

NATURE, THE VOLK, AND THE HEIMAT

The narratives and practices of the far-right ecologist

by **Madeleine Hurd & Steffen Werther**

In this article, we wish to describe the worldviews that underlie far-right environmentalism. It is our contention that far-right environmentalism addresses two problems often identified as key obstacles to modern environmental practice and consciousness. The first is inherent in the commodification of nature, encouraged both by capitalism and by the espousal of “sustainable development”. This commodification reduces nature to an instrument, a good to be consumed (more or less wisely). Humans, meanwhile, are defined solely as rational actors, well divorced from nature. Such definitions not only betray

a pernicious human-nature divide; they also make it very difficult to tap human sentiments of belonging and codependence on nature, both key, ecocritics argue, to effective environmentalism. Second, the abstract commodification of nature has been paralleled by the universal rationalism that is held, ideally, to dominate discourse in the political sphere. Useful though such discourse is, it does – as feminists and minorities have pointed out – delegitimize discourses based on the local, particular, emotional, and aesthetic. Unfortunately, ecocritics maintain, environmental change requires just such bottom-up, practice-based,

emotional discourses. For environmentalism to work, they argue, locals’ sense of place, of inhabitancy – ownership of nature and land, embedded in use and emotion – must be brought into political play. The challenge thus is to both the dominant market, and the dominant public sphere.¹

TO DISCUSS THIS challenge through an analysis of neo-Nazi environmentalism might seem a bit odd. Indeed, the mere idea of a neo-Nazi environmental platform raises many eyebrows. Surely such environmentalism can reflect nothing more than cynical vote-fishing?

Maybe; yet scholars note the continued prominence of environmentalist planks on many European far-right websites. German journalists and anti-fascist groups complain of the ways in which the far-right parties use ecology and animal rights to piggyback into local and national politics; left-wing publicists spend time uncovering ecological publications, anti-pollution movements, and branches of organic farming that are, in fact, fronts for neo-Nazi activity.² Far-right environmentalism is, evidently, politically useful, and, it seems, here to stay.

A perusal of far-right websites affirms this. Far-right environmentalism is, moreover, couched in emotional, localized, and practice-based rhetoric. The Sweden-Democrats list “Environment and Energy” and “Animal Protection” among their ten most important issues; they “see humans as part of nature, and acknowledge that we are altogether dependent on nature in order to continue our existence on earth”. Not only food, water, and air, but “the qualities of beauty that are embedded in nature” are needed to “fulfill our spiritual needs and make possible a high quality of life”; the party calls for the development of nuclear power, a lower tax on electricity, and measures to curtail Baltic Sea pollution. The Norwegian Progress Party calls for protection of “allemannsretten”,³ nature reserves, and “protection through use”, as well as a “responsible and sensible” plan to reduce emissions and combat global warming. France’s *Bloc Identitaire* pledges to protect “the national” against “transnationalists” who seek not only to “dominate and sacrifice peoples” but “organize the pillage of the planet” – “taking us right into a wall, towards catastrophes without precedent”. Their “Ecology as a Response to the Capitalist Devastation” advocates the husbandry of resources and increased respect for biodiversity. The French *Mouvement national républicain* offers about ten pages under the tab “Environment”, with planks ranging from renewable energy and animal protection to opposition to genetically modified food – all part of the protection of “the natural and, equally, the cultural and architectural environment”, that is, “the wealth of France” – which has “too long been sacrificed on the altar of economic productivity and the pursuit of immediate profits”. The British National Party proclaims itself “this nation’s only true Green party which has policies that will actually save the environment”. It is “fully conscious of the urgent need to combat all real pollutants in the environment” and recommends “environmentally friendly policies” including public transportation, the “banning of ritual slaughter of animals”, reform of factory livestock farming and the switch to organic fuels. Meanwhile, the Belgian *Démocratie Nationale* (formerly the *Front National*) has “Environment” as point nine of a ten-point program. It tells us that the “citizens of the industrialized world” must take responsibility for climate change, damage to marine biodiversity and water quality, and threats to public health; the party calls for increased recycling, reforms in agriculture, reduction in public and household consumption of water, and special polluter taxes.⁴

FAR-RIGHT ENVIRONMENTALISM is thus both passionate and prominent. German, British, and French far-right websites and publications call on readers to protect their respective peoples and homelands by political

means and direct action against – for instance – toxic waste, nuclear power, long-distance food transports, international food concerns, genetically manipulated plants, carbon emissions, and industrial cruelty to animals. Unsurprisingly, these ecological recommendations are made to tie into deeper far-right concerns. There are, for instance, plans to pass such laws against those responsible for these horrors: the soulless (Jewish?) international destroyer who sees places as abstract, profit-bearing entities, and the aliens who, having overpopulated and ruined their own homelands, are now flooding into ours. A slight scratching at the surface shows, indeed, how environmentalism is operationalized on behalf of far-right, xenophobic, and racist ideals.

How does this work? Jonathan Olsen published a seminal study of German econationalism in 1990; Mukul Sharma’s recent book dedicates a chapter to a Europe-wide overview.⁵ Both show how environmentalism can reinforce far-right and authoritarian tendencies. Olsen argues plausibly that the neo-Nazis claim to protect a homeland in open opposition to international capitalism’s profitable abstraction of land into quantifiable, exchangeable “space”. We wish to deepen this insight, moreover, by looking at how the far right seeks to ground environmentalist love of place in gendered, everyday life-world practices. When this happens, it furnishes additional emotional underpinnings for biodeterminist, xenophobic thinking.

The call for a communal sense of usufruct and ownership of place is, ironically enough, also central to left-wing environmentalist scholarship. Nor are environmentalist scholars oblivious to the exclusionary dangers inherent in such sentiments. Let us first unravel this paradox.

Universalist space and inhabitancy: an environmentalist dilemma

Charles Taylor has postulated Europe’s modern social imaginary as fundamentally individualistic, a triumph of the Enlightenment’s concept of polite society and public sphere. Instead of hierarchies, otherworldly moral purpose, and/or the guidance of eternal cosmic forms, the ideal society is a beneficial composite of individual wills, anthropocentric, self-interested, civil, and peaceful. The liberation implicit in globalization depends on such imaginaries – as Arjun Appadurai argues, when describing how the global reach of media vastly expands individuals’ ability to imagine differently placed alternatives, and thus poses a fundamental challenge to locally entrenched social and gender hierarchies.⁶ This image of society is, today, triumphant; it is the social imaginary that lies behind the global reach of industrial and finance capitalism,



Extreme-right-wing youth cleaning a public park in Gardelegen on their “National

while its universalist and individualistic ideals further movements worldwide for free trade, democratization, human rights, and feminism.

This abstract universalism prompted the reinvention of land and place that allowed resource-rich Europeans to master both near and far-off environments and humans. Enlightenment individualization was accompanied by strict private property laws, in the interests both of efficient taxation and of economic improvement. The commodification of land was joined with abstract mapping practices that allowed the representation of places to be separated from locals’ uses and experiences. This divorce, environmentalist historians argue, divided land from local experiences of usage and movement, rendering it accessible, instead, to imperialist and capitalist objectification, categorization and quantification. Ursula Heise has strongly condemned such worldwide systems of commodification as divorcing space from locals’ daily interactions with nature. The result – nature quantified according to abstract profit calculations, flattened to an abstract mass on maps – is (in Heise’s phrase) an “endocytic spacelessness”, in which there is “no longer any other than mankind, no outside outside” humans.⁷



Cleaning Day* (Nationaler Säuberungstag), 2005-10-22.

Photo: Christian Jungeblodt

This change affected the experiences of local humans as well. Local space, as Anthony Giddens points out, was linked to local time; unsurprisingly, representations of universal space necessitated the representation of universal time – time divorced from the sunrises and sunsets, seasons and cycles of local space. Governance of the world could be planned and executed only with the help of the “entrainment” made possible by a common time of clocks ticking together in progressive time. Giddens has seen this as part of the replacement of face-to-face interaction and space-time experience with modern national and global systems. Only abstract space-time could allow the modern human’s necessary trust in unseen experts and institutions, the informed “risk society” which increasingly replaces the moving-through-the-day, bodily experienced relations of locally bounded place-time. Universal time, finally, helps order the world into the linear narrative of economic growth, as ordered by the invisible hands of benign capitalist competition.⁸

The Western imaginary, as described here, has its serious critics. Many point to the knowledge system’s pro-masculine, pro-Western, anthropocentric, pro-colonial, and pro-capitalist implications. Feminists

and minorities have faulted its marginalization of collective and “private sphere” experiences. Fascists and, more recently, xenophobic nationalists argue for a hierarchical scale of unique, place and race-based community values. Further, they join environmentalists in critiquing both its abstraction of place, its denial of communal usufruct, and its dismissal of emotional and sensory experiences, all of which divide humans from nature.

FOR ENVIRONMENTALISTS, THE modern imaginary is problematic in that it alienates people not only from each other, but from their surroundings. Where one is, is immaterial; the practices that tie one to a particular time-space, with its actors and actants – the sense of inhabitancy – disappear.⁹ The environment, the land, is alienated, and can be dealt with like any other commodity. The new individual is detached from place, in free-floating human subjectivity – in what Giddens has termed a process of “disembedding”. Or, as David Deudney summarizes it, “who-ness” is, today, divorced from “here-ness”.¹⁰

One can also see nature’s commodification as part of the general shift from use-value to commodity-value. Commodification, as Jürgen Habermas and others

have argued, has increasingly penetrated into both the public, i.e. political, and private, or life-world, spheres. The main producers of use-value in the industrial world have indeed been identified as women in the home – that is, in the family’s life-world. Those who critique the nature-human divide and the loss of human inhabitancy can thus, like social democrats and (as we shall see) the far right, use the home and family as a counter-ideal and imaginary.¹¹

Environmentalists thus see commodification as a fundamental problem when it comes to the human-nature relationship. They call for a reintroduction of a sense of inhabitancy, underpinned by communal usufruct and a revaluation of embodied experiences of time and place (and thus nature). But here they run into a problem. Inhabitancy can be exclusionary.

A SENSE OF ownership of land, of inhabitancy, can be risky, as the analyses of grass-roots “not in my backyard” activism demonstrate. The right to speak for a territory, to declare ownership and responsibility, is, arguably, justified through a collective memory (often re-invented) of collective inhabitancy, that is, a history of experience and usage. One group defines *its* practices – and the practices of its ancestors – as definitional for a given place. These practices, when enshrined in a certain narrative as *the* history of the place, become a means of excluding alternative practices, alternative histories, and alternative groups. Doreen Massey, in her analyses of the exclusionary and rival claims to public places and “natural” environ-

ments, describes the resulting product as “envelopes of space-time”.¹² Mukul Sharma’s *Green and Saffron* gives telling examples of how such “envelopes” might work in the case of ecological activism. Some Indian activists invoke historical claims concerning a lost, pre-colonial era of ecological balance – to return to which requires authoritarian rule, strict enforcement of Hindu practices, and/or a revalorization of the caste system. The creation of nature reserves has been similarly underpinned: those who rope off such reserves postulate a pre-human history of “natural harmony”. The history of the humans who have lived and worked within the territory is disregarded; they are restricted or expelled.¹³

THE GREATER THE elaboration of a specific history of human-nature interaction, the stronger the claims made concerning that place’s proper present, and its future. This allows the espousal of environmentalism by both left and right – as shown by the dual loyalties of militant ecologists of the 1970s. As Jonathan Olsen puts it, both left- and right-wing environmentalists oppose the “homogenizing globalism that turns place into space and home into nowhere in particular”.¹⁴ Both thus celebrate inhabitancy, in opposition to the



Humans are and remain part of nature! Cover of an NPD flyer describing the party's environmental policy.



Protection of the environment is protection of the *Heimat*! This NPD slogan is popular at all levels of the party, as well as among independent extremists.



inhuman and unnatural exploitative practices of international capitalism.

But this does not mean that right and left environmentalism are identical. The right has a particular, biodeterminist definition of inhabitancy. Its ideologues reinforce the emotional tie of people and territory by pseudo-scientific biological determinism that holds peoples to have interacted with local nature over thousands of years, and thus formed both their nature and their own collective being. This, as Olsen shows, means believing that all people are “the expression of an ‘eco-niche’, the places, nations, and cultures to which they naturally belong”. Each *Volk* is held to be unique – and “the most natural thing on earth”.¹⁵ This means that the far-right myth holds that each separate people has developed both biomass and culture in fundamental interaction with the land and animals surrounding them. This means that if (say) Germans are to survive as a people, they must protect German nature and land. It also means that only Germans belong on that land. Or, to turn directly to a German neo-Nazi website (2008):

A people have, naturally belonging to them, their ancestral earth. This includes forests, rivers, meads, lakes, and much more – the landscape itself, in which our forefathers moved and lived – still in harmony with it. The fate of *Volk* and earth are chained to each other. [...] To cut through this band is, in the long run, to destroy the basis of existence of a *Volk* – unless it wants to join the parasitical *Nomadentum* that [lives on] other host peoples, hosts such as the German people, with their [German] honor, history, and pride.¹⁶

Thus far, we follow Olsen's argument. But we go further. We argue that everyday gendered practices, as espoused by both environmentalists and neo-Nazis, can anchor this sentiment in new emotional ways. Let us proceed to our case history, to see how this might happen.

Our case history: the National Democratic Party of Germany

The National Democratic Party of Germany (*Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschland* – NPD) has, at the time of writing, about 6000 members. It is the strongest nationalist party in Germany. Although it did not

garner more than 1.5% of the vote in the 2009 federal elections, and achieved, twice running, the 5% of votes in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Sachsen needed to gain representation in those states' legislatures. Its great strengths are local; in some communities, the NPD can count on a steady 20% of the vote.¹⁷

The NPD has, perhaps, the most eloquent environmentalist statement of any of Europe's neo-Nazis. Protection of the environment, the NPD program holds, is protection of the *Heimat*.

An intact nature is the foundation of our future! National policy is environmental policy. The lack of ecologically responsible policy threatens every *Volk* in its substance! Economic interests must come second to protection of nature. Man is part of nature. Nature, therefore, is not simply the ‘*Umwelt*’ of humans, but the *Mitwelt*.¹⁸

How is this rhetoric developed? Let us go to Bavaria, via the website www.npd-bayern.de. One is first, perhaps, struck by the prominence of nature imagery. On Jan. 26, 2013, the homepage has a background image of wheat fields and woods, overwritten with “Protect the *Heimat*”. Links lead to pages with pictures of border posts, hands resting on euro bills and coins, soldiers and youths – as well as “Protect the *Heimat*” lettered against pictures of a field amid forest and mountains, a snow-covered mountain range, a tree-surrounded log cabin, and wheat fields ripening under a blue sky – and the shadows of nuclear reactor towers. The NPD thus joins other far-right parties in playing on nostalgic, kitschy images of “our” countryside. This landscape is, it seems, threatened. Indeed, threats loom darkly throughout both text and imagery. Scrolling down, one finds articles protesting housing for asylum-seekers, complaining that low prices are “exterminating” German dairy farmers, exposing the profit-mongering underlying the Winter Olympics and the luxurious state benefits offered immigrants, and – in “What Jewish Roots?” – attacking the idea that the Germans' *Leitbild* was Jewish-rooted Christianity. One finds, finally, a poster protesting cruelty to animals: “Bavaria must not become the Orient!”, a diatribe against Muslim and Jewish slaughter practices. Warnings continue in the environmental information presented under the website's “Umwelt” link. Readers are called upon to oppose the dangers of atomic energy, genetically modified crops, the environmental policies

of the CSU, and the extinction of the German people.¹⁹

It is all connected. The supposed fact that environmental protection is protection of the *Heimat* is demonstrated both by the embedding of environmentalist messages in articles decrying the ill effects of international capitalism and immigration, and by grand narratives that make environmentalist concerns naturally xenophobic. Let us summarize a pair of fairly typical narratives of this sort, taken from the same website.

OUR STORY BEGINS with the NPD's condemnation of genetically modified crops. Is *Genmais* (genetically modified corn; literally: “gene-corn”), the website asks, to be sown on “our *Heimat* land”? Germany's politicians had

functioned as doormen for the profit-hungry machinations of the gene-monopolists from the US. In collaboration with the EU, and without asking the *Volk*, transgenic technology was brought into our *Heimat* through the back door. [...] Germany must be declared a genetic-engineering-free zone! If the *Amis* want to poison themselves with genetically modified food, that's their affair – we will never allow it.²⁰

The same website warns, in “No to Genetically Modified Corn!”, that genetically modified plants are being allowed to establish themselves as experimental plantations. This both “contaminates” the surroundings and allows the German government to argue, in the future, that genetically modified corn should be accepted because there was already so much of it in Germany. The author continues:

Parallels to immigration are obtrusively obvious. From guest workers (who after all return home) to the Land of Immigrants. If one had asked the Germans thirty or thirty-five years ago whether they wanted to have, in the future, fifteen million foreigners in their country, they would have defended themselves with hands and feet and possibly the ballot. Bit by bit, the Federal Republic has been made into the reception camp for all [the world's] troublesome and encumbered. The Germans are faced with a fait accompli, they are not asked any more – we are, now, a Land of Immigrants.²¹

Left: A healthy diet instead of "Gene-Food"! Genetic engineering – no thanks! Cover of an NPD flyer (Bavarian section).



Right: Animal protection is protection of the Heimat! Vote for the NPD on September 22! Campaign poster for the German federal elections of 2013 (NPD Facebook page).



Bavaria must not become the Orient! Illustration accompanying an article posted on Bavarian NPD website. Protests against cruelty to animals are often used as a cover for islamophobic and anti-Semitic sentiments.

The author's description of international companies' genetically modified food invasion thus segues into a denunciation of immigration: both will denaturalize Germany. And what is Germany? The *Heimat* – and its *Volk*. Here we have a second NPD trope. The German *Volk* – which has evolved to its present level by dint of eons of natural selection – is "also" an endangered species. The article "Become a *Völker*-Conservationist!" notes expert warnings against the mass extinction of plant and animals.²²

This is of course very depressing, especially in the view of nationalists. What, however, are the causes? The main evil is without doubt the relentlessly thorough commercialization of all fields of life, unto the most far-off corner of the earth. Those responsible are those dogooders, Liberalists and internationalists who are now complaining about the result of their own actions.

These were the people who were promoting "limitless free trade", calling for ever more motorways for heavy transport of animals, mineral water, and vegetables – so that "a few tens of thousands of profiteers can make big money off this insanity. [...] But the greatest threat to our world has its headquarters on the US East Coast, with willing vassals in Western countries." And instead of combating this, the Greens and their ilk were busy making Germany a Land of Immigrants. What about the extinction of peoples?

What is less well known [...] is that every year on average three languages die out. These were certainly small peoples who thereby lost the last vestige of their ethnic identity. They were subjected to the expansionist pressure of other *Völker*, were no longer able to know their own traditions, sing their own songs, live according to their own habits and customs, save their *Heimat* for their children, prevent the immigration of foreigners into it.

But this "irreplaceable loss in the heritage of creation does not trouble these internationalist corrupters of *Völker*". Just as every animal species has a right to survival, so does every *Volk*, no matter how great or how small. Every people has the right to refuse im-

migration and to "insist on the maintenance of their ethnic identity, which is, after all, the precondition for national solidarity. [...] Support the NPD – protection of the *Heimat* is protection of the environment."²³

From grand narrative to everyday practice

These are some of the framing myths invoked by eco-nationalists; they fit well into the grand narratives described by Olsen and others. This type of political, public-sphere environmentalism presupposes a "German" sense of inhabitation. The sense of inhabitation is further anchored, however, we argue, by appealing to practices in the "private", non-commodified sphere (according to neo-Nazi ideology, the natural sphere of women). This takes right-wing ideology beyond the sidewalk activism, demonstrations, and political practices that are the focus of much neo-Nazi practice and discourse, into the practices of "caring", that is, those of family, home, health, and nutrition; to the practice of familial or feminine traditions; and, in a more ironic twist, to practices of domestic consumption. Neo-Nazi advocacy of "environmental" practices in these spheres, we argue, sets out to create emotional links between right-wing narratives and the highly valorized private sphere. Let us look at how the NPD attempts to connect its biodeterminist environmentalism with far-right celebrations of women, health, family, and tradition.

Websites provide a good deal of material, but we can also turn to material published in traditional media. There is, for instance, the environmentalist magazine *Umwelt & Aktiv*, a supposedly apolitical journal that, nonetheless, reproduces the NPD's environmentalist rhetoric (down to a word-for-word, if unattributed, reproduction of the NPD's environmentalist program). Unsurprisingly: as German journalists have pointed out, one *Umwelt & Aktiv* editor has been an NPD candidate in state parliamentary elections, while the pseudonym of another, "Laura Horn", hides the wife of an NPD functionary.²⁵ How might this publication represent the supposedly overlapping worlds of ecology and neo-Nazi ideology?

Umwelt & Aktiv offers a fine mixture of articles, ranging from cozy to combative. One issue features

three pages devoted to health food (while attacking today's fast food, stress, and "enduring anger", as well as the UN's *Codex Alimentarius*, which "threatens the food of all nations"). There is a piece on the "Portable Box of Vegetables" – one can get produce from "*heimisch* gardens", to the benefit of "our health and the health of our children". Other articles attack the imperialist ambitions of the US food concern *Monsanto*. Germans could, instead, make their own honey, as an article on renting beehives points out. The "Plea for the Good Old Compost Heap" joins the beehive promoter in decrying mass production, this time of garden soil. Soil commercialization has involved the "systematic annihilation" of "millions of microorganisms"; home composting will give these creatures back their "*Heimat und Lebensraum*". *Lebensraum* is also the concern of the author of "The Ancestral Guardian Tree: A Dying Breed?" This Germanic tradition of planting a "guardian tree" (*Schutzbaum*) should be revived, not only out of respect for tradition and nature, but to give (German) birds their *Lebensraum*. On the same note, the gardener is advised to eschew the foreign rhododendron in favor of native German flowering bushes. The former is host to only a handful of insects; the latter feed both birds and hundreds of native German insects.²⁶

This is all sandwiched between grander stories – articles attacking Christianity, Judaism, and Islam for indifference to nature, preferring a "way of thinking" rooted "in the Germanic", when land was treated as common property and when eagles, horses and deer, "old trees and flowering bushes" were loved and respected.²⁷ Articles on the bison's "return home" to Western Europe and on over-fishing are followed by that popular neo-Nazi topic, overpopulation: "Flourishing landscapes through suicide of the Volk?" To be sure, the author writes, environmental destruction is caused by overpopulation; but the Germans cannot be called on to limit births. There are too few of them already; and every *Volk* has an equal right to existence. Germans must be careful; they face the risk of "spiritual" death, the forerunner to biological death.²⁸

Or let us turn to the magazine's website. Again, political polemics are interlaced with homely articles: "Cancer-Promoting Elements in Coca-Cola?", "Asiatic Ladybugs on the March Again" (a cannibalistic sort

Is their main concern really the well-being of cows? Rather sheer propaganda?



Asian ladybugs on the rise! Screenshot of an article on the *Umwelt & Aktiv* website.

that threatens the *heimische* with extermination), an exposé of the false claims made for supermarket “bio-bags”, and, on a grander plane, a call to refuse taxes that fund nuclear power. The obligatory polemics against “gene food” are complemented by articles exalting (German) nature. An article on “Herbal Wisdom” goes through various herbs and their healing powers, as used “by our ancestors”; the call to use herbs is complemented by descriptions of how to celebrate, and brightly-illustrated advertisements for, non-Christian family and community festivals such as a pagan Candlemas or the “Germanic Yule Festival”.²⁹

Such familial exhortations appear on NPD websites, as well. So do images of children. Blonde girls are, indeed, standard illustrations for NPD pamphlets and advertisements, in particular for open-air festivals. Such children are, implicitly, purely German, to be kept safe from foreign pollution, pedophiles, and practices. It is children who are to be protected against transgenic food, who are to inherit “our beautiful German nature”; indeed, an *Umwelt & Aktiv* article decrying “Kevinismus” advocates giving children more “Germanic” names (such as “Adolf, Adolph”, translated as “noble wolf”). German children are to be protected against all foreign biomass, especially by protecting them from all foreign culture.

Such arguments allow the far right to invest familiar, domestic, everyday concerns with eco-nationalist urgency. Environmental degradation is tied to immigration and international capitalism; right-wing environmentalism spans the private, local worlds of loving usufruct. Endowing the shopping bag, insect, and vegetable with neo-Nazi meaning gives ultra-nationalism an “in” that more traditional neo-Nazi ideology and activity lack.

GENDER PLAYS A ROLE here. Much is tied to, and reinforces, the nationalist idealization and delimitation of the ideal woman.³⁰ Here, again, environmentalism and neo-Nazi ideology make a fruitful marriage. Environmentalism, when defined as a matter of food, supermarket purchasing, gardening, herbal medicines, protecting children, and celebrating the seasons, addresses itself directly to women’s domestic concerns. It also exalts them. It is women who are to take care of our return to true (pagan) traditions and festivals – as “Frauen für Deutschland”, the web portal of the *Ring nationaler Frauen* emphasizes in calling women to celebrate *Faschingszeit*, whose traditions, “much older than Christianity”, derive from a Swedish runic image and/or a rite of fertility.³¹ Women as domestic consum-



Samples of *Umwelt & Aktiv*.

ers are similarly addressed. Unsurprisingly, far-right websites also feature online shopping. The NPD’s website advertises and will ship flags, T-shirts, stickers and badges, displaying, say, the Iron Cross, the German Eagle, or “the stolen *Heimat*”.³² There are other websites, however, which seem directed towards women. In 2011, the *Umwelt & Aktiv* website advertised small wooden figures (ravens, Viking ships) and a new-age cookbook, *Kettle Hearth Fire*, with “recipes to celebrate the festivals of seasonal changes”. This shop has now, it seems, been out-sourced to the website *Kind und Natur* (run by Bente Strauch, a former *Umwelt & Aktiv* collaborator and a leading member of the now banned *Heimatreue Deutsche Jugend* – here, again, German journalists have done the detective work). There, interested shoppers can still buy “pretty and useful” things such as window stickers of Viking ships, windmills, dwarves, and ducks; wholesome cookbooks (and books warning against the “lies and deception” of the food industry), the *Encyclopedia of Edible Wild Plants*, “advice to parents” concerning the dangers of vaccination, and the like. These are female-directed things that can, as *Umwelt & Aktiv* articles show, be both linked to ecology and framed as a specifically far-right concern. Ecology helps the far right penetrate the world of familial practice.

It does so on one more plane. Tying neo-Nazi ecological practices to the woman’s sphere furthers the reification of the woman and the home. The female domestic sphere is, arguably, key to what neo-Nazis claim to be protecting: the unspoiled, unalienated heart, the essence of the *Heimat*. Gisela Ecker discusses the concept of the *Heimat*, which, she finds, is weighted with emotionally charged images of joyous childhood. Male activists protecting the environment, and thus the *Heimat*, are protecting the eternally sacred, sunny and joyous world of childhood, presided over by the German maiden and mother.³³

UNDISTURBED GERMAN nature, that of childhood, is thus equated with the harmony of childhood. Nostalgia for a natural past that never was, complete with the invention of a history of environmentally sound practices, is projected both onto one’s own person and onto family, and thence onto the people as a whole. Or is it? Toraulf Straud argues that “eco-Nazis”



“Hands off our children”: Images of culturally threatened girls are standard in NPD Facebook page.

do not see nature as “soft, harmonious and idyllic, but as brutal and merciless”. They anthropomorphize nature – or,

rather, project “masculine traits” onto it.³⁴ This would, of course, provide a basis for activism; eco-soldiers must fight against the “bad” nature that comes from abroad (in the form of immigrants, and ladybugs). But it seems that this “bad” (and implicitly male) nature has its “good” (female) counterpart: that produced through the lens of environmentalist *Heimat* nostalgia. This allows an alternative, softening, caring, emotional nature – the love and joy of the small-scale, pastoral existence, which Raymond Williams describes as the modern West’s nostalgia for an imaginary, unalienated childhood.³⁵ This long-ago childhood is projected onto the *Volk* as a whole. Pagan ancestors (whose festivals we strive to recreate, whose children’s names we should respect, whose dishes we would like to cook) had a noble and loving relationship to nature. Our past determines our future, as embodied by our blonde girl-children, whose smiling faces compel us to strive to re-create this relationship. The entire neo-Nazi argument, in fact, solves the environmentalist challenge of engaging people in place through an invented history of communal usufruct, anchored with positive emotions in nature-friendly, everyday, use-value production – both of which attribute intrinsic value to nature. The problem is, of course, that the environmentalism produced is inhuman. ❌

Note: All essays are scholarly articles and have been peer-reviewed by specialists under the supervision of Baltic Worlds’ editorial advisory board.

references

- 1 We would like to thank the Baltic Sea Foundation for the grant that made research on this topic possible. The ecocritical literature is vast. For key concepts see e.g. A. Naess, “The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary”, *Inquiry* 16 (1973); Daniel Deudney, “Ground Identity: Nature, Place and Space in Nationalism”, *The Return of Culture and Identity to International Relations Theory*, Y. Lapid & F. Kratochwil (eds.), New York 1995; U. K. Heise, “Local Rock and Global Plastic: World Ecology and the Experience of Place”, *Comparative Literature Studies* 41, no. 1 (2004); J. Jacobs, “Earth Honoring: Western Desires and Indigenous Knowledge”, A. Bluten and G. Rose (eds.) *Writing Women and Space: Colonial and postcolonial Geographies*,



te (and sometimes propaganda (NPD



Herbal mixtures versus pharmaceutical madness. Screenshot of the NPD women's organization's website.



Banner of the *Umwelt & Aktiv* webshop.

- New York and London 1994; R. Marzec, "Speaking Before the Environment: Modern Fiction and the Ecological", *Modern Fiction Studies* 55, no. 3 (2009). The overlap between bioregionalism and right-wing environmentalism is explored in J. Olsen, "The Perils of Rootedness: On Bioregionalism and Right Wing Ecology in Germany", *Landscape Journal* 19, no. 1 (2000); for a defense of deep ecology against such critics, D. Orton, "Ecofascism: What is It? A Left Biocentric Analysis", *Green Web Bulletin* 68.
- 2 See e.g. M. Brandstetter, *Die "neue" NPD: Zwischen Systemfeindschaft und bürgerlicher Fassade; Parteienmonitor Aktuell der Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung*, Bonn 2012, pp. 13, 27ff, retrieved 2013-06-02, http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_30034-544-1-30.pdf?120213132509; J. Bars, H. Buchstein et al, *Die NPD im Kommunalwahlkampf 2009 in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*, Greifswald 2010, p. 122.
 - 3 Literally: "everyman's right", often translated as "the freedom to roam". This refers to the public right to be on public and even private land for certain purposes, such as recreation and exercise.
 - 4 The webpages (all retrieved 2013-05-02) are, in order of citation: "Sverigedemokraterna och omsorgen om djur och natur", <https://sverigedemokraterna.se/vara-asikter/vara-viktigaste-fragor/energi/> and <https://sverigedemokraterna.se/vara-asikter/principprogram/omsorg-om-djur-och-natur/>; "Miljø og klima" in *Forslag til partiprogram for perioden 2013–2017*, <http://www.frp.no/nor/siste-nytt/Landsmoetet-2013/Forslag-til-partiprogram-for-perioden-2013-2017>; "Ligne politique du Bloc Identitaire", <http://www.bloc-identitaire.com/bloc-identitaire/ligne-politique>; "Mouvement national républicain: Programme", <http://www.m-n-r.fr/programme2partiech9.php>; see also "Environnement, Mesures 87–132", <http://www.m-n-r.fr/aaz60.htm>; "Environment" <http://www.bnp.org.uk/policies/environment> and <http://www.bnp.org.uk/news/biggest-threat-environment-third-world-overpopulation>; "Environnement et écologie", <http://www.dnat.be/index.php/nos-idees/le-programme/environnement-et-ecologie?showall=1&limitstart>.
 - 5 J. Olsen, *Nature and Nationalism: Right-Wing Ecology and the Politics of Identity in Contemporary Germany*, London, 1990; M. Sharma, *Green and Saffron: Hindu Nationalism and Indian Environmental Politics*, Ranikhet Cantt, India, 2012. For scholarship on Germany, K. Ditt, "The Idea of German Cultural Regions in the Third Reich: The Work of Franz Petri", *Journal of Historical Geography* vol. 27, no. 2, 2001; R. Dominick, *The Environmental Movement in Germany: Prophets and Pioneers, 1871–1971*, Bloomington 1992; H. Jost, *Grüne Utopien in Deutschland: Zur Geschichte des ökologischen Bewusstseins*, Frankfurt 1991; W. T. Markham, *Environmental Organizations in Modern Germany: Hardy Survivors in the Twentieth Century and Beyond*, New York 2008.
 - 6 A. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Minneapolis 1996; C. Taylor, *Modern Imaginaries*, 2004.
 - 7 Heise, p. 130; see also R. Marzec.
 - 8 A. Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, Palo Alto 1991, p. 21.
 - 9 For explorations of "place" as key to human identity, see e.g. Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values*, Englewood Cliffs 1994.
 - 10 Deudney, p. 304.
 - 11 See Per Albin Hansson's famous 1928 parliamentary speech on "The People's Home".
 - 12 D. B. Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*, Minneapolis 2004: University of Minnesota Press.
 - 13 Sharma, pp. 130–148.
 - 14 Olsen, p. 5.
 - 15 Olsen, p. 6; see also his discussion of W. G. Haverbeck, "Ökologie und Nation: Die Grundlegungen des ökologischen Bewusstseins in Deutschland", *Handbuch zur Deutschen Nation*, B. Willms (ed.), Tübingen 1987, p. 415.
 - 16 *Nomadentum*: nomadic peoples; nomadism. The suffix "tum" implies essentialist qualities. Quoted in: "Theoriepapier Freie Gladbecker Nationalisten", retrieved 2013-10-01, www.wordpress.com/2008/10/08/unser-beitrag-zur-kampagne-volksgemeinschaft.
 - 17 See "Redebeitrag von Karl Richter auf dem Pressefest der Deutschen Stimme", July 1/2, 2011, quoted in *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2011*, Vorabfassung, p. 74; H. Buchstein, *Die Kandidaten der NPD für die Landtagswahl 2006 in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*, August 2006, retrieved 2013-07-01, http://www.hubertus-buchstein.de/Kandidaten_der_NPD_im_MV_2006.pdf; M. Brandstetter, *Die "neue" NPD: Zwischen Systemfeindschaft und bürgerlicher Fassade; Parteienmonitor Aktuell der Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung*, Bonn 2012, pp. 13, 27ff, retrieved 2013-06-02, http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_30034-544-1-30.pdf?120213132509; J. Bars, H. Buchstein et al. *Die NPD im Kommunalwahlkampf 2009 in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*, Greifswald 2010, p. 122; Sächsischer Verfassungsschutzbericht 2009, retrieved 2010-11-01, http://www.verfassungsschutz.sachsen.de/download/NPD_2009.pdf.
 - 18 Party program, retrieved 2012-11-01, <http://www.umweltundaktiv.de/heimatschutz/heimatschutz-was-ist-das>.
 - 19 "Heimat", articles dated from 2010-08-09 to 2011-10-19, retrieved 2011-11-20: <http://www.npd-bayern.de/index.php/menue/24/thema/1390/akat/6/Heimat.html>; echoed in U. Dittmann, "Tierrechte", *Umwelt & Aktiv*, January 2011, p. 27f. For the picture, see <http://www.npd-bayern.de/index.php/menue/56/thema/399/PDF-Archiv.html#20> "Genhofer – der Wendehals der 'Bayernseppel'", retrieved 2012-08-20, <http://www.npd-bayern.de/index.php/menue/24/thema/1388/akat/8/Umwelt.html>.
 - 21 "Nein zu Genmais!" in *ibid*.
 - 22 "Werden Sie Völkerschützer", retrieved 2012-08-20, http://www.npd-bayern.de/index.php/menue/24/thema/1388/id/1795/akat/8/infotext/Werden_Sie_Voelkerschuetzer/Umwelt.html.
 - 23 *Ibid*.
 - 24 "NPD Facebook", retrieved January 2013, www.facebook.com/npd.de. For similar rhetoric, see M. Faust's Landtag campaign speech, retrieved July 2012 (subsequently removed), <http://matthiasfaust.com/?p=29>; the YouTube film clip of Matthias Faust repeating the rhetoric has also been removed.
 - 25 See e.g. interview with editor Laura Horn in the NPD newspaper *Deutsche Stimme*, 2009-01-25, <http://www.deutsche-stimme.de/ds/?p=625>; "Tarnname 'Laura Horn'", *Blick nach Rechts*, 2011-03-30.
 - 26 H. Zech, "Nahrungsergänzungen: Modeerscheinung oder wirklich notwendig?", *Umwelt & Aktiv* 2009, no. 2; B. Rauch, "De rollende Gemüsebox", *Umwelt & Aktiv* 2009, no. 2; BAH., "Plädoyer für den guten alten Komposthaufen", *Umwelt & Aktiv* 2009, no. 2.
 - 27 K. Sojka, "Tierschutz und Kirchen: Theologen und Tierbehandlungen", *Umwelt und Aktiv* 2009, no. 2.
 - 28 R. Blum, "Deutschland stirbt – biologisch und geistig", in: *Umwelt & Aktiv* 2011, no. 3.
 - 29 "Asiatischer Marienkafer weiter auf dem Vormarsch", "Bio-Bags", "Kräuterkunde", retrieved 2012-07-23, <http://www.umweltundaktiv.de/umweltschutz>; B. Rauch, "Weihnachten damals, heute und morgen", *Umwelt & Aktiv* 2010, no. 4.
 - 30 For the importance that those environmentalists who support the NPD attach to separatist gender roles, see the furious attacks on "Gendermainstreaming" in "MenschInnen – das neue Geschlecht", *Umwelt & Aktiv* 2010, no. 3, and "Die Massenmedien und deren Verantwortung", *Umwelt & Aktiv* 2011, no. 4.
 - 31 "Brauchtum zur Faschingszeit", retrieved 2013-01-18, <http://www.ring-nationaler-frauen-deutschland.de>; Sachsen's *Ring nationaler Frauen* advocates the use of healing herbs and the celebration of Yule: "Kräuterallerlei gegen Pharmawahn", retrieved 2012-08-04, <http://www.rnf-sachsen.de>.
 - 32 Goods for sale, retrieved 2011-07-14, <http://www.umweltundaktiv-versand.de/pd1232560317.htm?categoryId=2>. (To be sure, the NPD periodical *Deutsche Stimme*'s website offers "children's", "domestic" and "garden, hiking, leisure" goods, but these are limited to two children's books and a dartboard, a bust of Frederick the Great and a German Eagle wall candleabrum.)
 - 33 G. Ecker, *Kein Land in Sicht: Heimat – Weiblich?*, Berlin 2002; Fink; for the pioneering study, C. Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics*, London 1988.
 - 34 T. Staud, "Rechte Grüne: Wie Rechte in der Ökoszene mitmischen", Heinrich Böll Stiftung (ed.), *Braune Ökologen, Hintergründe und Strukturen am Beispiel Mecklenburg-Vorpommerns*, Rostock 2012, p. 30; esp. quotations of the co-founder of the far-right Young Republicans, Marcus Bauer, endorsing the "manly aspects of a nature-intensive life".
 - 35 Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City*, New York 2011 and 1973.