

BEYOND ECOFASCISM? FAR RIGHT ECOLOGISM (FRE) AS A FRAMEWORK FOR
FUTURE INQUIRIES

Balša Lubarda

Department of Environmental Sciences and Policy

Central European University

Email: Lubarda_Balsa@phd.ceu.edu

ABSTRACT

The enduring and consistent rise of the far right has enabled its representatives to affect environmental debates at a larger scale. Although such incursions are often labeled 'ecofascist', the term itself may be insufficient to account for the complexity of this intersection. Building upon existing attempts to organize such discourses in a coherent sub-ideological set, 'far right ecologism' (FRE) is suggested as an overarching notion, deriving its morphology from fascism, conservatism, as well as national-populism. Therefore, values emanating from these strands, such as naturalism, spirituality, mysticism, authority, organicism, autarky, nostalgia and Manicheanism, constitute FRE as a heuristic device. \

KEYWORDS

Far right; ecologism; fascism; conservatism; nationalism

The two manifestos authored by the perpetrators of recent terrorist attacks in Christchurch and El Paso revealed that the ideas of 'ecofascism' remain conspicuous in the far right¹ imaginary. This may have taken aback those who find the concern for the

¹ I use the term 'far right' to refer to radical and extreme nationalist actors, including (but not limited to) right-wing populists, (neo) Nazis, ethnopluralists, identitarians, white supremacists, alt-right, and clero-fascists. There is a number of works on the far right or its different aspects (to name a few: Eatwell, 1996; Carter, 2005, 2018; Mudde, 1995, 2000, 2011; Rydgren, 2017),

natural environment² incompatible with such worldviews, but these links have a long tradition. Although it is generally contended that the right-wing (including the far right) is hostile to the environmental agenda (Krange, Kaltenborn, Hultman, 2018; Lockwood, 2018; McCright and Dunlap, 2000), green thought was originally imbued with romanticist, conservative and even nationalist tropes (Ditt, 1996: 1-28; Dobson, 2016). However, ecofascism itself may be inadequate to capture the breadth of discourses on the natural environment coming from the far right actors, ranging from populist to radical and extreme. The nationalist sentiments informing far right environmental discourse do not necessarily entail eschatological fascist inclinations nor do the conservative tropes of stewardship and responsibility, also present in some far right discourses, point to ecofascism. Moreover, studies of the far right convergence with ecological thought are manifold, going beyond ecofascism.³

Departing from this insufficiency of ecofascism, both conceptually and methodologically, I ask whether (how) the nexus of far right and ecologism can be grouped in a coherent framework for prospective empirical inquiries. Apart from its methodological contribution, this article aims to elucidate serious conceptual concerns over the ‘unacceptable lack of precision which makes ecofascism an ‘embittered taunt’ (Griffin, 1991: 2). This notwithstanding, discarding the label ‘ecofascism’ as ‘the’ signifier for the far right discursive engagement with natural environment in the future is still very unlikely, given its popularity in broader (particularly non-scholarly) circles. Yet, for an (sub)ideology to occupy the required space between ‘deductive rationalism and ad hoc empiricism’ (Freedon, 1996: 18), it needs to retain the balance between its morphology - internal consistency and the developments in the social world. Apart from the interwar era, ecofascism hardly ever had any of the two.

² The terms ‘ecologism’, ‘ecological’ and ‘environmental’ are operationalized in accordance with Dobson’s (1999: 235) distinction, where ecologism refers to an attempt to address the fundamental causes of environmental change through holistic, ideological or value-based underpinnings, whereas ‘environmentalism’ is focused on a rather managerial approach to the problem. Ecologism and ecology are used interchangeably, the former being operationalized as an ideological format of the latter, referring to the abovementioned value-based, holistic, and political positions (as opposed to using the term ‘ecology’ strictly as a branch of biology).

³ Other than eco-fascist forms or ‘right-wing ecology’ (Olsen 1999, 2000a, b) originated in Germany (see Bruggemeier et. al., 2005; Blackburn, 2006; Geden, 1996; Jahn and Vehling, 1980; Uekoetter, 2006; Woelk, 1992), but also Italy (Armiero, 2014), Portugal (Saraiva, 2016), and United Kingdom (Coupland, 2017, More-Collyer, 2004, Stone, 2004), there are analyses of ‘green nationalism’ in the Baltic countries (Galbreath, 2010; Galbreath and Auers, 2010; Lubarda, 2017), and again the UK (Fowler and Jones, 2005, 2006), as well as ‘white nativist environmentalism’ in the United States (Bhatia, 2004). For a number of cases, see also Forchtner, 2019a.

Indeed, far right values on the natural environment can be considered a subcomponent of ecologism, as they offer a distinctive social imaginary (Taylor, 2004), a substitute to the current (decaying) order. In times of upsurge of far right parties and movements, where “nature” is discursively associated with issues of immigration and national identity (Voss, 2014), such nexuses are salient even to mainstream actors. For instance, articulating nature (e.g. forests) as ‘national treasure’ can be enmeshed with claims related to immigration or religion (Isaev and Korovin, 2013), which is not rare even among those who do not consider themselves nationalists.

I argue that articulating the essential features of ‘far right ecologism’ requires looking at the wider spectrum of political thought from which its ideas and values are derived, including ecofascism. I will depart from the existing attempts to articulate the intersections of the far right with the natural environment (and their limitations), building on theoretical explorations in the field of ideology studies. These explorations will enable offering a set of core and peripheral values of FRE by looking at historical overlaps of fascism, conservatism, and national populism.

In search for a morphology of FRE

The substantive allure of ecofascism as a term is in its latter, fascist component. Amid claims that fascism is a ‘beehive of contradictions’ (Eco, 2002) or a ‘protean label’ (Mann, 2004: 365) devoid of its ideological core, the ‘fascist minimum’ – a set of emblematic features belonging to a (fairly) coherent ideology has long been defined (Eatwell, 1996). As a mostly historical phenomenon, generally associated with the Nazi regime, ecofascism is particularly interesting for tributaries of *Begriffsgeschichte*, or the conceptual history (Koselleck, 2002). True, Nazis were not an entirely homogenous entity, but a complex and often disarrayed assemblage of sub-groups, individuals, interests, and values. This explains perhaps unimaginable associations for opportunistic purposes, e.g. animal rights rhetoric and anti-semitism (Uekötter, 2005: 55), highlighting an essential conceptual feature of ecofascism: inconsistency. The same can be argued about Italian fascism, with environmentally-harmful policies such as “Mussolini’s law”: the draining of the Pontine Marshes (Snowden, 2006), conjoined with

a profound engagement with 'reclaiming' of nature through (sometimes conflicting) notions, such as race, landscape, history, modernity and ruralism (Armiero, 2014: 242).

In addition, taking an empirical perspective into account, ecofascism is not a term used in self-ascriptions: adherents of such ideas generally (though the Christchurch shooter is an exception to this rule) avoid referring to themselves as eco-fascists, eco-nazis or any similar terms. This is particularly the case with the far right in those countries such as Poland in which nationalism has a profound antifascist tradition, and was juxtaposed to German expansionism. Even though some authors (Olsen, 1999; Staudenmaier, 2011) use terms 'ecofascism' and 'right-wing ecology' interchangeably, the clear association of the former with a substantially discredited ideological framework of fascism poses yet another, normative problem. Referring to ecofascism might seem conducive to preventing the proponents of such worldviews from permeating the mainstream. However, contemporary far right ecological values are far more complex and elusive to be brought down to (neo)fascism.

Notwithstanding these deficiencies of ecofascism, some authors have already attempted to expand this notion through different analytical frameworks. As previously mentioned, Jonathan Olsen (1999, 2000) suggested 'right-wing ecology', consisting of eco-naturalism (nature as the blueprint for social order), eco-organicism (nature and society viewed as an organism), and eco-authoritarianism (illiberal politics as the best solution to the environmental crisis) as its foundational elements. However, right-wing ecology is a misnomer – the three categories, as well as the parties analyzed within Olsen's framework, all illustrate cases of far right environmentalism in Germany, lacking reference to countries outside of Western Europe, or the conservative political tradition.

Another framework, proposed by Forchtner and Kolvraa (2015), focused on the dimensions of 'nature in nationalism': aesthetic, symbolic, and material. The aesthetic dimension entails ideas of preservation as something unspoiled and beautiful, as well as the right or privilege of national subjects to enjoy their countryside or landscape (Forchtner and Kolvraa, 2015: 204). The symbolic aspect focuses on abstract values, such as the notion of sovereignty over a particular land – cultural differentiation from other communities (Forchtner and Kolvraa, 2015: 204-5). Conversely, the material aspect of the nature-nationalism nexus puts an emphasis on the relationship with

modernity and rationalism: how an eco-nationalist concern can be justified in rational terms – nature as an instrument, a resource. While the three dimensions coalesce in many ways, this framework as such makes no substantial reference to the social imaginary of the far right, with which Olsen somewhat engaged – how the society should be organized in order to nurture and protect the environment, and the values and positions it upholds.

Building on these existing attempts, identifying properties of an ideological variety such as (far right) ecologism requires a comprehensive methodological roadmap. The starting point for such inquiries is the work of Michael Freeden, the leading scholar of contemporary ideology studies. Moving away from approaches framing ideologies as solid, manipulative systems deconstructed by free-floating and detached analysts, Freeden (1994, 1996) envisages ideologies as ubiquitous yet volatile forms of political thinking organized in conceptual clusters with a distinguishable hierarchy. This nominalist hierarchy or ‘ideological morphology’, consists of an ineliminable set of properties (Freeden deliberately avoids the term ‘core’), coupled with adjacent and peripheral dimensions accounting for contextual differences. To explain his abstract model based on indeterminacy and ambiguity of ‘essentially contestable’ concepts (see Koselleck, 2002), Freeden (2003:51) points to a metaphor of the modular units of furniture (concepts) assembled in a particular way. Through diverse arrangements of furniture, different rooms can be created. Applied to green ideologies, holism⁴ represents the central ‘piece of furniture’, whereas biodiversity, community, control, decentralization, democracy, development, emancipation, equality, harmony, organicism, participation, and self-sufficiency stand for adjacent concepts (Freeden, 1996: 529). Together with the additional logical adjacencies to these concepts (equilibrium, the state, bioregionalism, rationality, and planning), Freeden (1996: 545) identifies particular ‘cultural constraints’ (e.g. the preponderance of agriculture or cultural romanticism) at the periphery that may be of use in identifying ecofascist utopia. Moreover, the conceptual thickness adds to the complexity of his ‘morphological’ approach. While both thick and thin ideologies have identifiable

⁴ Freeden (1996: 527-8) defines holism as “the interdependence or harmony of all forms of life” comprising “organicism, interdependence, and equilibrium as desired ends as well as prerequisites for viable life and for human flourishing”

morphology, the latter (including 'green ideologies') borrow their conceptual content from substantive, thicker ideologies (e.g. fascism or socialism) to supplant their conceptual ambiguities (Humphrey, 2001: 504)

Although Freeden rightly recognizes the fluidity and 'essential contestability' as a definitive feature of concepts, hence ideologies, his insistence on the threefold vision of morphology appears needlessly rigid. Capturing logical or contextual adjacencies analytically is ultimately only portraying the paucity of the (green) core. The 'thin' ineliminable substance of any ecologism susceptible to thicker ideologies (including the far right) renders periphery as paramount. Since closure is always a 'matter of degree' (Freeden, 1996: 18), insisting on distinctions within adjacent and peripheral dimensions undermines the internal complexity and dynamism of the morphology itself. Representing context as adjacent or peripheral tacitly assumes imagined heuristic and even ontological order. However, concepts and values acquire their meaning through historically transferred and contextually molded discursive traditions (Freeden, 1996: 54). Thus, I will examine the wider pool of right-wing ideologies informing far right environmental imaginary. The suggested, substantive morphology of FRE consists of a set of principal features supplanting holism, derived from ecofascism (but present in broader right-wing thought), with a 'green perimeter' (adjacent and peripheral concepts) articulated in conservative and nationalist writings. Without exploring the wider ideational cluster from which most of the far right arguments in relation to environment emanated, prospective empirical cases may be devoid of nuanced analysis due to the conceptual short-sightedness and lack of clarity.

From Blood and Soil to spirituality, organicism, and naturalism: carving out the key elements of FRE

Historically, the first association that comes to mind with ecofascism (and far right) conceptually is the notion of *Blood and soil* (*Blut und Boden*) (Bramwell, 1985, Bassin, 2005). Emerged in the writings of Walther Darré, this idea is at the core of FRE, outlining a holistic worldview through three fundamental elements: spirituality, organicism and naturalism. Rooted in paganistic interpretations and 'strong spiritual readiness' in the Nazi Germany (Bruggemeier and Zioc, 2005: 7), ecofascism relies on its

mythic substance.⁵ Although the spiritual component is not only immanent to ecofascism, as the substantial impact of Buddhism and Taoism on contemporary environmental thought has been noted by many (Cheng, 1986: 351-70; Goodman, 1980: 73-80; Nash, 1992:113–16; Nelson, 2009), far right mysticism stands out when compared to other forms of ecological thinking (Biehl, 1995: 134). This spiritual element of the far right imaginary conforms to ecocentrism (Wall, 2006), serving the case of critics, mostly tributaries of social ecology (see Zeegers, 2002), to assume common ontological groundings of deep ecology and fascism (Biehl and Staudenmeier, 1995), though failing to recognize a strong organicist bent at the core of such claims.

The spirituality-organicism nexus prompts explorations on the value of 'rootedness' in far right imaginary. The idea of rooted beings assumes an indivisible unity of living creatures and the environment in which they dwell (or of the blood and soil), forged under the influence of the anti-enlightenment traditionalism, disparaging Christianity, capitalism, economic utilitarianism, hyper-consumption and rampant tourism (Staudenmeier, 2011: 5-6). Rootedness is not only immanent to far right vision of ecological polity: it can be found in e.g. bioregionalism. Conceptions of a region as one's homeland can resemble nationalist regionalism when a region's traditions and language are spiritually tied to an 'ancestral' landscape (Biehl, 1995: 34). Certainly, the devotion of bioregionalists to democratic principles and not identifying bioregional communities with a nation-state or national borders renders them inapplicable to nationalist standards (Olsen, 2000: 75), but organicism is an overarching value across different ideological domains.

The holistic outlook reflected in spirituality and organicism implicitly assumes the unity of natural and social world, pointing to the centrality of (social) naturalism. By thinking of human cultures as rooted in landscapes, the aim of naturalists is to protect the integrity of both human and non-human agents, realigning the traditional, Enlightenment articulation of human rationality (Sommers and Block, 2014: 8). The 'natural' world becomes the blueprint for social world, eradicating the artificial distinction between the two. In ethnopluralist view, the presumed wholeness

⁵ The relationship between fascism and religion is a complex one, ranging from "cosmotheism" of William Pierce's National Alliance, to clero-fascism (e.g. in Croatia): including everything in between (see more Griffin, 2005).

(organicism), articulates cultures as separable containers (de Benoist, 1980), indicating that some cultures, alien to the habitat, are incompetent for protecting the environment. Hence, the far right utilizes the logic of social naturalism to advocate for the expulsion of foreign species, e.g. anti-immigration policies (Neumayer, 2006) to maintain the compositional equilibrium. However, the central problem of naturalism is its incompatibility with Christianity's idea of human beings as dominant, stewards of nature. The Christian tradition, supplanting most of the (particularly European) far right thought, is at odds with ecocentric and naturalistic standpoints, causing major inconsistencies in far right environmental thinking.

An apt (albeit extraordinarily rare) example of ecocentric, eco-fascist far right organization is *Greenline Front*, an initiative emanated in Ukraine, endorsing deep ecologists but also *völkisch* writers. Greenline Front fosters contemporary eco-fascist mysticism, with their fundamental goal of promoting an "ecological way of thinking", and "comprehension of the fact Earth's being not just a lifeless piece of stone, but the Mother of every creature alive, mother of humanity, as well." (Greenline Front Official Blog, 2019).

However, this distinctive spirituality and mysticism are not only immanent to (eco)fascism, as such values can be found across the Christian side of the far right spectrum: for instance, in their environmental program, entitled "In Harmony with Nature", Jobbik, the Hungarian far right party, argued that its goal is:

...strengthening the role of communities that are living in harmony with their surroundings, that are more and more self-sufficient in terms of energy and food, and that are strong, and rich, both materially and spiritually.

(Jobbik, 2010: 23, in Kyriazi, 2019: 7)

This quote introduces another, rather (logically) adjacent element to the morphology of FRE: that of autarky. To explore and understand values that could be considered adjacent to the core values of spirituality, organicism, and naturalism, it is necessary to expand the scope by looking at other, conservative and nationalist interventions in ecological thought.

The green perimeter of FRE: utilizing the wider ideological scope

Autarky is not an ineliminable value of FRE, as it refers to predominantly economic set of arguments, adjacent to environmental imaginary. Commonly associated with the moral superiority of peasant production, autarky is envisaged as the pathway to the revitalization of both the economy and the national pride. Many conservative⁶ intellectuals since the 18th century idealized the pristine, self-sufficient and virtuous rural world as opposed to ongoing industrialization and cultural decadence. In fact, the fundamental set of statements upon which pioneer eco-philosophy emanated comes from a conservative political tradition, critical of modernity, Enlightenment and rationalism. Autarky builds on the 'rootedness' principle, recalling a profound relationship between the people and the land in which they live.

The autarkic element also bears an aesthetic stylization of what was perceived as natural beauty into a characteristic of a region or 'tribe', or eventually the national cultural heritage (Ditt, 2000: 13-24). Essentially derived from romanticism, it envisages atomized, self-sustainable communities, the 'caretakers' of the land in control of local resources. This is tied to a naturalist (and nationalist) view of cultures inherently soaked in the landscape, the 'ethnoscape' (Smith, 2009). Since land is symbolically wedded to the idea of home, it appears natural for one to have profound feelings towards it, forming a logical, albeit symbolic link between the past, present and the future (Palmer, 1998). This 'nationalization of nature' highlights the 'passive role that nature plays in this familiarized conception of landscape' (Kaufmann, 1998: 667). The 'nationalized' Nature can also be articulated as wild and untamed, nostalgically harking back to the spiritual nostalgia of vast and untouched landscapes – nature as the "symbol of home, of sacred fatherland, and the idyllic past." (Hunka, de Groot, and Biela, 2009: 432).

Apart from the nostalgia for autarkic communities, the idea of stewardship logically stems out of is the conservative appreciation of responsibility, resting on an assumption that an optimal state for conserving nature and nurturing the love for one's home is a homeostatic system (Scruton, 2013). To elaborate this organicist idea,

⁶ There have been plenty of works on conservative political tradition and philosophy (writings of Edmund Burke, Michael Oakeshott). Here, I operationalize conservatism mainly from the writings of classical conservative writers (with an exception of Roger Scruton), as an ideology that advocates for autonomy, hierarchy, traditional social institutions, and property rights.

Scruton (2012: 227) uses the concept of *oikophilia* – the love of the *oikos*, not only the home but the people contained in it, the surrounding settlements that endow that home; “The place which is ours, where “it all takes place””. Again, commercializing heritage is deplored, as *oikophilia* is a living inheritance, towards ‘embellishment and renewal of the plot of the earth to which one is attached’ (Scruton, 2012: 412). Going back in history, the social component of stewardship (*oikophilia*) is embodied in Sir Arthur Tansley’s post-war idea of trusteeship for lands and individuals incapable of self-preservation by designing ‘home regions’ in order to instill the sense of care among those who were displaced during the Second World War. In this way, the people inhabiting the area near to the national park would be responsible for nature conservation, which would simultaneously provide a sense of home and an opportunity for a renewal of cultural values (Anker, 2001: 227).

Such ideations are, in Freedden’s terms, culturally adjacent – framing landowners as ‘caretakers’ of the land and the ancestry, virtues, and traditions of the land is particularly popular in societies (such as the English) where a considerable cultural value is placed upon the landscapes, but also the generational bonds associated with the land (Hay, 2002: 180). Thus, it is no wonder that Scruton’s writings on stewardship and the logic of ‘responsible Toryism’ in the environmental sphere have proliferated in such settings.

The autarkic community resembled in the idea of stewardship poses a question about the role and nature of authority within the far right imaginary. On one hand, a number of green national anarchist groups, particularly those associated with the alt-right in the US, disparage statist connotations, instead advocating for a decentralized, racialized conception of socialism (Taylor, 2019: 12). On the other hand, returning to the conservative political thought, eco-authoritarianism has been associated with the neo-Malthusian thinking, championed by some political conservatives and nature conservationists, integrated within the contemporary environmental movement since the 1960s.⁷

⁷ The role of influential conservatives in the development of green parties should also not be ignored: from figures such as Herbert Gruhl in Germany to Pennti Linkola in Finland, or the interesting case of Brice Lalonde in France, who only later turned towards more conservative ideological positions. While these generally remained on the fringe of the wider movement, many conservative thinkers, such as Edward Goldsmith, found themselves to be supporters of neo-Malthusian thinking, now one of the key elements of far right discourse.

The fundamental contention of neo-Malthusian doomsdayers is to argue that liberal democracy, due to its brokerage between competing interests, is unfit to address the imminent, ecologically wrought disaster. The dire prescriptions of such authors revealed a conspicuous distrust of human nature, arguing for draconian, authoritarian frugality in solving the environmental problem (Goldsmith, 1972: 277-90; Hardin, 1968; Heilbroner, 1974). Although claiming that such thinkers were innately conservative would be an overstatement, the shared skepticism of the capability of ordinary people to solve the 'environmental riddle' is vivid. Even though this enthusiasm of conservatives for the protection of the environment has generally faded nowadays, it is often forgotten that many American conservative politicians and thinkers (Buckley, Goldwater) until the 1980s were environmentalists (Farber, 2017).

However, it is worth noting that today, proponents of the 'neo-con' position argue for a free-market resolution to the environmental crisis, which is fundamentally at odds with the values upheld by the far right (Anderson and Leal, 2006; Austin and Phoenix, 2005; Bennett and Block, 1991; Jacques, Dunlap, and Freeman, 2008; Tranter, 2017). Conversely, traditional conservatives, based on the works of Burke and Oakeshott, promote a society built on responsibility and continuity through the stewardship of the environment (Ujj, 2013). Its opposition to social and political experimentation and its endorsement of hierarchical authority puts conservatism at considerable odds with the typology presented by Humphrey (2002: 504) (namely the 'radical democratization' component). Although in stark opposition to the ideas of fascism, conservatism remains open to interpretations of its connection with the land. The presence of survivalist and neo-Malthusian traditions in ecopolitical thought capitalizing on ideas such as oikophilia makes these conservative values susceptible to far right, illiberal momentum concealed behind nationalist, right-wing populism.

Unlike fascism and conservatism, seen as 'thick' right-wing ideologies with illustrative features (Rydgren, 2017), the conceptual obscurity of populism and nationalism as 'thin-centered' ideologies (Mudde, 2004) convolutes articulating core values of these categories. However, the ability to employ Manichean, binary representations in policy debates allows right-wing, national populists to engage with environmental topics (Capstick and Pidgeon, 2014; Carvalho, 2007; Farstad, 2017; Forchtner et. al. 2018; Fraune and Knodt, 2018). Therefore, not all right-wing populists

are 'anti-environmental': Matteo Salvini, the infamous leader of Lega Nord and the Minister of Internal Affairs in the Italian Government, spoke about "defending our seas, our mountains, our lakes, our rivers, our seas" (Italiambiente, 2018), alluding to a paramount significance of space for nationalist rhetoric. Landscape is a place for contested identities and nostalgia, but also for insider/outsider tropes – it is through the loss of access to the land, through its absence, that the place gains its special value (Cederlof and Sivaramakrishnan, 2011: 9). The relationship between nationalism and the land (Motherland, Home Country, or Native Soil) becomes mediated through connecting distinct peoples in distinct spaces, articulating the latter as 'sacred' (Smith, 1991). Amid claims that environmentalist nationalism is a prerequisite for an emancipatory move against capitalism (Gare, 1995: 144), the nostalgic element makes environmentalism and nationalism odd bedfellows. Nationalist historical endorsement of ruralism hampers endeavors to make environmentalism more appealing to a wider, urban audience (de-Shalit, 1996: 82).

Based on the empirical cases of Trump or Bolsonaro, populist eco-nationalism does not seem plausible, nor are those who consider themselves eco-fascists interested in obtaining support of the masses like populists. The alleged eco-centrism of ecofascism is hardly applicable to nationalist, even less populist anthropocentric postulates: the 'people' are the ones in danger, the ones that are given priority. Still, there are cases of right-wing populist parties: Jobbik and Mi Hazánk in Hungary, or the Latvian National Alliance, of far right anthropocentric environmentalism: promoting common-sense responsibility for the homeland including circular economy, organic farming, and climate action. Departing from the conceptual exploration across the 'green' elements of fascism, conservatism, and national populism, it will be possible to illuminate what the contemporary far right has taken up from these ideologies in construing its own ecological standpoint.

The morphology of FRE: essential contestability at the core

The ongoing struggle for dominating the discourse on the environment by asserting the values linked to heritage symbolism and/or national identity has attendant implications for prospective empirical inquiries. Notwithstanding the often-eclectic nature of the far right (such as the problems regarding self-ascription), an additional obstacle in assembling the values of the examined ideological strands are

contradictions visible in specific environmental debates (anthropocentrism/ecocentrism, animal welfare and hunting). For instance, the far right usually utilizes two major arguments for moral justification of hunting derived from ecological ethics: a) that hunting is useful as a wildlife management tool; b) it induces less damage than farming (for details, see Cahoone, 2009). However, some eco-fascists, departing from antimodernist and even more, anticapitalist convictions are strongly against hunting and carnivore diet, since "...vegan diet is a way to oppose the animal industry, full of immense suffering and promoter of the destruction of the planet, also raising this diet as a means of purification and physical-spiritual ascent." (Greenline Front, Blog, 2019).

In spite of these variations, the morphology of FRE can still be considered an ideal-type because it assists interpretations of far right support for environmentally-friendly policies. Such an undertaking is inevitably arbitrary, since any heuristic device requires appending discernible features and disregarding other potentially present elements. The far right, regardless of its variegated modality, almost unanimously departs from radical nationalist positions, which ultimately mold its ecological agenda. This manifests in the calls for 'rerooting' of nation in nature (Voss 2014: 53), asserting the intimate and intricate value of place and nature overall, originated in romanticist writings (see Hinchman and Hinchman, 2007). Moreover, this profoundness appeals to the oikophilic sense of responsibility for future generations. For instance, the Freedom Party of Austria, in its political program suggests this duty cutting across different generations: "We are aware of our attachment to our forefathers and our responsibility to our descendants, and want to preserve a homeland for future generations that facilitates autonomous living in an intact environment..." (Freedom Party of Austria – Party Program, 2011). To recapitulate, FRE brings together values presented across the ideological domains outlined in this article, namely: naturalism, spirituality, mysticism, authority, organicism, autarky, nostalgia, and Manicheanism.

Naturalism. The far right positions on biodiversity are ultimately shaped by the idea of a "national ecosystem" (Forchtner, 2019c) – sharing the naturalist postulates of the nation as indivisible from natural laws. This serves to point to those who resemble out-of-place, invasive, even exotic species (see Peretti, 1998, and Hettinger, 2001 for debates on biological nativism), which in a sociobiological sense, justifies the exclusion

of non-nationals. Yearning for 'natural' borders, referring to geographical unities (such as basins) imbued with nostalgia for long-lost territories, is another example of the synthesis of naturalism and nationalism. Thus, respect for everything "natural" arises from intrinsic qualities of nature rather than a moral duty. However, the hierarchy within the man-nation-nature relation is not firm, as it differs across the far right spectrum: the populist radical right being usually anthropocentric, while the more extreme elements purport the eternal bond between these overlapping entities, venerating nature for its power and authenticity in relation to frailty of nation-states.

Spirituality and mysticism. Even though it is difficult to account for a universal religious position of the contemporary far right given its patchy nature, far right ecologism indisputably rests on some form of spirituality. For those belonging to these groups in countries with a Christian majority, nature is a "God-given gift", and thus responsibility for its protection lies upon human beings. This can be seen as conflicting with the eco-centric naturalist postulate, sometimes reflected in the far right ecological activism, as a rift between dynamism and fatalism. For instance, some far right organizations belonging to wider circles of accelerationism and futurism, advocate for a hypermodern technological solutions to problems created by unenlightened masses (Taylor, 2004: 17). To the far right, environmental degradation is a symptom of a "spiritual deficit", induced by modern "ideologies of progress". This invokes Durkheim's idea of *anomie*, a sense of agonizing rootlessness permeating rationalized humanity, devoid of its perennial craving for nature as the atavistic source of stability in tumultuous times. Because of this spiritual erosion, even those who consider themselves as greens today 'no longer feel a mystical connection with nature, with the earth, with their homeland, with the nation.' (Koziel, 1991).

Organicism and autarky. Regardless of inner tensions within the far right, fostering communal responsibility for environmental care is not to be taken as a simple sum of individual responsibilities. Even if ideally autarkic and self-sustainable, a self-reliant individual is ultimately embedded in the (national) community. Each human community and culture is unique and authentic, forming a common eco-system, a biome with other organic and inorganic elements, from which kinship ties with other creatures are extrapolated. In this holistic yet cyclical imagery of booms and busts, nations and their nature develop, degenerate, and finally fade away. As Friedrich Ratzel, one of the

founding fathers of (German) geopolitics reportedly argued, “[t]he union between man and the earth is an organic bond; not merely an analogy, as in the various biological organic theories of society, but as a real union, a scientific truth.” (Ratzel, 1911: 2, in Neumann, 1966: 39). Those who are rooted in the soil are more self-dependent, but also more cognizant of the profoundness of the relation between a man and the land, as opposed to nomadic – uncivilized, feral or cosmopolitan lifestyles.

Authority. The far right holds a profound contempt towards democracy but also points towards the more fundamental issue of consistency between nonanthropocentrism and democracy (see Michael, 2019). Its socially conservative and “anti-globalist” nature conditions the calls for local-based initiatives. Due to the imminent nature of the threat, this multi-leveled change has to be anti-democratic and instigated by a central authority – for Pentti Linkola, a Finnish deep ecologist much admired by the far right, even an incompetent dictator has to be smarter than the will of the majority (Pentti Linkola Website). Eco-authoritarianism is not a novelty: not only that (together with naturalism), it was used by Olsen in his framework of right-wing ecology, but it has also been long observed in environmental thought (see Hay 2002: 184). However, the nature of that authority is unclear and has not been adequately problematized in previous frameworks. While authoritarian tendencies in environmental thought are not exclusively tied to the far right⁸, they can sometimes be relinquished by eco-fascists or the alt-right, as seen in the case of the decentralized Greenline Front or National Anarchists. In these renderings, the idea of authority is often transposed to a non-anthropomorphic entity. This is often justified through the ineptness of human leadership to adapt to the prospective ecological change – implying the supreme value of spirituality.

Nostalgia and Manicheanism. The far right is situated in-between the thrust for rebirth and the essentially conservative appreciation of nature and traditional livelihoods lost to the alien encroachments on the national being. This degree of confusion traverses across the far right discourse: although nostalgia is usually articulated in images of pristine nature and idyllic countryside, it also ‘potentiates

⁸ Shahrar (2015) mentions the example of the Soviet Union or the socialist China as the applications of distinct forms of eco-authoritarianism.

attainable future' (Sedikides and Wildschut, 2016, p. 319). Thus, moving beyond mere escapism, nostalgia is a proactive notion, deployed in various dimensions of environmental governance (Howell, Kitson, and Clowney, 2019). Promoting organic, family-farming as a means for reviving traditional values is an example of how these values can be realized. The persistent anti-cosmopolitan sentiment brings about absolute distinctions and populist Manicheanism in advocating the radical change (and appealing to authority). The clarity through which the far right renders the world separates regressive forces of environmentalism termed as 'liberal' or 'globalist' (international organizations included), from the authentic nationalist care for nature.

The abovementioned features of far right ecologism as a concept are all derived from the broader strands informing far right thought. Still, it is important to note that ideologies and sub-ideological concepts (such as FRE) constitute 'illusionary wholes' (Freedon, 2001: 95). Since FRE is an ideal-type, it is not designed for box-ticking of discourses on the environment. The presence of 'moving parts' within far right ecological positions, such as the ambivalence towards anthropocentrism, point to the need for utmost caution when approaching empirical cases. Its modular structure crafted through theoretical explorations ultimately depends on the public perception on how concepts are being dismantled and reassembled by the far right. Therefore, despite identifying the ineliminable cluster (spirituality, organicism, naturalism) derived from ecofascism, the 'adjacent' and peripheral features constituting the 'green perimeter' can be equally relevant. It is the 'Wolf of Context' (Latour, 2005: 177), that determines the extent to which these values are present or realized in far right discourse and practice. As Koselleck (2001: 36) argued, while the speech acts and actual acts (*Tathandlungen*) are intertwined, the diachronic change on the theoretical level may not occur on the same temporal level. Thus, it is the job of FRE to capture this change, after ecofascism depleted its methodological (if not theoretical) potential.

Conclusion

Far right attempts to influence environmental thought and configure authentic values are complex and appear in multifarious ways, transcending mere ecofascism. Valuing the ceaseless encounter of the generations and the environment to which they

are wedded has come a long way, beginning in the linkage between the agrarian imagery and the ethnic substance provided by 19th-century romantic nationalism.⁹ Far right ecologism also points to the conceptual problems within the ideological morphology, particularly the relationship between the core-periphery. Far from being marginal, far right ecologism presents a distinctive set of values, although intertwined with more mainstream green ideologies. Its foundational elements: spirituality and mysticism, organicism, and naturalism, substitute the vagueness of Freedden's holism. The 'green perimeter' (although the term is unjust as it is no less relevant than the 'core'): autarky, authority, nostalgia, and Manichean worldview, are all present in the wider right-wing thought, albeit in contrast to the climate skepticism or anti-environmental market fundamentalism also asserted by some tributaries of conservatism or populism. Moreover, FRE enhances the existing frameworks addressing far right values on the environment by pointing to a distinctive social imaginary as well as inconsistencies, not been emphasized in existing analyses. As such, FRE stands for an ideal-type, a heuristic 'exaggeration' (Weber, quoted in Burger, 1976: 127-8), nonetheless important for assessing how the contemporary far right values the natural environment. Normatively, far right ecologism stands in-between its radical impetus and normalizing eco-politics in a 'post-ecological society' (see Blühdorn and Welsch, 2007). Simultaneously, FRE challenges the win-win logic of sustainable development within democratic, consumer capitalism, yet still very much relying on the 'symbolic industry' of Beck's risk society. However, the suggested categories of FRE orient those undertaking empirical inquiries towards these inconsistencies and ambiguities of far right discourse and values, allowing for prospective theoretical and normative explorations.

⁹ Some authors (see Kaufman, 1998) point to the pre-romanticist tradition of 'wild landscapes', to which romanticist political thought is clearly linked.

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