

16 Alt-right ecology

Ecofascism and far-right environmentalism in the United States

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The rise of the so-called ‘alt-right’, or alternative right, has transformed the political landscape in the United States and challenged established political categories. For at least a generation, the political right has been understood primarily as a defence of the status quo: pro-capitalist, pro-state, pro-science and technology, and anti-environmental. By contrast, the alt-right draws its energy from a critique of the established order, liberal and conservative alike, not from its defence. Thus, it has resurrected older right-wing traditions of the antimodernist, revolutionary, and fascist right which have remained marginal in the North American conservative movement, often articulated in a white nationalist framework. While this milieu is highly diverse and internally divided, much of it is animated by strains of reactionary thought which attack liberal democracy, the state, and the ‘mongrelizing’, amoral forces of global capitalism. It has adopted positions associated with the political left, for example against war and free trade and for (exclusionary) social protectionism. Many contemporary researchers of the far right have begun to examine these new political alignments and how they disrupt past understandings (Reid Ross 2017; Lyons 2018).

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However, these accounts often overlook the extent to which alt-right discourse draws from ecological discourse. Ecology is an increasingly important political vector for the rejection of traditional pro-business conservative positions by the constellation of esoteric, revolutionary, and traditionalist currents that comprise the alt-right. This chapter thus analyses how the alt-right deploys ecological discourse, rediscovering older Nazi themes like organic agriculture and animal rights while articulating novel right-wing interpretations of concepts like biodiversity, decentralism, deep ecology, bioregionalism, anti-capitalism, Indigenism, and anarchism. It will explore the core themes and political actors within the milieu, as well as how ideological cross-pollination has resulted in left-right resonance and, at times, political collaboration. The chapter concludes by discussing the potential political role of alt-right ecology in the present historical conjuncture, drawing on theoretical frameworks developed by Fraser (2017) and Brown (2006).

How the alt-right has shifted conservative environmental discourse

Environmentalism remains a contested topic within right-wing politics. While a reflexive pro-business anti-environmentalism remains dominant within mainstream conservatism, the insurgent character of the alt-right has made it more receptive to environmental ideas. As an article on *altright.com* proclaims,

The anti-environmentalism of the present ‘conservative’ movement is nothing but a modernist, capitalist, classically Liberal, materialist Jewish conception which has found fertile ground in the hands of billionaire plutocrats wiping out nature all over the Earth for the sake of higher profit margins’.

Ahab (2017)

Concern for the environment is therefore an important issue for distinguishing oneself from mainstream conservatives: ‘The Alt Right was born as an “alternative” to Bush-Cheney era neoconservatism, when this strain of vile anti-environmentalism became entrenched within the Republican Party’ (*ibid.*).

Why is the alt-right more receptive to ecological ideas? One factor is its reclamation of previously taboo political traditions like fascism. This has facilitated a rediscovery of the historical connection between racialist and ecological ideologies, from Ernst Haeckel, the racialist who coined the term ecology, to Nazi environmentalism (Biehl and Staudenmaier 1995). Johnson (2018), editor of the prominent alt-right site *Counter-Currents*, describes himself as a ‘very pro-ecology person’, stating:

Although today ecology is considered a preserve of the Left, the truth of the matter is that if you go back far enough ecology was actually something that was pioneered by a lot of figures that today would be considered figures on the Right.

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Another factor is the intellectual bent of the alt-right. As its political vision centres on the allegedly ‘natural’ condition of human inequality, there has been a resurgence of interest in right-wing nature philosophy. Various strains of esoteric, mystical, and quasi-anarchist fascism are important currents within the movement, especially its ecological wing. Alt-right media outlets like *Counter-Currents* and *Arktos* prominently feature European right-wing ecologists like Savitri Devi, Troy Southgate and Pentti Linkola alongside mystical fascists like Julius Evola.

Lastly, the predominantly white demographic makeup of the environmental movement also makes it highly attractive to the alt-right, in which white

nationalism is central. '[T]he modern environmentalist movement is overwhelmingly dominated by white people, to the point where one might be tempted to say environmentalism (...) is the last bastion of implicit whiteness' (Ahab 2017). Since contemporary environmental activism is overwhelmingly liberal or left in orientation, alt-right ecology is primarily intellectual and 'metapolitical', following the neo-Gramscian strategy of the French *Nouvelle Droite* that seeks to shift the cultural and intellectual landscape towards receptivity to right wing politics.

Ecology is an important front in this war of ideas, and its articulation has shifted with the changing times. The classic right ecological emphasis on population and immigration is still there but takes new ideological forms. It is now often part of an expanded political terrain of alt-right ecology that includes new themes like deep ecology, decentralism, anti-modernism, anarchism, Indigenism, and veganism.

Overpopulation: Immigration and white 'habitat loss'

Overpopulation has remained a central theme for right ecology because it shifts responsibility for environmental problems away from questions of overconsumption or capitalism and focuses instead on either the sins of an undifferentiated 'humanity' or racist anti-immigration arguments about the profligacy of non-western cultures. The first coincides with the alt-right's elitist, declinist and clash of civilizations narratives, while the second speaks to the white nationalist fixation on 'white genocide'. Stern (2005) has shown how early conservationists in California viewed Mexicans as both a cultural and ecological threat, while Bhatia (2004) has described the broad network of right-wing groups that try to seduce progressives by channelling environmental concern into support for anti-immigration policies. Groups like Progressives for Immigration Reform, The Pioneer Group and Apply the Brakes have recruited prominent ecologists like David Foreman and Garret Hardin to give anti-immigration politics an environmental veneer. Many of these groups are funded by John Tanton, who the Southern Poverty Law Center calls 'the racist architect of the modern anti-immigration movement' (SPLC 2010). White nationalists have worked to establish an academic presence; white separatist Virginia Abernethy was editor of the scholarly journal *Population and Environment* from 1989 to 1999, followed by Kevin MacDonald, an evolutionary psychologist popular with neo-Nazis for his quasi-academic updates of classical antisemitic motifs.

In addition to pseudo-scientific anti-immigration discourse, the mystical and esoteric orientation of the alt-right has affinities with deep ecology, attractive because of a shared antimodernist politics and preference for changing culture over statist solutions. The alt-right website Amerika.org states 'the Alt Right movement is a philosophical descendant of Deep Ecology' (Stevens 2017). Deep ecology's emphasis on protecting an abstract 'wilderness' or 'nature' has been a consistent site where right-wing positions

have surfaced in the radical environmental movement. Earth First! was criticized for racist and sexist anti-immigration and pro-HIV positions in the late 1980s, leading to a split where self-professed ‘redneck for wilderness’ Dave Foreman and others advocating a narrow focus on wilderness protection left the group, bemoaning the influence of humanist ideologies like feminism and anarchism (1987; Bookchin and Foreman 1999). Foreman is now a spokesperson for Apply the Brakes, and his most recent book *Man Swarm* (2011) was glowingly reviewed by anti-immigration groups (Kolankiewicz 2015). Opposition to immigration in the name of overpopulation has been a theme for many deep ecological thinkers and groups (Olsen 1999), from Edward Abbey’s warnings against a ‘mass influx of (...) culturally-morally-genetically impoverished people’ (Abbey 1988: 43) to Devall and Sessions (1985) neo-Malthusian fixation on third-world population growth.

Finnish deep ecologist Linkola (2006) has become a darling of the alt-right for statements like, ‘[t]here is no use counting the immigrants at the border: one should wait a while and look in their nurseries’ (2006: 130). His books are published by alt-right press Arktos and praised on Counter-Currents website, which notes that, ‘Linkola’s sympathies lie squarely with fascism’ (Hawthorne 2011). A growing number of alt-right actors, like whitebiocentrism.com and amerika.org, fuse deep ecology with explicit white supremacy, translating deep ecology’s concern for habitat loss and species extinction into fears about ‘white genocide’ and the displacement of ‘indigenous’ white people by ‘invasive species’. Greg Johnson states, ‘what is now happening to the European peoples [is] habitat loss’ due to competition with ‘similar creatures’ (Minkowitz 2017). White supremacist Harold Covington frames his call for a whites-only ethno-state in terms of habitat loss, ‘The wolves have to have a habitat, and the white man has to have a habitat’ (Francey 2013), as does Tom Metzger of White Aryan Resistance: ‘being only about 10 per cent of the population, we [whites] begin to sympathize, empathize more, with the wolves and other animals’ (quoted in Bhatia 2004: 201).

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Ethnopluralism and right-wing bioregionalism

The flip side of alt-right ecology’s discourse of overpopulation, racialized environmental disruption, and white genocide is the creation of a white homeland, a place to realize David Lane’s ‘14 words’ slogan (‘We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children’). The alt-right’ has resurrected a blood and soil politics which echoes the ‘love of land and militant racist nationalism’ articulated by Nazi ecofascism (Biehl and Staudenmaier 1995: 6). Yet many contemporary far-right groups have traded in the language of overt white supremacy for ethnopluralism, a vision wherein distinct groups live separately but allegedly equal, free to pursue their ethnic interests. Ethnopluralism is often embedded in the discourse of diversity or biodiversity, capitalizing on the progressive

antiracist and environmental associations (Forchtner 2019). The white nationalist group Identity Evropa proclaims:

[W]e are ethno-pluralists: We believe that all ethnic and racial groups should have somewhere in the world to call home – a place wherein they can fully express themselves and enjoy self-determination.

Identity Evropa (2017)

Many strains of the alt-right reject traditional nationalism and the state in favour of regionalism, decentralism, or tribalism. Bioregionalism has become an increasingly attractive political vehicle to articulate these views. Growing out of the ecology movement, bioregionalism advocates living in more decentralized communities that correspond to bioregions rather than artificial borders. Although bioregionalism has mostly been articulated in a progressive environmental idiom, it is also open to nationalist interpretations contain seeds for exclusion which have made it attractive to the right (Olsen 2000; Park 2013; Lokting 2018).

The Pacific Northwest, which has among the whitest populations in the United States, has long been targeted by white supremacists as the natural place to create a white homeland, a strategy called the Northwest Territorial Imperative (Durham 2007). This same geographic area is also known by environmentalists as the Cascadia bioregion, which spans from Northern California to Southern British Columbia. The notion of Cascadia was first popularized in the pages of Ernest Callenbach's 1975 utopian novel *Ecotopia*, which depicts life in a breakaway eco-community spanning Northern California, Oregon and Washington. Informed by the emergent ecology movement, New Left, counterculture and back to the land movements, it describes a largely progressive environmental utopia. Yet it also hints at problems of nationalism and identity; *Ecotopia's* borders are guarded from outsiders and voluntary ethnic separatism the norm.

Cascadian bioregionalists have sought to make this fictional ecotopia into reality, with various organizations and a flag. While the majority of Cascadian bioregionalists are liberal or progressive environmentalists, the open parameters of place-based politics in an overwhelmingly white area has created an opportunity for participation by right actors.¹ One such group is True Cascadia, which fuses Cascadian bioregionalist discourse with overt white separatism to promote 'a White ethnic consciousness in the Pacific Northwest and prevent, as well as reverse, the increasingly discriminatory policies enacted in opposition to Whites in our own homelands' (Kavanaugh 2018). The group was invited to speak at the 2016 Northwest Forum in Seattle, the premier intellectual gathering for the far right, and their Cascadia hats were a visible presence at the 2017 Unite the Right march in Charlottesville, Virginia (Lewis 2017; Rose City Antifa 2017; Hayden 2018).

The Northwest Front is another white bioregionalist group led by long-time white supremacist Harold Covington. The group deploys a quasi-ecological

discourse which seeks to ‘preserv[e] our race from biological and cultural extinction’ by creating ‘a sovereign and independent nation on the continent of North America for White people only’ (Northwest Front 2010a, 2010b). Northwest Front’s website depicts happy white families frolicking in the natural beauty of the Pacific Northwest against the backdrop of the Cascadian bioregional flag, which they give a white supremacist interpretation: ‘The sky is the blue, and the land is the green. The white is for the people in between’ (Northwest Front 2010c).

Some actors are attracted to bioregionalism precisely because it seems to transcend left and right. Casey Brian Corcoran (2015), a prominent activist in the Cascadia bioregionalist movement, states:

I believe Place is more powerful and alive than Race or Ideology. The ‘far Right’ is not my enemy, nor is the ‘far Left’ (...) I am hopeful that Bioregionalism can be formulated in a way that opposes both toxic ideologies. AQ 4

Corcoran’s background is in the radical ecology and green anarchist movements, but he has come to abandon both, stating ‘I am not an environmentalist (...) Call me a European Indigenist’ (quoted in Jacob 2013). Although insisting he is not personally racist, the broader goal of creating a Cascadian nation comprised of diverse ‘tribes’ requires working with them: ‘[r]efusing to scapegoat even white “racialists” is, I feel, both morally courageous and *highly intelligent*’ (Corcoran 2015).

Indigenism, decolonization, tribalism

As Cascadia overlaps many sovereign indigenous nations, there is significant overlap between bioregionalism and Indigenism, a political perspective which asserts the rights and sovereignty of indigenous people. Chinook tribal member Robert Izatt states, ‘I totally see overlap with bioregionalism and current indigenous resistance (...) People with European ancestry need to reinhabit the land (...) taking only what you need, not just taking it because you can, you want it, or want to sell it’ (Sears 2016). Despite this ecological anti-capitalist sentiment, a politics tightly bound to place and culture has proven compatible with right-wing politics. In recent years the concepts of ‘indigeneity’ and ‘decolonization’ have been taken up by the alt-right, especially its ecological wing, as they are open to blood-and-soil, essentialist, and traditionalist interpretations. Despite radically different political motivations, indigenism’s valorization of place and identity, suspicion of modernity, valorization of traditional lifeways, critiques of the state, and transcendence of right/left overlap with central themes of the alt-right.

Corcoran’s close associate Vince Rinehart is another prominent figure in the convergence of indigenist, bioregionalist, and far-right movements.

A member of the Tlingit tribe, he advocates a ‘tribal anarchism’ wherein different distinct tribes – not necessarily but potentially racial in nature – unite to bring down the imperialist United States government and corporations. Although Native Americans have actual tribes, white settlers can create bio-regional tribes which then ally together ‘against colonialism and imperialism’ (Rinehart 2013). Although Rinehart’s pleas are garbed in the language of the left, he is closely allied with cryptofascist groups with ties to white nationalism like Attack the System, where he is an editor. Rinehart has written sympathetic articles defending the armed occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, despite many occupiers’ ties to white supremacist and anti-Indian movements (Rinehart 2016; See also Boggs 2019 in this volume).²

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Tulalip tribal member Eric Lee Flores, active in the Patriot movement, was also among those arrested at the Malheur Occupation (Rural Organizing Project 2017).

The related discourse of decolonization has become another arena for left-right crossover, often intertwining with ecological politics. The journal *Autonomy Cascadia: A Journal of Bioregional Decolonization* explores the intersection, seeking ‘a bioregional practice rooted in the repatriation of Indigenous land’ (Autonomy Cascadia 2013). Yet in other quarters, the ‘repatriation of indigenous land’ takes on a different meaning. Far-right populists across Europe have argued against recent immigration in terms of defending indigenous Europeans from colonization by alien cultures, deploying language and tropes of the postcolonial and indigenist lefts. Increasingly, right-wing actors from Eastern Europe to Africa have also utilized a post-colonial discourse to argue against the imposition of ‘western’ concepts such as gay rights, feminism, or free speech on indigenous populations (Tax 2012; Taylor 2017). While decolonization and indigeneity are concepts mostly associated with the antiracist left, they are not immune to ecofascist and other right-wing interpretations.

Right decentralism: Secessionism, tribalism, Green anarchism

At the other corner of the United States is The Second Vermont Republic (SVR), a self-described ‘peaceful secessionist’ movement founded in 2003. Founded in 2003 by Thomas Naylor, the group speaks a largely progressive idiom of sustainability, community, and independence from Wall Street and corporate America. Pioneering bioregionalist and ecologist Kirkpatrick Sale is a leading voice in SVR. Despite this progressive orientation, until 2008 SVR worked closely with the neo-Confederate secessionist group League of the South, designated a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center. The relationship seems to have significantly affected Sale’s political and intellectual interests; he now writes almost exclusively about secessionism. His last book, *Emancipation Hell* (2012), blames Lincoln and the Emancipation Proclamation for the Civil War and contemporary

race relations. SVR continues to collaborate with League of the South via the Abbeville Institute, devoted to ‘what is true and valuable in the Southern tradition’. Sale wrote the introduction to Naylor’s 2008 book *How Vermont and all the Other States Can Save Themselves from the Empire*, published by Feral House, which features a wide variety of fringe thinkers including white supremacists (Reid Ross 2017). In 2004, Sale and others from SVR founded the Middlebury Institute, a think tank dedicated to ‘the study of separatism, secession, and self-determination’ (Sale 2016). Its website features links to the website Attack the System, another ‘secessionist’ group with ties to both ecology and the far right.

Attack the System (ATS) is a ‘pan-secessionist’ website that grew out of the National Revolutionary Vanguard organization. Both were founded by Keith Preston, a former left-wing anarchist who now identifies as an ‘anarcho-pluralist’ and ‘pan-secessionist’. Pan-secessionism seeks to build ‘an international coalition against the global plutocratic super-class’ comprised of ‘regional federations of autonomous and self-determined communities reflecting an infinite variety of themes’ (Preston 2015). Although Preston does not identify as a white nationalist and several ATS associates are people of colour, these ‘communities’ include white nationalist separatists. Like most crypto-fascist ecologists, Preston (2015) insists ‘[s]uch a project necessarily involves transcending ordinary divisions of the kind that normally define the conventional Left and Right’.

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Preston and Attack the System are closely related to the National Anarchist and Third Positionist movements. National Anarchism advocates a decentralized, racialized socialism inspired by figures from the left and ecological wings of the Nazi Party like Walther Darré and the Strasser brothers (Reid Ross 2017; Lyons 2018). Despite their affinities with fascism, they reject the label due to its statist connotations. National Anarchists are active participants on the white supremacist website Stormfront. Third Positionism is a similar tendency which seeks to create a red-brown alliance of communists and fascists, also drawing from green Nazism. Along with other classically left positions like anti-imperialism and anti-capitalism, Third Positionists and National Anarchists actively embrace ecology and veganism (Sunshine 2008).

British activist Troy Southgate has been a key figure in developing a synthesis of fascist and green anarchist ideas within the Third Positionist and National Anarchist milieus. A onetime British National Front member, Southgate founded the National Revolutionary Faction in 1996, which became the main National Anarchist group in the anglophone world. Southgate was influenced by the British ecofascist Richard Hunt, who edited the journal *Green Anarchist* before being expelled and founding *Green Alternative*, which Southgate later edited. Southgate has articulated an anti-egalitarian right-wing anarchism that draws on anarcho-primitivist John Zerzan as well as mystical anarchist Hakim Bey (Macklin 2005).

National Anarchists have sought to infiltrate groups and movements in the United States with some success, targeting the anarchist, environmental,

anti-capitalist, indigenous, and animal rights movements (Griffin 2005). The main US group was the Bay Area National Anarchist Movement, founded in 2007. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, ‘BANA and other likeminded national anarchists cloak their bigotry in the language of radical environmentalism and mystical tribalism, pulling recruits from both the extreme right and the far left’ (Sanchez 2009).

When their neo-fascist commitments were discovered, BANA was expelled from the anarchist movement. Yet they insisted that ‘National Anarchists are genuinely sympathetic with many green anarchist ideas [and] deeply allied with Green Anarchist ideals’ (Bay Area National Anarchists 2007). Their response also highlighted their ecofascist orientation: ‘[t] hose who misuse or destroy the environment deserve a swift and merciless response that such behavior is unacceptable’ (ibid.). Although BANA disbanded in 2011, National Anarchist ideas continue to circulate in the left-right crossover milieu.

The discourse of racialized ecological anarchism that characterizes much alt-right ecology echoes the theme of Timothy Snyder’s 2015 book, *Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning*, which argues Hitler was less a nationalist than a ‘racial anarchist’ fuelled by an ecological worldview. This took the form of an ‘ecological antisemitism’ wherein Jews were *unnatural*, the embodiment of unnaturalness, and had to be eradicated to restore the world to its natural state (Snyder 2015: 5–10). Nazism sought to do this by attacking the liberal state form which protected Jews, thus returning to a ‘natural’ order characterized by the struggle of racialized groups for resources and dominance. Snyder’s reinterpretation of Hitler’s political vision closely resembles that of National Anarchism, Third Positionism, and other anti-semitic, conspiracist, and white nationalist groups concerned with ecology.

The Wolves of Vinland (WoV), described as the ‘environmentalist component’ of the alt-right (Caldwell 2016), are another right decentralist group which combine quasi-ecological tribalism with masculinist authoritarianism. Founded in 2006, the Wolves have been described as crypto-fascist. ‘Vinland’, which refers to the section of eastern North America reached by Vikings before Columbus, is a cultural reference for a variety of white nationalist groups. Although not primarily focused on race, one member was convicted of attempted arson on a black church and various members openly praise white nationalism (Woodruff 2015; Amend and Piggot 2017). A large part of the Wolves’ allure is their distinct aesthetic, which draws from the neo-folk and black metal music scenes, biker subculture, weightlifting and martial arts communities, and neo-paganism. Members engage in pagan rituals involving blood, runes and animal skulls wearing black-metal inspired face paint. Group membership is denoted by patches on biker vests or ‘cuts’ and prominent tattoos; many are heavily muscled from training for the fight clubs that characterize their gatherings.

Ideologically, the group draws on European paganism, a cult of masculinity, self-help ideology, egoism, and other romantic themes to envision

a political imaginary of tight-knit Viking warrior tribes subordinated in a meritocratic hierarchy bound together through ritual and martial training. It aligns closely with the mystical fascism of Julius Evola, sharing his rejection of nationalism as an overly inclusive, statist, and modernist ideology and social form. Their ecological antimodernism targets the 'Empire of Nothing', characterized by unfulfilling capitalist materialism, an unnatural and emasculating egalitarianism, and a corrupt state which protects it. Nature represents a timeless hierarchical order and the alternative to modernity, whose multiculturalism, feminism, wealth, urbanism, and statist bureaucracy breeds decadence, weakness and inferiority.

The Wolves prepare for the inevitable social and ecological collapse that will create a lawless world where real men can 'restart the world'. This requires building tribal communities that are 'are immersed in nature, in spirituality, free and independent of the materialistic hell of capitalism' (Waggener quoted in Wallace 2015). These tribes will take many forms, 'whether it be (...) religious tribalism or racial tribalism or whatever' (Southern Poverty Law Center 2017). It also requires reasserting traditional gender roles, especially the hierarchical 'gang masculinity' advocated by prominent member Jack Donovan, a popular author in the alt-right and manosphere movements. Although Donovan is homosexual, he rejects gay identity in favour of a hyper-masculine 'androphila'. This process of becoming 'barbarians' is also a spiritual battle that rejects the 'dead gods' while resurrecting 'old gods' through a combination of pagan spirituality, marital masculinity, and nature worship (Donovan 2014). Pagan and other pre-Christian spiritual practices have become an important ideological vector for combining white nationalism and ecology, including overtly racist variants like Wotanism, but also others like Ásatrúar and Odinists which have become battlegrounds between racist and non-racist interpretations (Weber 2018).

In recent years eco-fascist and alt-right groups have also embraced green, primitivist and anti-civilization anarchist thinkers. These tendencies are united by a palingenetic impulse coupled with romantic longing for a prelapsarian universe of authenticity and ecological harmony unsullied by the corruption of modernity. The ultra-violent Atomwaffen Division considers Ted Kaczynski, imprisoned Unabomber and green anarchist icon, as one of their 'holy trinity' alongside Timothy McVeigh and Anders Breivik (Anti-Defamation League ND). For Kaczynski, National Socialism had redeemable aspects because it was 'partly a revolution against civilization' (Kaczynski 2017). Anarcho-primitivist theorist John Zerzan, a friend of Kaczynski's, rejects not only the state and capitalism but civilization, language and abstract thought. Sunshine (2009) has demonstrated how this critique mirrors Nazi discourse which identifies Jews with the ills of abstraction and modernity, and draw from shared intellectual sources like Martin Heidegger, Oswald Spengler, and Mircea Eliade. Indeed, Zerzan has been praised by far-right figures including Russian fascist Aleksandr Dugin and the white supremacist site Stormfront (Reid Ross 2017). Similarly, Deep Green Resistance (DGR),

a group founded by green anarchist author Derrick Jensen, has been scorned by the left and embraced by the right for anti-trans and anti-immigration statements (Reid Ross 2017). At least three imprisoned green anarchists have turned to fascism while imprisoned for environmental activism (NYCABF 2008; Valdinoci 2014). Green and primitivist anarchism have proven compatible with the ecofascist right because they share significant philosophical and political terrain, including ecological antimodernism, civilizational decline narratives, blood and soil sympathies, and hostility towards the left.

While most right ecological discourse romanticizes a premodern imaginary, it also takes urban neoliberal forms. At the opposite end of the aesthetic and temporal spectrum is the hypermodern eco-fascist aesthetic. McFarlane (2018) argues that Silicon Valley's unique combination of ecology, neoliberalism, and techno-elitism has made it 'a significant incubator of "neoreaction" (NRx) and neo-fascist thought'. Drawing on accelerationist thinkers like Nick Land and the Italian Futurists, this tendency sees heroic individuals using technology to solve ecological problems created by the unenlightened masses, either via technological fixes or escape – walling themselves off from the teeming throngs or abandoning Earth altogether for the greener pastures of space.

Veganism and animal rights

While far from dominant in alt-right circles, veganism has become an increasingly visible theme within white nationalist and far-right groups (Forchtner and Tominc 2017). It is often advocated as natural and pure, but also an elitist gesture that dissociates one from the masses and, for some, aligns oneself with the diet of Adolf Hitler. Aryanism.net has a veganism subsection which states that 'a lifestyle that generates no demand for animal products, has always been a hallmark of an authentic National Socialist' (Aryanism.net). It continues, 'veganism is a direct consequence of the Aryan instinct of universal compassion. Far from its misassociation with the pacifistic hippy caricatures presented to us by the Jewish media, its most accurate spiritual association is with the archetypal heroic warrior' (ibid.).

Jayne Louis Liardi, founder of a popular YouTube channel called Simply Vegan, evolved into a white nationalist advocating an anti-globalist, racial separatist stance. In a video titled *My Awakening/Globalism vs Nationalism*, he outlined his transformation from a liberal, vegan, feminist multiculturalist into a pagan European nationalist, describing veganism as a search for personal truth informed by his European heritage (Liardi 2016). Capitalist consumerism – coded as Jewish – fills the vacuum of meaning for those without ethno-racial identity, thus 'If you have no identity, one will be installed for you by the kosher forces of the state' (ibid.). He advocates rediscovery of 'the Native European way' in order to create 'a future for our children free of this consumerism, this insanity, this anti-nature world' (ibid.) and is a regular guest on various far right media outlets (de Coning 2017).

One reason for veganism's newfound popularity is the rediscovery of fascist vegetarian Savitri Devi, widely read in the alt-right. Prominent Northwest neo-Nazi Matthew Stafford lists her as an inspiration for his fascist veganism (Reitman 2018). Andrew Anglin, founder of the white supremacist Daily Stormer website, is a former vegan. Troy Southgate (2011) emphasizes the role of veganism in Third Positionism, and fascists in England have been actively involved in animal rights activism. By contrast, for the US right veganism remains mostly an individual lifestyle choice and intellectual interest; there is no evidence of participation in the wider animal rights movement. The prominence of veganism in contemporary alt-right discourse cannot be reduced to purely strategic considerations. Instead, it shows these issues have no stable or neutral political valence, but rather are available for authoritarian and anti-egalitarian articulation.

Conclusion

The crossover between left and right politics is a confusing mixture of cynical co-optation alongside sincerely-held political convictions. While some groups strategically use ecological discourse solely to recruit new members from the left or public at large, many others are genuine in their advocacy of a far-right ecological perspective, especially tribalist, quasi-anarchist, and esoteric actors. Alexander Reid Ross suggests that this 'shared ideological space cannot be tidily blamed on co-optation', but instead constitutes a 'unique response to the same material conditions' (2017: 1).

Somewhat surprisingly, climate change does not seem to be a core theme in the groups and traditions under consideration here. This is likely due in part to the conflicting views found within the alt-right, where some dispute climate change as a 'cultural Marxist' lie while others accept its reality but direct blame onto immigration, the third world, or 'globalism'. What results is a big-tent ecumenicism that can accommodate both, wherein '[p]ersonal beliefs on whether or not climate change is anthropogenic do not matter since Alt-Right policies would be positive for the environment' (Evolalinkola 2017).

The current political moment has seen existing political institutions, parties, and ideologies lose legitimacy or collapse, opening new discursive terrain to actors on the left and right alike to offer new political visions and interpretations of events. The global surge of far-right populism across Europe from *Alternative für Deutschland*, Brexit, and the election of Trump in the United States has revealed the depth of dissatisfaction with the status quo and normalized previously far-right views. The Trump administration's ties to the alt-right have been extensively documented, including discursive as well as personnel overlap (Hawley 2017; Main 2017; Nagle 2017). The enemy identified by the ecological right closely approximates what Fraser calls 'progressive neoliberalism', an 'alliance of mainstream currents of new social movements (feminism, anti-racism, multiculturalism, and LGBTQ rights), on the one

side, and high-end “symbolic” and service-based business sectors (Wall Street, Silicon Valley, and Hollywood), on the other’ (2017). This political formation aptly describes the Clinton–Obama paradigm, which formally emancipated a variety of subaltern groups while simultaneously liberating the most destructive forces of capitalism. This creates a social dynamic ripe for the scapegoating political discourse of right populism. According to Fraser (2017), by ‘Rejecting globalization, Trump voters also repudiated the liberal cosmopolitanism identified with it. For some (though by no means all), it was a short step to blaming their worsening conditions on political correctness, people of color, immigrants, and Muslims’.

Alt-right ecology adds an ecological dimension to this critique of progressive neoliberalism, blaming environmental problems on a left-identified form of capitalism and the groups it champions (Mix 2009).

Brown’s (2006) essay ‘American Nightmare’ also illuminates recent developments on the right. She argues that by subordinating democratic values to a fundamentally amoral market logic, neoliberalism produced ‘de-democratized’ subjectivities confronting a social world emptied of normative meaning. This in turn sets the stage for neoconservatism to fill this ethical void, also bypassing democratic values in favour of an authoritarian form of Christian militarism. Contemporary right ecology performs a similar function, channelling the same sentiment into a different ideological container which reflects new political realities. They confront the same ‘empire of Nothing’ produced by neoliberalism but reject the war, centralized state power, and Judeo-Christian values which characterized neoconservatism, an ideology further tainted by the fact that many neocons are both Jewish and former leftists. They are not alone on the right in viewing neoconservatism as a suspiciously leftist species of conservatism: overly urban, intellectual, Jewish, and ideological. Alt-right ecology reflect the pervasive sense of ecological and social decline in a post-economic crisis world facing looming climate change, and the search for new ideologies – anarchism, tribalism, paganism – which reject the state and Christianity as viable sources for social, ecological, and spiritual renewal.

On this reading, capitalism and fascism are closely intertwined. Of course, Frankfurt School Critical Theory has long insisted on centering this relationship, with Horkheimer’s famous quip that ‘whoever is not prepared to talk about capitalism should also remain silent about fascism’ (quoted in Bronner and Kellner 1989: 78). Yet whereas the connection between the racialized scapegoating of traditional fascism and the dislocations of capital were rather opaque, mediated, and channelled into the state, alt-right ecology and eco-fascism make this connection clearly and directly; capitalism causes ecological degradation and the state cannot save us (Bookchin 1982; Moore 2003). As social and ecological dystopia feature ever more prominently in popular culture, the vision of stateless gangs living off the land in a brutal social Darwinian universe is already a familiar one. Alt-right ecology warns of this dystopian future while also embracing its potentiality, giving it a veneer

of inevitability and desirability. As social and ecological crises continue to deepen, and with few emancipatory political alternatives in sight, alt-right ecology appears to be an ideology and movement likely to keep growing.

Note

- 1 Anti-racist and left-wing bioregionalists, like Cascadia flag designer Alexander Baretich, actively counter right-wing attempts to co-opt the term Cascadia.

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