Check for updates

Article

Political Studies Association | politics

Politics
2026, Vol. 46(1) 173–192
© The Author(s) 2024

Article reuse guidelines:
sagepub.com/journals-permissions
DOI: 10.1177/02633957241273649
journals.sagepub.com/home/pol
Sage

Ecofascism in the shadow of 'patriotic ecology': Nativism, economic greenwashing, and the evolution of far-right political ecology in France

Lise Benoist
Uppsala University, Sweden

Joe Turner
University of York, UK

Daniel Bailey
Manchester Metropolitan University, UK

Abstract

Far-right environmental politics has changed dramatically in Europe in the last decade. Through an investigation of (far-)right rhetoric in the 2022 French elections we document the development of far-right political ecology in France and the rise of so-called 'patriotic ecology'. We identify an intensifying focus on rootedness, racialised Malthusianism, and localism which seeks to cast 'nomadic' or 'uprooted' Global South refugees and migrants, minoritised communities, and liberal globalist political elites as the primary culprits of France's environmental issues. We show how this discourse extends and develops prior forms of ecofascism, promising forms of statecraft that will intensify authoritarian border violence while 'liberating' the native stewards of rural France from 'punitive' forms of industrial decarbonisation. This reflects an evolving form of climate change denialism by stealth within far-right politics because it obscures the unequal, extractive economic causes of ecological crises and the need for systemic economic transformations.

Keywords

borders, ecofascism, far-right ecology, French politics, race and population

Received: 1th December 2023; Revised version received: 4th April 2024; Accepted: 15th May 2024

Corresponding author:
Joe Turner, Department of Politics and International Relations, Derwent College, University of York, York YO10 5DD, UK.
Email: joe.turner@york.ac.uk

Introduction

The last decade has seen a resurgence of far-right discourses on environmentalism especially in Europe and North America (Forchtner, 2019; Turner and Bailey, 2022; Marquardt and Lederer, 2022).[1] These various manifestations have been conceptualised as ecofascism (Moore and Roberts, 2022), green nationalism (Hultgren, 2015; Malm and Zetkin Collective, 2021), far-right ecologism (Lubarda, 2020), ecobordering (Turner and Bailey, 2022), and identitarian ecology (François and Nonjon, 2021). These discourses and conventional forms of climate denialism by far-right actors are far from mutually exclusive. Indeed, the relationship between the two is crucial to understand the mutations of far-right environmentalism. Both continue to be mobilised to discredit and delegitimise climate policies and sustainability transitions (Lockwood, 2018; Kulin et al., 2021, Buzogány and Mohamad-Klotzbach, 2021; Marquardt et al., 2022; Yazar and Haarstad, 2023), as the mainstreaming of far-right parties and politics re-shapes policy-making in ways detrimental to climate action (Marquardt et al. 2022; Jahn, 2021; Lockwood and Lockwood, 2022; Atkins, 2022; Paterson et al., 2024).

This article contributes to this scholarship through an empirical investigation of the far-right environmental discourse of French political parties ahead of the 2022 presidential and legislative elections. The study sought to trace the developing character and the (contradictory) internal logics of far-right environmental politics, by identifying how far-right parties narrate the causes and solutions to environmental issues. This case study was chosen because France has historically been an incubator for ascendant far-right movements developing new exclusionary and often instrumental environmental strategies (François, 2016; Carle, 2017; Malm and Zetkin Collective, 2021; Benoist, 2020; François and Nonjon, 2021). The 2022 elections featured a multitude of far-right parties including the National Rally (NR, formerly National Front), which made further electoral advances (gaining 41.45% vote share in the 2nd round of the Presidential election and gaining 89 Parliamentary seats in the legislative elections). We initially examined all registered political parties in the run up to the elections in order to understand how they narrated environmental issues, and then identified parties which could be described as 'far-right', nationalistic or conservative (based on Forchtner, 2019, see Appendix 1). On the basis of this selection criteria, we analysed party manifestos, speeches, debates, interviews and relevant X/Twitter profiles across eight selected parties. We examined how these eight parties framed environmental issues and examined any potential links between environmentalism, population, immigration, and nationalism. In order to contextualise the election data, we also analysed political party speeches and pledges surrounding the 2021 Climate and Resilience law, and cross referenced this data (where relevant) with campaign material from the 2019 European elections. The texts were coded based on 20 identified keywords, and then we conducted a discourse analysis of the gathered material focussing on the *intratextual* (the internal logic), *intertextual* (the relation to other texts) *and interlocutory* (the wider social and historical context) character of the statements and texts (Shilliam, 2021).[2] We focussed on critically assessing the ideological and political function of these parties' discursive strategies and their framing of environmental politics (Jessop, 2004); we did not make inferences about intention or individual ideological commitment.

In this article, we identify and scrutinise the environmental discourse of 'patriotic ecology' that was developed by the NR and other parties ahead of the 2022 elections. We find that the discourse frames racialised communities and migrants as well as 'globalist'

Table 1. (Far-)right parties in the French political landscape 2021–2022 (in grey, the ones which ended up not running).

Party name (English)	Party name (French)	Presidential candidate
The Republicans	Les Républicains (LR)	Valérie Pécresse
National Rally (NR)	Rassemblement National (RN)	Marine Le Pen
France, stand up!	Debout la France! (DLF)	Nicolas Dupont Aignan
Reconquest!	Reconquête!	Éric Zemmour
Popular Republican Union	Union Populaire Républicaine (UPR)	François Asselineau
The Patriots	Les Patriotes	Florian Philippot
The Nationalists	Les Nationalistes	Yvan Benedetti
Independent Ecological Movement*	Mouvement Écologiste Indépendant (MEI)	Antoine Waechter

* MEI advertises itself as a green party 'beyond the left and the right' and is as such not *far*-right. However, Waechter has historically distanced himself from alliances with the left, and promoted a conservative ecology, with a strong emphasis on tackling population growth.

political elites as culprits of environmental degradation while lionising the nativist localised stewardship of nature by rural communities. Our analysis explores the wider historical and material context of far-right environmentalism in France to demonstrate that the discourse rehabilitates and normalises ecofascist ideas of white supremacy, neo-Malthusianism, ethno-differentialism and ecobordering (the environmental justification of border violence). We argue that this discourse demonstrates how ecofascism functions as an ideological foundation for how French far-right parties relate to the environment (Moore and Roberts, 2022; Dubiau, 2022), but that its discursive strategies continue to mutate in order to build electoral coalitions.

The ideological and policy agenda of the French far-right, and NR's discourse in particular, works through several registers, but its four central logics (which structure the rest of this article) are: (1) the defence of French 'green' exceptionalism, (2) a racialised conception of population and natalism, (3) the co-option of 'localism' and 'stewardship' with a fixation of promoting French rural communities as vital to environmental protection, and (4) a rejection of the 'punitive ecology' of 'global elites' in the name of 'the people'. In this ethno-nationalist strategy, the 'real' France is presented as already 'green' and ethnically-bound to French nature. The 'real' threat to ecology is the influx of negatively racialised migrants from the Global South which destroy the natalist link between 'blood and soil'. It also equally blames the 'punitive ecology' enforced by the 'global elites' in Paris and beyond (Duina and Zhous, 2024: 19–29). While 'patriots' and farmers, in particular, are presented as stewards of the land, migrants and certain liberal elites (the purveyors of punitive ecology) are presented as 'nomads' or 'globalists' who threaten the future of French nature and culture.[3] The policy solutions, in this imaginary, is the further securitisation and militarisation of borders in order to combat immigration from the Global South, natalist policy for white people, and resistance to interventionist climate policies orchestrated by the French state.

In analysing the narrative of 'patriotic ecology', we want to identify a particular electoral and political strategy used by the NR, and the French far-right in general, in order to critically examine what it normalises, obscures, and makes possible. However, we do not suggest that the strategy *is* 'patriotic' nor 'ecological'. Nor would we suggest that any 'patriotic ecological' project would provide any genuine, sustainable, or just solution to the climate crisis.

In the next section, we provide an overview of the historical development of ecofascism, and thereafter show how the French far-right has historically drawn upon its key logics and tropes. We then empirically examine the modern development of 'patriotic ecology' and scrutinise its fallacious depictions and hierarchical visions of environmental protection that shadow and rehabilitate ecofascist ideas.

Ecofascism and its mutations

While the meaning of ecofascism has varied considerably historically (see, e.g. Madelin, 2023; Dubiau, 2022), contemporary contributions to the understanding of far-right ecologies broadly describe it as the intersection between environmentalism (eco), racialised supremacy, and authoritarianism (fascism). The term is still most famously associated with the Nazi doctrine of *Blut und Boden* (Blood and Soil) (Biehl and Staudenmaier, 1995). More recently, scholars have defined it as a 'reactionary and revolutionary ideology that champions the regeneration of an imagined community through a return to a romanticised, ethnopluralist vision of the natural order' (Campion, 2021: 926). Moore and Roberts (2022: 11) treat it as a movement geared towards national renewal or 'purification' premised on the violent expulsion of a radical other who threatens the natural order of the people and its environment. Regardless of the form ecofascism takes, it always revolves around ideals of racialised supremacy tied to the preservation of nature. Ecofascism alone does not encompass the various ways the far-right engages with environmentalism (Lubarda, 2020). However, we argue that ecofascism remains a useful analytical category to understand the changing and emergent character of political ecologies of the far-right in Europe and in France specifically. In doing so, rather than needing to identify a 'purist' form of ecofascism, we give analytical attention to the identification of how ecofascist ideas are normalised by the contemporary far-right.

Ecofascism's central tenet is as an appeal to 'the people' as rooted in a natural and national territory which is threatened by the decadence, 'mixing' and pollution of modernity. The contemporary far-right re-energise principles of ethno-nationalism and interlinked ideas of ethno-differentialism, which continuously pits 'the true people' against poorer, racialised migrants who are represented as invaders (this is entirely decontextualised from histories of colonialism, imperialism, and global inequality which structures the movement of people). This frame equally treats racialised citizens, feminists, queer, disabled communities, and revolutionary working-class movements as biological threats to the nation and its environmental 'homeland' (Siddiqui, 2021). Central to the ecofascist tradition is the connection of a 'pure' environment or landscape with a 'pure' ethnic body. 'Bloodline' (hetero-biological) heritage is rooted to the land. The 'rooted' are, in turn, presented as natural stewards of this ethnic and environmental territory. This equally positions certain liberal elites as an enemy (albeit with very different consequences), as defenders of multiculturalism, the feminisation of European society and the destruction of a nation's or civilisation's natural environment through the imposition of liberal modernity.

Contemporary ecofascist discourses in Europe and North America coalesce around further normalising white supremacist principles and utilising state violence against poorer and negatively racialised 'others' from the Global South; primarily by extending border regimes. Following Tilley and Ajl (2023), we understand ecofascist ideas to be drawn from European histories of colonial expansion and control, where white supremacist notions of demography, overpopulation, and conceptions of naturalised racial

difference have been used to structure an imperial world order and produce regimes of exploitation and accumulation. This in turn has created fertile terrain for European fascist movements to claim that the conservation of nature is synonymous with the preservation of a 'pure' (white) people.

While the far-right's engagement with climate and environmental issues is often categorised into denialists versus ecofascist camps, we trouble this distinction by arguing that 'patriotic ecology' fed by ecofascist ideas constitutes a *denialism by stealth*. More explicit forms of climate denialism are often associated with 'fossil fascism' (i.e. the explicit defence of fossil fuels through authoritarian politics and the rejection of the environmental movement as a feminised and racialised threat to ethnically pure societies) (Malm and Zetkin Collective, 2021; Daggett, 2018), but ecofascism can also encompass denialist stances. While traditional denialism of the *evidence* of climate science, modern mutations have centred on *process* scepticism, contestation over the culprits of ecological degradation, and scepticism of policy *response* (Van Rensburg, 2015; Jett et al., 2024). More recently, scholars have even pushed for the term 'climate obstruction' or climate delayism instead, to encompass other strategies of *delay* and *inaction* that similarly prevent the implementation of effective climate mitigation policies, beyond the evidence deniers–non-deniers dichotomy (Ekberg et al., 2022). It is within this category of 'obstruction' that we situate the effects of the normalisation of ecofascism in European party politics. Denialism by stealth highlights how the contemporary far-right obstructs the pursuit of effective climate policies and obscures the systematic drivers of climate change, while simultaneously working to strengthen and normalise racist state and border violence (see also Forchtner and Lubarda, 2023).

The far-right and reactionary environmentalism in France

While there is increased interest in the politics of environmental justice in France (Coolsaet and Deldrève, 2023; Ford, 2016), research has revealed the contradictions and social tensions in the development of green capitalist solutions (Tienhaara, 2014) and far-right attempts to co-opt the rise in environmental sentiment and lead the backlash to the government's technocratic environmental agenda (Boukala and Tountasaki, 2019; Bivar, 2022). However, the research on far-right environmentalism has tended to focus on its populist characteristics (Boukala and Tountasaki, 2019; De Nadal, 2024), arguably at the expense of a sustained analysis of its racialised, colonial, and authoritarian politics (although see Moore and Roberts, 2022).

The forms of 'climate denialism' deployed by the far-right have evolved in recent years. Since her takeover of the NR, Marine Le Pen has overseen a shift in discursive strategy towards process scepticism centred on policy responses in particular (Van Rensburg, 2015; Jett et al., 2024), which has instead mobilised political resistance to effective climate action in different forms. In 2014, the then-NF created the party-affiliated organisation *Nouvelle Écologie* (New Ecology) to profess a commitment to landscape preservation, and biodiversity as forms of 'national wealth' (Collectif Nouvelle Écologie, 2016: 4). In the 2017 presidential elections, NR began referring to 'patriotic ecology' as an approach which protects the French environment as a wider part of the protection of French culture and heritage (Boukala and Tountasaki, 2019). Hervé Juvin, a self-proclaimed environmentalist, contributed heavily to the party's 2019 manifesto which emphasised the ideological battle 'between patriots who defend "those who are from somewhere" and post-nationalists who would welcome "those who are from

nowhere"' (NR 2019: 7). A division which is presented at the heart of the 'patriotic ecology' strategy. Importantly, 'rootedness' was framed as the social condition for protecting ecosystems against nomadic invaders as 'only a state and a population in full possession of their territory can ensure the survival of ecosystems' (NR 2019: 45). This new environmental discourse could be best epitomised NR's by Jordan Bardella in 2019 when he claimed 'the best ally of ecology is the border' (Bardella, 2019a), in line with his understanding of 'immigration and the environmental challenge' as being 'the two major issues of the 21st century' (Bardella, 2019b).

Juvin and, by extension, NR's approach is grounded in decades of reactionary environmentalist thought, initiated by the *Nouvelle Droite* (New Right, ND) and advanced by other actors on the extra-parliamentary far-right (François, 2016). The ND movement, played a formative role in the ideological 'counter-cultural' battle against liberals and leftist in France and was influenced notably by the work of Alain de Benoist following the revolutionary fervour of 1968. The influence of the ND has inspired the ideological and rhetorical strategies of the parliamentary right (through ideological networks, think tanks, and activism), with its focus on localism, rootedness, and growth-critical positions, based on critiques of modernity, consumerism, and globalisation (François, 2016). This opposition to globalisation is not solely populist but distinctly informed by the racialised ethnodifferentialist worldview of the ND, which has promoted the idea that a diversity of cultures can be tolerated as long as the physical 'mixing' and reproduction between 'races' is avoided at all costs (e.g. Juvin, 2022a; François, 2016 for an overview). The racial separatism and anti-globalist environmentalism of the ND, arguably, underpins the parliamentary far-rights' promotion of rootedness in local communities as a precondition to environmental protection (Benoist, 2021). However, as we identify, this actively revives fascist tropes of defining the community based on a presupposed link between the land and the people, echoing ecofascist ideology which links conservation to racial purity (Guillibert, 2020; Biehl and Staudenmaier, 1995).

These historical and ideological conditions were further intensified in 2021 when Eric Zemmour, a polemical TV journalist, created a new far-right party, Reconquête! (Reconquest!) and announced his intention to run for president. Known for his frequent use of hate speech, Zemmour actively drew on the great replacement conspiracy theory and actively defended French 'civilisation' (as he termed it) and the Vichy regime (France24, 2014; also Zerofsky, 2019). The rise of Zemmour markedly shaped the 2022 presidential election campaigns and accelerated a political shift to the right, helping to normalise NR and Le Pen by making the party sound 'less extreme'. Reconquête fixated on the regeneration of Frenchness through the purification of the national body of Muslim influences, and the reinvigoration of masculine and colonial constructs of white French superiority and exceptionalism (with a particular focus on the 'loss' of Algeria) (Brown, 2022). The more radical fringe of NR enthusiastically supported and/or joined Zemmour's ranks. His candidacy coincided with a strategic shift away from outright denialism and adopting the 'rooted' ecology principles of the NR (EZ 2021B).

The addition of another far-right party to the French political landscape meant that these explicitly white supremacist ideas and atmospheres of colonial nostalgia received further media attention. This unleashed and helped normalise *outwardly* fascist rhetoric into and followed a previous spike in hate crimes (ODIHR, 2021). While far from unique to French politics, there now exists a hegemonic consensus on anti-immigrationism across liberal, centrist, and rightist parties. Differing expressions of Islamophobia and attacks on multiculturalism were identifiable in the discourses of Emmanuel Macron's

government and conservative candidates such as Valérie Pécresse (Les Républicains, LR), albeit the appeals were far more explicit among far-right figures.

In this context of everyday normalisation of anti-immigrationism and the onset of ecological breakdown, the environmental discourses of far-right parties and actors have evolved to fuse the two political issues. We detail this emergence of 'patriotic ecology' as a political discourse in the following section.

'Friends', 'foes', and framing: An analysis of 'patriotic ecology' in the 2022 French elections

French exceptionalism

As the denialism of climate science has become increasingly untenable as a respectable political position in European politics, the far-right have sought to strategically develop new strategies which obfuscate the root causes of the ecological crisis and contest national responsibility for mitigation. A consistent message from French far-right, and conservative mainstream parties, ahead of the 2022 French presidential and parliamentary elections was that France is already exceptionally green and sustainable, given its low-carbon nuclear energy use and agrarian traditions. The implication of these assertions being that France bears little national culpability for greenhouse emissions and that global targets or radical structural change have no relevance. In the far-right variant this is taken further by narrating how France's otherwise 'green' nature is actively threatened by the influx of racialised others and the imposition of less carbon intensive technology.

In this imaginary, the pastoral vision of agrarian France and *la France profonde* is treated as inherently sustainable. For the French far-right, the farmer is the heart of the French nation, nurturing the bucolic idyll of the French countryside and producing traditional food (Ivaldi and Gombain, 2015). Le Pen argued in NR's presidential manifesto that 'agriculture has always had a special place in the heart of French people' and that farmers are the 'guarantors of our food sovereignty, depositaries of our know-how, keepers of our landscapes' (NR 2022C: 4). Reconquête also made this explicit when arguing that:

> Agriculture has always been constitutive of France's identity . . . While favouring the latest technologies in order to emit less CO_2, I will vigorously defend all harms caused to the beauty and integrity of our natural heritage which is one of the richest of Europe: our mountains, our rivers, our forests will have to be protected as it should, as it is also about France's identity. (R! 2022: 33)

The local farmer is a useful symbolic register to imagine what is to be protected in the midst of calls for economic transition. Yet this imaginary of sustainable agrarian tradition actively elides the reality of modern farming techniques and the production of French agriculture such as beef and cheese. The agricultural sector accounts for 17% of total French greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, the highest in the European Union (EU) (Mielcarek-Bocheńska and Rzeźnik, 2021), and large agro-corporations such as Danone, Unibel, and Flunch today dominate the sector rather than the nationalistic idealised figure of the artisanal local farmers (Bivar and Whited, 2020). Far-right actors and parties, while decrying 'globalism', have notably allied with the French agricultural industry's lobby

(Bivar, 2022) to greenwash its reputation and denounce suggestions that the sector is not in harmony with nature.

Equally, nuclear energy production is put forward as a further reason why economic transformation is unnecessary in France. In 2021, Le Pen announced that 'We are already the best students of the ecological class. Thanks to nuclear power, we already have a mainly decarbonised economy' (MLP 2021A). Zemmour too praised this 'wonderful *French* technology' (2021G emphasis added) and similarly overstated the green character of the French economy:

> We should congratulate our country everyday, because we are the country that emits the least CO_2, because we have an electric mix that relies on nuclear power at 75%, and 85% if we add hydroelectricity that absolutely does not emit CO_2. So we should be proud rather than saying that we are bad, that we have used up the planet, etc. France is the country that defends the best in this CO_2, battle [sic]. (2021D)

Responsibility for ecological destruction is thus eschewed as the French 'way of life' is presented as naturally harmonious with the environment. This discourse actively seeks to greenwash the existing French economy, which includes powerful aviation and automotive sectors as well as agriculture. Equally, this works to obscure France's historical role in producing global emissions through industrialisation and colonisation, and emissions related to global supply chains and imports (Tilley and Ajl, 2023). To NR (2022A, 6) the blame for ecological destruction clearly lies elsewhere:

> France should not sacrifice the well-being of its population to correct the mistakes or abuses of other countries! It should do its share, entirely, but only its share, of the global ecological effort. Why punish French people? It is not French people's responsibility to pay for the faults of others.

Multilateral agreements, regulations, and suggestions of expanding renewable energy infrastructure are frequently framed as interventionist tactics by 'leftist' and 'globalist' environmentalists (who supposedly dominate United Nations (UN) climate summits) that are unnecessary, economically damaging, and a betrayal of French sovereignty. International comparisons on GHG emissions are used to dismiss multilateral climate agreements as fundamentally unjust by Debout la France (DLF 2022) and Asselineau (FA 2021) among others.

It is important to recognise what systems and material interests are being defended in projects of French exceptionalism (now taken up furiously by the far-right). For example, as with liberal politicians, the wider environmental and social costs of nuclear power generation are consistently ignored, such as the process of uranium extraction and intensive use of water (Hercht, 2014). France extracts large quantities of uranium from Niger, a former colony which remains in a neo-imperialist relationship with the French state and capital (Taylor, 2019). The French company Areva utilises low-cost labour in Niger to mine uranium with localised consequences for pollution, drought, and poisoned water supplies in mining regions as well as high risks of cancer and chronic illness for those employed (an indication of what (Davies, 2022) calls 'toxic slow violence'). These systems of extraction follow broader patterns of historic and contemporary imperial resource extraction and environmental destruction across the Global South, with the benefits of accumulation amassed by companies in the Global North and by local elites (Hamouchene, 2019). While the imperial status quo is supported by liberal and conservative parties, the

far-right's rigorous use of nuclear power as an example of French exceptionalism reveals the fundamental contradictions in its appeals to both reject 'globalism' and protect 'French nature'.

The myriad of environmental consequences related to ingrained economic operations demonstrates the façade of this greenwashing by the far-right and many liberal parties. Indeed as we argue later, it constitutes a particular form of denialism. What is key to the far-right strategy is how this exceptionalism is rooted in pastoral imaginaries of homeland, which is allied with a broader defence of environmental racism and inequality at the global level (as we discuss below).

Population and natalism

The far-right simultaneously demonstrate an obsession with 'non-European' population growth as a driver of resource use and emissions (Turner and Bailey, 2022; Benoist, 2020). The Malthusian notion of a 'population bomb' that depletes scarce natural resources has been extremely influential throughout liberal environmentalism (Ehrlich, 1968) with its deeply colonial framing of whose reproduction is viewed as problematic and dangerous (exemplified in interventionist family planning in the Global South, see Hartmann, 2016). However, the most *explicitly* racialised framing of overpopulation today remains propagated by the far-right parties (supported by liberal ideological complicity, see Tilley and Ajl 2023). This logic, often deployed in collaboration with 'lifeboat ethics' and the 'tragedy of the commons' parable (Hardin, 1968, 1974), as well as nativist ideas of belonging and stewardship (see Turner and Bailey, 2022), works to frame interventionist natalist strategies and border security as a key to sustainability and reducing emissions and access to 'scarce' resources. This can be thought of as racialised Malthusianism (see Hultgren, 2015; Forchtner, 2019).

In France, fears of overpopulation in the Global South are used to contend that national borders must be reinforced to ensure sustainability and 'harmony'. Zemmour claimed this explicitly when he argued that 'the problem with the climate is demography and the explosion of natality in Africa and Asia. We should stop speaking about consequences and not the causes' (EZ 2021A). Africa looms large in this narrative, according to NR (2022B, 5) 'the almost-doubling of the population in Africa within a short time-period will increase the migratory pressure to a level never reached so far'. This claim is further exemplified by Mouvement Écologiste Indépendant's argument that: 'China's and India's growth highly increase the energy, cereal and raw material demand, as well as the production of GHG. The earth cannot sustain 8 billion inhabitants like Europeans' (MEI 2022). Collapsing the drivers of climate change down to population growth in this way carefully ignores the systematic drivers of ecological degradation while remaining silent and thus depoliticising rich European's lifestyles and modes of production, despite the far more egregious emissions pertaining to the wealthy in the Global North (Gore, 2023). This equally follows the colonial racist obsession with the reproduction of Black, Asian, and Indigenous women (Bhatia, 2003). As in previous eras of eugenics and demographic science, the French far-right demonstrates a will to intervene in the bodies of poorer, negatively racialised women (contrasted with the reproductive duty of white French women, see below).

For the far-right, this population growth would only be accelerated by Global South migration to Europe and North America (Turner and Bailey, 2022). It was on this basis that NR claimed that: 'Ecology is incompatible with open borders and infinite mobility'

(NR 2022A, 17) and, in 2019 the NR spoke of the 'death of the identity of French people' due to 'migratory submersion' and the 'replacement' of French people in French cities due to 'a very high birth rate' in immigrant communities (Free West Media, 2019).

As Malm and Zetkin Collective (2021) argue, these narratives work to depict 'mass immigration' as *equivalent* to the catastrophe of climate change. Speaking in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, Le Pen asserted that the 'Covid-19 pandemic revealed the health breakdowns threatening us, breakdowns that also of course come from the pressure on ecosystems that the forced concentration of people in metropoles and a mobility out of control between continents'. (MLP 2021A). For Le Pen, the breakdown of ecosystems is a manifestation of the so-called breakdown of Western societies through immigration. Intercontinental mobility, shorn from its origins in colonial and capitalist inequalities, should therefore be violently stopped for the sake of the environment.

Stewardship and 'localism'

Far-right figures have also, building on European projects of colonisation and dispossession, claimed that non-European peoples are an active risk to the conservation of nature (or, in the contemporary framing of anti-immigrationism, *European nature*). In this way, reactionary movements draw on the logics of 19th century liberal imperialist conservation projects which relied on frontier myths of pristine natural wildernesses and 'edens' and sought to forcibly remove the people who occupied those lands (Grove, 1996; Forchtner, 2023). In this way, indigenous and colonised peoples have been historically presented by mainstream liberal commentators and ecofascist alike, as not possessing the knowledge or civilised orientation to manage land properly and thus lacking a sovereign claim to protect nature (Bhandar, 2018). This has perpetuated the idea, already present in Malthus' work, that the poor are to blame for environmental destruction and for their inability to use resources efficiently (Tellmann, 2013). The French far-right draws on these colonial and ecofascist logics with an emerging fixation on how Europe's natural resources are being 'plundered' by the influx of migrants with no emotional or financial investment in European nature (Turner and Bailey, 2022). Against this, patriotic ecology is a call for a 'reinvent[ion]' of 'right-wing ecology, rooted, close to nature' (2021D), an ecology that would 'take France back from those who disfigure, plunder and pollute it!' (NR 2022A: 5).

Le Pen's binary framing of 'nomads' versus 'patriots' is central to the strategy of patriotic ecology. Here ethno-nationalist 'rootedness' to territory is central to environmental protection. Le Pen argued in 2021 that 'every patriot must think ecologically, and for a simple reason: A nomad can come to an oasis, eat all the dates, drink the water from the well and move on when nothing's left. But we're settled, deep-rooted patriots' (Raether and Joeres, 2021). Nomads, instead, plunder nature with no regard to future generations. Such a racialised retelling of the 'tragedy of the commons' fable obscures the reality of who suffers the most from environmental degradation and simultaneously reinforces a far-right vision of France as naturally white and inherently green.

As we suggest above, this focus on stewardship and land use is not unique and instead draws on long-term colonial and ecofascist logics. First, the Romantic notion of national character derived from the local natural environment relied on an aestheticization of nature as the cradle and well spring of the 'pure' nation (see Forchtner and Kølvraa, 2015). Second, the connection between blood and soil within 20th century fascist movements, which explicitly connected 'bloodline' (hetero-biological) to territory. This was of course a central feature of the Nazi's genocidal violence towards Jewish, Roma, and other

minoritised groups. Third, practices of colonial dispossession justified on the basis of the differentiation of civilised versus uncivilised land use, in which colonised people outside of Europe were deemed either 'savage' and too close to nature (thus their lands being presented as terra nullius), or unable to properly domesticate or conserve their lands effectively (Bhandar, 2018; on the colonial origins of the holocaust see Césaire, 2000: 39–42). As Bhandar (2018) argues, this exclusionary vision of land stewardship relies on racialised conceptions of labour, belonging and private property.

Accordingly, the far-right's vision of localism relies on a form of racial separatism and stewardship which runs through ecofascist ideology. While the narrative of overpopulation problematises reproduction in the Global South, this takes on a different approach to reproduction when applied to white (rural) France, in particular. Patriotic ecology to Le Pen is all about cultivating the 'transmission' of a national and racial genus across generations (for more on the history of this in the British Empire, see Shilliam, 2018). This plays off a longer eugenist tradition in France which depicts the farmer as feeding the national body and defending the 'race' and nation against degeneracy (see Bivar and Whited, 2020). In this way, the NR's manifesto explicitly argues for the natalist transmission of national inheritance as the best force of environmentalism:

> Populations united by being long-term on a territory are the ones which can claim their complicity with nature, this interdependence with the environment which creates the diversity of human cultures, and which nomadism and forced mass-migrations irreversibly destroys. *Transmission is a civilisational duty* (emphasis added). The respect that others have had before us towards animals, plants, life diversity, this respect that has created the splendour of our landscapes and the animal and vegetal wealth in France, we need to pass this on like a call for life. (NR 2022A, 8)

Transmission is thus configured as a pronatalist duty to save the environment. Only the white French, those with 'long-term' connections with territory and nature, have a legitimate claim to belong in France and sustain the splendour of its landscapes as stewards. This reveals the racialised and gendered conception of reproduction used by the far-right, where in contrast to migrants and women in the Global South, white women have an active duty to reproduce children for the sake of the future of French nature (Siddiqui, 2021). As NR argues, it is in the family where an 'ecological responsibility is at stake' (NR 2022A, 8). The reproduction of rooted locals within a heteronormative family is deemed essential to not only the protection of the moral order, nation and civilisation *but* also the environment.

Within this framing of localism, ecosystems are always 'culturalised' and by extension racialised. To the far-right, defending 'bio-cultural' difference is about defending the 'natural' differences between human societies. This means that the 'organic community' must be defended as if it was an ecosystem (Carle, 2017). Juvin (2019) has been central to the normalisation of these ideas into parliamentary politics by arguing that securitised borders are the *precondition* to protect the 'biotope' from disruptive 'invasive species' – or in short: 'Borders or death!' (Juvin, 2022b, 215). In this line of thinking, restrictive immigration, repatriation, deportation regimes, and pronatalist policies for rooted people are naturalised in terms of racial preservation – to protect the diversity of human societies and environments just as conservationists would protect native animal and plant life (Juvin, 2022a). In this setting, the mythologising of the small artisan French farmer as emblematic of the local (which itself has roots in the crossover between conservation and

eugenics in the mid-20th century) helps advance a vision of national purity and natural harmony (Bivar and Whited, 2020).

As is commonplace in European politics, this vision of French society relies on a collective amnesia over the realities of European empire, contemporary imperialism, and the historical roots of climate change. What is entirely obscured in this narrative, is how France remains an imperial power, including 13 overseas territories and financial leverage over the Franc Zone which includes 14 African countries. The formal French Empire at its apex included 150 million people across Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean. A process of expansion that Jason Moore (2022) argues must be understood as central to the expansion of industrialised capitalism and carbon emissions. From 1946–1960 *all* French colonies held the same rights of citizenship as those in mainland France. In light of this, any nativist claim that being French relates to white populations in mainland France relies on actively ignoring the complex imperial and racist history of sovereignty and citizenship itself (Wilder, 2015 [2005]). Immigration to France today *directly* follows the imperial grooves of economic, social geopolitical relations across North and West Africa. For example, Algeria and Morocco remain the largest sources of people moving to France, and non-European migration routes are wholly over-represented by all French former colonies and those most affected by contemporary imperialism (such as countries in the Franc zone, Statista, 2023). But in propagating a vision of a pure France threatened by faceless nomads, these material histories and structures which constitute modern French society are entirely elided.

Superficially, a focus on localism may share commonalities with left-wing political movements. However, in the far-right vision, localism is the spatial register of the 'rooted' native steward who must reproduce within the moral confines of the heteronormative white family. In turn this relies on the routine dehumanisation of racialised communities as both 'out of place' and threatening French natural harmony (Puwar, 2004). It does so by asserting aesthetics of the French landscape and mascfarmers toiling and attuned to the earth, which in turn speaks to regional pride in the French territories, as well as generating disparaging imagery of the Global South migrant as an environmental danger. In doing so, the terms localism and stewardship in far-right discourse seek to rebuild a form of environmental racism and rely on a structural ignorance of the material economic and political drivers of ecological breakdown.

The discursive juxtaposition of 'punitive ecology'

The discourse of patriotic ecology is also fuelled by its supposed contrast with the socio-economic and environmental impacts of environmental strategies associated with centrist political parties, such as the Macron government (but also the Greens and the Left at large). The French far-right has made substantial electoral gains from deriding neoliberal political actors in particular as globalist, unpatriotic, metropolitan elites that only work in interests of markets and finance capital rather than 'the people' (Mudde, 2019).

This rhetorical anti-elitist position has a legacy throughout (eco)fascist movements who claim to reject the decadent and globalist system of liberal capitalism. This is often ran through with anti-semitism (Saull, 2018). Despite far-right support for numerous aspects of neoliberalism (low taxes, deregulation, privatisation, etc.), patriotic ecology is rhetorically cast as confronting the liberal environmentalism of the elites in ways which have bolstered the far-right's electoral support.

The far-right actively contrasts patriotic ecology with what they term 'punitive ecology' in two distinctive ways. The first is the lament of commitments to free trade and

globalisation. For example, in 2022 Le Pen (2022B) claimed that imports represent 50% of France's total CO_2 emissions, and has previously argued that free trade 'is the reason gigantic cargo ships criss-cross the world, producing insane CO_2 emissions . . . we are destroying the environment through free trade' (Raether and Joeres, 2021). The economic consequences of globalisation on 'the people' rooted in 'the territories' are also cited as a cause for concern. Globalisation, Reconquête argues, is leading to rural communities' 'impoverishment, suicides, this feeling of powerlessness and giving up in front of unleashed free-trade which doesn't impose the same rules to all producers' (R! 2022: 33). The punitive nature of 'sacrifices' by French farmers to achieve the objectives of political elites is a repeated motif (see NR 2022 C, 10). Much of this messaging is directed towards those in the agricultural sector who may share a desire for 'localism', the hierarchical traditions of rural France and who have traditionally voted for conservative parties. However, the critique of punitive ecology also extends to the low-carbon changes to production occurring in the French automotive sector in formerly industrialised areas that have historically been the base of far-right coalitions (Hitch, 2022). For example, the rise of electric vehicle use has created a dependency on China for the manufacturing of batteries and rare minerals, in contrast to existing supply chains required to manufacture cars powered by fossil fuels that benefit domestic interests. As Zemmour put it, 'we sacrifice our car industry in the name of ecological imperatives' (2021G).

The message articulated by NR (2022A, 17) is that 'ecology is incompatible with free-trade, with the race to the lowest social, environmental and tax-related costs'. The power of these critiques can be located in the fusion of valid criticisms of global economic production with the populist presentation of 'villainous elites', international climate policies and the scapegoating of migrants and negatively racialised communities. However, because the far-right doesn't oppose capitalist systems of production and accumulation, this amounts to no more than a reactionary strategy against 'globalism'. This is ultimately tied back to the 'threat' of multiculturalism and the movement of people rather than producing alternative systems of ownership, production, and the radical democratisation of the economy (e.g. see Aji 2021).

The second critique of punitive ecology focuses on imposition of low-carbon infrastructure in rural areas by large French corporations. The regulation of high-carbon business practices is portrayed as the 'destruction of the French way of life' while the erection of renewable energy infrastructure such as solar and wind farms are cast as the *real* threat to France's local environments. As stated by MLP (2021A):

> (Ecologism) . . . this fundamentalism that intends to end with ways of life, traditions and mores of ours, and to take control of every single one of our actions, strongly threatens the membership of French people to environmental policies. [. . .] The reality of a global climate change is used to profit big companies solely. Through a pile of norms, through European taxonomy [. . .] the death of craftmanship and small businesses is planned. [. . .] The persecution of those who need their car to go to work, drive children to school, or simply to be free to move around, shows the authoritarian and punitive nature of an ideology that has replaced ecology.

As is common across other European far-right parties (see the British National Party), wind turbines are routinely lambasted, with NR (2021: 12) describing the implementation of wind turbines as 'a theft of the landscape', and in certain cases, an expulsion from 'our own home'. As we describe above, nuclear power stations are not castigated or questioned in the same way.

The criticism of punitive ecology, therefore, primarily centres on the economic, social, and cultural sacrifices of the 'rooted' white working-class and petit bourgeois groups in

French society, while the 'uprooted' global unpatriotic elites continue to prosper. As Asselineau (2021B) put it, 'Macron's and all europeanists' punitive ecology only serves to make "green business" richer and to make French people feel guilty'. This discourse is only strengthened by the injustices and inequality that have increased under Macron's government.

While the disproportionate reliance on technological solutions should be critiqued, what is problematic is the far-right's own 'solutions' and the argument that 'punitive ecology' can only be resisted by a pragmatic turn to a form of localism that defends the freedom of real citizens (Juvin, 2022a) and preserves the social and economic status quo. While promising to oppose global forces of liberalism and the free market, this amounts to a structural defene of capitalist forms of land ownership and production. A defence that relies on a blatant white supremacist myth about who is French and who has a claim to be part of and allowed to dwell in 'French nature'. The opposition here to an unjust transition wrought by the ruling party is not met with a call for a socially just transition, but instead to effectively call for the freedom to make no transition at all and maintain the already existing global/local inequalities that French societies rests on. This doesn't mean that this is the explicit stated intention of the strategy of the far right, but it is the consequence and *effect* of this politics. This, itself, is a form of climate denialism by stealth.

Conclusion

This study offers an empirical account of contemporary mutations of far-right environmental discourses in France. We find that patriotic ecology seeks to capitalise on mainstream neoliberal, paternalistic, and regressive environmental policies through deploying a discourse that preaches French exceptionalism and rehabilitates ecofascist logics of rootedness, nativist stewardship, racialised Malthusianism. This discourse contends that France already boasts a relatively green society and economy and seeks to inculcate the notion that any interventionist green state action is the 'real' threat to genuine sustainability, which instead rests on the responsible stewardship of (white) national rural citizens. In doing so, there is an increasing focus on localism as a spatial scale of conservation, which is itself related to nativist and masculine depictions of French agrarian life and heteronormative family structures of inheritance.

With the promotion of localism and rootedness within patriotic ecology, the underlying narrative remains an obsession with minoritised communities in, and immigration to, France as an alleged threat to the French nation and its natural environment. This racialised framing places the blame for ecological collapse on the movement of displaced and dispossessed people to wealthier European societies, and on the 'excessive' reproduction of people in the Global South. The call for securitised borders and the forced assimilation of minorities in France is thus presented as necessary to protect French culture and nature, which echo ecofascist racial hierarchies and the authoritarian purification of the nation in the name of the environment. The appeal to the 'local' serves to protect a fantasy of rural nativist stewardship which is imagined to be threatened by migration and the intervention of political elites, and seeks to legitimise border violence under the auspices of environmentalism. As such, the discourse represents the further normalisation of ecofascist ideas in contemporary far-right European politics. This is as European far-right parties increasingly seek to rationalise violent border security policies and enforce a form of climate apartheid that defends existing global inequalities (Sealey and Huggins, 2017). This

article offers an empirical account of one influential variant of this dangerously exclusionary form of environmental politics.

This political ecology is fallacious in that it camouflages the role of French capitalism in accelerating ecological breakdown, including the GHG emissions emitted by the lionised agricultural sector, and can thus be seen as a form of denialism. As we show, this is not the overt denialism of climate change *per se*, but rather the denialism of the root causes of the climate crisis, the need for systemic changes in the economy to accomplish mitigation, and the introduction of policies designed to accelerate transition. This denialism by stealth results in obstruction to effective climate action. This political project is thus aligned with the perceived interests of powerful groups in France, such as the nuclear industry and agri-business lobby which have resisted the decarbonisation agenda and the construction of renewable energy infrastructure in rural areas, despite far-right rhetorical claims to be in defiance of 'the elites'. This blend of nationalist exceptionalism, localism, and ecobordering works to keep, defend, and protect major vested interests in French industry and the existing unequal and exploitative social order (see Saull, 2018 for more on this).

Yet, as fallacious as environmental discourses such as patriotic ecology are, they threaten to become increasingly attractive to sections of electorates in future years, in the context of anxieties around climate change, the slowdown of economic growth, the potential loss of jobs as a result of the systemic changes required by the low-carbon transition, the increasing concentration of wealth by a tiny elite, and an alienation from traditional party-political structures. Far-right discourses become particularly influential when they tap into material insecurities that liberal, centrist, and conservative governments tend to ignore. Given the political, economic, and ecological conditions generated by climate change and low-carbon transitions, the mainstreaming of far-right politics (see Mondon and Dawes, 2023) and ecofascist resistance to climate action could foreseeably be an even more prominent trend in environmental politics in the near future. A failure to produce an alternative and convincing programme of just transition (such as Ajl 2021) threatens to nourish far-right support and give ecofascist ideas further political ground.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This project was funded by the Department of Politics, University of York Research Support Grant (2022).

ORCID iD

Joe Turner https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2419-0414

Notes

1. The term far-right here is defined as 'linking membership in the nation to biological/racial and/or cultural traits' as well as varying tendencies towards 'ethnopluralism, anti-socialism, proclivity for scapegoating "others", and an uncritical view on the community's historical past' (Forchtner, 2019: 3).
2. All translations are done by the authors.
3. However, it is important to note the power differentials between presenting an elite group as an 'enemy' vs an already structurally minoritised and precarious population such as negatively racialised migrants and refugees in France/Europe. The latter is far more vulnerable to structural and physical violence and, as we discuss below, the concrete policy proposals of the far-right focus on immigration restrictions and forced assimilation rather than challenge any of the unequal power structures of French society.

References

Ajl M (2021) *A People's Green New Deal*. London: Pluto Press.

Atkins E (2022) Exploring right-wing populism and net-zero policies in the United Kingdom. *Energy Research and Social Science* 90(5): 102681.

Bardella J (2019a) Le meilleur allié de l'écologie, c'est la frontière. *Twitter*, 8 April. Available at: https://twitter.com/J_Bardella/status/1115165179241746432 (accessed 23 June 2023).

Bardella J (2019b) L'immigration et l'environnement sont les deux enjeux fondamentaux du XXIème siècle. *Twitter*, 25 April. Available at: https://twitter.com/J_Bardella/status/1121489850274865152 (accessed 10 July 2023).

Benoist L (2020) Rootedness, borders and anti-capitalism to counter a 'totalitarian' globalist left ideology. *Ecología Política* 59: 273–296.

Benoist L (2021) Green is the new brown: Ecology in the metapolitics of the far right. *Undisciplined Environments*. Available at: https://undisciplinedenvironments.org/2021/05/04/green-is-the-new-brown-ecology-in-the-metapolitics-of-the-far-right/

Bhandar B (2018) *Colonial Lives of Property*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Bhatia R (2003) Green or brown? White nativist environmental movements. In: Ferber AL (ed.) *Home-Grown Hate: Gender and Organized Racism*. New York: Routledge, pp.194–214.

Biehl J and Staudenmaier P (1995) *Ecofascism: Lessons from the German Experience*. Edinburgh: AK Press.

Bivar V (2022) The patriot ecology of the French far right. *Environmental History* 27(4): 618–624.

Bivar V and Whited T (2020) Industrial French food and its critics. *Modern & Contemporary France* 28(2): 129–139.

Boukala S and Tountasaki E (2019) From black to green: Analysing Le Front National's 'patriotic ecology'. In: Forchtner B (ed.) *The Far Right and the Environment*. London: Routledge, pp.72–87.

Brown M (2022) France can't erase Algeria from its history. *Foreign Policy*. Available at: https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/04/08/france-presidential-election-algeria-history-colonialism-europe-eec-africa/ (accessed 10 July 2023).

Buzogány A and Mohamad-Klotzbach C (2021) Populism and nature: The nature of populism. *Zeitschrift für Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft* 15(2): 155–164.

Campion K (2021) Defining ecofascism: Historical foundations and contemporary interpretations in the extreme right. *Terrorism and Political Violence* 35(4): 926–944.

Carle Z (2017) Contre-révolutions écologiques: Quand les droites dures investissent la défense de la nature. *Revue du Crieur* 8(3): 44–61.

Césaire A (2000) *Discourse on Colonialism*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Collectif Nouvelle Écologie (2016) Nos 21 propositions pour une écologie patriote au XXIe siècle. Available at: https://www.actu-environnement.com/media/pdf/news-28016-propositions-fn-ecologie.pdf (accessed 15 June 2023).

Coolsaet B and Deldrève V (2023) Exploring environmental justice in France: evidence, movements, and ideas. *Environmental Politics* 33(5): 757–777.

Daggett C (2018) Petro-masculinity: Fossil fuels and authoritarian desire. *Millennium* 47(1): 25–44.

Davies T (2022) Slow violence and toxic geographies: 'Out of sight' to whom? *Environment and Planning C* 40(2): 409–427.

De Nadal L (2024) Climate change: Bad news for populism? *Nationalities Papers* 52(2): 414–429.

Dubiau A (2022) *Écofascismes*. Paris: Grévis.

Duina F and Zhous HX (2024) *The Populist Logic on the Environment*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Ehrlich P (1968) *The Population Bomb*. New York: Ballantine.

Ekberg K, Forchtner B, Hultman M and Jylhä KM (2022) *Climate Obstruction: How Denial, Delay and Inaction Are Heating the Planet*. London: Routledge.

Forchtner B (2023) Looking back, looking forward. In: Forchtner B (ed.) *Visualising Far-Right Environments*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp.294–301.

Forchtner B and Kølvraa C (2015) The nature of nationalism. *Nature and Culture* 10(2): 199–224.

Forchtner B and Lubarda B (2023) Scepticisms and beyond? A comprehensive portrait of climate change communication by the far right in the European Parliament. *Environmental Politics* 32(1): 43–68.

Forchtner B (ed.) (2019) *The Far Right and the Environment*. London: Routledge.

Ford C (2016) *Natural Interests: The Contest Over Environment in Modern France*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

France24 (2014) French bestseller says Vichy regime 'tried to save French Jews. *France 24*, 12 October. https://www.france24.com/en/20141012-french-bestseller-vichy-save-jews-zemmour

François S (2016) L'extrême droite française et l'écologie. Retour sur une polémique. *Revue Francaise d'histoire des Idées Politiques* 44(2): 187–208.

François S and Nonjon A (2021) Identitarian ecology. *Illiberalism*, 1 February. Available at: https://www.illiberalism.org/identitarian-ecology-rights-reinterpretation-environmental-concerns/ (accessed 15 June 2023).

Free West Media (2019) French senator warns of globalist-engineered 'great replacement'. *Free West Media*, 9 November. Available at: https://freewestmedia.com/2019/11/09/french-senator-warns-of-globalist-great-replacement/ (accessed 23 June 2023).

Gore T (2023) *Carbon Inequality in 2030: Per Capita Consumption Emissions and the 1.5-C Goal*. Oxford: Institute for European Environmental Policy.

Grove R (1996) *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600–1860*. Cambridge: CUP.

Guillibert P (2020) La Racine et la Communauté. *Mouvements* 4(104): 84–95.

Hamouchene H (2019) *Extractivism and Resistance in North Africa*. Amsterdam: Transnational Institute.

Hardin G (1968) Tragedy of the commons. *Science* 162(3859): 1243–1248.

Hardin G (1974) Living on a lifeboat. *Bioscience* 24(10): 561–568.

Hartmann B (2016) *Reproductive Rights and Wrongs*. Chicago, IL: Haymarket.

Hercht G (2014) *Being Nuclear: Africans and the Global Uranium Trade*. Boston, MA: MIT Press.

Hitch A (2022) Post-industrial regions and the French presidential election. *The Chicago Council on Global Affairs*, 10 June. Available at: https://globalaffairs.org/commentary-and-analysis/blogs/post-industrial-regions-and-french-presidential-election (accessed 10 July 2023).

Hultgren J (2015) *Border Walls Gone Green*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota.

Ivaldi G and Gombain J (2015) The Front National and the new politics of the rural in France. In: Strijker D, Voerman G and Terluin I (eds) *Rural Protest Groups and Populist Political Parties*. Wageningen: Wageningen Academic Publishers, pp.243–264.

Jahn D (2021) Quick and dirty: How populist parties in government affect greenhouse gas emissions in EU member states. *Journal of European Public Policy* 28(7): 980–997.

Jessop B (2004) Critical semiotic analysis and cultural political economy. *Critical Discourse Studies* 1(2): 159–174.

Jett J, Raymond L and Hennes EP (2024) Process skeptical populist framing of climate change in right-leaning media. *Environmental Politics* 33(5): 799–819.

Juvin H (2019) L'homme doit 'défendre son biotope contre les espèces invasives'. *Site officiel d'Hervé Juvin*, 13 March. Available at: https://hervejuvin.com/lhomme-doit-defendre-son-biotope/ (accessed 10 July 2023).

Juvin H (2022a) Écologie politique? *Site officiel d'Hervé Juvin*, 15 April. Available at: https://hervejuvin.com/ecologie-politique/ (accessed 23 June 2023).

Juvin H (2022b) *Chez Nous! Pour en Finir avec une économie totalitaire*. Paris: La Nouvelle Librairie.

Kulin J, Sevä IJ and Dunlap RE (2021) Nationalist ideology, rightwing populism, and public views about climate change in Europe. *Environmental Politics* 30(7): 1111–1134.

Lockwood B and Lockwood M (2022) How do right-wing populist parties influence climate and renewable energy policies? *Global Environmental Politics* 22(3): 12–37.

Lockwood M (2018) Right-wing populism and the climate change agenda. *Environmental Politics* 27(4): 712–732.

Lubarda B (2020) Beyond ecofascism? Far-right ecologism as a framework for future inquiries. *Environmental Values* 29(6): 713–732.

Madelin P (2023) *La Tentation Écofasciste: Écologie et extrême droite*. Montréal, QC, Canada: Écosociété.

Malm A and Zetkin Collective (2021) *White Skin, Black Fuel: On the Danger of Fossil Fascism*. London: Verso Books.

Marquardt J and Lederer M (2022) Politicizing climate change in times of populism. *Environmental Politics* 31(5): 735–754.

Marquardt J, Oliveira MC and Lederer M (2022) Same, same but different? How democratically elected right-wing populists shape climate change policymaking. *Environmental Politics* 31(5): 777–800.

Mielcarek-Bocheńska P and Rzeźnik W (2021) Greenhouse Gas emissions from agriculture in EU countries – State and perspectives. *Atmosphere* 12(1396): 1–18.

Mondon A and Dawes S (2023) The mainstreaming of the far right in France: Republican, liberal and illiberal articulations of racism. *French Cultural Studies* 34(3): 329–339.

Moore J (2022) Imperialism, with and without cheap nature: Climate history and the demise of Westphalia. *Working Papers in World-Ecology*. Available at: https://jasonwmoore.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Moore-Imperialism-With-and-Without-Cheap-Nature-Circulating-March-2023.pdf

Moore S A and Roberts A (2022) *The Rise of Eco-Fascism: Climate Change and the Far Right*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Mudde C (2019) *The Far Right Today*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
NR (2019) Pour une Europe des nations. *Rassemblement National*. Available at: https://rassemblementnational.fr/telecharger/publications/Manifeste.pdf
ODIHR (2021) *France. OSCE ODIHR Hate Crime Reporting*. Available at: https://hatecrime.osce.org/france (accessed 23 June 2023).
Paterson M, Wilshire S and Tobin P (2024) The rise of anti-net zero populism in the UK. *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis* 26(3–4): 332–350.
Puwar N (2004) *Space Invaders*. Oxford: Berg.
Raether E and Joeres A (2021) So yes, politics is violent. *Die Zeit*, 7 May. Available at: https://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2021-05/marie-le-pen-francefront-national-presidency-right-wing-eu-climate-change (accessed 15 June 2023).
Saull R (2018) Racism and far right imaginaries within neo-liberal political economy. *New Political Economy* 23(5): 588–608.
Sealey-Huggins L (2017) '1.5°C to stay alive': Climate change, imperialism and justice for the Caribbean. *Third World Quarterly* 38(11): 2444–2463.
Shilliam R (2018) *Race and the Undeserving Poor*. London: Agenda.
Shilliam R (2021) *Decolonizing Politics*. Cambridge: Polity.
Siddiqui S (2021) Racing the nation. *Race and Class* 63(2): 3–20.
Statista (2021) Number of immigrants in France in 2021, by geographical origin. Available at: https://www.statista.com/statistics/944172/geographical-origins-of-immigrants-france/ (accessed 25 April 2023).
Taylor I (2019) France à fric: the CFA zone in Africa and neocolonialism. *Third World Quarterly* 40(6): 1064–1088.
Tellmann U (2013) Catastrophic populations and the fear of the future: Malthus and the genealogy of liberal economy. *Theory, Culture & Society* 30(2): 135–155.
Tienhaara K (2014) Varieties of green capitalism: Economy and environment in the wake of the global financial crisis. *Environmental Politics* 232: 187–204.
Tilley L and Ajl M (2023) Eco-socialism will be anti-eugenic or it will be nothing. *Politics* 43(2): 201–218.
Turner J and Bailey D (2022) 'Ecobordering': Casting immigration control as environmental protection. *Environmental Politics* 31(1): 110–131.
Van Rensburg W (2015) Climate change scepticism: A conceptual re-evaluation. *SAGE Open* 5(2): 2158244015579723.
Wilder G (2015 [2005]) *The French Imperial Nation-State*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
Yazar M and Haarstad H (2023) Populist far right discursive-institutional tactics in European regional decarbonization. *Political Geography* 105(102936): 1–10.
Zerofsky E (2019) The right-wing pundit 'hashtag triggering' France. *The New York Times*, 6 February. https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/06/magazine/eric-zemmour-france-far-right.html (accessed 10 July 2023).

Author biographies

Lise Benoist is a PhD student at the department of Human Geography, Uppsala University. She was previously a member of the Zetkin Collective, who co-authored *White Skin Black Fuel – On the dangers of fossil fascism* (Verso, 2021). Her research interests include (far)right ecologism and more specifically nationalist ecological activism.

Joe Turner is a Senior Lecturer in International Politics at the University of York. His interdisciplinary research examines how border violence is structured by imperialism and colonialism (present and historical). He is currently working on two projects: (1) examining the UK government's response to refugees crossing the English Channel on small boats and (2) investigating the relationship between environmentalism, ecofascism, and border politics. He has published widely, including *Migration Studies and Colonialism* (with Lucy Mayblin, 2021) and *Bordering Intimacy* (2020).

Daniel Bailey is a Senior Lecturer in International Political Economy at Manchester Metropolitan University. He previously worked at the University of Manchester, the Sheffield Political Economy Research Institute, and the University of York. His research examines the interplay between ecological degradation, the global economy and the governance of mitigation and adaption. Drawing on state theory and comparative political economy, his research seeks to make sense of the dynamic and geographically-variegated political and economic forces – including vested interests, societal conflicts, growth models, and institutionalised logics – that shape governmental and market responses to ecological breakdown and the transition to 'net zero'.

Appendix 1. List of analysed materials

Party manifestos/programmes to the 2022 presidential elections	Reference
Rassemblement National (RN)	
Projet écologie	NR 2022A
Projet immigration	NR 2022B
Projet agriculture	NR 2022C
M la France	NR 2022D
Reconquête! (R!)	
Programme: 'Pour que la France reste la France	R! 2022
Union Populaire Républicaine (UPR)	
Mes 27 + 1 engagements	UPR 2022
Les Républicains (LR)	
Notre projet pour la France 2022	LR 2022
Les Patriotes (LP)	
Projet pour la France	LP 2022
Les Nationalistes (LN)	
Programme: 'Les 20 mesures d'urgence pour rétablir la France'	LN 2022
Mouvement Écologiste Indépendant (MEI)	
Projet présidentiel	MEI 2022
Debout la France! (DLF)	
100 décisions pour la France 2022-2027	DLF 2022
Video debates/speeches before the 2022 presidential elections	
'La France face à la guerre', TF1, March 14th	2022A
Debate E. Macron–M. Le Pen, ahead of the second round, BFMTV, April 20th	2022B
'Grand oral: les candidats face à l'urgence écologique', V. Pécresse, Blast, March 13th	2022C
Debate J-L. Mélenchon – E. Zemmour, BFMTV, September 24th, 2021	2021D
E. Zemmour, speech in Saulieu, February 12th	2022E
'Face à face', V. Pécresse–E. Zemmour, March 10th	2022F
Interview E. Zemmour, Thinkerview, October 20th	2021G
'10 minutes pour convaincre', TF1, April 6th	2022H
Counter-projects to the 2021 Climate and Resilience Law	
Pour une écologie positive – Les Républicains (LR) https://www.deputes-les-republicains.fr/images/documents/POUR-UNE-ECOLOGIE-POSITIVE-Strategie-environnementale-Deputes-LR.pdf	LR 2021
Press conference counter-project Marine le Pen https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v4z-ZUOVjLU&ab_channel=RassemblementNational	MLP 2021A
Intervention Marine Le Pen, French Parliament https://twitter.com/MLP_officiel/status/1376655443028807686	MLP 2021B
Launch video of the Localist movement https://x.com/leslocalistes/status/1392757721796120577	Localistes 2021A
Localist Manifesto https://www.leslocalistes.fr/manifeste-localiste/	Localistes 2021B
15 questions referendum proposal RN https://twitter.com/MLP_officiel/status/1376655443028807686	RN 2021

(Continued)

Appendix 1. (Continued)

Party manifestos/programmes to the 2022 presidential elections	Reference
Counter-project DLF https://www.debout-la-france.fr/actualite/les-12-mesures-de-nicolas-dupont-aignan-et-debout-la-france-pour-passer-dune-ecologie/ Twitter accounts (keyword search 'écologie', 'climat', 'environnement') @Reconquete_off @ZemmourEric	DLF 2021
https://twitter.com/ZemmourEric/status/1408087423779803136	EZ 2021A
https://twitter.com/ZemmourEric/status/1469066986198077452	EZ 2021B
@vpecresse @lesRepublicains @Waechter2022 @dupontaignan @DLF_Officiel @UPR_Asselineau @UPR_Officiel @MLP_officiel @J_Bardella @RNational_off @AndreaKotarac @HerveJuvin @UPR_Asselineau	
https://twitter.com/UPR_Asselineau/status/1424800720113610757	FA 2021A
https://twitter.com/UPR_Asselineau/status/1424800720113610757	FA2021B