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SEEKING ECOLOGICAL BALANCE IN THE SHADOW OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS: NEW WAVE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS

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Abstract

The climate crisis is coming with such severe consequences that it is no longer possible to escape responsibility. Considering that the stage of "let the polluter pay" has long passed and no serious steps have been taken in this regard, humanity is at a decision point in the face of environmental crises. Either a balance will be established in the relationship between society and ecology, or we will surrender to the climate crisis and other deepening crises. The climate movements include a strong call to action to re-establish the balance between society and ecology in this dilemma. This article examines the development of global environmental policies, the inadequacies of states in combating the climate crisis, and the alternative transformation strategies poposed by new wave environmental movements such as Fridays for Future, Extinction Rebellion, and Blockadia. It also explores the connection between these movements and Ernst Bloch's concept of "concrete utopia". Methodologically, this descriptive study is grounded in the theoretical framework of environmental movements, international environmental conferences, and Bloch's utopian thought, using literature review and document analysis as its primary methods. The study concludes that these movements approach the climate crisis on the basis of scientific reality, critically address the structural problems of the current system, and propose concrete, actionable alternatives. Inspired by Bloch's concrete utopia, they focus on real solutions that can create change today, rather than imagining distant ideals. With inclusive structures that unite people of different identities and generations, these movements go beyond protest and act as powerful forces for social and ecological transformation.

Keywords: Ecology, Climate Crisis, New Wave Environmental Movements, Concrete Utopia.

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İKLİM KRİZİNİN GÖLGESİNDE EKOLOJİK DENGE ARAYIŞI: YENİ DALGA ÇEVRE HAREKETLERİ

Öz

İklim krizine bağlı sorunlar o kadar şiddetlidir ki artık sorumluluktan kaçmanın olanağı yok gibidir. "Kirleten ödesin" aşamasının da çoktan aşıldığı ve bu konuda ciddi adımların atılmadığı düşünülürse, çevresel krizler karşısında insanlık bir karar aşamasındadır. Ya toplum-ekoloji ilişkisinde bir denge kurulacaktır ya da iklim krizi ile derinleşen başka krizlere teslim olunacaktır. İklim hareketleri, bir yerde bu söz konusu ikilemde toplum-ekoloji dengesinin yeniden kurulmasına yönelik güçlü bir eylemli çağrıyı içermektedir. Bu çalışma, küresel çevre politikalarının gelişimini, devletlerin iklim krizine karşı mücadeledeki yetersizliklerini ve Fridays for Future, Extinction Rebellion ve Blockadia gibi yeni dalga çevre hareketlerinin sunduğu alternatif dönüşüm stratejilerini incelemekte; bu hareketlerin Ernst Bloch'un "somut ütopya" kavramıyla kurduğu ilişkiyi analiz etmektedir. Bu bağlamda çalışma, çevre hareketleri, uluslararası çevre konferansları ve Bloch'un kuramsal çerçevesi doğrultusunda şekillenen betimsel bir çalışmadır. Literatür taraması ve belge analizi yöntemleri kullanılarak ilgili literatürden elde edilen veriler çözümlenmektedir. Çalışma sonucunda, söz konusu hareketlerin iklim krizine bilimsel gerçeklik temelinde yaklaştıkları, mevcut sistemin yapısal sorunlarını eleştirel bir bakış açısıyla değerlendirdikleri ve bu eleştiriler doğrultusunda somut ve uygulanabilir alternatifler geliştirdikleri saptanmıştır. Bloch'un somut ütopya kavramından ilhamla, soyut gelecek tahayyülleri yerine bugünün koşullarında dönüşüm yaratabilecek pratik çözümler geliştirdikleri; farklı kimlik ve kuşaklardan bireyleri bir araya getiren kapsayıcı yapılarıyla yalnızca protesto değil, aynı zamanda dönüştürücü bir toplumsal rol üstlendikleri ortaya konmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ekoloji, İklim Krizi, Yeni Dalga Çevre Hareketleri, Somut Ütopya.

Utopian thought always includes a criticism of the status quo.[1]

Introduction

The Planet is undergoing a major transformation due to human activities such as global warming, climate change, rapid depletion of clean water resources and disruption of the ecological balance through uncontrolled production processes, a culture of overconsumption and the use of energy that are not compatible with nature. Parallel to the growing scale of the climate and biodiversity crises, people are increasingly aware of the consequences of this existential threat and the urgent need for real action to mitigate it.

The climate crisis is constantly affecting all areas and is recognized as a scientific reality rather than a scientific assumption. The impacts of the crisis have been threatening the right to life of local communities for a very long time, and hundreds of millions of people have been seriously affected by severe climate-related disasters such as forest fires, droughts, floods and hurricanes. By 2050, more than a billion people could be forced to flee their homes due to climate change as a result of the impact of deforestation and the appropriation of nature driven by the fossil fuel dependency of today's societies, whose existence is defined by consumption. As an alternative to such unsustainable futures, new forms of imagination require a roadmap that moves beyond deadlock and inertia.

In an age where the climate crisis is deepening, developing new and sustainable visions for the future requires revisiting the historical roots of the concept of utopia and rethinking them in

[1] Ted Honderich (1995) "The Oxford Companion to Philosophy"

light of today's global challenges. Inspired by Plato's Republic, Thomas More depicted Utopia as a small island housing a homogeneous, egalitarian and peaceful city-state where social virtues prevail.

The word "Utopia" is derived from the Greek words "topos" meaning place, "eu" meaning good, and "ou" meaning no, together creating the meaning "the ideal good place is also no place". Utopian thought expresses visions of a desired society based on contemporary experiences. In contrast, dystopian thought depicts an undesirable society that evolves from the current social organization and existing conditions (Hjerpe & Linnér, 2009, p. 235). The function or use of utopian thought is as a transformative force or instrument of change in global politics and policymaking. This is because "utopian thought is always critical of the status quo" (Honderich, 1995, pp. 892-893). Utopias, which have the capacity to offer future perspectives, also contain a strong critique of power and offer a roadmap for social transformation. However, a utopia that does not involve the participation of the public cannot connect with social reality. This is especially evident in the context of environmental utopias, highlighting the necessity of social engagement and political action to achieve a sustainable transformation.

Ernst Bloch's (1986, pp. 15-20) concept of concrete utopias refers to a mode of utopian thinking that is grounded not in dreams or fantasies, but in existing social realities and critical social theory, pointing toward the construction of an objectively possible future. This is an understanding of utopianism that focuses on identifying the existing potential for social change and deriving a constructive (eu-topos) utopia from the development of this potential, rather than constructing imaginary worlds (ou-topos) that are impossible to realize. Bloch builds on the ideas of Marx and Engels, who argued that utopian socialism failed to accurately identify the structural causes of social problems, often resulting in counter-revolutionary outcomes. From this perspective, a constructive utopianism must intensify its critique of existing social conditions and cultivate 'free spaces' in which the practical application of utopian principles can be explored. In Bloch's approach, utopia is not a fixed plan or rigid template; it is an open-ended, constantly evolving process.

Today, although climate change and its consequences such as water scarcity, food insecurity, loss of biodiversity, extreme weather events and mass migrations are seen as part of an ecological dystopia, it is worth examining that there is a utopia in every dystopia and that the possibilities for change offered by new generation environmental movements in this crisis have the potential to make a difference. In this period of rapid ecological collapse, the transformative possibilities offered by the new generation environmental movements can be linked to the critical and visionary potential of utopian thought. Fridays for Future (FFF), Extinction Rebellion (XR) and other new wave environmental movements not only draw attention to the ecological crisis but also pave the way for the search for an alternative social order. By showing that we are not doomed to a dystopian future, these movements demonstrate that utopia is not merely an abstract design, but a realizable project of transformation.

This study examines the development of global environmental policies, the failures of states in combating the climate crisis, as well as the alternative transformation strategies offered by new wave environmentalist movements. It also analyzes how new wave environmentalist movements,

which have the potential for utopian transformation in response to the threat of ecological dystopia, can create change within the existing system. The aim of this study is to analyze the practical utopian approaches developed by new wave environmental movements in response to the ecological crisis and to evaluate their potential for social transformation through the lens of Bloch's concept of concrete utopias. As the ecological crisis deepens, it becomes increasingly evident that contemporary environmental movements are shaped not only by nature conservation discourses but also by more holistic approaches that seek broader societal change. Movements such as Fridays for Future (FFF), Extinction Rebellion (XR), and Blockadia diverge from traditional environmentalism by advancing a radical vision of transformation grounded in systemic critique, direct action, and participatory-democratic practices. This study contributes to the literature by not only examining the actions of these movements but also exploring their utopian imaginaries, thereby revealing their theoretical alignment with Bloch's notion of concrete utopia. It demonstrates that these movements assume not merely a protest function but also a constitutive and transformative role within society. In this context, the study is a descriptive work grounded in the theoretical framework of environmental movements, international environmental conferences, and Bloch's utopian thought. The data were analyzed through literature review and document analysis methods.

1. The Global Dimension of Environmental Crises: From The 1972 Stockholm Conference to Cop Summits

Although the negative effects of the industrial revolution on the ecological balance have played an important role in the development and spread of consciousness about nature, environmental problems are not unique to the present day or to the industrial revolution. According to Foster (2002, p. 39), humans, who cannot live in harmony with nature, have been destroying and damaging nature since the first pre-capitalist civilizations such as Sumer, Phoenicia and Rome. However, the reason why the industrial revolution was a turning point in the ecological crisis is that nature was fenced off and property acquisition was accepted as a prerequisite for the market economy. In addition, with the mechanization process and rapid population growth, the exploitation of nature has increased more than ever before in capitalism.

Beginning in the 19th century and continuing into the 20th century, the first period of nature conservationist and traditional environmentalist movements emerged in the form of organizations such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (1865), the Audubon Society (1885), and the Sierra Club (1892), which aimed to recognize natural beauties of a "romantic" nature. The first international regulations on the environment were mainly aimed at protecting certain animal species (seals, birds, whales, etc.) and balancing and limiting the interests of the relevant states in order to ensure a sustainable economic use of limited natural resources (Önder, 2003, pp. 91-92).

When the effects of the industrial revolution began to affect the daily lives of individuals, becoming a public health problem and at the same time reducing the profitability of capital by decreasing the productivity of workers, it was then that environmental problems began to appear

on the agenda of states through legal measures. In the post-World War II period, important works such as Rachel Carson's "*Silent Spring*" (1962), a pessimistic scenario in which DDT (dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane), pesticides and other chemicals would cause the sudden death of humans and animals; Garret Hardin's "*The Tragedy of Commons*" (1968), in which individuals acting in their own self-interest would lead to the overuse of common resources; the Club of Rome's (Meadows et al., 1972) emphasizing that the natural environment would be uninhabitable if the current growth trend continued; E. F. Schumacher's (1973) "*Small is Beautiful*" questioning the existing economic and technological structures, etc., were widely publicized and paved the way for ecological awareness. In the 1970s, the discovery that the world's natural resources and physical limits were not sufficient for all countries to industrialize and expand their industries continuously also led to the emergence of new ecological environmentalist movements from traditional, romantic nature protectionism.

However, at the "The Future of Third World" Conference held in Bucharest in 1972, the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess made the distinction between "shallow ecology and deep ecology", stating that the solutions and perspectives produced so far had an anthropocentric view of nature and emphasized the necessity of establishing an eco-centric perspective. In this sense, shallow ecology is a way of thinking that does not find nature valuable in itself and argues that the main purpose of opposing pollution and resource depletion is the health and welfare of people in developed countries. On the other hand, deep ecology is a nature-centered perspective that considers humans and nature as one and whole and considers nature valuable in itself (Naess, 1973). Therefore, with this distinction, awareness has increased and a shift in consciousness from humans to nature has occurred in environmentalist movements.

In the face of the magnitude, complexity and multidimensionality nature of environmental problems, national policies alone were not deemed sufficient in solving these problems, and the necessity of close international cooperation for the protection of the environment was realized. One of the first international conferences to put environmental protection on the agenda of international societies was the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm in June 1972. In this conference, where links were established between the environmental issues and human rights, attention was drawn to the carrying capacity of the environment. The first step towards the concept of sustainability was taken by emphasizing the need to observe intergenerational equity in utilizing environmental elements (Güneş, 2004, p. 85). The fact that the conference outputs did not lead to tangible gains led to criticism. In 1987, the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, convened under the leadership of Gro Harlem Brundtland, published the report "Our Common Future", also known as the Brundtland Report. For the first time, the concept of "sustainable development" was defined; it was emphasized that unlimited growth is not possible and it was concluded that if this continues, resources and nature will not be sufficient to meet the needs and expectations of future generations (Güneş & Beyazıt, 2012, p. 37).

The foundation of most political developments in terms of climate and environmental policies was laid at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), also known as the Rio Conference or Earth Summit, which was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in June

1992. Three environmental conventions were signed at the Rio Conference, which is considered to be the most important environmental meeting of the 20th century due to its content and wide participation. The most important of these, and the one that received the most public and media attention, was the "United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change" (UNFCCC). Recognizing that they have common but differentiated responsibilities, developed countries promised to provide development aid to developing countries in order to alleviate the financial burden that developing countries would face in terms of preventing environmental problems. In addition, the convention, which stipulates that greenhouse gas emissions should be reduced below 1990 levels, has organized a "Conference of Parties" (COP) at the end of each year since 1995 in order to establish the necessary mechanisms to achieve this. In this meeting, the states decided to determine the next road maps by discussing the progress they had made in greenhouse gas emissions for a year (Yücel & Kurnaz, 2021, p. 30).

In 1997, legally binding emission limitation and reduction targets were set with the COP3 held in Kyoto, Japan and the Kyoto Protocol signed. Accordingly, "countries with greenhouse gas reduction obligations" are included in Annex-I, while Annex-II countries are obliged to pay the costs of both countries with reduction obligations and developing countries outside Annex-I so that they can make green investments. Finally, "countries that do not have greenhouse gas reduction obligations but are obliged to report their emissions are included in Annex-B (outside Annex-1). In this protocol, where legally binding provisions were included for the first time in the fight against global warming, the target of reducing greenhouse gases by 5% between 2008 and 2012 was included (Yücel & Kurnaz, 2001, pp. 30-31). However, the United States and Australia, which have high rates of greenhouse gas emissions, did not become parties to the agreement, while China and India were included in the Annex B list and only had to report their emissions. In addition, if developed countries do not comply with their targets in the Kyoto Protocol, they will be penalized with a 30% reduction of their reduction targets for the next period, while no sanctions were imposed on developing countries.

The first global environmental conference of the 21st century was the "World Summit on Sustainable Development" held in Johannesburg in 2002. In this context, although there were no binding provisions in the declaration adopted at the Johannesburg Summit, the most important feature of this summit was that Canada and Russia became parties to the Kyoto Protocol.

After remaining silent for a long time after the Kyoto Protocol, the states adopted the Paris Climate Agreement at the COP21 in Paris in December 2015, aiming to keep the increase in global average temperatures below 2 degrees Celsius and even limit it to the threshold of 1.5 degrees Celsius, and to achieve net zero emissions in the second half of the 21st century. For monitoring and evaluation, it was agreed to meet every 5 years at "global stocktake" summits and submit reports summarizing what measures have been taken to meet the targets and to what extent the targets have been achieved. However, again, no monitoring and sanction mechanisms were envisaged for implementation by the countries, and the implementation of the agreement was left entirely to the goodwill of the states. In parallel with the Paris Climate Agreement, the European Union (EU) has committed to transition to a green economy by transforming its resources into a green, efficient, competitive low-carbon economy and making its waste, energy, and raw material

use more efficient in its "Circular Economy Package" and "8th Environmental Action Plan". In these reports, the EU stated that mechanisms will be established to take decisive steps to meet the 2030 greenhouse gas emission reduction target and to realize the transition to climate-neutrality by 2050, and that greenhouse gas emissions will reach net zero in new growth strategies (Beyazıt & Yarım Altunay, 2021, p. 208).

Most recently, at the 27th Conference of the Parties (COP27) held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, states signed the agreement that includes a number of regulations to be followed in the fight against climate change. The loss and damage fund, which includes a commitment by richer countries to provide financial assistance to developing countries to help them recover from the damage and economic losses caused by the impacts of climate change, is an indication of progress on "climate justice". However, it can also be said that the conference failed to deliver on the transition away from fossil fuels and on countries' (in)fulfillment of their commitments. For example; Turkey, which is a party to the Paris Agreement as of November 10, 2021, announcing that it has updated the reduction from the increase it announced in 2015 as "21% by 2030" to 41% at this conference only creates mathematical confusion and means that it will increase greenhouse gas emissions, not reduce them. Because, as Greenpeace emphasizes, "incremental mitigation is an increase, not a reduction" (Akgül, 2022).

However, another event that marked COP27 under the guise of climate justice was the fact that the number of participants linked to fossil fuel companies at the summit was higher than the total number of delegates of the island states of Indonesia, which were flooded due to lack of timely measures. Moreover, the fact that the United Arab Emirates, one of the largest exporters of fossil gas and oil, hosted COP28 created a separate controversy. Finally, the fact that the main sponsor of the COP27 summit was Coca Cola, which ranked first in the "Top 10 Most Plastic Polluting Companies" reports published by the Break Free from Plastic (BFFP) movement in 2020 and 2021, gives a strong idea as to whether the main purpose of these so-called "environmentalist" conferences is the environment or the economy (Euronews, 2022).

COP28 was organized in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, an important actor in terms of fossil fuel reserves. This summit was recognized as an important turning point in the context of climate policies. For the first time in 29 years of climate negotiations, the term "fossil fuel" was included in the final decision. Previously, in many international texts, including the Paris Climate Agreement, only the phrase "reducing carbon emissions" was used, and fossil fuels, the main source of emissions, were not directly targeted.

In this context, countries such as Saudi Arabia have objected to direct reference to the source of emissions in the negotiations, arguing that decisions to reduce fossil fuels are contrary to the spirit of the Paris Agreement. However, the influence of fossil fuel lobbies on the conference was also evident. Among the 60,000-70,000 people attending the summit, there were around 2,500 lobbyists directly or indirectly linked to the fossil fuel sector, and it was argued that these groups were steering the negotiations in order to block developments (Yeşil Gazete, 2024).

COP29, organized to limit the devastating effects of the climate crisis, was held in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan. Among the main agenda items of the summit was the process of transition

away from fossil fuels. While small island states argued that this process should be discussed on the axis of "reducing and completely eliminating fossil fuels", African countries and China demanded that this issue be addressed under the title of "financing". As a result of the discussions, in line with China's proposal, the issue of transition away from fossil fuels was discussed under the heading of finance. While the G77 countries demanded the creation of a climate finance fund of at least 1.3 trillion dollars annually, developed countries fell far behind this demand and argued that developing countries with large economies such as Saudi Arabia, China and India should also make financial contributions. As a result, rich countries, which bear retrospective responsibility for climate change, pledged to increase the transformation fund created for poorer countries to fight climate change to 300 billion dollars annually (Kahraman, 2025).

In this context, the fact that China has become the world's largest economy after the US and has surpassed the economic size of the EU countries has caused developed countries to not want to shoulder the financing responsibility solely on themselves. However, the absence of leaders such as European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz from the summit painted a negative picture about the future of global climate negotiations. Moreover, the fact that the total number of fossil fuel lobbyists attending COP29 was about 1,000 people more than the total number of delegates from the 10 most vulnerable countries has led to serious criticism about the effectiveness of such conferences. Finally, Donald Trump's decision to withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement after being elected as the President of the US for the second time and his adoption of policies supporting the fossil fuel industry marks the beginning of an alarming process in terms of global climate policies. Given the influence of the US on the global economy and politics, the possible negative effects of this decision on international climate negotiations and sustainable energy policies pose a considerable risk (BBC Türkçe, 2025).

2. A Bleak Future: From Ecological Crisis to Ecological Dystopia

The 21st century will undoubtedly be defined by climate change and the water and food crises and energy scarcity it will accelerate. The Paris Agreement, ratified by 195 countries in December 2015, is a historic milestone in the global fight against climate change. With this agreement, efforts were made to keep the increase in global average temperatures below 2 degrees Celsius or even limit it to 1.5 degrees Celsius, and it was expected to reach net zero emissions in the second half of the 21st century, but as it was understood from the COP27 summit, states failed to fulfill their commitments and succumbed to the fossil fuel lobby.

The problem of climate change is not a 21st century issue. The world has repeatedly experienced ice ages, it has been much warmer than today, and the amount of carbon dioxide has been much higher than today. However, according to Slingo (2022), the current climate change is different, more dangerous and urgently needs to be taken more seriously than in the past in terms of the cause, speed and human-induced nature of the problem. First of all, the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, particularly carbon dioxide, is increasing rapidly as a result of the use of fossil fuels such as coal, oil and natural gas in both industry and daily life. The ability

of the Earth's biosphere to capture carbon and mitigate the impact of emissions is also declining as forests are destroyed for mining and tourism and water sources become more acidic. This affects the water and carbon cycles, which are the planet's primary cycles, and the balance in the ecosystem is being disrupted. A review of past climate changes shows climate variability is caused by slow changes in the Earth's orbit around the Sun, and that even if there is an increase, these temperatures are offset by the natural response of the ecosystem to reduce carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

Second, climate change is happening at a rate that many plants and animals cannot migrate or adapt to. Today's carbon dioxide levels are 30% higher than they were 100 years ago. The average surface temperature has risen by 1.2 degrees Celsius over the last century and will rise by a further 2 degrees Celsius by 2050 if serious action is not taken. The change in the Earth's temperature during the last ice age was only 5 degrees. The melting of the Arctic ice caps, releasing trillions of tons of harmful gases into the atmosphere, will accelerate warming and its deadly consequences, rapidly escalating the crisis. Even more alarming, the current rate of global emissions will take the world 3-4 degrees warmer in just 80 years (Lowe, 2020).

The third difference is that all these changes are artificially caused by human beings. The Anthropocene epoch, the current geological period in which human activities have become dominant on the environment and climate, is causing significant changes in the ecosystem, including climate change, deforestation and loss of biodiversity, and this situation deeply affects the future of cities. 97% of climate scientists show that the more frequent occurrence of some extreme events such as sea level rises, heat waves and heavy rainfall is a result of human-induced climate change (Yıldız, 2019). According to the calculations of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), sea level is expected to rise between 28 and 98 centimetres by 2100. If all the glaciers in Greenland melt, it is estimated that the increase in sea levels could reach 7 metres. On the other hand, many coastal cities have already started to experience the negative impacts of sea level rise. For example, in Tanzania, 8 per cent of Dar es Salaam, a city of 4.4 million inhabitants, is below sea level. Approximately 40 per cent of Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia, is below sea level. If no measures are taken against climate change, it is estimated that by 2050, a total of 800 million people living in 576 cities located on the seashore worldwide will be exposed to devastating effects such as loss of life and property and displacement due to sea level rise (Uncu, 2019, p. 20).

By the end of 2020, 82.4 million people had migrated due to climate change. According to the report published by the United Nations International Organisation for Migration (IOM) (2022), forced migration due to climate change alone is projected to be between 44 million and 113 million people by 2050. In pessimistic scenarios with more severe climate change impacts, this number is estimated to reach 216 million. This figure is more than double the displacement caused by conflict and violence (Brown, 2008, p. 8).

Therefore, water, energy and food crises caused by the Anthropocene Epoch and climate change are the most important problems that will shape the future of cities. By 2030, it is estimated that water supply in many cities in India, China, Africa and the Americas will be greatly reduced, and by 2025, it is predicted that many cities in the developing world will suffer from low

access to electricity as well as the projected increase in demand (Frem, Rajadhyaksha & Woetzel, 2018, p. 8). The possibility of flooding and salinisation of deltas and coastal plains are expected to negatively affect not only settlement patterns but also food production processes. Most climate change projections predict that impacts such as greenhouse gas emissions, temperature increases and sea level rise will occur gradually. Accordingly, a given amount of emissions will lead to a given temperature increase, which in turn will lead to steadily rising sea levels. However, the geological record shows that even small changes in climate can cause sudden and large-scale transformations in the entire system.

In other words, when global temperatures exceed certain thresholds, unpredictable, fast-moving and potentially irreversible changes can be triggered. At that point, uncontrollable processes can kick in, even if no more carbon dioxide is added to the atmosphere. At this point, even if no additional carbon dioxide is added to the atmosphere, potentially unstoppable processes have been set in motion. Together with habitat destruction, overconsumption and pollution, global warming is fuelling the second harbinger of planetary catastrophe: the collapse of global biodiversity. In fact, many studies suggest that the Earth is now entering the 'Sixth Mass Extinction' cycle. According to IPCC reports, seventy-five per cent of the world's species will disappear in the next 240 years if human lifestyles continue as they are (Yücel & Kurnaz, 2021, p. 53).

3. Ecological Utopia and New Wave Environmental Movements in The Pursuit of an Ideal Future

Utopianism requires the utopian to vividly imagine the norms, institutions and individual relationships of a society that is qualitatively better than the one in which he or she lives (Hansot, 1974). A critical distinction is made between constructive utopianism (eu-topos or "the good place"), which demonstrates the potential for social change, and unrealizable imaginary worlds (ou-topos or "nowhere"). Many theorists (Pepper, 2010; Bright, 2012; Friberg, 2022) therefore follow Bloch's distinction between "abstract utopias" and "concrete utopias". According to Bloch (1986, p. 16), abstract utopias are based on imagination and fiction, while concrete utopias are based on critical social theory and can be developed from an understanding of existing social processes.

Some see the function of utopia as testing and clarifying ideas by enlivening imaginary narratives. As Mannheim (1936) noted, merely indulging in fantasies and ignoring the flaws of existing society can lead to a counter-revolutionary movement that tolerates problems rather than solving them. Constructive utopianism must therefore continue to criticize existing society and create 'free spaces' where we can do theoretical and practical work to test the applicability of utopian principles (Stillman, 2000, pp. 18-20). The theoretical framework of utopianism offers an intellectual grounding that historically includes the search for the ideal society and criticism of the status quo. However, the majority of environmental utopias face criticisms such as being based on fantasies disconnected from actual reality, envisaging a limited transformation by remaining specific to a certain time and place, and sometimes ignoring individual freedoms (Tek & Yarım

Altunay, 2023, pp. 110-111). While such utopias are seen as social engineering projects and offer criticisms of existing social and economic systems, they may remain weak in terms of practical applicability.

However, at this point, new generation environmental movements depart from the abstract framework of traditional utopianism, inspired by Bloch's conceptualisation of 'concrete utopias'. Instead of merely presenting idealised future projections in the face of the ecological crisis, these movements aim to produce concrete and viable alternatives by criticising the current system. Their opposition to greenwashing policies and their search for an alternative order 'here and now' against ecological destruction allow them to adopt a practical utopianism that goes beyond the status quo. In this context, Bernard Stiegler (2018) proposes the concept of 'Neganthropocene' as a response to the ecological and social destruction of the Anthropocene Epoch. This concept emphasises the need for new forms of collective action in the face of the current ecological crisis and climate panic and offers an important theoretical framework for making sense of the emergence of new generation environmental movements. According to Stiegler (2018, p. 40), human impact on the Earth's ecosystems has become so great that we have now reached a point where humanity is jeopardising its own existence. Therefore, the age of the Neganthropocene should be seen as an opportunity to rethink the human relationship with the natural world and to develop a new form of collective action.

The new generation of collective action forms is the rise of global resistance movements, so-called 'Blockadia'[2], which are organised at the grassroots level and resist extractive projects (e.g. pipelines, coal mines) on the ground, instead of mainstream environmental organisations - 'big green'[3] - that promote market-based solutions in partnership with corporate interests, which Klein (2014) criticises. These movements often bring together different groups united against environmental degradation. These direct actions also have tangible achievements: The 'Keystone XL Pipeline' protests in the United States, the 'Shell to Sea' protests in Ireland, and the recent 'Ende Gelände' protests near Bonn, Germany, the largest carbon dioxide emitter in Europe. Research by the Autonomous University of Barcelona, Lund University (Sweden) and Universidad del Magdalena (Colombia) has shown that such direct actions are increasing. The number of such protests globally has increased sixfold in the last decade. Blockadia actions have been organised in at least 48 locations in 10 years, up from only eight previously (Carey, 2017). These movements are not limited to resistance; they also aim to develop alternative economic and ecological models to the projects they oppose. For example, farmers in Nebraska building a barn powered by wind and solar energy in response to a pipeline project is a concrete and symbolic example of counter-production. Experiences in Germany and Denmark demonstrate how effective community-based and publicly owned energy systems can be in the transition to renewable energy. By 2000, about 85% of Denmark's wind turbines were owned by farmers and cooperatives. Although large

[2] The main characteristics of Blockadia are: They are locally orientated, they are formed by diverse coalitions, they are temporary but widespread, they take direct action, and they fight for the intersection of local and global issues.

[3] Big green is a term often used to refer to mainstream environmental organisations that are well-established, well-funded and have a significant influence on environmental policy and discourse. Examples include organisations such as the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the Sierra Club and the Nature Conservancy.

private companies have become increasingly active in offshore projects, the most successful energy transitions in both countries have stemmed from grassroots initiatives. Community participation in energy production and decision-making processes has accelerated the local acceptance and spread of these projects. In contrast, the lack of local involvement often leads to resistance that can jeopardize project success. This illustrates that ecological transformation is not only a technical process but also a social one, emphasizing the relevance of energy democracy (Klein, 2014, p. 139).

Similarly, local, diverse, and resilient agricultural models such as "agroecology" are supported to enhance food security and address climate change. New wave environmental movements, with their participatory structures, horizontal organization, and efforts to strengthen local democracy, aim to empower communities in shaping energy and production systems (Klein, 2014, p. 406; Bohl et al., 2021).

The Fridays for Future movement has galvanized a new generation of youth movements around the world, powered by children who protest by skipping school every Friday. The movement takes a stance that questions the meaning of education when governments ignore scientific evidence and disregard expert advice despite the urgent need for action. Supported by teachers, academics and parents, FFF has enabled young people to take an active role in the climate struggle. This growth has also contributed to the emergence of new youth leaders who are courageously campaigning to draw attention to the climate crisis. Activists such as Vanessa Nakate from Uganda and Disha Ravi from India have raised awareness of the climate emergency, giving meaning to statistics through their personal stories. In 2019, FFF spearheaded the world's first large-scale climate protest, the "Global Climate Strike", which mobilized four million people in 163 countries. One of the greatest achievements of this movement is that millions of children, despite their young age, inspired older generations to support the climate struggle (Snelson, 2023).

Similarly, in 2018, Extinction Rebellion (XR) reached 1,265 local chapters in 79 countries in the UK, with the success of raising awareness and widening the debate on climate change. XR has provided a platform for such talent, just as FFF has nurtured new young leaders. Using the slogan 'The Science is Clear. Our future is not', XR is a decentralised, international and politically non-partisan movement that uses non-violent direct action and civil disobedience to persuade governments to act fairly on the 'climate and ecological emergency' (Extinction Rebellion, 2025). XR is an internationally organised civil disobedience movement demanding systemic change in the face of ecological crisis and climate change. Due to its non-hierarchical structure and open participation, XR allows individuals to get involved in the movement without any membership procedure. The movement encourages a broad participation by including individuals without a background in activism. In this respect, XR stands out as a movement that goes beyond traditional forms of environmental protest and brings together people from different social segments.

XR's basic strategic approach is built on nonviolent resistance. In the historical context, nonviolent forms of action pioneered by figures such as Martin Luther King and Gandhi have been adopted by XR as a means of struggle against the climate crisis. One of the main arguments of the movement is that traditional methods of raising awareness - such as leaflet distribution, marches and informative events - are not effective enough, and given the urgency of the current ecological

crisis, more radical and effective forms of action should be adopted. Based on scientific research showing that non-violent action has historically been more successful, the movement argues that, unlike violent protest, it can encourage wider sections of society to join the movement. Given that violent protests are often limited to young and male participants and have divisive effects on society, XR's adoption of nonviolent action provides a critical advantage in terms of engaging children, the elderly and less politically engaged individuals in the movement. This strategy demonstrates that the movement is not only engaged in direct action, but also in a battle for public opinion (Extinction Rebellion, 2025).

This new generation of environmental movement is shaped by the principles of 'tell the truth, act now, and be above politics'. The movement calls on governments to declare a state of emergency on the climate and ecological crisis and to tell the 'truth' in collaboration with other organisations to emphasise the need for change. It also emphasises the need for immediate action 'now' to halt biodiversity loss and reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2025. It proposes the creation of a Citizens' Assembly to ensure climate and ecological justice and argues that this assembly should function as an independent mechanism to guide national and international policy decisions. Thus, it is aimed to shape environmental policy decisions with a supra-political approach, based on direct public participation (Extinction Rebellion, 2025).

The FFF, XR and other new generation environmental movements are not just organisations advocating for their own interests, but also organising forums to ensure public scrutiny of environmental policies and holding governments accountable for their climate commitments. By demonstrating the importance and power of protest, these movements show that we are not doomed to a dystopian future and that ecological destruction can be prevented. In this sense, they revive the utopian hope that exists in every dystopia.

Based on a concrete, scientifically proven climate crisis, the new generation of environmental movements have developed a form of struggle that is not based on fantasies, but rather on the stark reality. Unlike traditional utopias, they focus on practical achievements that directly intervene in today's ecological problems, rather than merely designing an 'ideal' order in the future. These movements, which can be organised in different times and places on a global scale by using digital means, transcend temporal and spatial boundaries by (dis)binding the struggle to the 'here and now'. At the same time, by putting freedom and creativity at the centre, they become not only an environmental movement but also a part of social transformation.

In this context, the relationship of new generation environmental movements with utopian thought is based on the concept of 'concrete utopias' defined by Bloch rather than the abstract ideals of traditional utopias. That is, they argue that utopianism should function as a critical force that makes social change possible. Instead of unrealisable dreams, they aim to produce viable and sustainable solutions based on the critique and transformation of the existing system.

Conclusion

Today, the world is facing multiple crises and is entering a period in which unresolved crises generate new ones and create global instability environment. In the COP Summits organised under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and in the IPCC reports,

which constitute the scientific pillar of the convention, there is a broad consensus that the climate crisis is a scientific fact and that annual average temperature increases will exceed 2°C unless necessary measures are taken. However, despite this, there is no international consensus on a solution and radical measures to be taken on a global scale cannot be implemented due to political and economic interests. In this context, despite bearing the historical responsibility for the climate crisis, the early industrialised states are reluctant to fulfil their financing obligations due to the economic crisis and domestic political balances. While the effectiveness of fossil fuel lobbies makes the implementation of global climate policies more difficult, countries such as China, India, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, which are considered as developed economies today, prioritise taking a place in the economic race and push the climate crisis to the background. Especially under the Trump administration, the US withdrawal from climate negotiations has further weakened the viability of international climate policies. In this process, Pacific small island states, Sub-Saharan African countries, young generations and disadvantaged groups, which are directly affected by the climate crisis and underrepresented in global decision-making mechanisms, emerge as the biggest victims of the crisis.

In this context, while the likelihood of ecological dystopia becoming a reality in the near future is increasing, ten years after the Paris Climate Agreement, countries have failed to fulfil their commitments and fallen behind the targets set. At this point, the failure of governments to fulfil their environmental commitments has paved the way for the emergence of a new generation of environmentalist youth movements, known for their innovative, inclusive, peaceful, direct action approaches, which are organised from the grassroots, alarmed about the climate crisis and demand action.

This study evaluates the discourse and action practices of new generation environmental movements and, based on the analyzed examples and theoretical framework, demonstrates how these movements align with Bloch's concept of concrete utopias. The findings reveal that these movements adopt three core principles consistent with Bloch's conceptualization:

First, new wave environmental movements are not solely focused on environmental protection; they critically examine the current social and economic order based on scientific reality and strive to develop concrete, feasible alternatives through this critique. Examples such as the successes achieved during the Keystone XL Pipeline protests and the local, community-based renewable energy models in Germany and Denmark reflect the practical implications of this approach. Second, these movements carry transformative potential in the construction of alternative ways of living. Movements like XR and FFF propose a clear roadmap for systemic transformation through specific demands such as declaring a state of emergency, establishing citizens' assemblies, and engaging in direct action. Third, these movements are organized through a participatory, inclusive, and grassroots democratic approach, enabling broad representation by bringing together individuals from various segments of society. Their advocacy for Indigenous rights, emphasis on intergenerational knowledge transfer, and capacity to organize globally via digital means are concrete examples of this inclusivity.

In these respects, new generation environmental movements demonstrate a meaningful theoretical convergence with Bloch's understanding of concrete utopias, which define utopia

through the potential possibilities within current reality. These movements move beyond the question of 'What should be?' and focus instead on 'What can be done here and now?' not stopping at critique but actively creating transformative spaces for action. In conclusion, these movements argue that a dystopian future is not inevitable and revive the idea of utopian hope. Their aim goes beyond merely protecting nature; they seek to unlock the creative potential of life and to transform individuals into active agents. They demand systemic change, connect local resistances with global networks, and offer a hopeful and regenerative vision for the future.

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that new generation environmental movements embody the principles of concrete utopias by combining scientific critique, actionable alternatives, and inclusive participation. This research contributes to the literature by offering a contemporary application of Bloch's theoretical framework to the practices of environmental movements such as Fridays for Future and Extinction Rebellion. It highlights the capacity of these movements to act not only as ecological resistance, but also as vehicles of transformative social change grounded in real possibilities.

In this context, the activity of young people in environmental movements makes them not only a part of a social movement, but also a carrier of environmental conscience. In this context, especially the countries with developed economies that cause the climate crisis and global authorities should take into account the just demands of young generations. The solution of the climate crisis and other global problems can be possible not only through individual or national policies, but also through global co-operation and public participation. Otherwise, it will be inevitable that unresolved crises will produce new crises and the world will continue to move towards a future that pushes the limits of ecological collapse.

Genişletilmiş Özet

Birleşmiş Milletler İklim Değişikliği Çerçeve Sözleşmesi kapsamında düzenlenen COP zirvelerinde ve sözleşmenin bilimsel ayağını oluşturan IPCC raporlarında, iklim krizinin bilimsel bir gerçek olduğu ve gerekli önlemler alınmadığı takdirde yıllık ortalama sıcaklık artışlarının 2°C'yi aşacağı konusunda geniş bir mutabakat bulunmaktadır. Ancak buna ragmen çözüm noktasında uluslararası bir uzlaşı sağlanamamakta ve küresel ölçekte alınması gereken radikal önlemler, siyasi ve ekonomik çıkarlar nedeniyle hayata geçirilememektedir. Bu bağlamda, erken sanayileşmiş devletler, iklim krizinin tarihsel sorumluluğunu taşımalarına rağmen ekonomik kriz ve iç politik dengeler nedeniyle finansman yükümlülüklerini yerine getirmekte isteksiz davranmaktadır. Fosil yakıt lobilerinin etkisi, küresel iklim politikalarının uygulanmasını daha da zorlaştırırken, günümüzde gelişmiş ekonomiler kategorisinde değerlendirilen Çin, Hindistan, Suudi Arabistan, Katar gibi ülkeler ise ekonomik rekabette öne geçmeyi önceliklendirerek iklim krizini ikinci plana itmektedirler. ABD'nin, özellikle Trump yönetimi döneminde, iklim müzakerelerinden çekilmesi, uluslararası iklim politikalarının uygulanabilirliğini daha da zayıflatmaktadır. Bu süreçte, iklim krizinden doğrudan etkilenen ancak küresel karar alma mekanizmalarında yeterince temsil edilmeyen Pasifik küçük ada devletleri, Sahra Altı Afrika ülkeleri, genç nesiller ve dezavantajlı gruplar krizin en büyük mağdurları olarak öne çıkmaktadır.

Kontrolsüz üretim süreçleri, aşırı tüketim kültürü ve doğayla uyumsuz enerji kullanımının ekolojik dengeyi bozması, gezegenin büyük bir dönüşüm geçirmesine yol açmıştır. Bu bozulma sonucunda ortaya çıkan iklim değişikliği; su kıtlığı, gıda güvensizliği, biyolojik çeşitlilik kaybı, aşırı hava olayları ve kitlesel göçler gibi sorunlar ekolojik distopyanın unsurları olarak görülse de yeni dalga çevreci hareketlerin sunduğu farklılık yaratma potansiyelleri dikkate değerdir. Ekolojik çöküşün hız kazandığı bu dönemde, yeni nesil çevreci hareketler, ütopyacı düşüncenin eleştirel ve dönüştürücü potansiyeliyle ilişkilendirilebilir. Fridays for Future (FFF), Extinction Rebellion (XR) gibi hareketler, yalnızca ekolojik krize dikkat çekmekle kalmayıp, alternatif bir toplumsal düzen arayışına da zemin hazırlamaktadır. Bu hareketler, distopik bir geleceğin kaçınılmaz olmadığını göstererek, ütopyayı soyut bir tasarımın ötesinde, gerçekleştirilebilir bir dönüşüm projesi olarak sunmaktadır.

Bu çalışmada, yeni nesil çevre hareketlerinin söylem ve eylem pratikleri değerlendirilmekte; analiz edilen örnekler ve teorik çerçeve doğrultusunda, bu hareketlerin Ernst Bloch'un somut ütopya anlayışıyla nasıl örtüştüğü ortaya konmaktadır. Sonuç olarak, bu hareketlerin Bloch'un kavramsallaştırmasıyla uyumlu üç temel ilkeyi benimsedikleri görülmektedir:

İlk olarak, yeni dalga çevre hareketleri yalnızca çevre koruma odaklı değildir; mevcut toplumsal ve ekonomik düzeni, bilimsel gerçekliğe dayalı eleştirilerle sorgulamakta ve bu eleştiriler üzerinden somut, uygulanabilir alternatifler üretmeye çalışmaktadır. Blockadia örneğinde olduğu gibi, Keystone XL Boru Hattı protestolarında elde edilen başarılar ve Almanya ile Danimarka'daki yerel, topluluk temelli yenilenebilir enerji modelleri, bu yaklaşımın pratik yansımalarıdır.

İkinci olarak, bu hareketler alternatif yaşam biçimlerinin inşasında dönüştürücü bir potansiyel taşımaktadır. XR ve FFF gibi hareketler, doğrudan eylem, yurttaş meclisleri ve acil durum ilanı gibi somut taleplerle, sistemsel dönüşüm için net bir yol haritası çizmektedir. Üçüncü olarak, bu hareketler katılımcı, kapsayıcı ve tabana dayalı bir demokratik anlayışla örgütlenmekte; toplumun farklı kesimlerinden bireyleri bir araya getirme kapasitesiyle geniş bir temsiliyet sağlamaktadır. Yerli halkların haklarını savunmak, nesiller arası bilgi aktarımına önem vermek ve dijital olanaklarla küresel ölçekte örgütlenmek bu kapsayıcılığın somut örneklerindendir.

Ütopyacılığın teorik çerçevesi, tarihsel olarak ideal toplum arayışını ve mevcut statükoya yönelik eleştiriyi içeren bir düşünsel zemin sunmaktadır. Ancak çevreyle ilgili ütopyalar, çoğunlukla gerçeklikten kopuk fantezilere dayanması, belirli bir zaman ve mekâna özgü kalarak dönüşüm potansiyelinin sınırlı olması ve bazılarında bireysel özgürlükleri göz ardı etmesi gibi eleştirilerle karşılaşmaktadır (Tek & Yarım Altunay, 2023, ss. 110-111). Bu tür ütopyalar, toplumsal mühendislik projeleri olarak görülerek, mevcut sosyal ve ekonomik sistemlere yönelik eleştiriler sunarken, pratik uygulanabilirlik açısından zayıf kalabilmektedir.

Ancak yeni nesil çevreci hareketler bu noktada Bloch'un (1986) "somut ütopyalar" kavramsallaştırmasından ilham alarak geleneksel ütopyacılığın soyut çerçevesinden ayrılmaktadır. Bu hareketler, ekolojik kriz karşısında idealleştirilmiş gelecek projeksiyonları sunmak yerine, mevcut sistemin eleştirisini yaparak, somut ve uygulanabilir alternatifler

üretmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Yeşil aklama politikalarına karşı durmaları ve ekolojik yıkıma karşı "şimdi ve burada" alternatif bir düzen arayışı içinde olmaları, statükonun ötesine geçen pratik bir ütopyacılık anlayışını benimsemelerine olanak tanımaktadır. Bu bağlamda, Bernard Stiegler (2018), Antroposen Çağı'nın ekolojik ve toplumsal tahribatına karşı bir yanıt olarak "Negantroposen Çağı" (Neganthropocene) kavramını önermektedir. Bu kavram, mevcut ekolojik kriz ve iklim paniği karşısında yeni kolektif eylem biçimlerine duyulan ihtiyacı vurgulamakta ve yeni nesil çevreci hareketlerin ortaya çıkışını anlamlandırmada önemli bir kuramsal çerçeve sunmaktadır. Stiegler'a (2018, s. 40) göre, Negantroposen çağı, insanların doğal dünyayla olan ilişkisini yeniden düşünmek ve yeni bir kolektif eylem biçimi geliştirmek için bir fırsat olarak görülmelidir. Bu bağlamda, Naomi Klein'in "Blockadia" kavramı, yeni nesil çevreci hareketlerin doğasını anlamada önemli bir kavramsal çerçeve sunmaktadır. Klein (2014), fosil yakıt projelerini durdurmak için yerel toplulukların ve aktivistlerin oluşturduğu direniş ağlarının, ekolojik ve toplumsal adalet mücadelesinde kritik bir rol oynadığını vurgulamaktadır. Bu hareketler, yalnızca ekolojik taleplerle sınırlı kalmayıp, kapitalist ekonomik sistemin sürdürülebilirlik üzerindeki etkilerini de sorgulayan radikal bir dönüşüm arayışını temsil etmektedir.

FFF, XR ve diğer yeni nesil çevreci hareketler, bilimsel olarak kanıtlanmış somut bir iklim krizinden yola çıkarak, gerçekliği tüm çıplaklığıyla ortaya koyan ve fantezilere dayanmayan bir mücadele biçimi geliştirmektedir. Geleneksel ütopyaların aksine, yalnızca gelecekteki "ideal" bir düzeni tasarlamak yerine bugünün ekolojik sorunlarına doğrudan müdahale eden pratik kazanımlara odaklanmaktadır. Dijital olanakları kullanarak küresel ölçekte farklı zaman ve mekânlarda örgütlenebilen bu hareketler, mücadeleyi "şimdiye ve bugüne" bağ(ım)lı kılmaktan çıkararak zamansal ve mekânsal sınırları aşmaktadır. Aynı zamanda özgürlük ve yaratıcılığı merkeze alarak, yalnızca bir çevre hareketi değil, toplumsal dönüşümün de bir parçası haline gelmektedir. Bununla birlikte, bu hareketler yalnızca kendi çıkarlarını savunan örgütler olmanın ötesine geçerek, çevre politikalarının halk tarafından denetlenmesini sağlamak amacıyla forumlar düzenlemekte ve hükümetleri verdikleri iklim taahhütleri konusunda sorumlu tutmaktadır. Bu hareketler, protestonun önemini ve gücünü ortaya koyarak, distopik bir geleceğe mahkûm olmadığımızı ve ekolojik yıkımın önlenebileceğini göstermekte; her distopyanın içinde var olan ütopyacı umudu canlandırmaktadır.

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