystem discourse and also example of climate change, the importance of scientific studies aimed at demonstrating and preventing the destruction of the environment resulting from human struggle is emphasized (Eryılmaz, 2017a).

In another scene, Fernand Pareau, a mountain guide on Mont Blanc, the highest mountain in Europe, states that there has been approximately a 150-meter melt since 1945. The guide, who shows an English family around the ski resort, points to the stairs in the area where skiing should take place, mentioning that stairs have been added almost every year due to the melting, with the following words:

“Tourist: When you was young the temperature why? How?.

Guide: We used to have gorgeous summers but never as hot as now. Before, we used to graze cows here. They walked around the edge of the glacier and went up there to eat the grass... Now that's finished. Before, there were no ladders. We just stepped straight onto the glacier. So you can see that it's melted by about 150 meters since 1945. Geologists could give the exact numbers but that's what it looks like to me... This year they had to add another ladder. So the glacier has melted between 7 and 10 metres this year. And it will melt even more with this hot weather” (9:26).

The conversation between the mountain guide and the tourist can be explained through the ecological changes caused by global warming. As mentioned by the mountain guide, this ecological change can also be viewed within the framework of the ecosystem discourse, where scientific findings are ignored, and governments fail to create policies due to economic concerns. The following words of the mountain guide highlight that the ecosystem has reached its at final stage:

“Now, with global warming, things are different. I feel that now we only have two seasons. Winter turns directly into summer without us noticing. What should we do? I don't know. I don't know. The glaciers are melting more every day” (11:04).

The mountain guide's observation of the melting glaciers in the Alps and the statement "now, with global warming, things are different" is, in fact, a phenomenon that needs to be viewed from a larger perspective. The melting of glaciers in the Alps is not only disrupting the mountain ecosystem but is also causing the degradation of the region's flora and fauna. This, once again, points to the disruption of natural systems within the ecosystem discourse, signaling that no collective action is being taken to address these issues.

In the documentary, after speaking with the mountain guide, the couple takes action when they return to England. After realizing the damage they have caused to the environment, people begin to make changes in their lives. The British couple's reflections on air travel and their carbon footprint exemplify another aspect of the ecosystem discourse (49:22). This discourse reflects an effort to understand the negative impact of human activities on the natural environment. The fact that a single flight consumes their entire annual carbon budget demonstrates the fragility of the natural world. Within the framework of the ecosystem discourse, this highlights the damage that humans have caused to the ecosystem and the responsibility they must take. At this point, activities like running the car on chicken fat and producing their own food have become the couple's focus. However, in later scenes, their struggle for wind turbine farms and the report they submitted to a committee ends in failure. This further demonstrates how individual and social roles in the ecosystem discourse are intertwined and obstructed.

Moreover, scenes such as a group of climbers covering a glacier with special paper to reduce summer melting (15:43), a man recycling old fireman pants to balance out the carbon emissions from his flights (15:52), and the mountain guide's protest with environmentalists to reduce heavy truck traffic through a local tunnel by biking through it at certain hours of the day (1:06:11) are also consistent with the ecosystem discourse. According to this framework, environmentalists are attempting to "return nature to itself" in response to the harm humans have caused to the environment (Eryılmaz, 2017a).

Additionally, the statement, "every part of modern life is now literally made of oil from" (18:08), highlights the negative lifestyle humans maintain towards the natural world. The excessive use of oil and fossil fuels disrupts the balance of the ecosystem. Within the context of the ecosystem discourse, this is a warning: The depletion of resources threatens humanity's future! These words demonstrate how, beyond the beneficial uses of petroleum, its excessive consumption has caused significant harm to the ecosystem (18:01). As seen, in line with the ecosystem discourse, petroleum should be used in various areas that benefit humans. However, it is being recklessly consumed without consideration for future generations, particularly in the transportation sector, which increases environmental harm.

On the other hand, a female doctor in Nigeria highlights the damage done to nature by the oil company, Shell. It shows that the water they drink is highly polluted and filled with frogs. "With the help of a microscope, you can see the disease we have inside" (19:29) reflects the damage Shell has caused not only to the local people but also to nature. In the following minutes of the documentary, the young doctor, who shows the damage Shell has done to the air, water, and nature, is also seen selling gasoline made from Shell's oil, in an attempt to make money (1:02:58). Here again, as indicated by the ecosystem discourse, while there is a complaint about the destruction of nature, it is also revealed that the local people are part of this system, driven by their needs (Eryılmaz, 2017a).

3.2. Environmental Justice Discourse

The environmental justice discourse emerged from the struggle against waste dumping in the state of North Carolina, USA, in 1982. Over time, the concept expanded both in terms of content and geographic reach, far beyond the United States (Martinez-Alier et al., 2014). The environmental justice discourse now represents the convergence of seven previously independent movements. The first is the civil rights movement, which focuses on racial issues. The second is the movement defending rights for the rights of undocumented workers and migrants, particularly in terms of occupational health and safety. The third is the indigenous land movement, which defends the rights of groups such as Native Americans and African Americans. The fourth is the environmental health movement, which focuses on the anti-toxins movement. The fifth is the movement centered on issues like the lack of green spaces, waste sites, and poor air quality. The sixth is a human rights movement, which focuses on peace and solidarity. The seventh is an expanded immigrant movement that includes fundamental citizenship rights, such as the right to clean air and water. Moreover, the environmental justice discourse also calls for greater economic equality, international environmental regulations, smart growth, and more focus on solving environmental problems, making it a broad environmental policy framework (Faber, 2008). The discourse aims to address all issues related to inequality in race, gender, and class, while focusing on the fair distribution of environmental impacts and sharing of costs within societies (Taylor, 1997).

One of the most striking stories within the environmental justice discourse in the film is the exploitation of Nigeria, a country rich in oil and natural gas reserves, by Shell Oil. Although Nigeria possesses oil and natural gas reserves, it has been impoverished by the influence of core countries. In the following scenes, we see a young female doctor who has received medical training in a region that lacks a hospital, school, clean water, and electricity. She wants to establish a health center to treat those affected by the damage caused by oil. At this point, the young woman explains that Shell promised to build a health center in the region, and after waiting for three years, the administration canceled the project. As seen, in Nigeria, an exploited peripheral country where all natural resources have been drained, Shell's management, which has grown wealthy from the country's reserves, does not support the establishment of a medical center to address the health issues they have caused in the region. Additionally, the young doctor is trying to raise money to establish the facility by fishing in a lake. However, due to the contamination of the lake with oil, large fish have disappeared, and only small fish remain. These small fish are washed with detergent after being caught to prevent people from being poisoned by the oil in the lake (19:56). Thus, developed countries, in their pursuit of oil reserves, cause water pollution in Nigeria, leading to the extinction of fish species.

The film also shows an incomplete construction of a building in the Niger Delta, where the construction of hundreds of community aid projects has been halted. Shell claims that the reason for this is the risk of kidnapping in the area. However, 13% of the oil revenues should be allocated to community development projects. Despite this, the people have received almost none of their share (20:18). In the Niger Delta, Shell and other oil companies represent one of the greatest manifestations of environmental injustice. These oil companies have caused widespread impoverishment by placing all social, economic, and environmental costs on the people (Martinez-Alier et al., 2014).

The Niger Delta, despite being home to a large oil reserve, remains impoverished. Instead of improving the income of the people, oil revenues have led to a worsening situation

due to corrupt policies. The local population cannot benefit from the natural resources in their own region. Within the framework of environmental justice discourse, this situation demonstrates that oil companies and the government not only disregard the rights of the people but also deprive them of their natural resources, continuing environmental degradation for their own benefit. Shell's annual pollution of the air and environment in order to dispose of gas flares is clearly evident from the following statements:

"The local people's health problems are compounded by gas flares burning night and day throughout the Niger Delta. Asthma, bronchitis, skin diseases, and cancer have all been linked. That gas is found alongside oil but as it's dangerous to transport so it can't easily be sold to overseas markets. It could be used for cooking and heating within Nigeria. But building the infrastructure is expensive so the oil companies just burn it off. The flares emits about 70 million tons of carbon dioxide every year, more than the annual emissions from 10 million British homes" (22:41).

As mentioned above, in the region, natural gas is released during oil production, and because the cost of storage is high, billions of cubic meters of natural gas are wasted every year. Moreover, Shell's reckless policies in extracting reserves lead to the inefficient consumption of natural resources in Nigeria, while also triggering air pollution and causing serious health problems within the population. The people living in the Niger Delta are struggling with respiratory diseases, skin diseases, and other health issues caused by the oil companies. This situation, in line with the environmental justice discourse, highlights that the treatment costs for the local population are not covered. In these regions, where health systems are insufficient, the importance of the environmental justice discourse is emphasized.

"In 2005, 13 billion pounds, 1.5 million pounds per hour, and 400 pounds per second. A large portion of this massive glacier comes from Nigeria. This is extracted from a place where most people earn less than 1 dollar a day" (19:06).

As Shell earns massive profits globally, the majority of the local population struggles to survive on less than a dollar per day. The failure to share the oil revenues with the people has contributed to the further impoverishment of society. The negligence of both the oil companies and the government in addressing this issue demonstrates a violation of environmental justice. Shell's refusal to take responsibility towards the local people highlights how the problem in environmental justice is not only ecological but also deeply social.

In another scene, the female doctor visits a neighboring town. In this town, the government was responsible for a massacre. The town had become embroiled in a major conflict over land ownership for an area Shell intended to drill for oil. Military forces were sent to the area to find terrorists. The woman visits the town to hear the story from the locals. A woman from the town recounts how the water had become highly polluted, and during that time, she was pregnant, but her baby died after birth. The International Amnesty Organization investigated the situation, and it was concluded that the government was responsible for the deaths and the events. Shell Nigeria, in an attempt to avoid the consequences, destroyed the reports (24:57). One of the largest sources of income, the oil revenues, are distributed unequally. However, the groups that experience the least environmental and social impacts are often the ones who own these companies. The following words from the woman illustrate this situation:

"You know it takes a lot of money to become a medical student. I need to pay for my accommodation and other things. And I want to put on nice clothes. That means I will start

the fishing from this year till maybe four years time... The fishing is not good. Because of the oil spills there killing most of the fish. We don't even have big fish again, just small ones... Sometimes the oil will be all over the whole fish. So you have to wash the fish, maybe with Omo. They talk in the news that we have produces one thousand or one million barrels of oil today. But instead of we being rich we are getting more poorer" (21:08).

The Niger Delta is considered one of the most polluted places in the world. For many years, it has become a hub of exploitation by oil companies that harm both the environment and the people. Nigeria is a region where "at least one oil spill can happen at any given moment". Although the people living there have survived war, they continue to battle against pollution on a daily basis (Bassey, 2022).

In the film, another striking story involves two Iraqi children who, as a result of the war caused by oil, are forced to flee the country's borders. These children, who lost their father in the war -a war that impoverished Iraq and stripped it of its ability to use its own resources- now make a living by selling lightly used shoes discarded by developed countries, which are said to be too old to wear (38:22). These scenes align with the environmental justice discourse, illustrating how developed nations exploit the resources of developing countries, despite having no rightful claim to them. The words of the Iraqi refugee child highlight this issue within the context of environmental justice:

"Our dad had a donkey. We used to ride on it. I got scared... when it ran fast. But when the Americans came in the middle of the night, we had to run away. Because we thought they'd kill us. When we came back next morning we found our donkey dead. Our dad was the best one in all of Iraq. But then the Americans came and killed him. We found him dead in the morning. I wish he hadn't died. I still can't believe they killed him. They completely destroyed our country and they completely destroyed our lives" (32:34).

The two Iraqi children, who became refugees due to the war in Iraq, can be seen as a significant example of the environmental justice discourse. This is because oil resources are being exploited to serve the interests of powerful nations, while the local population and natural areas bear the brunt of the damage. Furthermore, the war and oil extraction lead to the degradation of the land, the depletion of water resources, and the disruption of natural balance. The killing of the donkey and the forced displacement of these people after the arrival of the Americans is a clear manifestation of environmental violence. In this context, the war and refugee situation in Iraq serve as a stark example of environmental justice discourse.

In another scene, the words of an Indian investment expert who wishes to establish a low-cost airline stand out:

"We offered them tickets for 600 rupees, and then reduced it to one rupee. How many people can buy a one-rupee ticket? We estimate that every Indian can. Even a rickshaw driver, even servants. You know, in a country with a billion people, in 2005, it was ridiculous that only the elite could fly" (6:03).

The investor highlights that the poor population in India has been deprived of air travel. By offering low-cost flights with short durations, the goal is to make this mode of transport accessible to the entire country. This could be seen as a reflection of the justice discourse. However, when considered in terms of environmental justice, the increase in air travel would lead to greater environmental harm. As a result, the impoverished segments of society would once again bear the brunt of this environmental destruction.

Additionally, the struggle of a British couple seeking to establish wind farms also brings environmental justice to the forefront. “It normally always comes down to with wind farms is aesthetics. You know everything else is basically put together to try and back up the ultimate thing and the ultimate thing is. They don’t spoil want it to their view” (54:11). This reflects the practical challenges of environmental justice. Individual efforts alone cannot always ensure justice. As seen in this example, environmental justice requires not only the equal distribution of resources but also collective action within communities. “Each human being on the planet would have equal rights to the Earth’s resources. Equity is the only option” (1:10:33) reflects the fundamental principle of environmental justice. However, as highlighted in the film, resources are distributed unfairly.

3.3. Eco-Socialism

Eco-socialism emerged from the fusion of the fundamental principles of socialism with ecological thought. While socialism critiques capitalism for being based on the exploitation of labor, it also argues that capitalism is responsible for the destruction of nature (Değirmenci, 2022). The environmental issues threatening our climate and planet are the consequences of economic growth. As economic developments increase, so does the demand for fossil fuels such as oil and coal. In contrast, eco-socialism, which emerged from the critique of capitalism, presents itself as “ecologically viable and socially just” movement aimed at preventing environmental destruction. Eco-socialism asserts that socialism without an ecological perspective is worthless (Wall, 2010). It broadly defines environmental problems, including vehicle pollution, unemployment, urban decay, the lack of social services, and poverty (Pepper, 1993). Fundamentally, eco-socialism seeks to preserve the essence of socialism while extending it. In other words, it supports the elimination of the capitalist state approach, that supports the class system, and the establishment of a more fair and moral system for environmental protection (Kovel, 2022).

In the film, the statement, “capitalism’s only goal is ever expanding growth but ever expanding growth on just the one not expanding planet. This is impossible” (41:09) significant in the context of eco-socialism. Capitalism’s desire for perpetual growth leads to the depletion of the planet’s limited resources. Eco-socialism argues that this constant urge for growth results in ecological disasters. The following statements from the film also highlight the foundation of consumerism and capitalist thought:

“Why are American cities designed so that it’s almost impossible not to have a car? Why were 100 railways in cities like New York, Philadelphia and Los Angeles built and then deliberately destroyed? Why did the electric car get scrapped? ... Why was an oil company lobbyist allowed to change official government reports on global warming? Why was the same PR firm employed by the tobacco industry to persuade the public that smoking is healthy, then employed by the oil industry to convince us there was still doubt about climate change? Alternative energy has been available for 50 years. Why have we barely used it? Why were solar panels taken off the White House? Because right from the early days of the industry the oil men and their obscene profits have had an unhealthy influence on the people running our country and now they are the people running our country. And they’re providing the cash too. Oil business isn’t just in bed with the government; it is the government” (23:32).

These statements demonstrate that, within the framework of eco-socialism, capitalist interests and the fossil fuel industry are the largest barriers to the adoption of renewable energy sources. Another scene from the documentary presents the following as an example of eco-socialism:

“Skiing in the desert. Heating the air. Lighting empty offices. Energy is so ridiculously that cheap it makes perfect economic sense to just piss it away. China is the new bad guy. Because, they are building a new power station every four days. But a quarter of that energy makes stuff for us. Western companies pay Chinese workers crap wages to make crab plastic toys then ship them to Europe and wrap the in more plastic. Planters drive to the-out-of town megastore in their gas guzzlers, plastic toys and plastic goes into plastic bags. Two days later, the toys break. They immediately return to landfills in China, where they lie for 50,000 years ... 800 times more energy is wasted, and it’s 10,000 times more expensive for you. It’s a tricky decision” (34:39).

Furthermore, the mountain guide’s home is near a place where 4-5 thousand trucks pass daily. The guide says these trucks are heading to Italy: “Most of them come from the North with potatoes. They go through the tunnel to be washed in Italy. Far down Italy. And then come back later as mash. Same with milk. They transport it to make yoghurt. And then bring it back. It’s madness. Madness” (38:40). This commentary aligns with eco-socialism’s critique. The mountain guide’s reflections, “Our generation caused these problems. Always development, development, development. Always asking more and more from the planet” (33:15) and “when we were young we didn’t have running water in the house. We had to fetch all our water which taught us to use it carefully. The same with electricity ... Our parent taught us that but we didn’t think to teach our children” (34:06) critique capitalism within the context of eco-socialism.

Additionally, the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina is an example of the ecological damage inflicted by the oil industry on the Louisiana region. Before the hurricane hit, the oil industry had weakened the region’s defense against major natural disasters (Faber, 2008). In this context, the Shell worker caught in Hurricane Katrina can be analyzed within the eco-socialism discourse. Despite experiencing this environmental devastation, his positive thoughts on oil illustrate how humanity has been corrupted. This situation can be read as a combination of environmental destruction and social inequality, as well as the fusion of capitalism’s destructive impacts on nature and society. “You see it, you spell it, and you know it’s crazy and you know ugly and smells so much like money it’s just beautiful you know” (18:59) reflects this eco-socialist critique.

The Indian investment expert, however, points out that there are far more significant sectors to consider before targeting the aviation sector for environmental damage. According to him, it is a mistaken approach to single out one sector and place the blame for all this harm solely on that sector. His statement, you can prevent this damage by using fewer napkins, less paper, cutting fewer trees, buying eco-friendly cars, and not flying, draws attention. However, within the context of eco-socialism, this raises an important concern. While the investment expert’s primary concern is the welfare of the poor people, the result still circles back to a critique of capitalism. The profit-driven nature of the aviation industry can conflict with environmental protection goals. Eco-socialism emphasizes not raising flight prices as the expert suggests, but instead focusing on choosing more sustainable and less environmentally harmful transportation options. “We have only 200 aircraft commercially flying in India. China has 800. Ultimately you know we have a very long way to go playing catch up with China or catch up with Europe. Or you know say America Airline Southwest have 417 aircraft. That’s double the amount of aircraft we have as a country” (43:44) echoes the desire for constant production. The following statements show the scale of capitalism’s critique, which is central to eco-socialism:

“Lots of ideas have tried to take over the world, but there is only one winner. Together, they create within us an insatiable desire to buy more and more stuff. Americans have been advertised to the longest, and they now eat to consume twice as much energy as Europeans, nine times more than a Chinese person, fifteen times more than an Indian, and fifty times more than someone from Kenya. If all six and a half billion people here on Earth consumed like Europeans or Japanese, we’d need two more planets’ worth of resources. If everyone consumed like Americans, Australians, and Canadians, we’d need another four. By 2040, the population will reach 10 billion, and we will still need two more planets. Capitalism’s only goal is ever-expanding growth, but ever-expanding growth on just one, non-expanding planet. This is impossible. The current economic system is disastrous, not just for the planet, but for most people too. 100 years of capitalism have allowed the richest 10% to control 40% of the circulating money, while leaving 60% for the poor. Anyone wanting to live differently is thwarted every time, by profit-the only measuring stick. Destroying the planet is written into the system, and runaway climate change is not a very surprising result (40:13)”.

Lastly, the words of the Iraqi refugee child, “the Americans are not like us. We wear our shoes till they fall apart. But if any little thing is wrong with theirs they throw them away. American, British, all of them. Their old shoes come here in big containers. We buy them, fix them and sell them” (37:17) are also consistent with the eco-socialism discourse.

The oil production in the Niger Delta is a classic example of how the capitalist system exacerbates environmental destruction. Oil companies exploit natural resources, disregarding both the environment and local populations to achieve large profits. As seen in the film, the oil company continues to maximize its profits while ignoring the environmental damage and health problems faced by the people. In eco-socialism, such injustices are inherent to the capitalist mode of production. The statement from the film, “in a paradoxical country, finding oil makes the country poorer. As long as gasoline remains monopolized by a few people” (22:23) reflects how Shell’s oil extraction activities come at the expense of the environment and local communities. In the context of ecosocialism, Shell’s activities and major disasters such as climate change serve as examples of capitalism’s exploitative effects on both nature and humanity.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper is to analyze the documentary *The Age of Stupid* through the lens of environmental discourses. As a significant documentary film, *The Age of Stupid* has been analyzed in the context of environmental discourses using qualitative content analysis. A deep analysis has been conducted in alignment with the film’s objectives. The film, which presents six interconnected real-life stories, is evaluated within the frameworks of ecosystem discourse, environmental justice discourse, and ecosocialism discourse. Through these frameworks, the film critically addresses key concepts such as global climate change, environmental degradation, social responsibility, inequality, and sustainability.

The film, within the framework of ecosystem discourse, highlights how humanity’s disregard for scientific predictions that warn of potential environmental destruction ultimately leads to living in a degraded environment. This situation reflects the disregard for the ecosystem discourse. In the film, the British couple’s recognition of the environmental damage caused by humanity and their adoption of new lifestyle changes stand out. However, towards the end of the film, it is revealed that the report they presented to the committee regarding wind turbines was rejected. This outcome, as the ecosystem discourse suggests, underscores the inadequacy of individual awareness in safeguarding natural ecosystems. Therefore, as the ecosystem discourse emphasizes, the

solution lies not only in individual action but also in the collaboration between societies and nations to address the environmental crisis effectively.

Within the framework of environmental justice discourse, Shell's activities in the Niger Delta are shown to be causing significant environmental, social, and economic harm to the region. Environmental justice is framed not only in terms of ecosystem preservation but also the fair use of natural resources. However, the film emphasizes how developed countries exert influence over both ecosystem management and income distribution in developing nations. As a result, the people of the Niger Delta experience severe exploitation. Additionally, the plight of Iraqi children who are displaced due to oil exploitation and war serves as another significant example illustrating the concept of environmental justice. This highlights the intersection of environmental degradation and social inequalities.

When examined within the context of ecosocialism, the film prominently features the discourse of the external voice. It highlights the economic dominance that developed countries and large corporations impose on other societies, in alignment with capitalist structures. However, in relation to this, the film underscores a critical issue: the economic development of Western societies has been accompanied by significant environmental degradation. This relationship between capitalist growth and environmental harm emphasizes the unsustainable nature of development that relies on exploitation of both people and ecosystems, reflecting key tenets of ecosocialist thought.

Despite the aforementioned discourses, there remains very little land on Earth that is still suitable for natural life. A poignant remark made by the archivist in the final scene of the film is worth noting: "Why didn't we save ourselves while we still had the chance? Could the answer be that we somehow didn't find ourselves worthy of saving?" (1:21:33). These words represent a significant discourse, both for humanity and the natural world, calling for urgent action. For all these reasons, the words of the Shell worker who witnessed Hurricane Katrina "in my opinion, the resources we've used or misused over the last 100 years give me the right to rename this era. For example, the Age of Ignorance. The Age of Stupid" highlight the striking nature of the issue, emphasizing the profound consequences of human disregard for environmental sustainability.

In conclusion, cinema, which holds a significant place in environmental communication, not only has a lasting impact on visual messages but also on environmental discourses. New studies in this field should be evaluated through various discourses. The most important outcome of such works should not be understood solely in terms of their contribution to academic literature, but also in the role they play in raising both individual and societal awareness. The findings highlight the pressing issues of today's world. Likewise, they reveal the potential dangers the world may face in the future.

Notlar

1 <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1300563/>.

References

- Alkın, R. C. (2021). Aftershock: Earthquake In New York filmi üzerine bir afet sosyolojisi incelemesi. *İçtimaiyyat Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 6(1), 298–311.
- Alkın, R. C. (2022). Ateş, su ve sosyoloji: Türkiye’de 2021 yazında meydana gelen orman yangınları ve seller üzerine bir afet sosyolojisi analizi. *Tezkire*, 31, 73–85.

- Başaran, E. (2020). Türkiye Tarımının Genel Görünümü ve Küçük Üreticilerin Varlığı Üzerine Sosyolojik Bir Analiz. *Anemon Muş Alparslan Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 8(1), 55–62.
- Bassey, N. (2022). Tragic milestones of the Niger Delta. In Brownhill (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook on Ecosocialism* (pp. 155–164).
- Boström, M., & Lidskog, R. (2024). *Environmental sociology and social transformation: Key issues*. Routledge.
- Çankal, G., & Alkın, R. C. (2024). İklim değişikliği, bilinçsiz tarım ve afet yönetimi: Karapınar obruklarına bir bakış. *Afet ve Risk Dergisi*, 7(2), 410–425.
- Değirmenci, M. (2022). Ekososyalizm-ekoanarşizm-ekofeminizm. In N. Coşkun Karadağ & A. Balcıoğulları (Eds.), *Sosyal bilimlerde güncel araştırma ve incelemeler III* (pp. 201–215). Akademisyen Yayınevi.
- Eryılmaz, Ç. (2017a). Çevre söylemlerine göre çevre konulu filmlerin analizi. *Bilgi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 1, 117–147.
- Eryılmaz, Ç. (2017b). Sosyal bilim paradigmaları çerçevesinde çevre sosyolojisinin kuramları ve kavramları. *Fırat Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 27(1), 159–174.
- Faber, D. (2008). *Capitalizing on environmental injustice: The polluter-industrial complex in the age of globalization*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Florida, R. (2018). Soylulaştırma, eşitsizlik ve seçkinler şehri ile gelen yeni kentsel kriz (D. N. Özer, Trans.). Doğan Kitap.
- Giddens, A. (2009). Sağ ve solun ötesinde: Radikal politikacıların geleceği (M. Sözen & S. Yücesoy, Trans.; 2nd ed.). Metis Yayınları.
- Giddens, A. (2012). *Sosyoloji: Kısa fakat eleştirel bir giriş* (Ü. Y. Battal, Trans.; 4th ed.). Ekonikos Yayınları.
- Giddens, A. (2013). *Sosyoloji*. Kırmızı Yayınevi.
- Giddens, A., & Sutton, P. W. (2020). *Sosyolojide temel kavramlar* (A. Esgin, Trans.; 4th ed.). Phoenix Yayınları.
- Hannigan, J. A. (2006). *Environmental sociology*. Routledge.
- Harvey, D. (2019). *Yeni emperyalizm* (A. N. Bingöl, Trans.). Sel Yayıncılık.
- Kaçmaz Akkurt, G., & Şemsiyeci, S. (2024). Evaluation of nature-based solutions to improve the urban microclimate in Mediterranean climate conditions: A case study of Izmir-Karsiyaka. *Sustainability*, 16(7).
- Kaçmaz, G. (2021). İklim değişikliği ile mücadelede doğa temelli çözümler. *Eğitim, Bilim, Kültür ve Sanat Dergisi*, 3(2), 82–92.
- Keleş, R. (2021). *Kentbilim terimleri sözlüğü* (3rd ed.). İmge Kitabevi Yayınları.
- Kılıç, S., & Tok, N. (2014). Geleneksel adalet anlayışlarından çevresel adalet anlayışına. *Uluslararası Alanya İşletme Fakültesi Dergisi*, 6(3), 213–228.
- Kızılçelik, S., & Erjem, Y. (1996). *Açıklamalı sosyoloji sözlüğü* (4th ed.). Saray Kitabevleri.

- Klinger, K., & Metag, J. (2022). Media effects in the context of environmental issues. In B. Takahashi, J. Metag, Thaker, & S. E. Comfort (Eds.), *The handbook of international trends in environmental communication* (pp. 31–49). Routledge.
- Kovel, J. (2022). The ecofeminist ground of ecosocialism. In L. Brownhill, S. Engel-Di Mauro, T. Giacomini, A. Isla, M. Löwy, & T. E. Turner (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook on ecosocialism* (pp. 32–38). Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.
- Le Roy Ladurie, E. (2021). *Kısa iklim tarihi* (M. A. Kılıçbay, Trans.). Doğu Batı Yayınları.
- Martinez-Alier, J., Anguelovski, I., Bond, P., & Yanez, I. (2014). Between activism and science: Grassroots concepts for sustainability coined by environmental justice organizations. *Journal of Political Ecology*, 21(1), 20–60.
- Neuman, W. L. (2014). *Toplumsal araştırma yöntemleri: Nitel ve nicel yaklaşımlar* (S. Özge, Trans.; 7th ed.). Yayınodası.
- Opperman, S. (2019). The literal and literary conflicts of climate change: The climate migrant and the unending war against emergence. In S. Slovic, S. Rangarajan, & V. Sarveswaran (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of ecocriticism and environmental communication* (pp. 108–117). Routledge.
- Overdevest, C. (2024). *Introduction to the Elgar encyclopedia of environmental sociology*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Özdağ, U. (2017). *Çevreci eleştiriye giriş: Doğa, kültür, edebiyat*. Ürün Yayınları.
- Pepper, D. (1993). *Eco-socialism: From deep ecology to social justice*. Routledge.
- Pezzullo, P. C., & Cox, R. (2010). *Environmental communication and the public share*. SAGE Publications.
- Rice, R. E., & Moxley, C. M. (2022). Plastic communication campaigns and interventions: Foci, theoretical frameworks, variables and methods. In B. Takahashi, J. Metag, J. Thaker, & S. E. Comfort (Eds.), *The handbook of international trends in environmental communication* (pp. 132–154). Routledge.
- Ritzer, G. (2020). *Küresel dünya* (M. Pekdemir, Trans.; 2nd ed.). Ayrıntı Yayınları.
- Rochyadi-Reetz, M., & Teng'o, D. (2022). Prioritizing development, vying for attention: Factors influencing the practice of environmental journalism in the Global South. In B. Takahashi, J. Metag, J. Thaker, & S. E. Comfort (Eds.), *The handbook of international trends in environmental communication* (pp. 220–231). Routledge.
- Roush, D., Jurin, R. R., & Danter, J. (2010). *Environmental communication: Skills and principles for natural resource managers, scientists and engineers*. Springer.
- Schmitt, C. R., Mocatta, G., & Tate, J. M. (2022). Rhetorical approaches in environmental communication. In B. Takahashi, J. Metag, J. Thaker, & S. E. Comfort (Eds.), *The handbook of international trends in environmental communication* (pp. 70–87). Routledge.
- Şen, A. (2018). Bilimkurgu sinemasında ekolojik adalet ve ekoeleştirici. *Ankara Üniversitesi İlel Dergisi*, 5(1), 31–60.

- Takahashi, B., Duan, R., Joshi, A., Van Witsen, A., & Li, W. (2022a). Covering the environment beat: A systematic review of research on news media coverage of the environment. In B. Takahashi, J. Metag, J. Thaker, & S. E. Comfort (Eds.), *The handbook of international trends in environmental communication* (pp. 17–30). Routledge.
- Takahashi, B., Metag, J., Thaker, J., & Comfort, S. E. (2022b). Expanding conceptualizations of environmental communication research. In B. Takahashi, J. Metag, J. Thaker, & S. E. Comfort (Eds.), *The handbook of international trends in environmental communication* (pp. 3–16). Routledge.
- Taylor, D. E. (1997). Women of color, environmental justice and ecofeminism. In K. J. Warren (Ed.), *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature* (pp. 38–81). Indiana University Press.
- Tekeli, İ., & Ataöv, A. (2017). *Sürdürülebilir toplum ve yapıları çevre: Stratejiler yelpazesi*. İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları.
- Wall, D. (2010). *The rise of the green left: Inside the worldwide ecosocialist movement*. Pluto Press.

An Analysis of the The Age of Stupid Documentary in the Context of Environmental Communication

Serdar NÜKTE (PhD Student)

Extended Abstract

The aim of this article is to evaluate the documentary film *The Age of Stupid* through the lens of environmental discourse. Environmental communication, especially after the 1980s with the acceleration of industrialization, has become a prominent field of study. This period has brought with it environmental issues that continue to affect the present day. The emerging problems highlight the significance of research and initiatives within the field of environmental communication. Perhaps one of the most important outcomes of these efforts has been the raised awareness regarding environmental degradation. The advancement of technology and the widespread use of mass communication channels have been crucial drivers of this awareness. One of the key films cited in the literature for its role in fostering this awareness is the documentary *The Age of Stupid*.

This article analyzes the documentary *The Age of Stupid* through qualitative content analysis. The film foregrounds six real-life stories and archival footage, which are examined through the lens of three environmental discourses: the ecosystem discourse, the environmental justice discourse, and the ecosocialism discourse. This is because the central theme of the film is based on the idea that nature is being destroyed by human activities, and these actions are contributing to climate change and global warming. One of the most striking emphases of the film is the notion that by the year 2055, very few species will remain in the natural world.

Ecosystems and the sustainable use of natural resources must be maintained through the cooperation of all societies, for both current and future generations. At the beginning of the film, archival footage presents news reports highlighting the extreme rise in temperatures and the intensification of floods. Despite numerous warnings, it is portrayed that life on Earth is approaching its end. From this perspective, when the film is analyzed within the framework of ecosystem discourse, several negative scenarios become apparent. One of the most significant of these is the activities of oil companies in the Niger Delta. In this region, due to Shell's operations, drinking water is severely polluted and filled with frogs. This situation illustrates how dire the conditions are for both the natural world and human populations. In addition to the degradation of aquatic ecosystems, the fishing industry is also adversely affected. The gases emitted by oil companies in this region contribute to global warming. This, in turn, leads to the deterioration of both ecosystems and public health. However, despite widespread complaints from the local population, this issue is ignored by both the oil companies and the government. The war in Iraq, caused by oil, has similarly devastated the ecosystem of the region. The violence resulting from the war not only causes physical destruction but also ecological harm. The efforts of the guide and the British couple in the Alps should also be assessed within the ecosystem discourse. As the guide points out, despite scientists' warnings about the melting of glaciers and global warming, by 2055, the world has reached a point of near extinction. The British couple's individual efforts, such as running their car on chicken fat and increasing paper consumption, have proven ineffective. This is because their primary goal of installing a wind turbine was rejected by a committee. In this context, within the

framework of ecosystem discourse, the film demonstrates that individual efforts alone will not be sufficient to save the world in the future.

Environmental justice is a discourse that advocates for the elimination of inequality in all forms, including in areas such as language, religion, race, and the environment. Within the framework of environmental justice discourse, one of the most prominent stories is again related to oil. In the Niger Delta, although the people living in the region are the rightful owners of the oil, they are among the most disadvantaged groups. Not only has their natural environment been destroyed due to oil extraction, but they have also faced severe economic decline. Furthermore, the region is grappling with serious health issues. The situation of Iraqi refugee children is similar. They have been displaced due to the loss of their living spaces as a result of oil-related activities. Additionally, Hurricane Katrina, triggered by oil extraction practices, led to the degradation of the natural environment and the displacement of people from their homes. All of these examples are key indicators of environmental injustice. This is because the destruction of ecosystems due to oil companies' activities directly impacts the lives of the people and wildlife in these regions. However, the companies that profit from this exploitation face no social, economic, or environmental repercussions.

Ecosocialism is a discourse that opposes capitalism and advocates for the protection of ecosystems. Within the framework of ecosocialism, the most striking elements in the film are the animated videos. These animations depict capitalism as a system designed for the benefit of only one group. The continuous desire of these groups to accumulate wealth is presented as one of the primary causes of ecosystem degradation. This is because the insatiable demand for consumption, and the resulting waste, harm the planet. Moreover, this situation suggests that, with the ever-increasing population, humans will soon exceed the planet's capacity to support life.

In conclusion, despite all these discourses, by 2055 the film presents the Earth as having become uninhabitable. However, the purpose of the film is to show that there is still something that can be done. As emphasized in the film, within the context of these discourses, both individual and collective action must be taken in a cooperative, scientifically-informed manner. As noted by the archivist at the beginning of the film, the phrase "we could have saved it, but we didn't" should be understood in light of the real possibility that this outcome could indeed come to pass.

Keywords: Environmental communication, Qualitative content analysis, Ecosystem discourse, Environmental justice discourse, Ecosocialism.

Bu makale **intihal tespit yazılımlarıyla** taranmıştır. İntihal tespit edilmemiştir.

This article has been scanned by **plagiarism detection softwares**. No plagiarism detected.

Bu çalışmada "**Yükseköğretim Kurumları Bilimsel Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği Yönergesi**" kapsamında uyulması belirtilen kurallara uyulmuştur.

In this study, the rules stated in the "**Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive**" were followed.

Araştırma tek bir yazar tarafından yürütülmüştür.

The research was conducted by a single author.

Çalışma kapsamında herhangi bir kurum veya kişi ile **çakar çatışması** bulunmamaktadır.

There is no **conflict of interest** with any institution or person within the scope of the study.