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The shared roots of two contrasting environmental approaches: Coexistence of climate denialism and ecofascism in the Finnish far-right

Ahti, Venla

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Venla Ahti

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1. Introduction

The recent years have seen an unprecedented focus on environmental policies when governments around the world face the challenges caused by climate change. Nevertheless, the increase in environmental concerns has been accompanied by the rise of climate change denialism which has gained a lot of media attention. The denialist narratives reached mainstream political discussion around the world through far-right leaders, the most influential examples being former presidents Donald Trump and Jair Bolsonaro. Furthermore, climate denialism has received considerable attention in academia, with scholars exploring its linkages with far-right parties (McCright & Dunlap, 2011; Lockwood, 2018). These anti-environmental policies started causing more concern when the far-right climate-denialist parties started entering governments. However, while climate denialism has been seen as the main threat among environmentalists, there is another environmental approach gaining rise in the far right: ecofascism. Ecofascism ties together environmentalism with (ethno-)nationalism (Staudenmaier, 2011, p. 14), and has most strikingly inspired some devastating mass killings. The terrorist attacks in Christchurch, New Zealand, and in El Paso, Texas, were at least partly justified in environmental terms by the attackers (Milman, 2021).

With climate denialism remaining a common narrative among far-right actors and some far-right extremists carrying out terrorist attacks ‘for the sake of the environment’, this begs the question, how do both of these narratives fit under far-right ideology? Thus, this research aims to contribute to this puzzle by studying the Finnish far-right through a comparison of two parties. Finland has followed the international trend of far-right parties rising with Perussuomalaiset (Finns Party, PS) reaching the second most votes in the national elections in 2023 (Tilastokeskus, 2023). Furthermore, in 2021 previous members of PS established a party, Sinimusta Liike (Blue-and-black Movement, SML), that has continuously faced accusations of fascism (STT, 2024). Despite their shared history, these two parties have seemingly different approaches to the environmental discussion. For PS, environmental issues have not been in their core interests and the party has shown climate denialist attitudes (Vihma et al., 2021, p. 229) whereas SML promotes environmental issues and displays some ecofascist notions in its party manifesto (SML, n.d.F). Considering the shared roots of the parties, they offer an opportunity to compare their climate denialist and ecofascist notions and look at the grounding premises in common. Thus, this research tries to answer the question:

How do climate denialism and ecofascism coexist in the Finnish far-right?

To answer this, the paper draws on concepts from previous research, focusing on ‘nationalism’ and ‘race’. Moreover, it is argued that climate denialism and ecofascism can coexist due to their common ideological premises of nationalism and racism. Furthermore, the paper will be structured as follows. First, the previous literature will be reviewed while simultaneously forming the theoretical base of the research on key concepts: climate denialism, ecofascism, nationalism, and race. Second, the methodology of the research will be explained. Third, the findings will be analyzed and discussed relating them to the previously introduced theories. Lastly, the paper will conclude by discussing the findings, explaining their implications and significance, and leaving suggestions for future research.

2. Literature Review/ Theoretical Framework

2.1. Far-right

There has been a lot of contestation among scholars on how to define ‘far-right’. Most definitions prefer spectrum over categorization but still try to find the key similarities or differences. Nevertheless, even identifying the core of right-wing is not simple because there are many different styles of thought considered to be part of it (Carter 2018, p. 161). This is further complicated by some right-wing actors avoiding clear placement on the economic spectrum while taking clear ideological positions (Rovny, 2013, p. 19). Therefore, many definitions have focused on the non-economic ideological spectrum. For example, Carter (2018, p. 161), focuses on the attitudes of the left and the right toward equality. This conceptualization defines the left as more egalitarian for their efforts to minimize social inequalities whereas the right is more inegalitarian by believing that “most inequalities are natural and so cannot be eradicated” (p. 161). Followingly, conceptualizations of far-right have built similarly on shared ideological stances instead of economic positions. A widely accepted definition comes from Mudde (2007, p. 22) who identifies three core ideologies for far-right: nativism, authoritarianism, and populism. Out of these three, the key ideology is considered to be nativism which conceives all nonnative elements as threats to the nation-state (p. 22). This concept will be introduced in more detail later on. As for authoritarianism, Mudde (2007) uses the conceptualization from Adorno et al. (1969, p. 228) defining the concept as the glorification and uncritical attitude toward authoritative figures of ingroup and

using ‘moral authority’ to punish outgroup figures. Furthermore, in the last component of the definition, populism, society is seen as divided into two groups, “the pure people” and “the corrupt elite”, and politics should reflect the will of the former group (Mudde, 2004, p. 543). This definition of far-right, which includes nativism, authoritarianism, and populism, will be used in this paper. Next, the link between far-right and climate denial will be explored.

2.2. Climate denial

Definitions of ‘climate denialism’ differ in their choice of wording (‘denialism’ or ‘skepticism’), but the substantial differences lie in their focus on what exactly is being denied. For example, Rahmstorf (2004) divides denialists into three camps: ‘trend skeptics’, who deny the existence of climate change entirely; ‘attribution skeptics’, who accept climate change but deny its anthropogenic causes; and ‘impact skeptics’, who believe climate change to be “harmless or even beneficial” (p. 77). One category was added by Engels et al. (2013, p. 1021), who also look at ‘consensus skepticism’, which accounts for the belief that there is no scientific consensus on climate change. These categories have more to do with *what* is being denied, but, denialism can also regard the responses to the issue. Moreover, Moore and Roberts (2022, p. 52) add ‘action denialism’ and ‘urgency denialism’ to Rahmstorf’s (2004) list. The former claims that there is no need to do anything and the latter that while we should act, it is not urgent (Moore & Roberts, 2022, p. 52). However, these categories deal more with the nature and severity of climate change but many denialist narratives revolve around personal involvement. As such, Wullenkord (2022, p. 1) looks at the climate denial spectrum as moving from literal denial (i.e., ‘trend denial’) over ‘interpretive denial’ to ‘implicatory denial’. More specifically, ‘interpretive denial’ consists of the denial of personal or global outcome severity, whereas avoidance, denial of guilt, and rationalization of own involvement are grouped under ‘implicatory denial’ (p. 5). Furthermore, interpretive denial can include a denialist narrative of ‘perspectival selectivity’, identified by Norgaard (2011, p. 406). In her case study of Norway, comparisons to the role of the United States in global greenhouse emissions were used to marginalize Norway’s responsibility, leading to ‘denial of self-involvement’ (p. 406). However, since both ‘interpretive denial’ and ‘implicatory denial’ can be seen as revolving around perspectival comparison, they will be grouped under one category as ‘implicatory denial’. Thus, to construct a comprehensive definition of climate denialism, this paper combines these categories: literal, attribution, consensus, action, urgency, and implicatory denial.

Previous research has found right-wing ideology to be a strong predictor of climate denialism (Jylhä et al. 2016; McCright & Dunlap, 2011). While a lot of the literature has focused on literal denial of climate change, Wullenkord (2022, p. 5) finds the same relationship between the ideology with other forms of climate denial as well. Furthermore, looking beyond this correlation of right-wing ideology and climate denial, a significant body of research has analyzed the reasons behind it. Scholars have moved past the argument of denial coming from a lack of knowledge, furthermore, Norgaard (2011, p. 409) argues that “in the present global context, ‘knowing’ or ‘not knowing’ is itself a political act”. Scholars have proposed various explanations for the correlation and some of the most prominent ones will be introduced next.

Lockwood (2018, p. 712) groups the different explanations for climate denial among right-wing populist parties under ‘structuralist’ and ‘ideological’ approaches. The structuralist approach looks at “the roots of populism in economic and political marginalisation amongs those ‘left behind’ by globalisation and technological change” (p. 712). By ‘left behind’, Lockwood (2018, p. 718) refers to especially male industrial and manufacturing workers whose jobs and wages have been corroded by globalization and automation. Other scholars have analyzed the economic reasons not only from the industrial workers’ perspective but also looking at people in the most privileged positions as well. Norgaard (2011, p. 410) notes that climate denial persists when the distance between privileged people and environmental problems increases through two dynamics of global capitalism; globalization and increasing inequality. Furthermore, Daggett (2018) argues similarly that climate denial works in favor of “fossil-fuelled capitalist interests” (p. 27). However, Lockwood (2018, p. 721) argues that explanations from the structuralist approach are insufficient to explain climate denial among the right-wing populists. Some of the highlighted shortcomings are that the threat to employment in high-carbon industries comes from technological advances and globalization, not climate change, and that climate denial is found among right-wing even in states with no significant domestic fossil fuel resources (p. 721). Therefore, Lockwood (2018, p. 726) prefers the ideological approach which is concerned with ideological reasons and particularly with the “symbolic place” of climate change in the opposition between ‘the people’ and a cosmopolitan elite (Lockwood, 2018, p. 712). This approach highlights the importance of nationalist and socially conservative values in working against the climate agenda which is seen as being pushed by a cosmopolitan elite against national interest (p. 722).

However, Lockwood's (2018) dismissal of the structuralist approach seems too quick, since he looks at the structures behind denial in a too narrow way. While Lockwood (2018, p. 720) mentions the degeneration of living standards as a possible threat to the 'left behind', he does not consider the role of attachment to lifestyles or privileged positions in society. Contrastingly, Wullenkord (2022, p. 5) focuses on this aspect, arguing that taking climate change seriously depends on accepting the societal consequences required to tackle it. This would then oppose the right-wing ideology, which, according to Wullenkord (2022), "produced climate change and disproportionate privilege of those who benefit from the status quo" (p. 5). Furthermore, Daggett (2018, p. 41) argues that the lifestyles and hierarchies that are tied to fossil fuels lead not only to denial of climate change but to a refusal of it. This is to counter the threat that climate mitigation poses to these hierarchies and to protect one's privileged position (Wullenkord, 2022, p. 5). This kind of 'active refusal' benefits the person not only economically, but also helps avoid the psychological and emotional stress of knowing about one's wrongdoings (Norgaard, 2011, p. 409). Moreover, this climate change refusal has been found to relate to wider historical denial (Loftin, 2023). Loftin (2023, p. 603) describes this denial as a 'will to innocence', with which the author refers to the denial of ongoing effects of the historical acts of racial domination and its involvement in fossil fuel combustion. The relationship between past racial violence and fossil fuel and its present effects has been studied by Malm and the Zetkin Collective (2021, p. 327) who trace it back to Britain's first coal-powered steamboats being used for imperial conquests. The authors highlight the idea at the time of white Europeans having control over coal making them entitled to dominate the non-white people (p. 331). Furthermore, Malm and the Zetkin Collective (2021; cited in Loftin, 2023, p. 591) note that the carbon emissions from these past colonial acts have not disappeared but have been cumulating throughout the decades, connecting the history of racial domination to the present climate challenges. Thus, Loftin (2023, p. 603) argues that accepting climate change requires bearing the guilt of the violent racist processes, leading to perseverance of climate denial.

2.3. Ecofascism - past

As climate denial is generally associated with the right-wing, ecological radicalism has been considered a left-wing feature. However, its "counterpart on the radical right", ecofascism, has raised concern through contemporary political groups displaying ecofascist notions

(Rueda, 2020, p. 96). Ecofascism has been defined as “the preoccupation of authentically fascist movements with environmentalist concerns” (Staudenmaier, 2011, p. 14; cited in Szenes, 2021), while being intertwined with ‘xenophobic nationalism’ (Biehl & Staudenmaier, 1995, p. 6). Even though ecofascism has raised concern only relatively recently, it is not a new phenomenon. Biehl and Staudenmaier (1995, p. 6) trace its origins back to Germany during the nineteenth-century anti-Enlightenment currents of Romanticism and irrationalism. The authors highlight two German thinkers from this period, Ernst Moritz Arndt and Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl, who fostered its growth (p. 6). Importantly, according to Biehl and Staudenmaier (1995, p. 6), both of these thinkers’ visions were attached to xenophobic nationalism, being solely concerned with German soil and German people. Particularly Riehl promoted nature as more genuine than society and believed that the *Volk* (the German people) is rooted in a specific territory (Rueda, 2020, p. 99). These ideological currents led to the emergence of *Blut und Boden* (Blood and Soil) philosophy and the *völkisch* movement, in which ecofascism was grounded (Rueda, 2020, p. 98). Rueda (2020, p. 98) explains the core of ‘Blood and Soil’ ideology as that the “two main components of a nation are a shared ascendancy and a shared territory”. These then make up for the “national soul or spirit (*Volkgeist*)” (Rueda, 2020, p. 98). Moreover, the concept of ‘rootedness’ was inherent to Blood and Soil philosophy, for it sought to restore the bond of the *Volk* and its natural environment (Biehl & Staudenmaier, 1995, p. 14). Furthermore, a shared understanding among the *völkisch* movement was that the concept of German *Volk*, “defined in racial terms”, should serve as the basis for the nation (Rueda, 2020, p. 100). Followingly, these groups started spreading anti-semitic and ethnic nationalist ideas (Rueda, 2020, p. 101). These ideas were then incorporated into the Nazi party ideology, the central themes being “natural order, organicist holism, and denigration of humanity” (Biehl & Staudenmaier, 1995, p. 11).

2.4. Ecofascism - present

Recent literature has found new manifestations of the early twentieth-century ecofascism in contemporary far-right movements. The research has particularly focused on the radical far-right movement, ‘alternative right’, or ‘alt-right’, which has been active in the US since the beginning of the 21st century (Rueda, 2020; Taylor 2020; Boggs 2020). This movement is not seen as a tight-knit group but a movement made of many separate groups who share some core ideas (Boggs, 2020, p. 296). Rueda (2020) describes these shared ideas as “anti-

democratic, anti-liberal, anti-conservative, -- white nationalist, racist, and patriarchal” (p. 104). Because of the movement’s anti-establishment attitudes, the author stresses the profound difference between the alt-right and the rest of the right (p. 104). Moreover, as Rueda (2020, p. 105) finds the movement to be a manifestation of an old phenomenon, scholars have found clear links between the alt-right and the ecofascist ideas of Nazi ideology. Boggs (2020, p. 297) shows that the ‘hyper-nationalist’, racist concept, the *Volk*, together with the movement’s violent anti-immigrant views predicate their goal of building a white ‘ethnostate’. Furthermore, scholars have pointed out the ties to Nazi ecofascist thinking with the alt-right’s use of Nazi slogans such as ‘Blood and Soil’ (Boggs, 2020, p. 301; Taylor, 2020, p. 278).

Beyond the alt-right movement in the US, ecofascist ideas have been spread in the Nordics, through movements such as the Nordic Resistance Movement (*Nordiska motståndsrörelsen*, NRM) which is a supranational association operating in Sweden, Norway, and also previously in Finland (Rueda, 2020, 109). The movement’s division in Finland (*Pohjoismainen vastarintaliike*) was ordered to be shut down in 2020 by the Supreme Court of Finland for their ambitions which breach the national constitution and international human rights, and for agitation against an ethnic group (Korkein oikeus, 2020). Furthermore, Szenes (2021, p. 149) shows how the NRM builds its ecofascist ideology by reinforcing neo-Nazi grievances that include ‘global Zionism’, ‘mass immigration’, and multiculturalism. Additionally, the organization has promoted the conspiracy theory ‘Great Replacement’ (Ekman, 2022, p. 1134), according to which non-white immigrants are replacing white Europeans, creating an existential threat to white people (Obaidi et al., 2021, p. 1676). Moreover, Szenes (2021) summarizes the general belief of the NRM that the white Nordic race can be only preserved through the “creation of a pure Nordic National Socialist white ethnostate, by the repatriation and deportation of all foreigners and immigrants including those with Nordic citizenship (p. 174).

The American movement has links to NRM through their leading figure but also the alt-right has promoted Nordic ecofascist ideas in their media (Rueda, 2020, 109). A particularly popular figure among the alt-right is a Finnish deep ecologist Pentti Linkola (1932-2020) whose books have been published by alt-right press (Taylor, 2020, p. 278). Moreover, Linkola has been described as “the epitome of ecofascism” (Protopapadakis, 2014, p. 586). Linkola saw overpopulation as the most disastrous consequence of technological progress, for

humans have found a way to “override any safety valve” of nature, i.e. famine or disease, that would bring ‘proper equilibrium’ (Protopapadakis, 2014, p. 591).

2.5. Nationalism

Nationalism has been identified as a core ideology for the far-right (Mudde, 2007). Mudde (2007, p. 16) offers a general definition of ‘nationalism’ as a political doctrine that seeks to achieve consistency between the nation (the people), and the state. Moreover, he acknowledges the variations of nationalism and differentiates two strands, state and ethnic nationalism (p. 17). State nationalism can be seen as being concerned with the civic, territorial, and political, whereas ethnic nationalism is about the cultural and racial (p. 17). Nevertheless, Mudde (2007, p. 17) argues that nationalism always holds both state and ethnic elements, and prefers differentiation between the more “moderate” and more “radical” nationalisms, calling the latter form ‘nativism’. Nativism as the radical version separates native people and nonnative elements, believing that only members of the native group can inhabit the state (p. 19). Mudde (2007, p. 19) argues that while nativist ideology can include racist arguments, it is not inherently racist. Nevertheless, the race component of nativism will be further elaborated later on. First, the relationship between nationalism and the environment is discussed.

Nationalist ideology has a complicated relationship with the environment, as Conversi (2015, p. 632) notes that both pro- and anti-environmentalists can appropriate nationalism. Thus, it is not surprising that far right has varying articulations of ‘nature’ (Moore & Roberts, 2022, p. 48). What Moore and Roberts (2022, p. 48) find as the common thread across far-right nature articulations, is their opposition to ‘neoliberal nature’ which is allegedly promoted by the left. The ‘neoliberal nature’ is seen as a rootless international image of the environment where people are detached from it, which far-right counters by “reaffirming nature’s national character” (p. 49). Despite this narrow common thread among far-right, different nationalist accounts of nature can be identified. Therefore, Forchtner and Kølvråa (2015, p. 204) look at nature in nationalism under three different dimensions: aesthetic, symbolic, and material. The aesthetic dimension draws more on Romantic ideas that nature is not “something to be dominated and controlled” but its ‘unspoiled’ beauty should be appreciated (p. 204). Moreover, the symbolic dimension ties nature to a nation’s claim over the territory, which has been seen in its radical form in the Nazi’s ecofascist ideas of protecting natural species

against the threat of foreign species (p. 205). Despite the possibility of radicalization, these dimensions are essentially pro-environment. However, the material dimension views nature in economic terms by focusing on the resources it can provide for the people and economy (p. 206). This dimension places nature below the needs of people, thus, it is seen more as an anti-environment nationalist stance. Nevertheless, these different narratives can work in tandem, as shown by Forchtner and Kølvråa (2015, p. 217), which leads to inconsistent environmental stances regarding nature protection and climate change (p. 219). The authors explain this through nationalism's ideological tenets that promote concern for the countryside but also are against global phenomena, such as climate change (p. 219). This points out the difference between conceptions of 'nature' and 'climate' in far-right environmental discussions, however, to ensure clarity, this research will use 'environment' as an umbrella term for both. Furthermore, the important distinction for the paper is between pro-environment nationalism (aesthetic and symbolic dimension) and anti-environment nationalism (material dimension).

2.6. Race in environmental discourse

Apart from far right's nationalist conceptions of the environment, there are substantial ideological ties between far-right nationalism and environmental attitudes with the concept of race. Going back to the radical form of nationalism, nativism (also 'ethno-nationalism'), the interlinkages between the concept and racism have been studied. While Mudde (2007, p. 19) claims that nativism is not inherently racist, Carter (2018) argues that "the policies of exclusionary nationalism and the push for cultural homogeneity often go hand-in-hand with racism and/or xenophobia" (p. 164). Furthermore, Carter (2018, p. 164) notes that the belief in a homogenous nation is based on the idea that there are incompatible natural differences between races and that these should not mix; according to a racist doctrine. Furthermore, the racist component has been found in far-right environmental narratives. First, a narrative that has been adopted by ecofascist groups for racist environmental arguments is what Taylor (2020) identifies as a "fixation on 'white genocide'" (p. 277). This narrative gained popularity after French philosopher Renaud Camus published a book in 2012, discussing 'white genocide' as 'the Great Replacement' (Ekman, 2022, p. 1130). Essentially, the Great Replacement is a conspiracy theory that argues that white Europeans are being replaced by nonwhite immigrants from outside of Europe (Ekman, 2022, p. 1130). This racist narrative is then linked to ecological concerns through an emphasis on fear of (white) habitat loss and species extinction (Taylor, 2020, p. 278). Second, as previously discussed, scholars have

linked climate denial with far-right's historical denial of colonial violence (Malm & the Zetkin Collective, 2021; Loftin, 2023). Loftin (2023) notes that climate change is inseparable from white racial domination; that "humans have caused the problem but some vastly more than others" (p. 592). The carbon-heavy industrialization of European countries was carried out through colonial violence, which is dismissed in far-right's climate denial (Loftin, 2023, pp. 592, 594). Thus, while it is implicit, climate denial involves a racist component. Therefore, this paper will analyze the explicit and implicit racist elements of the far-right parties' environmental attitudes.

2.7. Theoretical expectations

Investigating the notions of climate denial and ecofascism in the Finnish context, the theoretical expectations are that forms of nationalism and racism facilitate these two seemingly conflicting environmental attitudes in far-right. Following the literature on nationalism and environment, it is expected that nationalist ideas are promoted for or against nature (Forchtner & Kølvrå, 2015). Furthermore, previous literature has connected racism to both ecofascism (Taylor, 2020) as well as climate denial (Malm & the Zetkin Collective, 2021; Loftin, 2023), thus, similar linkages are expected to appear in the Finnish far right.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research method

This research conducts a comparative case study, looking at two far-right parties from Finland, Perussuomalaiset (Finns Party, PS) and Sinimusta Liike (Blue-and-black Movement, SML). These parties will be introduced later on. Moreover, the paper employs a qualitative content analysis (QCA) which allows for a systematic analysis of the data while helping to uncover "meanings, motives, and purposes in textual content" (Halperin & Heath, 2020, pp. 365, 373). Another benefit of QCA is that the data collection method is based on already existing material, reducing the bias that is usually higher in obtrusive methods, such as interviews (p. 374). Furthermore, the timeframe for the data begins from the establishment of SML in January 2021 and ends in April 2024 when the data was collected. The research analyzes primary sources, including party manifestos, articles, and blog posts, with the data

being gathered from the respective parties' websites. PS has its own newspaper "Suomen Uutiset" under which its articles are published, and also a section for blog posts by party members, whereas SML publishes all articles under its own name. Random selection is not feasible for this research for the articles need to address environmental challenges in enough detail to be useful for the analysis. Moreover, fifteen publications were selected for each case to bring enough content throughout the timeframe while allowing for qualitative analysis. As for the recording unit, the paper will use sentences to be able to get some context around the keywords, while having more specificity than full paragraphs. The analyzed text is in Finnish and the quotes that are used have been translated by the researcher. Lastly, the systematic analysis will be conducted using a coding frame, which outlines the target categories and identifies the indicators for each that signal their occurrence. The coding frame will be introduced later; next the cases will be introduced.

3.2. Case selection

These cases have been selected because they represent two different strands of the far-right, where PS is an example of a populist radical right party (Mudde, 2007, p. 30) and SML is a radical party with extremist ideologies. Furthermore, because of their shared history, the effect of the parties' political history can be controlled, allowing for a better focus on their environmental agendas. Nevertheless, these cases will be introduced to help reach an accurate analysis.

Finns Party (PS)

PS won the second most seats in the 2023 parliamentary elections (Lakka, 2023), but its beginning was more of a struggle. The party was founded as a successor party to the Finnish Rural Party (Suomen maaseudun puolue, SMP) that went bankrupt in 1995. SMP was considered a populist party and was situated socio-economically in the center-left, thus PS does not have radical right-wing roots (Arter, 2010, pp. 486, 501). However, gradually since 2003, PS has radicalized by moving to more extreme positions in the sociocultural dimension, particularly regarding immigration (Jungar, 2016, pp. 123, 139). Nevertheless, throughout the radicalization the Finns Party has enjoyed a "reputational shield" against allegations of extremism, due to its "respectable origins in agrarian populism" (Jungar, 2016, p. 136). The real breakthrough for the party happened in 2011 when the Finns Party gained

19% of the votes in the national elections, continuing with stable support until reaching its all-time highest share of 20% in 2023 (Tilastokeskus, 2023). For the core themes being immigration and EU-skepticism, environmental issues have not had much space in the party objectives. Leading up to the 2019 elections, eight parties announced their common climate change policy objectives, with PS being the only party represented in the parliament that did not take part (Vihma et al., 2021, p. 227). Afterward, however, the party came up with its first program for energy and the environment in 2019 (Vihma et al., 2021, p. 228). Moreover, Vihma et al. (2021, p. 229) describe the environmental approach of PS as “climate nationalism with a pronounced industrial twist”, but add that climate denialism is tolerated within the party.

Blue-and-black movement (SML)

SML was founded in January 2021, by previous members of PS and its youth wing (Yle News, 2021). What started this process was the separation of the PS and its youth wing in the spring of 2020, following the youth party leaders’ open ethnonationalism and fascist identifications (Yle News, 2021). Two of the founding members of SML were part of this youth wing, and the third founding member had been expelled from PS (Yle News, 2021). All of the founding members have been convicted of incitement to ethnic hatred (Yle News, 2021; Hankaniemi, 2022). Moreover, the party’s name, ‘Blue-and-black movement’, is a tribute to two Finnish far-right organizations, ‘Lapuan liike’ and ‘Isänmaallinen kansanliike (IKL), from the interwar period, referring to their colors (Yle News, 2021). Furthermore, the youth wing of these movements was called Sinimustat, ‘the Blue-and blacks’, (Yle News, 2021), leaving no doubt of the historical influences of SML. The chairman of SML stated that the party belongs to the same ideological “third way” as the historical European fascist parties, such as National Socialists in Germany (STT, 2024). On its website, the party describes itself as a radical, traditionalist, and ‘Finnish-minded’ party that pursues Finland that serves and defends the Finnish people’s culture, environment, and lifestyle (SML, n.d.F). Their definition of radicalism is “an ideology where the desired goal dictates the means on the political field” (SML, n.d.F). The party displays clearly more radical thinking compared to PS and has environmental concerns highlighted. Following this introduction of the cases, the coding frame will be explained.

3.3. Coding frame

The coding frame can be found in the Appendix but will be explained here shortly. The coding follows a coding frame that consists of four main categories: climate denialism, ecofascism, nationalism, and race. The categories of ‘climate denialism’ and ‘ecofascism’ are to see whether the parties in question employ rhetoric that falls clearly under these categories. Climate denialism is divided into subcategories according to the previous conceptualization that involves seven variations of climate denial: literal, attribution, consensus, action, urgency, and implicatory denial. All these categories are included to reach a more accurate analysis of the premises of denial. However, during data coding, no instances of literal denial were found, thus the category was removed from the coding frame. As for ecofascism, several subcategories are added for to help organize the indicators. With ecofascism, the related concepts ideas tend to be closely related, but separating some of them into subcategories helps in the coding process. The following were identified as its core components: ‘Romanticism’, ‘völkisch philosophy’, and ‘Blood and Soil ideology’. Furthermore, having previously identified related concepts to both climate denialism and ecofascism, the categories of ‘nationalism’ and ‘race’ are added to see how these appear in the environmental discourse. For nationalism, the subcategories of ‘pro-environment’ and ‘anti-environment’ are used with indicators relating to Forchtner and Kølvrå’s (2015) categorization. Furthermore, the concept of ‘race’ is divided to look at the racist narratives that can be appropriated in environmental discourse, namely ‘racial separation’ and the conspiracy theory “Great Replacement”.

4. Analysis

4.1. Identifying the environmental approaches

Overall, the findings affirmed that PS advances climate denialist rhetoric whereas SML employs ecofascist rhetoric. From the publications of the Finns Party, all forms of climate denial that were included in the coding frame, except ‘literal denial’, were found. Moreover, there was a clear difference between which type of denialism was found in the party’s official newspaper articles and in the blog posts of party members. Whereas implicatory, action, and urgency denialism were found mostly in newspaper articles, consensus, impact, and attribution denialism were mostly found in blog posts. The most frequently found denial form was ‘implicatory denial’ through indicators for ‘rationalization of own involvement’ and

‘guilt denial’. Moreover, implicatory denial can be seen in comments that deny guilt, for example, a comment from a Finns Party MP saying: “We have no reason for bad conscience. Instead, we can be proud of how good we already are” (PS, 2022a). Additionally, ‘action denial’ was found through comments like: “we Finns cannot do anything about it [climate change]” (Mäkynen, 2022a). Following this narrative, the climate actions Finland has taken are downplayed by deeming them as simply “gestures of goodwill” (PS, 2023e). Furthermore, several publications included ‘consensus denialism’, ‘impact denialism’, and ‘attribution denialism’. Consensus denial and attribution denial were closely related, for consensus denial was found often related to questioning the reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and asking whether anthropogenic climate change is “the scam of the century” (Hetta, 2021). Impact denialism was found in blog posts concerned with the effects of climate change in Finland, stating that storms in Finland will not intensify, “thanks to climate change” (Rintala, 2024).

As for SML, the party employs blatant ecofascist rhetoric with most of their concerns revolving around rootedness, anti-cosmopolitanism, and Finnish blood. The Romantic ideas of anti-cosmopolitanism and a sense of decay manifest in phrases like “We want to get rid of the destructive grip of modern society and globalist values on our community and land” (SML, n.d.F). Furthermore, this is lined together with the concept of rootedness, as the party lists as one of its core objectives “to fight relentlessly against multiculturalism and rootless global mass society that threatens the Finns’ national existence” (SML, n.d.F). According to the party, the feeling of ‘rootlessness’ is being advanced by the left and ‘market giants’ (SML, n.d.I). To oppose this, the party promotes the meaning of shared ascendancy through the discourse of ‘Finnish blood’ (SML, 2024). Furthermore, while the ecofascist notions of this narrative are not too subtle, there is a direct reference to the Nazi slogan ‘blood and soil’ in the party’s manifesto. As previously mentioned, the party leader has spoken openly about following the same ideological path as the National Socialists (STT, 2024), making it clear that it is not simply an unfortunate similarity. Furthermore, as the Nazis used the rootedness argument against Jews, SML also employs heavily anti-Semitic rhetoric. SML sees the EU as a path for “Jewish hybrid-influencing” and is against different international agreements that would condemn anti-Semitism (SML, n.d.A).

However, further analysis of the parties' environmental attitudes together with the concepts of nationalism and race revealed several overarching themes. These narratives will be explained next.

4.2. *'Finland first'*

The first recurring theme in the writings from each party is a "Finland first" way of thinking regarding environmental issues. This comprises the nationalist approach that the parties use in distinct ways to advance their agendas but share a similar idea of "acting and thinking homeward – and not being ashamed about it" (PS, 2022c). For PS, prioritizing Finland means prioritizing the economy and Finland's competitiveness over nature and climate change considerations. They see the green transition as an "excuse" to worsen Finland and want to bring "some sense into the climate discussion" (PS, 2023a). The need for climate action is denied through implicatory denial, by emphasizing the small size of Finland, which makes its actions meaningless in the global context (Asunta, 2023; PS, 2023e). This narrative is often advanced by pointing to the country's share of global emissions and comparing it to the world's biggest polluters (PS, 2022a). Furthermore, to counter the green transition, PS offers its own climate change policy program 'blue-and-white transition' which includes climate, environment, and energy policies designed to strengthen Finland by placing "Finland's interest first" (PS, 2022d). The party is critical of the climate policies, often arguing Finland is carrying an unreasonably big economic burden globally (Asunta, 2023). Moreover, the concern over Finland's export industries' competitiveness and its people's purchasing power (PS, 2023d) is stated to push against the international commitment to climate actions. Finally, it is also argued that "the Finnish industry is a climate act, on top of other benefits such as employment and tax revenues" (PS, 2022b). These narratives of Finland's climate contribution being meaningless, Finland bearing too great economic costs, and the Finnish industry already being the 'eco-friendly option', are all to minimize any climate action. Thus, the 'national interest' is understood as placing the economy above the environment.

Contrastingly, for SML, prioritizing Finland means prioritizing the 'Finnishness', together with nature and animals, "without letting economic considerations get in the way of these principles" (SML, n.d.H). Moreover, SML favors the international climate targets that PS deemed as 'unrealistic'. SML supports the EU climate goals but wants Finland to execute even more ambitious climate policies separately from the EU (SML, n.d.A). However, the

party focuses solely on the well-being of Finnish nature and people, promoting the idea that future eco-friendly Finland is only for (white) Finnish people, who “are not forced to serve any foreign race or people” (SML, n.d.D). Furthermore, SML specifies that the “pure environment” and living standard should be upheld solely with Finnish efforts “without direct codependency on hostile actors towards our people” (n.d.C). Here, the “symbolic dimension” (Forchtner & Kølvrå, 2015, p. 204) of nationalist nature discourse can be seen through the emphasis on Finnish people belonging to and having sovereignty over the territory of Finland. Therefore, even the promotion of more ambitious climate goals is not about helping the environment globally, but primarily about preserving the Finnish environment. This shows how the party’s nationalism facilitates a pro-environment approach, compared to PS whose nationalism promotes a pro-economy stance over environmental considerations.

4.3. Nature’s national vs international character

Furthermore, going beyond the pro- and anti-environmental nationalism of SML and PS, the parties’ framing of ‘nature’ differs. Moore and Roberts (2022, p. 49) argue that the far-right actors generally share a notion of nature that opposes the ‘neoliberal nature’, and contrast it by reaffirming nature’s national character. This is seen in the case of SML which, as previously shown, focuses on *Finnish* nature. Moreover, the party sees inherent links between the people and the land, which follows the Nazi ideology of ‘Blood and Soil’. One of the party’s core objects in its party manifesto is to “emphasize the meaning of soul and blood [*sielu ja veri*] in the formation of national identity” (SML, n.d.F). They do not use a direct translation of ‘Blood and Soil’, but the similar tone and the fascist ideology of the party speak for a clear reference to the Nazi slogan. Furthermore, the concept of Blood and Soil entails the idea of ‘rootedness’ which is also prominent in SML’s articles. SML (n.d.C) blames the Western states for upholding the current standard of living and their societies’ rootlessness that leads to exceeding nature’s carrying capacity. Thus, the party does not only consider nature as part of the nation but promotes the nationalization of nature through the emphasis on ‘rootedness’.

However, the argument of far-right parties nationalizing nature (Moore and Roberts 2022, p. 49) does not show in the case of PS. Instead, the party’s narrative around environmental issues can be defined as ‘internationalizing nature’. This is partly because most of the environmental publications talk about ‘climate’ which, Forchtner and Kølvrå (2015, p. 212)

argue, is difficult to fit into the far-right nationalist imaginary of nature. Nevertheless, the lack of nationalist framing of nature and narrow focus on climate change seems to rather promote the transnational ‘neoliberal nature’ than oppose it. Furthermore, as previously shown, the party’s discourse on climate is to a large extent denialist, which is often based on the international notion of climate change. The arguments emphasize that Finland is either too small to affect the climate, or does not have to act before the ‘major polluters’ act (PS, 2022a). Statements like, “Finland has no chance to stop climate change which is a global problem” (PS, 2023c), use the international character of the climate to minimize Finland’s responsibility. Furthermore, some literal denialist arguments found in the blog posts do not only shift the responsibility on ‘bigger polluters’ but argue how the planet “has always managed to adjust to the exact right temperature to preserve life” (Mäkynen, 2022b). Here, the arguments try to do the exact opposite as when nationalizing nature, that is to reduce the sense of responsibility over nature among people. Moreover, even when one blog post expresses concern over ‘national nature’, the blame for the lack of nature preservation is placed on climate change mitigation having been prioritized above it (Mäkynen, 2022a). However, among the publications from PS, there are virtually no other demands of nature preservation. This renders the argument as simply using the ‘international climate’ narrative as a scapegoat for the lack of any environmental efforts. As such, the difference in the conceptions of nature between PS and SML, work to advance their different nationalist goals. PS uses an international conception to dismiss environmental responsibility and advance economic goals, whereas SML employs a nationalist one to advance its anti-immigration agenda.

4.4.. Racism in environmental terms

The last theme identified across the data in overt and covert forms is racism in environmental terms. In the case of SML, racism is very undisguised and related to ‘natural differences’ between races, and the ‘naturalness’ of racism. These ‘natural differences’ between races are explained by how “different subgroups of the human species have adapted to different environments” (SML, 2023a). This idea is further advanced by arguing that “for other [non-human] nature there does not seem to be demands for filling Finland’s nature with all kinds of foreign species” (SML, n.d.K). Such arguments reveal the ecofascist idea of how society should be based on laws of nature and emphasize how “human is part of nature” (SML, n.d.K). Furthermore, the conception of immigrants as “foreign species” shows the

intertwining of racism and environmental discourse, echoing the ecofascist ideas of the past. Followingly, the separation of “species”, i.e. races, serves as the basis for the argument of reserving the country for one ethnic group. This can be seen in how the party considers Finland as “the national homeland of the Finns, in which the Finns are privileged to live” (SML, n.d.G). Moreover, what SML sees as the greatest threat to this image of Finland is the “great replacement” (*väestönvaihto*) which is mentioned in many of the party’s articles (SML, n.d.E; n.d.J; n.d.K). This racist conspiracy theory is preoccupied with the “white genocide” of European people and is eagerly promoted by SML. It is incorporated in the party’s view of modern society as a “multicultural society experiment”, deeming it as “unnatural and dangerous” and that “will inevitably lead to the replacement of white native population with foreign populations” (SML, 2023a). Particularly the use of terms like “unnatural”, the party shows its dedication to the laws of nature while advancing the racist agenda.

Comparing the environmental discourse of PS to that of SML, there were no instances of overt racism. However, when looking behind the arguments, there are signs of covert racism. Several arguments from PS that were categorized as interpretive denial compared Finland to bigger polluters to minimize the responsibility of Finland. Importantly, all of the publications that used this narrative named the same countries as the main polluters in the world: China and India. Some of the posts additionally listed “developing countries” in general to be the main problem in reducing carbon emissions (Kymäläinen, 2023). These arguments point to covert racism in two ways. First, what the list of “worst polluters” includes are only non-Western, non-white, countries while missing one of the biggest polluters in the world, the US. This does not necessarily indicate discrimination if the list follows official statistics, however, the US is the second biggest polluter after China, before India (Paddison & Choi, 2024). Thus, naming only China, India, and the developing countries without mentioning the US seems unjust. However, this can be argued against by noting Finland’s political ties with the US which can explain the party wanting to not criticize it. Nevertheless, this leads to the second way the party’s discourse is connected to hidden racism. As introduced in the theoretical framework, climate denialism has been linked to wider historical denial of racist violence, defined as “will to innocence” (Malm & Zetkin Collective, 2021; Loftin, 2023). Statements like “we have no reason to beat ourselves for our climate sins” (Asunta, 2023), show the “will to innocence” at work. Furthermore, what most of the publications demonstrate is not literal denial where the entire problem is denied, but instead implicatory denial where the responsibility is placed on China, India, and developing countries. This can

be argued to work in a more racist way than literal denial since the responsibility of European countries in the initiation of anthropogenic climate change is not only denied but the responsibility placed fully on the (non-white) developing countries. Even though these two accounts of covert racism are based on more what is between the lines, they are important considerations to have a holistic picture of the roots of the party's climate denial.

5. Discussion

These common narratives among PS and SML provide support for the theoretical expectations of the research. Even when the environmental discourse from each party followed very clearly their distinct agendas, the notions of nationalism and race could be identified. The nationalist discourse from PS that promotes the economy aligns with the previous literature on how economic interests play a role in climate denial. However, what the deeper analysis showed, is that the party's dismissal of climate change does not only come from promoting the national economy but displays signs of racist roots. Refusing the responsibility and placing it on the "biggest polluters", referring only to non-Western states and failing to mention the second biggest polluter, the US, or any other "white" polluter for that matter. Moreover, this ties the roots of PS's climate denial closer to the ecofascism of SML which has overt racist arguments. This was expected, knowing the ideological inspirations of the party came from past fascist movements, namely from the National Socialists. Altogether, the findings show how the same racist and nationalist premises can facilitate both anti- and pro-environmental attitudes.

6. Conclusion

To conclude, the importance of studying the different environmental attitudes, namely climate denialism and ecofascism, emerging in the far right cannot be stressed enough. Moreover, the threats these approaches pose for mitigating climate change (because of climate denial) or for human rights (because of ecofascist policies) need to be taken seriously. This research has provided to understanding of their ideological premises, comparing how they relate to one another. Making use of the concepts of nationalism, and racism, this paper shows how climate denial and ecofascism both draw on them, albeit in different ways. Several narratives were identified from the data. First, nationalism working through the "Finland first" approach was found in the discourse from both PS and SML. While for PS this meant placing the

Finnish economy first and dismissing nature through climate denial, SML prioritized the environment over the economy but with a limited concern over only national nature. Second, looking closer at the parties' notions of nature, a contrast between international and national conceptions was found. Starting with the assumption that far-right "nationalizes nature" (Moore & Roberts, 2022), the case of SML followed this national framing of the environment, whereas PS solely focused on the international character of the climate. This was shown to fit each of their environmental attitudes with PS being able to dismiss environmental policies as international problems, and SML promoting them for the sake of nature's position in forming national identity. Lastly, the roots of their climate denialism and ecofascism in racism were discussed, showing the upfront racism of SML's discourse and the underlying racist notions of PS's denial narratives. Thus, the findings support the theoretical expectations of the paper, that climate denialism and ecofascism coexist in far-right because of their shared nationalist and racist premises, even if these are displayed differently.

Nevertheless, the limitations of the research need to be addressed. One clear limitation is associated with most qualitative studies, that is the extent of generalizability that is limited by the small number of cases. Furthermore, this research focuses solely on the Finnish far-right, tying it with the country's context. However, being able to control for the effect of the context allows for a clearer focus on the parties' environmental approaches, increasing the paper's internal validity. Nevertheless, it does not increase the generalizability. Another limitation is the scope of the research, which could have been broader in terms of data analyzed and contextualization. As for future research, there is still a need for further research into the relationship between climate denial and ecofascism. Case studies are needed from different contexts to build a deeper understanding of the topic, after which wider comparisons between countries are feasible. Moreover, what was beyond the scope of this paper, is looking more into the causal mechanisms of how what part environmentalisms play in radicalization among far-right. In this study, the two parties in question were originally one and the same, which begs the question of how the process of radicalization affects the party's environmentalism or the other way around. Altogether, what is clear is that the topic of far-right environmental approaches will remain highly relevant for years to come.

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8. Appendix

Categories	Sub-categories & Indicators	Finns Party (PS) examples	Blue-and-black Movement (SML) examples
<i>Climate denialism</i>	<i>Attribution denialism</i> Indicators: Mentions of denying anthropogenic causes of climate change	“Anthropogenic climate change –scam of the century?” (Hetta, 2021)	-
	<i>Impact denialism</i> Indicators: Mentions of effects of climate change being harmless or beneficial	“The official prediction is that storms will not proliferate nor amplify – thanks to climate change.” (Rintala, 2024)	-
	<i>Consensus denialism</i> Indicators: Mentions of questioning the scientific consensus on climate change	“When we go deeper into the causes and effects of climate change and of human’s influence, experts and scientist have a spectrum of opinions.” (Mäkynen, 2022b)	-
	<i>Action denialism</i> Indicators: Mentions of no need to act or climate change mitigation actions being useless	“Finland cannot save the world and our actions do not have any noticeable effect on climate change.” (PS, 2022a)	-
	<i>Urgency denialism</i>	“-- 50 years of climate meetings have declared	-

	Indicators: Mentions of lack of urgency, actions being pushed forward	the end of the world every few years - - Still, the world has not perished.” (PS, 2023b)	
	<i>Implicatory denial</i> Indicators: Mentions of avoidance, guilt denial, rationalization of own involvement, perspectival comparison	“It is absurd to think that we from Finland could remove carbon from the air on behalf of China and India.” (Korpinen, 2022)	“Still, we have to remember that world’s biggest sources of carbon dioxide are: China, US, India, Russia and Japan” (SML, n.d.A)
<i>Ecofascism</i>	<i>Romanticism</i> Indicators: Mentions of a fading (ethnic) community, preserving the traditional life of a community, anti-cosmopolitanism	-	“[SML] was created to serve and defend the Finnish people’s culture, environment, and lifestyle” (SML, n.d.F)
	<i>“Blood and soil”</i> Indicators: Mentions of the term, rootedness, emphasis on ‘blood’	-	“—the party aims to emphasize the meaning of soul and blood in the formation of national identity” (SML, n.d.F)
	<i>Völkisch</i> Indicators: Mentions of the <i>Volk</i> defined according to race, anti-Semitism, natural order	-	“It [SML] promotes white racial identity, with a political focus on the white Finnish nation” (SML, 2024)
<i>Nationalism</i>	<i>Anti-environment nationalism</i> Indicators: Mentions of nature as resources (material), prioritizing	“Overly strict, economy and day-to-day life deteriorating climate policy needs to be replaced with a	-

	national economy over nature	blue-and-white climate, environment, and energy policy that strengthens Finland.” (PS, 2023b)	
	<i>Pro-environment nationalism</i> Indicators: Mentions of nature’s beauty (aesthetic), nature as the people’s territory (symbolic), prioritizing nature over economy	-	“Part of nationalism is not only preservation of Finnishness, but also Finnish nature and fauna.” (SML, n.d.H)
<i>Race</i>	<i>Racial separation</i> Indicators: Mentions of biological differences among races	-	“The biological subgroups of human species have adapted to different environments--“ (SML, 2023a)
	<i>“Great Replacement”</i> Indicators: Mentions of the term itself, ‘white genocide’	-	“Blue-and-black Movement is against Great Replacement.” (SML, n.d.E) “- - from the white genocide protomoting European Union” (SML, 2023b)