

Continuity-Based Environmental Communication: Ecological Persistence in Observational Documentary

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ABSTRACT

Keywords

Environmental Communication;
Documentary Film; Observational
Documentary; Ecological Persistence;
Indigenous Everyday Practice

Environmental communication has traditionally emphasized crisis framing, advocacy narratives, and audience impact, positioning documentary film as a persuasive instrument. Recent relational perspectives, however, suggest that ecological meaning may also emerge through everyday practice rather than explicit rhetorical confrontation. This study examines how an observational documentary can function as environmental communication through the articulation of routine ecological practices. Using a qualitative interpretative approach, the study conducts close textual analysis of the 24-minute documentary *Pusenai – The Last Dayak Basap* (2018), focusing on recurring practices, scene sequencing, editing structure, and visual contrast. The findings show that environmental meaning is constructed through the sustained representation of everyday activities, including rattan weaving, forest foraging, communal interaction, and cultural transmission. These practices are mediated through repetition, duration, and continuity, allowing ecological relations to emerge as lived and ongoing conditions rather than as crisis-driven narratives. The study proposes ecological persistence as an analytical concept describing the continuity of human–nature relations as structured within observational documentary form. This perspective extends environmental communication beyond persuasion-centered paradigms by highlighting continuity-based representation as a significant mode of ecological articulation. The findings also suggest that environmental communication may operate through perceptual visibility rather than explicit persuasion.

1. Introduction

Environmental communication has developed as an interdisciplinary field concerned with how ecological issues are produced, mediated, and understood within social contexts. Over the past several decades, scholarly attention has been largely directed toward crisis-oriented communication, particularly in relation to climate change, environmental degradation, and persuasive strategies aimed at influencing public opinion and policy (Comfort & Park, 2018; Pezzullo & Cox, 2022). Within this dominant paradigm, environmental issues are typically framed as urgent problems requiring immediate response, positioning communication as an instrument of persuasion, mobilization, and behavioral change. While this approach has played a crucial role in raising environmental awareness globally, it also tends to privilege moments of disruption and crisis over the continuity of everyday ecological relations that sustain human–environment interactions.

This crisis-centered orientation is particularly evident in the study of environmental media, where documentary film has frequently been conceptualized as a tool of advocacy and social intervention. Within this framework, documentaries are often analyzed in terms of their ability to expose environmental destruction, critique extractive industries, and mobilize audiences toward pro-

environmental action (Chattoo, 2020; Nisbet & Aufderheide, 2009). Empirical studies have further demonstrated that environmental documentaries can shape audience attitudes, influence behavioral intentions, and generate emotional engagement that motivates environmental concern (Bieniek-tobasco et al., 2019; Janpol & Dilts, 2016). Such approaches provide important insights into the persuasive capacity of media; however, they also tend to reduce environmental communication to intentional messaging designed to produce measurable impact, thereby overlooking other forms of ecological meaning-making that are less explicit but equally significant.

In response to these limitations, recent developments in environmental communication scholarship have begun to expand the analytical lens beyond crisis narratives and advocacy discourse. Scholars have argued that environmental communication should not be understood solely as a strategic effort to influence public opinion, but also as a relational practice embedded in everyday life (Pezzullo & Cox, 2022). From this perspective, human–nature relations are constituted through routine activities, cultural values, and embodied experiences that are continuously enacted and transmitted across generations. Hansen (2019) further emphasizes that media do not simply convey environmental information but actively organize environmental reality through representational practices, visual framing, and narrative structure. Consequently, environmental meaning may emerge not only through explicit rhetorical articulation but also through mediated representations of lived ecological relations that unfold in ordinary contexts.

Indigenous communities provide a particularly significant context for understanding this relational dimension of environmental communication. In many Indigenous knowledge systems, ecological relations are not externalized as issues requiring intervention but are integrated into everyday practices, cultural traditions, and social organization (Whyte, 2017). These relations are sustained through embodied knowledge, intergenerational transmission, and collective engagement with the environment. Research on communities such as the Dayak Wehea in East Kalimantan demonstrates that forest management practices, cultural rituals, and everyday subsistence activities function as constitutive forms of environmental communication rather than reactive responses to environmental crisis (Widowati & Wulandari, 2022). In such contexts, the environment is not framed as an object of advocacy but as an integral dimension of lived experience, thereby challenging dominant paradigms that prioritize confrontation, urgency, and persuasion.

When such lived ecological practices are represented through documentary film, new questions emerge regarding how environmental meaning is mediated through cinematic form. Documentary, as Nichols (2024) suggests, is not a neutral reflection of reality but an organized representation shaped through narrative sequencing, editing rhythm, and visual composition. The ways in which scenes are structured, repeated, or juxtaposed contribute to how audiences interpret social and environmental realities (Pearlman, 2013, 2019). Moreover, reflexivity in documentary practice highlights that filmmaking itself is a process of knowledge production, where creative decisions play a role in shaping meaning (Candy & Edmonds, 2018; Renov, 2025; Sanders & Nash, 2019). Despite these insights, the intersection between environmental communication and documentary studies remains relatively underexplored, particularly in the context of Southeast Asian Indigenous communities.

This gap becomes evident in the continued dominance of crisis-centered analyses of environmental documentary. While existing research has extensively examined advocacy narratives, persuasive strategies, and audience reception, relatively limited attention has been given to how observational documentary modes may articulate environmental meaning through the representation of everyday practices. In particular, there is a lack of analysis concerning how cinematic elements such as duration, repetition, sequencing, and visual contrast mediate ecological relations without relying on explicit rhetorical framing or confrontational discourse. As a result, forms of environmental communication that operate through continuity, routine, and relational practice remain insufficiently theorized within both environmental communication and documentary scholarship.

Addressing this gap, this study examines how environmental meaning can emerge through the continuity of everyday ecological practices as represented in observational documentary form. Rather than positioning environmental communication as persuasion or protest, the study considers how routine activities, such as weaving, foraging, and communal interaction can function as meaningful articulations of human–nature relations when mediated through cinematic structure. This perspective emphasizes continuity as a key organizing principle, where ecological relations are not constructed through dramatic events or crisis narratives but through sustained patterns of practice that become visible over time.

The documentary *Pusenai – The Last Dayak Basap* (2018) provides a relevant case for exploring this perspective. The film portrays the daily life of an elderly Dayak Basap woman who continues to engage in rattan weaving, forest foraging, and cultural transmission within a changing landscape influenced by oil palm expansion. Rather than constructing an explicit narrative of resistance or environmental crisis, the film foregrounds the persistence of everyday practices that reflect ongoing human–nature relations. This raises important questions regarding how such continuity is structured, mediated, and interpreted as environmental communication within the documentary form.

Based on this context, the present study aims to analyze how an observational documentary can function as environmental communication through the articulation of everyday ecological practices. Specifically, the research seeks to: (1) identify the ecological practices depicted in the documentary that signify human–nature relations; (2) analyze how sequencing and editing structure mediate these practices into coherent environmental meaning; and (3) examine how relational connections between embodied knowledge, communal practice, and cinematic structure contribute to the articulation of ecological continuity. To achieve these objectives, the study adopts a qualitative interpretative approach through close textual analysis of the 24-minute documentary *Pusenai – The Last Dayak Basap* (2018), focusing on narrative structure, visual organization, and temporal sequencing as key elements of environmental communication.

2. Method

This study addresses the research problem of how environmental communication can emerge through observational documentary without relying on explicit advocacy, by employing a qualitative interpretative approach based on close textual analysis of audiovisual material. The method is designed to examine how everyday ecological practices are structured, sequenced, and mediated within documentary form to produce environmental meaning.

The research focuses on the documentary film as a structured audiovisual text rather than on audience reception or production processes. This approach is grounded in established perspectives in documentary and film studies, which emphasize that meaning is not simply recorded but constructed through cinematic elements such as sequencing, editing, rhythm, and visual composition (Nichols, 2024; Pearlman, 2013). Close textual analysis is used as the primary analytical method to investigate how narrative and visual structures organize meaning beyond explicit verbal articulation. As an established method in film studies, its procedural foundation is supported by prior scholarship, while its application in this study is adapted specifically to examine environmental communication within documentary form.

The primary data source is the 24-minute observational documentary *Pusenai – The Last Dayak Basap* (2018), which portrays the everyday life of a Dayak Basap woman in Teluk Sumbang, East Kalimantan. The film presents activities such as rattan weaving, forest foraging, communal interaction, and cultural transmission without relying on explanatory narration or advocacy discourse. This characteristic makes it suitable for analyzing how environmental meaning is mediated through continuity of everyday practices rather than through crisis-centered framing. The unit of analysis consists of audiovisual sequences, including scenes, shot compositions, transitions, and temporal duration, which are treated as data representing the organization of ecological practices within the film.

Data collection was conducted through repeated viewing of the documentary to identify relevant patterns and structures. The film was first viewed in its entirety to understand the overall narrative flow. Subsequent viewings were conducted iteratively to segment the film into analytical units based on scenes and sequences. Each segment was categorized according to the type of activity depicted, such as weaving, foraging, gathering, and communal interaction. During this process, detailed notes were taken regarding visual composition, duration, repetition, and transitions between scenes. This iterative procedure allows the analysis to move beyond surface-level observation and capture deeper structural patterns within the film.

The analytical process follows a logical sequence that corresponds to the presentation of findings in the results section. First, everyday ecological practices are identified as primary indicators of human–nature relations. Second, the sequencing of these practices is examined to understand how narrative continuity is constructed across the film. Third, editing rhythm and temporal duration are analyzed to assess how processes are made visible through sustained representation rather than compression. Finally, structural contrasts within the film are examined, particularly the juxtaposition between everyday practices and scenes depicting environmental transformation, such as oil palm landscapes. This step is intended to understand how contrast functions not as a dominant narrative shift, but as a reframing element that clarifies continuity.

An important methodological consideration in this study is the researcher’s dual role as both analyst and filmmaker. This positionality is explicitly acknowledged through a reflexive approach. While formal production archives or detailed editing breakdowns are not systematically analyzed as primary data, the researcher’s experiential knowledge of the production process and editorial discussions provides contextual insight into how narrative coherence was constructed. Following reflexive documentary scholarship (Renov, 2025; Sanders & Nash, 2019), this positional awareness is treated not as a source of analytical bias, but as methodological transparency. At the same time, to maintain analytical rigor, the interpretation remains grounded in the observable narrative and visual structure of the completed film rather than subjective recollection.

To ensure analytical rigor, this study applies an iterative and systematic analytical procedure. Repeated viewing enables prolonged engagement with the data, allowing patterns to emerge progressively. A consistent analytical framework is applied across all sequences to maintain coherence, while interpretation is grounded in relevant theories from environmental communication and documentary studies. Transparency in the analytical process and researcher positioning further supports the credibility and replicability of the study.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Presenting the Result

Everyday Ecological Practices as Relational Continuity

Environmental meaning in the documentary emerges through the sustained visibility of everyday ecological practices rather than through explicit environmental narration. These practices are presented as recurring and continuous activities embedded within daily life, including weaving, foraging, material processing, and communal interaction. Across multiple sequences, the film emphasizes repetition, duration, and continuity, allowing ecological relations to become observable through routine action rather than dramatic narrative framing. In this structure, environmental meaning is not introduced through crisis or advocacy, but gradually constructed through the accumulation of everyday practices that reflect ongoing human–nature relations.

In addition to repetition, the film constructs continuity through subtle variations in framing and spatial positioning. While the same activities, such as weaving or material preparation, recur across sequences, they are presented from slightly different visual perspectives, including shifts between interior and exterior space, variations in camera distance, and changes in compositional balance. These variations prevent repetition from becoming static, instead producing a dynamic continuity in which everyday practices are experienced as ongoing yet evolving. Through this pattern, ecological relations are not only repeated but continuously re-situated within different spatial contexts, reinforcing their embeddedness in daily life.

To provide an overview of the patterns identified in the film, the key ecological practices and their cinematic mediation are summarized in Table 1. The table outlines the main analytical categories, representative scenes, and the cinematic elements through which these practices are structured. It also highlights recurring patterns and the forms of environmental meaning that emerge from these representations. This overview serves as a structural guide for the following analysis, which elaborates each category in detail based on its sequential and visual appearance in the film.

Table 1. Summary of Ecological Practices and Cinematic Mediation in the Documentary

Analytical Category	Key Scene / Sequence	Cinematic Elements	Observed Pattern	Environmental Meaning
Everyday Ecological Practices as Relational Continuity	Repeated scenes of weaving, foraging, and communal interaction	Repetition, long duration, static framing	Recurring daily activities across sequences	Ecological relations appear as routine and continuous rather than exceptional
Material Process (Weaving Chain)	Gathering → cleaning → drying → splitting → weaving	Sequential editing, process visibility	Continuous workflow across multiple scenes	Environmental dependence is expressed through material transformation
Embodied Knowledge and Material Negotiation	Cutting, pulling, transporting rattan; navigating forest terrain	Close and medium shots emphasizing bodily movement	Repetition of physical engagement with environment	Ecological knowledge appears as embodied practice rather than verbal explanation
Cross-Spatial Ecological Awareness	Boat journey and identification of marine life (sea turtles)	Observational framing, minimal intervention	Recognition across forest and coastal environments	Ecological familiarity operates across multiple spatial domains
Gendered Labor and Communal Practice	Women weaving collectively while conversing (Figure 2)	Group composition, continuous interaction	Integration of labor and social interaction	Environmental meaning is embedded in collective livelihood practices
Cultural Transmission	Dance instruction and collective music-making	Repetition, shared space with daily activities	Coexistence of cultural and material practices	Ecological continuity extends into identity and intergenerational knowledge
Structural Mediation and Contrast	Closing montage: burned land and heavy machinery	Visual contrast, scale difference, final placement	Juxtaposition after repeated daily practices	Environmental disruption is framed as intrusion into existing relational continuity

The following analysis elaborates these categories in detail, focusing on how ecological practices are structured and mediated across different sequences in the film when situated within the historical background of the Dayak Basap community. Traditionally inhabiting the karst highlands of East Kalimantan, particularly in Berau and Kutai Timur, the Dayak Basap were previously semi-nomadic and closely dependent on forest ecosystems. Although the film does not explicitly narrate this historical transition, the continuity of forest-dependent practices remains visible through repeated

actions such as gathering, weaving, and processing natural materials. This continuity is not presented as a historical narrative but as an observable pattern within the present, where ecological relations are embedded in routine activity.

Rattan weaving appears as the most frequently recurring practice and functions as a central node connecting multiple elements within the film. As shown in Figure 1 (00:01:29), weaving is performed within the domestic interior of a wooden house, with the rattan material visibly present as a direct extension of the forest environment. The visual framing integrates ecological labor into domestic space, where the activity is positioned as part of everyday routine rather than as a distinct or ceremonial act. The presence of rattan fibers within the frame maintains a material connection to the forest even when the forest itself is not visually depicted.

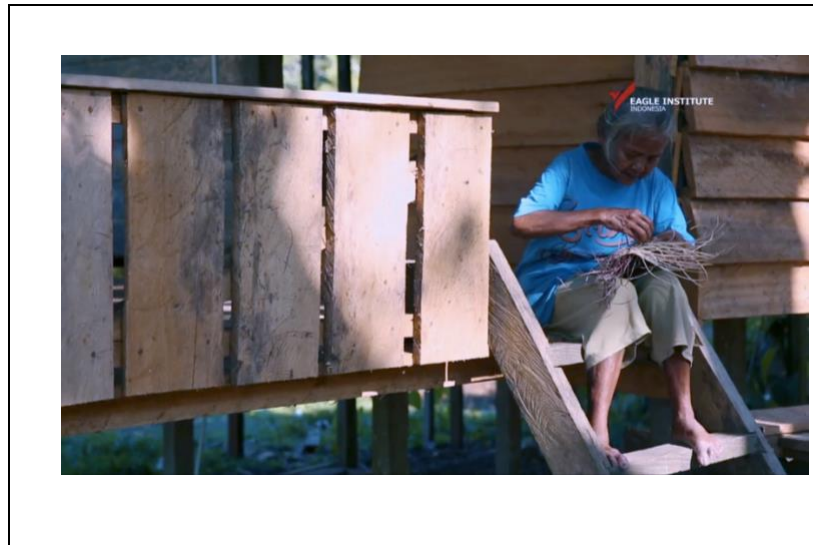


Figure 1 Pusenai weaving rattan inside her wooden house (00:01:29), illustrating the integration of ecological labor within domestic space.

The process of weaving is consistently linked to preceding and subsequent activities, forming a sequential chain of material transformation. Scenes depicting gathering, cleaning, drying, splitting, and weaving appear across different segments of the film, creating a continuous workflow structure. These sequences are presented with extended duration, allowing each stage of the process to remain visible. The temporal unfolding of these activities prevents compression into symbolic representation and instead maintains the visibility of process as an ongoing condition.

Beyond the continuity of material processes, ecological relations are also articulated through embodied interaction with the environment. Forest access is further represented through embodied interaction with the environment. Actions such as pulling, cutting, trimming, and transporting rattan are shown through close and medium framing that emphasizes bodily movement and physical effort. These sequences highlight how ecological relations are mediated through direct engagement with terrain and material, where knowledge is expressed through action rather than verbal explanation. The repetition of these bodily actions across scenes reinforces their role as consistent indicators of ecological practice.

The emphasis on embodied knowledge also contributes to ongoing discussions regarding the epistemological status of Indigenous environmental knowledge. Rather than being translated into abstract categories or externalized as data, knowledge in this context remains situated within practice. This challenges representational frameworks that extract knowledge from its lived context and instead supports approaches that recognize knowledge as inseparable from the conditions of its enactment.

Embodied Knowledge and Material Negotiation.

The film deepens ecological articulation by foregrounding embodied knowledge. Forest access is not abstractly described; it is shown as physical negotiation. Pulling, cutting, trimming, and transporting rattan emphasize bodily strain and endurance. The ecological relation is mediated through muscle, balance, and tactile familiarity with terrain. Labor becomes the visible interface between human and landscape.

Material transformation unfolds as a sequential chain: extraction, cleaning, drying, splitting, weaving. Each stage is presented with durational pacing, allowing process to remain visible rather than compressed into outcome. This extended visibility constructs ecological continuity as workflow. Forest resource does not appear as raw nature but as material entering a structured cycle of transformation. Environmental dependence becomes legible through processual linkage rather than declarative explanation.

Embodied knowledge is also demonstrated in subtle observational competence, such as recognizing marine life during the boat journey. The identification of sea turtles extends ecological familiarity beyond forest space into coastal environment. Knowledge emerges as lived recognition rather than didactic instruction. In these moments, the body functions as archive, carrying accumulated ecological memory across landscapes. Ecological relation is therefore not episodic but continuous across spatial domains.

Gendered Labor, Communal Space, and Cultural Transmission.

Ecological persistence in the film is socially mediated through women's communal practice. Weaving circles operate as relational hubs where economic production, social interaction, and environmental reflection converge. As shown in Figure 2, women gather while weaving and discussing the potential entry of oil palm companies. The dialogue unfolds within ongoing craft activity rather than as staged political confrontation. By embedding environmental concern within collective labor, the film underscores that ecological discourse is grounded in material livelihood and gendered responsibility.

The presence of gendered labor further complicates conventional distinctions between environmental, economic, and social domains. The findings suggest that these domains are not separate analytical categories but intersecting dimensions of the same relational system. Environmental communication, therefore, cannot be fully understood without considering how ecological relations are sustained through everyday economic practices and social organization.

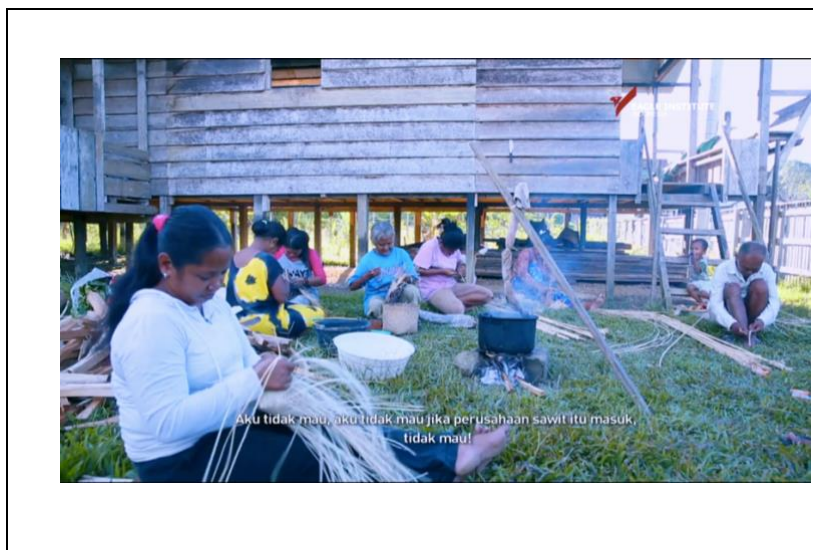


Figure 2 Women weaving collectively while discussing potential oil palm expansion (00:01:50)

Gendered labor becomes structurally significant in sustaining this relational continuity. Women maintain an adaptive economic alternative rooted in forest access, particularly through rattan weaving. The circulation of woven bags beyond the village through small-scale trade demonstrates that craft production is neither nostalgic nor symbolic alone; it is economically consequential. The relational network connecting forest resource, domestic labor, and local commerce reveals how environmental disruption would directly affect economic stability. In this context, ecological persistence is inseparable from women embodied and collective work.

Cultural transmission further expands this relational configuration beyond material production. Scenes of dance instruction and collective music-making situate ecological continuity within symbolic and intergenerational domains. Cultural practices are performed alongside weaving and communal gathering, reinforcing identity tied to place and shared memory. Through bodily movement, rhythm, and repetition, ecological relations extend into the sphere of belonging and heritage. Persistence therefore encompasses both livelihood and cultural continuity, linking survival, knowledge, and collective identity within an integrated ecology of practice.

Structural Mediation and Relational Contrast.

The film's observational mode constructs coherence through duration and repetition rather than narrative progression. Scenes are allowed to unfold without interruption, and transitions between sequences maintain continuity rather than abrupt shifts. This temporal structure enables patterns to emerge gradually, where meaning is constructed through accumulation of repeated practices rather than through explicit explanation.

The closing sequence introduces visual elements of environmental transformation, including burned land and industrial machinery. These images appear after the repetition of everyday practices has been established. The juxtaposition between small-scale human activity and large-scale industrial presence creates a visible contrast in scale, movement, and spatial organization. This contrast does not replace the continuity of everyday practice but reframes it within a broader environmental context.

The role of cinematic structure in this study also points toward a broader reconsideration of media form in environmental communication research. While much of the existing literature emphasizes content and message, the findings highlight the importance of formal elements such as duration, sequencing, and repetition in shaping how environmental meaning is perceived. This suggests that analytical attention should extend beyond what is represented to how it is structured temporally and visually.

Through this structural arrangement, the film presents environmental meaning as emerging from the observable continuity of everyday ecological practices. Repetition, sequencing, duration, and contrast function as the primary elements through which ecological relations are made visible, without reliance on explicit narrative framing or advocacy discourse.

3.2 Create a Discussion

Building on the patterns identified in the results, this section interprets how these structural elements contribute to broader discussions in environmental communication and documentary studies. The findings suggest that environmental meaning in the documentary is constructed through the sustained visibility of everyday ecological practices, rather than through explicit advocacy or crisis framing. This mode of articulation aligns with recent developments in environmental communication scholarship that challenge the dominance of crisis-oriented paradigms. Rather than positioning environmental communication solely as a strategic effort to influence public attitudes or behavior, scholars have increasingly emphasized its constitutive and relational dimensions, where meaning arises from lived interaction with the environment (Cox & Stephen, 2015; Pezzullo & Cox, 2022). In this context, the documentary demonstrates how ecological relations can be communicated not through rhetorical intervention, but through the representation of routine practices that are continuously enacted. This perspective further suggests that environmental communication may operate through perceptual orientation, where meaning emerges from the visibility of relational conditions rather than from explicit persuasive intent (Milstein et al., 2017).

This perspective stands in contrast to the prevailing orientation in environmental media studies, which has largely focused on advocacy narratives, moral urgency, and crisis representation (Brereton, 2020; Buell, 2009). In such approaches, environmental problems are typically constructed as dramatic disruptions requiring immediate response, and documentary film functions as a tool for raising awareness and mobilizing action. While this paradigm has been influential, it also tends to frame environmental communication as episodic and event-driven. The findings of this study suggest an alternative configuration, in which environmental meaning is organized around continuity rather than disruption. By presenting everyday ecological practices as stable and recurring, the documentary reorients attention from moments of crisis to the ongoing conditions that sustain human–nature relations. This shift is consistent with critiques that argue crisis framing can obscure the everyday relational conditions through which environmental meaning is lived and sustained (Nerlich et al., 2010).

The absence of voice-over narration and the reliance on observational techniques further reinforce this shift. Without explicit verbal framing, meaning is not directed but emerges through temporal immersion and visual repetition. As suggested by Nichols (2024), documentary film constructs social reality through representational structure rather than direct transmission of information. In this case, the durational emphasis on labor, repetition, and communal activity allows viewers to engage with ecological relations as lived experience rather than abstract concepts. This supports Brereton's (2016) argument that environmental film can cultivate ecological ethics through aesthetic strategies that situate audiences within relational contexts, rather than through didactic messaging. It also aligns with perspectives in visual anthropology and ethnographic film that emphasize observation and process over narrative intervention, where meaning emerges through sustained engagement with everyday life (Pink, 2020).

The embodied dimension of ecological knowledge observed in the film further expands this interpretation. The depiction of activities such as rattan processing, forest navigation, and material transformation illustrates how ecological understanding is embedded in bodily practice rather than articulated through discourse. This resonates with Whyte's (2017) argument that in many Indigenous contexts, ecological relations are constitutive of everyday life rather than reactive responses to environmental crisis. Knowledge is expressed through action, repetition, and skill, functioning as an accumulated form of lived competence. By maintaining the visibility of process rather than reducing it to outcome, the documentary allows ecological knowledge to remain situated within practice. This challenges representational models that externalize Indigenous knowledge as informational content detached from its lived context.

At the same time, the film demonstrates that ecological relations are not only material but also social. The prominence of gendered labor and communal practice highlights how environmental communication is embedded within collective interaction and economic activity. The depiction of weaving as a shared practice, accompanied by informal discussion of environmental change, illustrates that ecological awareness is mediated within everyday social spaces rather than through formal political discourse. This observation aligns with perspectives that locate environmental communication within relational networks and community-based practices (Pezzullo & Cox, 2022; Ramirez et al., 2020). The findings therefore extend the scope of environmental communication to include forms of articulation that are continuous, informal, and embedded in livelihood practices.

The integration of cultural transmission into this relational framework further reinforces the continuity of ecological meaning. The coexistence of material production, social interaction, and cultural expression within the same temporal and spatial context suggests that ecological relations operate across multiple domains simultaneously. Rather than being confined to environmental discourse, these relations are distributed across practices of survival, identity formation, and intergenerational knowledge transfer. This multidimensional continuity challenges analytical approaches that isolate environmental communication as a distinct domain, instead highlighting its embeddedness within broader social and cultural processes.

A particularly significant finding concerns the role of cinematic structure in mediating environmental meaning. The film's reliance on repetition, duration, and restrained pacing constructs interpretive coherence without reliance on narrative escalation. Environmental meaning accumulates

gradually as patterns of practice become visible across sequences. This supports the view that documentary is not a passive reflection of reality but an active organization of meaning through formal elements such as sequencing and editing (Nichols, 2024; Pearlman, 2013). The structural placement of the closing montage, which introduces visual elements of environmental disruption, further illustrates this principle. Rather than initiating environmental meaning, the montage reframes continuity that has already been established, allowing viewers to interpret industrial transformation as an intrusion into an existing relational system.

This sequencing is particularly important in distinguishing the film from conventional environmental narratives. By placing disruption after continuity, the documentary avoids framing environmental degradation as the primary narrative driver. Instead, it positions continuity as the baseline condition, against which disruption becomes legible. This structural strategy shifts the interpretive emphasis from crisis to persistence, suggesting that environmental meaning can be grounded in the endurance of relational practice rather than in moments of rupture. In this sense, contrast functions not as a narrative climax but as a reframing device that clarifies the significance of what has already been observed.

Within this analytical framework, the concept of ecological persistence can be understood as a way of describing how environmental meaning is organized in the film. Ecological persistence refers to the continuity of relational practices that connect human activity, material processes, and social interaction across time. It is not defined by resistance or protest, but by the ongoing enactment of ecological relations within everyday life. The findings suggest that such persistence operates across multiple dimensions, including material production, embodied knowledge, communal practice, and cultural transmission, forming an integrated system of relational continuity.

In this regard, ecological persistence can be understood not only as a descriptive category but also as an analytical lens that reorients the focus of environmental communication research. Rather than asking how media persuade audiences to act, this perspective invites inquiry into how media render ongoing ecological relations perceptible. This shift expands the scope of environmental communication to include forms of articulation grounded in continuity, presence, and relational visibility, rather than in urgency, crisis, or intervention.

The contribution of this study lies in its integration of environmental communication and documentary studies through an analysis of observational film form. While previous research has often treated these fields separately, focusing either on environmental messaging or cinematic technique, this study demonstrates how environmental meaning can emerge through the interaction of both. By examining how everyday practices are structured and mediated within the documentary, the study expands the understanding of environmental communication beyond advocacy-centered frameworks.

More broadly, the findings suggest that environmental communication does not necessarily require explicit messaging or persuasive intent. Instead, it may operate through the visibility of ongoing relational practices that reveal the interdependence between humans and their environment. This perspective opens new possibilities for analyzing environmental media, particularly in contexts where ecological relations are embedded in everyday life rather than articulated through formal discourse.

4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that observational documentary can function as environmental communication without relying on crisis-centered rhetoric, explicit advocacy, or persuasive messaging. Through the analysis of *Pusenai – The Last Dayak Basap* (2018), the findings show that environmental meaning emerges from the sustained visibility of everyday ecological practices rather than from dramatic narrative framing. The documentary constructs ecological relations through repetition, duration, and continuity, allowing viewers to encounter human–nature interactions as ongoing conditions embedded in daily life.

The absence of voice-over narration and the reliance on observational techniques play a crucial role in this process. By refraining from explanatory or didactic framing, the film enables

environmental meaning to emerge gradually through visual and temporal immersion. Everyday activities such as weaving, foraging, material processing, and communal interaction are presented as recurring patterns, forming a coherent structure that reflects the continuity of ecological relations. In this sense, environmental communication is not delivered as a message but becomes perceptible through the organization of practice within the documentary form.

A key finding of this study lies in the role of cinematic structure in mediating environmental meaning. The sequencing of scenes, the emphasis on duration, and the repetition of similar activities function as formal elements that construct interpretive coherence. Rather than guiding viewers through narrative escalation or moral urgency, the film allows meaning to accumulate through the sustained presence of relational practices. This highlights the importance of considering documentary not merely as a medium of representation, but as a structured system through which environmental relations are organized and made visible.

The placement of structural contrast in the closing sequence further reinforces this approach. The introduction of images depicting environmental transformation, such as burned land and industrial machinery, does not initiate environmental meaning but reframes continuity that has already been established. By positioning disruption at the end, the documentary enables viewers to interpret environmental change as an intrusion into an existing relational system. This structural strategy shifts the focus from crisis to persistence, suggesting that environmental meaning is grounded in continuity rather than rupture.

Based on these findings, this study proposes ecological persistence as an analytical descriptor for understanding how environmental communication operates within observational documentary. Ecological persistence refers to the continuity of relational practices that connect human activity, material processes, social interaction, and cultural transmission across time. It emphasizes that ecological relations are not only expressed in moments of conflict or crisis but are continuously enacted through everyday practices. This concept provides a framework for analyzing environmental communication beyond conventional paradigms that prioritize urgency, advocacy, or behavioral change.

The contribution of this study lies in its integration of environmental communication and documentary studies through a focus on cinematic form. While existing research has often examined environmental communication in terms of messaging or audience impact, this study demonstrates that meaning can also emerge through the structural organization of audiovisual elements. By examining how repetition, sequencing, and duration mediate ecological practices, the study expands the analytical scope of environmental communication to include non-confrontational and practice-based forms of articulation.

Furthermore, this study highlights the importance of Indigenous contexts in rethinking environmental communication. The representation of everyday practices within the Dayak Basap community illustrates how ecological relations are embedded in livelihood, embodied knowledge, and cultural continuity. These findings suggest that environmental communication in such contexts cannot be fully understood through frameworks that prioritize external intervention or advocacy. Instead, it requires attention to relational practices that are already present within the community's daily life. In this regard, the study contributes to broader discussions on how Indigenous knowledge and practice can inform alternative approaches to environmental communication.

In addition to its theoretical contribution, the study also offers methodological implications. By employing close textual analysis and incorporating reflexive awareness of practice-based production, the research demonstrates how documentary analysis can be used to examine environmental communication as a process of meaning construction. The integration of reflexivity allows for a more nuanced understanding of how narrative and structural decisions shape the representation of ecological relations, while maintaining analytical rigor through systematic examination of the audiovisual text.

Despite these contributions, several limitations should be acknowledged. The analysis is based on a single documentary, which may limit the generalizability of the findings across different contexts or film forms. Additionally, the study focuses on textual analysis rather than audience reception, leaving open questions regarding how viewers interpret continuity-based environmental

narratives. The absence of audience data means that the study cannot fully assess the communicative impact of this approach beyond its structural and representational dimensions.

Future research may address these limitations by examining a broader range of observational documentaries, particularly those produced in Indigenous or community-based contexts. Comparative studies could explore how different cultural settings influence the articulation of ecological persistence and whether similar patterns of continuity emerge across diverse environments. In addition, audience reception studies would provide valuable insight into how viewers engage with continuity-based environmental communication and whether such representations influence perception, understanding, or ethical orientation.

Further investigation may also consider the application of this analytical framework to other forms of media, including digital storytelling, participatory video, or community-based media production. As environmental communication continues to evolve in response to global challenges, it becomes increasingly important to explore alternative modes of articulation that move beyond crisis narratives. The concept of ecological persistence offers a potential pathway for understanding how environmental meaning can be communicated through continuity, relational practice, and everyday experience.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that environmental communication can operate through the visibility of ongoing ecological relations rather than through explicit advocacy or crisis discourse. By foregrounding continuity, the documentary invites viewers to recognize the interdependence between humans and their environment as a lived and sustained condition. This perspective expands the theoretical and methodological boundaries of environmental communication, suggesting that the articulation of ecological meaning may reside not only in moments of urgency, but in the persistence of everyday practice.

5. Acknowledgement

The authors express sincere gratitude to the Dayak Basap community in Teluk Sumbang, particularly Pusenai and the women weavers, for their openness and trust in allowing their daily practices to be documented and reflected upon in this research. Appreciation is also extended to the film production collaborators whose creative discussions during the editing process contributed to the narrative structure analyzed in this study. This research was supported by funding from the Department of Communication Studies, Universitas Merdeka Malang, whose institutional assistance made the completion of this work possible.

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