

‘We are nothing without nature’ - The emotional resonance of far-right
ecologist online content in public Telegram channels



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23.08.2021

A Thesis submitted to
the Board of Examiners
in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of
Master of Arts in Conflict Studies & Human Rights

Name of Supervisor: Dr. Mario Fumerton
Date of Submission: 23.08.2021
Programme Trajectory: Internship and Thesis Writing (30 ECTS)
Word Count: 14.947

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Abstract

Recently, ecofascism, a radical environmentalist ideology often associated with (Neo-)Nazis, has regained popular interest following several right-wing extremist terrorist attacks (Christchurch (2019) and El Paso (2019)) after which the attackers cited the ideology as a motivation. In both cases, online platforms played a role as sources of radical ideas, and in general, there is an established link between extremist online forums and offline violence. Given the renewed relevance of ecofascism as a motivator for violence, this thesis aims to understand how ecofascist groups of the far-right achieve emotional resonance with their audience by using a centuries-old ideology. The aim is to contribute towards an understanding of the underlying mechanisms of ecofascist thought that explain its appeal and ability to motivate violence.

To address this question, this thesis will conduct a qualitative case study analysis on far-right environmentalist Telegram channels using a snowballing sampling method. In order to identify relevant content, this thesis will operationalize the far-right ecologism (FRE) framework. The FRE framework will also be used to code the sample according to an interpretative theme. Additionally, frame analysis, and the sensitizing concepts of emotional resonance and contextual shifts are used to address how an interplay of framings, appeals to emotions, and a global context characterized by environmental crises may contribute towards the resonance of ecofascist content.

The thesis concludes that an important component of the emotional resonance of far-right ecologist content is the way posts not only associate nature with white supremacist ideology, but also how they connect these themes to a global, changing context characterized by environmental crises. This interplay of ideas aims to create a larger, emotional impact on their audience. The relevance of this insight is that the strategic use of themes of environmental crises by the far-right might serve as a new entry point to extremist ideologies and aid the recruitment of new members, especially those already concerned over environmental degradation.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my fiancé Mark Bruno. You have proven to me manifoldly that you will stay with me in sickness and in health. And if double-checking over 200 citations isn't love, then I don't know what is.

Let's remember together that "if you can't find the makings of a story inside yourself, you won't find them anywhere" (Walter Moers).

Ich möchte meinem Vater Edgar Papp und meiner Stiefmutter Ingrid Papp dafür danken, dass ihr meine Arbeiten immer mit Interesse gelesen habt und mir als gute Gesprächspartner immer zur Seite standet, auch wenn wir ein Jahr lang getrennt leben mussten. Danke, dass ihr stolz auf mich seid und mich in allerlei Hinsicht unterstützt habt. Die lieben Nachrichten haben geholfen. Ich hoffe, euch bald wiederzusehen.

Ich möchte mich bei meiner Mutter, Karin Heinrich, bedanken, ohne deren Unterstützung und Aufmerksamkeit ich dieses Unterfangen nicht hätte bewältigen könnte. Ich hoffe, dass wir nun zu unseren normalen Besuchsplänen zurückkehren können, auch wenn wir jetzt leider ohne Pablo, Meye, und Edis auskommen müssen.

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Introduction

As the prominence of climate change increases, it is not surprising that environmentalist ideologies experience a revival. Environmentalist ideas have also gained more prominence among white supremacists, a group usually not associated with environmental concerns.¹ Nonetheless, the far-right has a long standing tradition of environmental protection dating back to the Romanticists of the 19th century and the Green Wing of Hitler's party NSDAP.² This ideological current has often been referred to as 'ecofascism', and while a clear definition of this term is lacking, it refers to the intersection between extreme right ideology and environmentalism. Ecofascist ideas often centre around the protection of the local countryside based on beliefs in the unity between 'race' and nature. As such, environmentalism forms a long-standing and integral part of the extreme right.³

While right-wing environmentalism has never truly disappeared from the imagination of the far-right, it has gained notoriety in recent years due to several terrorist attacks in which the attackers claimed to have been influenced by ecofascist ideology.⁴ Examples of this include the Christchurch and El Paso shootings of 2019.⁵ Both attackers published manifestos in which they made specific mentions of environmental degradation as reasons for carrying out an attack.⁶ Such environmental effects were brought in relation with globalisation which they believed to be the driving force of natural destruction.⁷ Furthermore, the texts contained green nationalist themes, a form of nationalism that focuses on the relationship between

¹ For a precise definition of definitions of far-right, radical right, etc., please see the glossary in Appendix A.

² Peter Staudenmaier, "Fascist Ecology: The 'Green Wing' of the Nazi Party and its Historical Antecedents," *Pomegranate: The International Journal of Pagan Studies* 13, (2011): 4-21.

³ The 'West' is understood to comprise Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the US.

⁴ Jacob Davey, and Julia Ebner, "The Great Replacement': The Violent Consequences of Mainstreamed Extremism," *Institute for Strategic Dialogue* 7, (2019).

Also, on the intensified interest in ecofascism on the far-right:

Jacob K. Smith, "The (Re)Emergence of Eco-Fascism: White-Nationalism, Sacrifice, and Proto-Fascism in the Circulation of Digital Rhetoric in the Ecological Far-Right," Edited by Leslie A Hahner. Thesis, Department of Communication, 2021.;

Daniel Rueda, "Neoecofascism: The Example of the United States," *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 14, no. 2 (2020): 95-126.;

Blair Taylor, "Alt-Right Ecology - Eco-fascism and far-right environmentalism in the United States," In *The Far Right and the Environment: Politics, Discourse and Communication*, 221-233. New York: Routledge (2019).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Jacob Ware, "Testament to Murder the Violent Far-Right's Increasing use of Terrorist Manifestos," Policy Brief, International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, 2020.

⁷ Davey, Ebner, "Violent Consequences."

people and their land.⁸ Additionally, both shooters also discussed having obtained their ideas through online forums.⁹ In general, online forums have gained importance for the extreme right as a tool of recruitment and organization.¹⁰ This relationship between on- and offline worlds is therefore an important consideration in the reproduction of violence.

These circumstances raise a set of questions about why the interest of far-right extremists in environmentalism intensified recently, and what role internet communities play in this process. Additionally, the role of radical environmentalism as a motivator for far-right extremist violence remains under-explored. Finally, the question of motivation also leads to the consideration of how such online content manages to convince and persuade people, or, in other words, how content *resonates* with an audience. Of particular interest here is the role of emotions as a mechanism to appeal to an audience.

Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to illuminate these overarching areas of inquiry by focusing on ecofascist posts in far-right online groups. Specifically, far-right Telegram channels will serve as a case study, a platform that has been linked to the extreme right.¹¹ Furthermore, the far-right ecologism framework (FRE) by Balsa Lubarda, a specific, heuristical conceptualization of ecofascism, will aid the identification of relevant cases of ecofascism on Telegram.¹² Furthermore, to address issues of resonance, this thesis will utilize frame analysis to make sense of the appeal of ecofascism. Frame analysis is especially useful to understand how groups engage in meaning-making processes with the aim of appealing to an audience.

These considerations lead to following research puzzle:

⁸ Balsa Lubarda, "Polluting Outsiders: Green Nationalism as a Concept-Case Study: Latvia," in *Current Debates in Public Finance, Public Administration and Environmental Studies*; Aydın, M., Pınarcıoğlu, NS, Ugurlu, Ö., Eds (2017).

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Walther, Samantha, and Andrew McCoy, "US Extremism on Telegram," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 15, no. 2 (2021): 100-124.

¹¹ Ibid.;

Aleksandra Urman and Stefan Katz, "What they do in the Shadows: Examining the Far-Right Networks on Telegram." *Information, Communication & Society* (2020): 1-20.

¹² Balsa Lubarda, "Beyond Ecofascism? Far-Right Ecologism (Fre) as a Framework for Future Inquiries," *Environmental Values* 29, no. 6 (2020): 713-732.;

Far-right ecologism (FRE) is not the same as ecofascism. FRE is a specific understanding of environmentalism on the far-right political spectrum. Ecofascism, on the other hand, lacks a precise definition and can also apply to political currents other than the far-right. This thesis uses ecofascism as an umbrella term while FRE refers to the precise framework as specified by Lubarda.

How does emotional resonance emerge within far-right ecologist online content that aims to incite violence in the case of posts of far-right ecologist Telegram channels collected between May and July 2021?

This research question gives rise to a number of sub-questions:

1. Which far-right ecologist (FRE) values are contained within relevant sections of the case studies?
2. How do these values correspond to diagnostic and prognostic frames of frame analysis?
3. Which emotions are appealed to?
4. In which ways do these emotions aim to respond to the emotional lives of their audience and thus generate emotional resonance?
5. How does emotional resonance contribute towards the goal of inciting violence?

At the most basic ontological level, the puzzle is about meanings and symbols. This means that the social world is understood to consist of meanings that people create and negotiate with each other. The puzzle thus aims to *understand* the world rather than *explain* it. Epistemologically, the interpretivist approach is most relevant since the puzzle concerns how people make sense of their world. It emphasizes the meanings people use to interpret their world rather than seeking out an objective truth.¹³ This approach also works well with the ontological nature of the puzzle.¹⁴ The ontological and epistemological dimensions of the puzzle are consistent with a qualitative methodological approach.

This thesis will tackle the research question in four chapters. The first chapter will engage with the relevant academic literature and formulate an analytical frame. Specifically, I am using *frame analysis* with a focus on *emotions* as a mechanism of *frame resonance*, which addresses how movements make sense of the social world, so-called framings, and attempt to recruit new members. *Frame resonance* hereby refers to a fit between framing and daily lives.¹⁵ An important mechanism of frame resonance are emotions, conceptualized as *emotional resonance*.¹⁶ In the past, several scholars have criticized that the concept of resonance is too ‘static’, rather than also accounting for the importance of a changing social

¹³ Jennifer Mason, *Qualitative Researching*, Third edition. ed. London: SAGE, 2018: 8.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 4-6.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Douglas Schrock, Daphne Holden, and Lori Reid, “Creating Emotional Resonance: Interpersonal Emotion Work and Motivational Framing in a Transgender Community,” *Social Problems* 51, no. 1 (2004): 61-81.

context.¹⁷ This gap has been covered by the concept of *contextual shifts* which may contribute towards frame resonance.¹⁸

Chapter 2 outlines the methodology of the research. It describes the sampling method, the data collection method, and the stages of analysis. Posts from public Telegram channels hereby serve as illustrative examples of the phenomenon of far-right ecologism. These posts will serve as the basis for an analysis of emotional appeal in relation to contextual effects.

In Chapter 3, the relevant empirical context is discussed. This includes the influence of far-right online forums on real-life violence while also establishing a link back to the theoretical literature by discussing framings of the environment by the far-right.

In Chapter 4, the sample set will be analysed in different stages of analysis in accordance with each relevant theoretical concept outlined in the analytical framework. The first section identifies how problems and solutions are identified within the sample, the so-called diagnostic, and prognostic frames of frame analysis. The FRE framework hereby serves as an aid to identify framings. Secondly, emotions are identified in the sample to approach how posts appeal to the emotions of their audience. The third section examines if posts make references to a global context to further increase the appeal of messages. The last section aims to answer how the combination of these factors contributes towards the goal of inciting violence.

Overall, this research aims to demonstrate how ecofascist online groups are able to utilize a shifting global context characterized by environmental crises and uncertainty to their advantage. By interrelating white supremacist ideology with symbols of nature and threats of environmental crisis, content creators establish direct relevance to the daily lives of their audience. Additionally, posts appeal to specific emotions that may arise from such a shifting context. Overall, this interplay increases the emotional resonance of their ideas. These posts are often paired with calls for violence and attempts to increase the resonance of postings should also be understood as ways to motivate more people to act on such calls. As such, the relevance of this research is in demonstrating how radical environmentalist online content is able to make use of real crises in order to recruit new members and promote violence.

¹⁷ McDonnell, Terence E., Christopher A. Bail, and Iddo Tavory. "A Theory of Resonance," *Sociological Theory* 35, no. 1 (2017): 1-14.

¹⁸ Bart Bonikowski, "Ethno-nationalist Populism and the Mobilization of Collective Resentment," *The British Journal of Sociology* 68, (2017): S181-S213.

Chapter 1 - Theoretical literature and analytical frame

This chapter will introduce the analytical frame of this thesis and review the relevant academic literature. The research puzzle is focused on the emergence of emotional resonance in far-right ecologist content which can be broken down into three main areas of relevant academic literature, covering (i) frame resonance, (ii) emotions, and (iii) far-right ecologism. In other words, the research puzzle is situated between these areas of academic debate, and this chapter aims to show how these different ideas contribute towards answering the research question. Topic (i) frame resonance is derived from frame analysis, forming the overarching theory of the research puzzle. Topic (ii) emotions aims to connect framings with the role of emotions. Bringing these two topics together allows for the introduction of the sensitizing concept of emotional resonance. Lastly, topic (iii) far-right ecologism explores the relevant academic literature that illustrate the ideological construction of forms of far-right environmental radicalism.

This literature review introduces relevant academic debates and aims to show how the concepts that emerge from these debates are relevant to the research puzzle. In doing so, it aims to show how the research puzzle contributes to an academic discussion. Lastly, the illustration of the academic debate serves to generate a set of sensitizing concepts that help answer the research question. These will be summarized in a final section which introduces the analytical frame which is formed from the relevant academic concepts.

1.1 Frame analysis and its relevance to the research puzzle

The far-right has long been known to engage in elaborate forms of storytelling.¹⁹ An exploration of how the far-right utilizes narratives about the environment, needs to pay attention to *how* things are expressed and to which ends, rather than checking for their factual validity. The underlying idea is that narratives about the world sometimes resonate more with people than dry facts. As such, the research puzzle grounds itself most fundamentally in the realm of symbols and meanings, and, thus, requires a theoretical lens in line with this ontological dimension.

¹⁹ Maik Fielitz and Holger Marcks, "Digital Fascism: Challenges for the Open Society in Times of Social Media," CRWS Working Paper Pandora Project, UC Berkeley, 2019.

One suitable lens is frame analysis, a theory first developed by Goffman in 1974 that examines the process of meaning making that social actors, specifically those who are part of a social movement, engage in.²⁰ The theory enables the exploration of both the process of *framing* (verb) as well as the finished product of meaning-making, the *frame* (noun).²¹ This allows researchers to analyse the act of creating meaning as well as the finished product of meaning-making.²² Drawing from the constructionist approach, frame theory is thus concerned with the discursive realm. Additionally, the theory aims to capture how rhetoric motivates action, as in how specific frames can encourage an audience to mobilize for a cause. As such, frame theory provides a suitable theoretical lens to explore how the far-right utilizes environmental rhetoric by focusing on *framings* of the environment and how these may appeal to an audience.

Furthermore, frame theory is aimed at the study of social movements. The far-right in itself can be understood as a type of social movement which often pursues the goal of inciting violence. This may not be immediately apparent since there is a tendency to attribute far-right violence to lone actor terrorists.²³ This assumption is a misinterpretation of the oftentimes obscure, anonymous, and horizontal organizational style of far-right groups that primarily takes place online and differs from the clear hierarchies of ‘traditional’ movements. Thus, far-right violence is often not planned by a central authority, rather, far-right terrorists often spent much time on far-right forums that provided motivations for attacks. By conceptualizing the far-right as a loosely organized social movement, the fallacy of assuming that far-right violence is the result of an isolated and purely individual radicalization process can be avoided.

1.1.1 The basics of frame analysis

Drawing on the later work of Benford and Snow, frame theory is especially concerned with how social movements identify problems and solutions via ‘frames’ to recruit new members to their cause.²⁴ Frames consist of three ‘core framing tasks’, the diagnostic,

²⁰ Benford and Snow, “SOCIAL PROCESSES,” 611.

²¹ David Snow, Robert Benford, Holly McCammon, Lyndi Hewitt, and Scott Fitzgerald, “The Emergence, Development, and Future of the Framing Perspective: 25 Years since “Frame Alignment”,” *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 19, no. 1 (2014): 30.

²² Ibid.

²³ Paul Joosse, “Leaderless Resistance and the Loneliness of Lone Wolves: Exploring the Rhetorical Dynamics of Lone Actor Violence,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 29, no. 1 (2017): 52-78.

²⁴ Benford and Snow, “SOCIAL PROCESSES,” 613.

prognostic and motivational frames. Movements first need to define the problem around which to mobilize, the so-called *diagnostic frame*.²⁵ A diagnostic frame enables movements to express why something is an issue and who is responsible for the problem, i.e. the movement antagonist.²⁶ Secondly, movements propose desired solutions, i.e. what should be done about the problem, with a so-called *prognostic frame*.²⁷ This frame also includes potential strategies and actions to be taken.²⁸ Lastly, movements want to recruit new members to their cause and motivate new and existing members to act. This is referred to as the *motivational frame* and represents a “call to arms”.²⁹ In order for these frames to be effective, they need to resonate with their audience.³⁰ This is referred to as *frame resonance* which is defined as the degree to which specific frames resonate with an audience and, thus, is a vital element of a frame’s ability to recruit new members.³¹

While frame analysis is a useful analytical tool, several points of critique have been voiced over the years concerning how the theory conceptualizes the process of resonance.³² Specifically, the role of emotions has been relatively absent from the framework, yet their role seems important for consideration since emotional appeal, rather than factual information, is often what motivates people to join a cause and engage in protest.³³ Secondly, the framing literature has a tendency to imagine frame resonance as ‘static’, that is, a frame is either resonant or not. Resonance is thus entirely dependent on the strategic alterations a movement makes to their framings. This conceptualization has been criticized for being too simple and unrealistic.³⁴ The concepts of *emotional resonance* and the influence of *contextual shifts* aim to fill this gap and conceptualize resonance in more realistic ways.

²⁵ Benford and Snow, “SOCIAL PROCESSES,” 615.

²⁶ Ibid., 615-6.

²⁷ Ibid., 616-7.

²⁸ Ibid., 616.

²⁹ Ibid., 617-8.

³⁰ Ibid., 619.

³¹ Ibid., 619.

³² J. Goodwin, James Jasper, and Francesca Polletta, “The Return of the Repressed: The Fall and Rise of Emotions in Social Movement Theory,” *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 5, no. 1 (2000): 65-83.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Goodwin et.al., “Rise of Emotions.”

1.2 Emotional Resonance

The study of emotions in social movement theories has long been seen as controversial.³⁵ Emotions were initially understood as a sign of the irrationality of protest movements, and were later dropped completely from theoretical models in favour of a rational actor model.³⁶ However, in the 1980s during the cultural turn of social movement studies, interest in emotions was renewed.³⁷ Framing theory, a product of this turn, is attuned to the importance of cultural codes and narrations, nonetheless, the early versions of the theory by Benford and Snow were rather concerned with the cognitive aspects of recruitment.³⁸ Yet the concept of ‘motivational framing’ or the frames that lead members to engage in action, implied the existence of a mechanism that converts a rhetorical frame into action.³⁹ This weakness has been acknowledged by Benford as well, noting how the topic of emotions has been understudied despite its potential.⁴⁰ Specifically, Benford describes that frame theory continues to understand movement actors as “Spock-like beings, devoid of passion and other human emotions”.⁴¹

One of the first to approach this issue was Mitch Berbrier in an analysis of white separatist rhetoric.⁴² He described how white separatists engage in the transformation of frames to make ‘white’ people appear like an ethnic minority among immigrants. For this, the movements changed or ‘aligned’ their frames to achieve resonance with an audience.⁴³ White separatist groups made use of “ideas about ‘love’, ‘pride’, and ‘heritage preservation’” to emotionally appeal to a mainstream, Caucasian audience.⁴⁴ He synthesized from this the concept of *cultural affectations* and *ethnic affectations* through which rhetoric can appeal to peoples’ “fundamental sentiments”.⁴⁵ Cultural affectation represents a social mechanism that

³⁵ Goodwin et.al., “Rise of Emotions.”; Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*, Peregrine Books. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975.

³⁶ Ibid.

The rational actor model assumes that social actors respond rationally to opportunities and risk rather than being influenced by irrational impulses such as emotions.

³⁷ Goffman, “Frame Analysis,” 616.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 617.

⁴⁰ Robert D. Benford, “An Insider’s Critique of the Social Movement Framing Perspective,” *Sociological Inquiry* 67, no. 4 (1997): 409-430.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Mitch Berbrier, ““Half the Battle”: Cultural Resonance, Framing Processes, and Ethnic Affectations in Contemporary White Separatist Rhetoric,” *Social Problems* 45, no. 4 (1998): 431-450.

⁴³ Ibid.,

⁴⁴ Ibid., 431.

⁴⁵ Berbrier, ““Half the Battle”,” 440.

is able to access or make use of larger cultural sentiments.⁴⁶ Berbrier's concept advances towards the inclusion of emotions in frame analysis, however, it continues to overemphasize cognitive aspects of resonance.⁴⁷ Cultural affectations are more about an apparent fit between narrations and frames instead of focusing on how such narrations make people *feel*.⁴⁸

Schrock et.al. criticize Berbrier for treating these 'fundamental sentiments' as cognitive and static.⁴⁹ Instead, emotions should be seen as changeable and responding to variable everyday life situations.⁵⁰ Schrock et.al. note that previously, frame theory understood frame resonance as a "cognitive congruity between frames and personal beliefs, between frames and cultural narratives or knowledge of events", however, they add that such cognitive alignment cannot account for how frames actually move people.⁵¹ An intellectual understanding of a given situation does not mean that a frame also resonates emotionally. B. Robnett illustrates this difference with the example of a black power frame in a student committee: While 'white' committee members were able to intellectually understand the importance of black rights, this framing failed to resonate emotionally with them as it did not relate closely enough to their lived experience.⁵² As such, appealing to an audience's emotions, rather than purely to their intellect, forms an important determinant of the resonance of any given frame.⁵³

Schrock et.al. developed the concept of *emotional resonance* to close this gap which they define as "the emotional harmony and/or disjuncture between collective action frames and the emotional lives of potential recruits".⁵⁴ Emotions are to be distinguished from cultural narrations. Alignment between a frame and a dominant cultural narrative certainly can give rise to frame resonance, however, it is also possible that a frame resonates *emotionally* precisely because it is at odds with cultural narrations and thus acts as liberating.⁵⁵ For example, a person might find emotional appeal in a frame that suggests the opposite of the cultural narrations in their environment if the person feels oppressed by these cultural ideals.

⁴⁶ Berbrier, "'Half the Battle'," 440.

⁴⁷ Schrock et.al., "Creating Emotional Resonance.", 76.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 76-7.

⁵² Belinda Robnett, "Emotional Resonance, Social Location, and Strategic Framing," *Sociological Focus* 37, no. 3 (2004): 209.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Schrock et.al., "Creating Emotional Resonance," 61.

⁵⁵ Robnett, "Social Location," 197.

Therefore, emotional resonance is not the same as a congruence with cultural narratives as it was previously hypothesized by Brebrier. Emotions are hereby conceptualized as a separate mechanism that may arise as a consequence of congruence as well as incongruence with cultural narrations.

Schrock et.al. also note that emotions are not just limited to resonance but form an important mechanism of motivational frames. One of the weaknesses of frame analysis has been explaining how frames motivate people to engage in action.⁵⁶ The original concept of motivational framing did not specify a concrete mechanism that would motivate people to respond to a ‘call to action’.⁵⁷ For instance, it is not clear how a purely cognitive understanding of a situation would motivate someone to engage in social movement action. After all, everyone is surrounded by messages about social issues which might all be considered important. Necessarily, there needs to be an explanatory mechanism in between a frame’s ‘call to action’ and movement members engaging in action. Emotions can be understood as a motivating mechanism in themselves that provides members with the impetus to engage in action.⁵⁸ They are thus a key mechanism of motivational framing.

It is also worthwhile noting that emotions are not limited to the influence of rhetoric and context but can be invoked by symbols. For instance, Samuel Mateus refers to ‘affective rhetoric’⁵⁹ which he defines as “the use of affective means of persuasion to induce cooperation in beings that, by nature, respond not just to symbols but to the emotions they trigger”.⁶⁰ Not just language, but also symbols can communicate narratives, and appeal to the emotions of an audience. Similar to Schrock et.al. and Robnett’s critique of the overemphasis of cognitive processes in frame analysis, Mateus emphasizes that symbols are another way to appeal to the emotional lives of an audience.⁶¹ He provides the example of a watch advertisement that shows images of racers.⁶² Without using many words, this ad symbolically links the qualities of a race winner with the purchase of the watch without referencing any of its material qualities.⁶³ Instead, items sell an emotional experience by attempting to make the

⁵⁶ Schrock et.al., “Creating Emotional Resonance.”, 73.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 72.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Mateus uses ‘affect’ and ‘emotions’ as interchangeable words.

⁶⁰ Samuel Mateus, “Affective Rhetoric: What it is and Why it Matters,” In *Affect, Emotion, and Rhetorical Persuasion in Mass Communication*, Routledge, 2018: 71.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., 72-3.

⁶³ Ibid.

viewer identify with the qualities of a race driver.⁶⁴ In other words, symbols need to be considered as elements that contribute towards emotional resonance.

1.2.1 Emotions and contextual shifts

While the work on emotional resonance assists in gaining an understanding of framing, it still conceptualizes resonance as a matter of ‘hitting the right notes’ with an audience.⁶⁵ Some fluidity is being acknowledged, yet resonance is rather understood to be ‘static’, as in a frame being either resonant or not. This is a limiting understanding of resonance as it does not see emotions as embedded in a social context. If it is understood that emotions tend to be changeable, then it is worthwhile examining in a systematic way what brings about this changeability.

The authors McDonnell et.al. describe frame resonance as ‘emergent’ in a theoretical paper on the mechanisms of ‘cultural objects’.⁶⁶ The authors argue that “resonance emerges in the relations among object, person, and situation”, that is, no frame is inherently resonant, but always context dependent.⁶⁷ It is possible that a new context gives rise to frame resonance, without the original frame having been significantly altered. Rather, the previously existing frame suddenly offers people ways to understand a new situation, and through insights generated from the frame, *solve new problems*. McDonnell et. al. provide the example of the difficulty a group of Ghanaian students experienced in portraying people suffering from HIV in a non-stigmatizing way.⁶⁸ In the end, the group decided against showing sickly-looking people, and to mark healthy-appearing people with the colour red to suggest the hidden nature of the virus.⁶⁹ The colour red provided the students a novel way to look at the issue of what a person with HIV ‘looks like’ and thus resonated as a solution.⁷⁰ In other words, alignment between an audience’s belief and frames is not sufficient, but there first needs to be a practical applicability of the frame’s core message that may only arise as people are confronted with new problems.⁷¹

⁶⁴ Mateus, “Affective Rhetoric,” 71.

⁶⁵ Schrock et.al., “Creating Emotional Resonance,” 61.

⁶⁶ While McDonnell et.al. never provide a definition for their sensitizing concept ‘cultural objects’, their focus on frame resonance and cultural narrations suggests that they use it in lieu of the concept of frames.

⁶⁷ McDonnell et.al., “Theory of Resonance,” 2.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

The authors cite emotions as one of the causes that can suddenly make a frame resonant, especially emotions that arise after agitating world events.⁷² For example, the aftermath of the attacks of 9/11 saw an increase of resonance in anti-Islam rhetoric.⁷³ Thus, frames might be especially resonant when they correspond to feelings experienced after distressing situations, in particular when a frame validates these feelings.⁷⁴ This alignment between frames and feelings thus enables audiences to make sense of problems and solve these more efficiently than with previous understandings of the world.⁷⁵ In the authors' words "cultural objects [frames] do not resonate because they are resonant—they are experienced as resonant because they solve problems better than the cognitive schema afforded by objects or habituated alternatives".⁷⁶

Similarly, B. Bonikowski further formalized the study of context, emotions, and frames in an analysis of ethno-nationalist rhetoric.⁷⁷ He hereby suggests the sensitizing concept of *contextual shifts/effects* as an element that can give rise to the emergence of frame resonance without the original master frame having necessarily been altered.⁷⁸ Bonikowski understands resonance hereby as a matter of supply and demand of a specific rhetoric. It is possible for a social movement to 'supply' frames for which there is no 'demand' in society.⁷⁹ For example, a populist party could 'supply' radical ideas, however, they only resonate on the fringes of society, possibly because the framings do not correspond to most people's experience.⁸⁰ Bonikowski argues that contextual shifts can affect the supply and demand of frames, as in, a change in context of an audience can lead to a sudden demand for particular framings, and, hence, the sudden emergence of frame resonance.⁸¹ For instance, a change in socioeconomic conditions may increase the demand of a population for a suitable explanation, potentially making fringe radical rhetoric more mainstream.⁸²

Unfortunately, the authors do not give their definition of a 'cultural object', however, they seem to use it in lieu of 'frame'.

⁷² McDonnell et.al., "Theory of Resonance," 6.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 10.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Bonikowski, "Collective Resentment," S181-S213.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid., s191.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid., s192.

Frames are a stable element in this idea and do not necessarily change, while resonance represents a variable element.⁸³ In other words, frames do not necessarily undergo a process of alignment nor change to resonate with an audience, but simply a change of context can lead to the emergence of resonance. The author notes that sometimes not even the attitudes of the audience need to change: “what changes are the conditions within which the message resonates with the audience”.⁸⁴

Bonikowski shows that the emergence of frame resonance has been particularly the case for far-right discourses. Over the past few decades, there have usually been right-wing parties or groups in Europe, yet only in recent years these messages began to resonate more deeply with people.⁸⁵ This corresponds to a scenario where the supply of a frame has been relatively stable, but demand for a particular framing or interpretation suddenly increases.⁸⁶ The author identifies several global contextual shifts that can be connected to this increased resonance of ethnonationalist frames: (a) Economic changes, specifically rising inequality; (b) Demographic shifts, in particular labour migrations caused by globalization and refugee crises; (c) Alienation from mainstream culture, specifically a lack of identification with mainstream media “which is increasingly socially egalitarian, cosmopolitan, and multicultural”.⁸⁷

This does not mean that movements never alter their frames in response to contextual events. For example, A.M. Bliuc et.al. argue that groups may change narratives when confronted with inter-group conflict, different definitions of social reality, or changes to shared goals.⁸⁸ Contextual events can give rise to such changes in a group’s dynamic and therefore a movement should be understood within its social context.⁸⁹ However, the work by Bonikowski and McDonnell et.al. illustrate that it is not always necessary for a movement to change their framings and understandings of the world in order to be resonant. A contextual change does not necessarily require a movement to change the ways they frame an issue. In fact, a change in context might be precisely what makes a particular frame more resonant as it

⁸³ Bonikowski, “Collective Resentment,” s192.

⁸⁴ Ibid., s193.

⁸⁵ Ibid., s201.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid., s201-4.

⁸⁸ Ana-Maria Bliuc et al., “Collective Identity Changes in Far-Right Online Communities: The Role of Offline Intergroup Conflict,” 2019.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 1776.

may become more applicable to a current situation, and, to echo McDonnell et.al., provide the audience with novel solutions to new problems.

1.3 Ideology and Far-right ecologism

While the previous sections elaborated on the literature around frame analysis, this section now turns to specific framings within the right-wing scene concerning the environment. Specifically, it introduces frameworks that help understand. However, before turning to issues of far-right environmentalism, it is necessary to define how ideology in general, and far-right ideology in particular, can be understood.

In general, ideology refers to the particular way people make sense of the world. Ideology constitutes daily life experiences of people, while at the same time potentially misrepresenting or misunderstanding events or conditions of life that lie outside of this experience.⁹⁰ Thus, any given ideology helps people make sense of their life, yet, it makes only specific interpretations of life visible to whoever subscribes to the ideology, while rendering other meanings invisible that lie outside of their scope.⁹¹ At the same time, ideology is not the same as a personal interpretation of the world as ideologies are usually shared between groups of people. Instead, ideology is formed through interactive processes between people who negotiate meanings with each other.⁹² As such, ideology is a changeable interpretation of the world that is shared, negotiated, and re-negotiated between people.⁹³

While ideology thus can be defined as a specific way of making sense of life, the fact that ideology is also negotiated meaning between people can make it challenging to define any ideology precisely. This is certainly the case with far-right extremist ideology in general as the far-right tends to change ideological outlooks as it suits their purposes.⁹⁴ Their ideology may include broad issues such as conspiracies about immigrants and secret Zionist governments, xenophobia, anti-global and anti-government beliefs, and concerns over individual liberty among many more.⁹⁵ As noted by Mudde “right-wing extremism is an

⁹⁰ Stuart Hall, “Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the Post-structuralist Debates,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 2, no. 2 (1985): 91-114.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Dennis K. Mumby, “Ideology & the Social Construction of Meaning: A Communication Perspective,” *Communication Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (1989): 303.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Thomas J. Holt, Joshua D. Freilich, and Steven M. Chermak, “Examining the Online Expression of Ideology among Far-Right Extremist Forum Users,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* (2020): 4-6.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

ideology that people are free to fill in as they see fit”.⁹⁶ Therefore, any conceptualization of extremist far-right ideology can only present a temporary snapshot of the phenomenon that is likely to be re-negotiated or that might only apply to specific sub-sections of the far-right. Yet without some form of definition the analysis of meaning-making of the far-right would be impossible.

Similarly, far-right environmentalism is a challenge to clearly define. Historically, this ideology has been referred to as ‘ecofascism’, dating back to the green wing of Hitler’s party NSDAP which was concerned with the role of people and their local environment.⁹⁷ Underlying these ideas was a belief in the “metaphysical symbiosis between the Volk, its culture, and nature”.⁹⁸ People were imagined to be spiritually interwoven with their land and had to be equally kept as ‘pure’ as the land they lived on.⁹⁹ Other ethnic groups were perceived as challenges to ‘ethnic purity’ and to the upkeep of the ‘natural’ order.¹⁰⁰ Yet, ecofascist ideology did not disappear after the end of WWII and can still be found as an important ideological element of both right-wing parties and white supremacist groups that can be found across Europe and the United States.¹⁰¹

Nonetheless, a coherent framework for the identification of cases of modern ecofascism has long been missing. To date there exists only one framework for the ideological components of ecofascism, the far-right ecologism (FRE) framework by Balsa Lubarda.¹⁰² This framework aims to address the lack of clarity of the definition of ‘ecofascism’ while also providing a guide for the identification of the ideology. FRE consists of five values which may or may not all exist simultaneously in any given case. The first value is *naturalism* which is defined as the belief that the laws of nature map onto the laws of society.¹⁰³ The second value represents *spirituality and mysticism*, i.e. a belief that there exists

⁹⁶ Cas Mudde, “Right-wing Extremism Analyzed: A Comparative Analysis of the Ideologies of Three Alleged Right-wing Extremist Parties (NPD, NDP, CP’86),” *European Journal of Political Research* 27, no. 2 (1995): 203.

⁹⁷ Staudenmaier, “Fascist Ecology,” 4-21.

⁹⁸ Rueda, “Neoecofascism,” 99.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Staudenmaier, “Fascist Ecology,” 11.

¹⁰¹ Taylor, “Alt-Right Ecology,” 223.;

Forchtner, Bernhard, “Nation, Nature, Purity: Extreme-Right Biodiversity in Germany,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 53, no. 3 (2019): 285-301.;

Kristian Voss, “Nature and Nation in Harmony: The Ecological Component of Far Right Ideology,” Thesis, CADMUS EUI Research Repository, 2014.

¹⁰² Lubarda, “Far-Right Ecologism”, 723.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 723.

a mythical connection to nature, often combined with strong themes of spirituality.¹⁰⁴ Thirdly, there is *organicism and autarky* according to which a group of people or ‘race’ form an organic whole that needs to be kept separate from other ‘races’ or risk ‘dilution’ and ‘weakening’ of one’s ‘race’.¹⁰⁵ The autarky of nations or ‘races’, i.e. the necessity to keep people of different origins separate, may logically follow from this assumption. Fourth, *authority* represents the belief that the urgency of environmental degradation necessitates an authoritarian government while democracy is seen as incapable of responding to urgent needs.¹⁰⁶ Lastly, there is *nostalgia and Manicheanism*, with nostalgia describing the desire for a return to the past, and *Manicheanism* referring to binary thinking that calls for radical change.¹⁰⁷ In other words, *Manicheanism* posits that a desire to return to traditional livelihoods excludes any possibility to incorporate modern elements (be it through globalisation, capitalism or consumerism).¹⁰⁸ These modern elements are seen as “alien encroachments on the national being”.¹⁰⁹

Importantly, Lubarda adds to this that these values are not “designed for the box-ticking of discourses on the environment” as FRE represents an ideal type or an “heuristic exaggeration” of far-right beliefs about the environment.¹¹⁰ Empirical cases can always deviate somewhat, invigorate some values more than others or add new elements.¹¹¹ It is also possible that additional analytical categories can be found in such real-life examples. For instance, other authors have described *pessimism and a sense of decay*, especially in response to environmental catastrophes and climate change.¹¹² A common component of fascism in general, “the idea of inevitable decay leads fascist thinkers to imagine an apocalyptic rebirth generally associated with a national (or ethnic) resurgence”.¹¹³ Climate change could potentially encourage ideas about decay and the need for rebirth.¹¹⁴ Nonetheless, Lubarda’s framework provides a good starting point to understand cases of ecofascism as long as one understands the framework as a guide that allows flexibility.

¹⁰⁴ Lubarda, “Far-Right Ecologism,” 724.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 724-5.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 725.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 725-6.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 725.

¹¹² Rueda, “Neoeocofascism.”

¹¹³ Ibid., 110.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

1.4 The analytical frame

To summarize the above section, frame analysis provides an analytical lens to examine the meaning-making process of social movements when they attempt to recruit new members through novel ways of representing social problems and solutions. Historically, frame analysis has overly focused on the cognitive aspects of framings, i.e., rational, and logical understandings of frames. An addition to the framework was necessary to understand the role of emotions, and this gap has been covered by the concept of emotional resonance, i.e., how frames resonate with the *emotional* lives of their constituents. Emotional resonance can be further expanded by considering how context influences emotions, so-called contextual shifts. A change in global context can influence someone's feelings, making new framings resonate with them emotionally while previously these may have been non-resonant. Lastly, the FRE framework provides one way of understanding far-right environmental radicalism.

From this overarching academic debate, sensitizing concepts can be extracted to form an analytical frame. This is in line with the research puzzle which is ontologically grounded in the study of meanings and symbols. The key concepts consist of framing, emotional resonance, contextual shifts and far-right ecologism. Yet before the relationship between these concepts can be finalized in an analytical frame, it is necessary to establish a closer theoretical connection between framing theory and far-right ecologism.

For this, it is possible to map FRE onto frame analysis whereby frame analysis forms the overarching theory while FRE is a type of master frame. This master frame can be broken down into its constituent parts of the five individual values which are conceptualized as diagnostic and prognostic frames depending on whether their primary function is to diagnose a problem or to propose a solution or if they do both at the same time. For example, the value of *organicism and autarky* holds that human cultures form 'organic wholes' with nature. Therefore, 'outsiders' are identified as the problem (diagnostic framing) while the isolation of the culture or autarky is the solution (prognostic framing). Hence, this value functions as both a diagnostic and prognostic frame at the same time. This works in a similar fashion for all five values. *Naturalism* maintains that the laws of nature map onto the laws of society, therefore, 'unnatural' elements of a society can be identified and problematized (diagnostic). *Spirituality and Mysticism* proposed the existence of a spiritual connection to the land; thus, perceived disruptions of this bond are a problem (diagnostic), and the protection or

re-establishment of the connection is a goal (prognostic). In *Authority*, an authoritarian government is valued above others, thus this value primarily helps to identify desired forms of government (prognostic) with an implied problematization of democratic ones. Lastly, *Nostalgia and Manicheanism* express the desire to go back to more traditional livelihoods and thus primarily act as prognostic frames for a preferred lifestyle. This conceptualization has been summarized in Table 1.¹¹⁵

	Primarily diagnostic	Primarily prognostic	Both
Naturalism	✓		
Spirituality and Mysticism			✓
Organicism and Autarky			✓
Authority		✓	
Nostalgia and Manicheanism		✓	

Table 1: Mapping FRE values onto the core framing tasks of frame analysis. FRE is the overarching master frame while the constituent values can be broken down into core frames. Some of the values primarily diagnose problems, while others propose solutions, or both at the same time.

Additionally, it is necessary to further specify Bonikowski’s contextual shifts. The author identified three global shifts that are relevant to frame resonance of ethnonationalist rhetoric. Ethnonationalism in itself is ideologically closely related to far-right ecologism as both form part of the spectrum of far-right beliefs.¹¹⁶ It is reasonable to argue that Bonikowski’s three contextual shifts are also likely relevant in the case of far-right

¹¹⁵ Motivational framing is not irrelevant or carelessly omitted in this breakdown of FRE values. As explained about, in order to fully understand motivation framing it is necessary to also count in the role of emotions. A ‘call to action’ involves specific requests to the reader to engage in specific action while appealing to their feelings. Therefore, while it is possible to understand the prognostic and diagnostic frames of FRE, it is not possible to understand how these may motivate an audience to act without considering the role of emotions as well. A ‘call to action’ is not intrinsic to the FRE values.

¹¹⁶ Lubarda, “Far-Right Ecologism.”; Bonikowski, “Collective resentment.”

ecologism. However, one significant contextual shift is missing, namely ‘climate change and environmental degradation’. Just as the other shifts, environmental degradation has global effects, and affects a significant amount of people. Furthermore, it is likely to be of relevance to far-right actors who engage in environmental radicalism. It makes sense to extend Bonikowski’s three contextual shifts to four, namely:

- (a) Economic changes
- (b) Demographic shifts
- (c) Alienation from mainstream culture
- (d) Climate change and environmental degradation

With this in mind it is now possible to assemble FRE, frame analysis and the associated concepts into an overarching analytical frame. Diagram 1 represents this analytical lens as a model and shows two distinct scenarios for the emergence of emotional resonance. In scenario 1, a FRE frame is employed by a social movement, however, for unspecified reasons, it fails to resonate with a target audience. In the second scenario, however, a contextual shift amplifies the emotional appeal of the FRE frame which then contributes towards the emergence of emotional resonance with the target audience. In either case the overarching FRE master frame is a stable element in the model, meaning that it is not necessary for the master frame to change for the emergence of resonance. Emotional resonance on the other hand is a variable element that increases or decreases depending on context. While it is always possible for a movement to change their framings in response to a contextual change, this model thus aims to illustrate that resonance can also emerge in the absence of such a change.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ It is also worthwhile noting that including contextual shifts in the framework slightly changes the ontological nature of the puzzle. The most predominant ontological dimension of the research puzzle is the category of ‘meanings and symbols’. However, by including context, meaning-making is put *in relation with* a global context. Mason (2018) refers to this as an “ecological puzzle” in which the connection between surroundings and agents is important. While the ontological dimension of meanings and symbols remains the most dominant, contextual shifts add an underlying ecological dimension to the overarching puzzle.

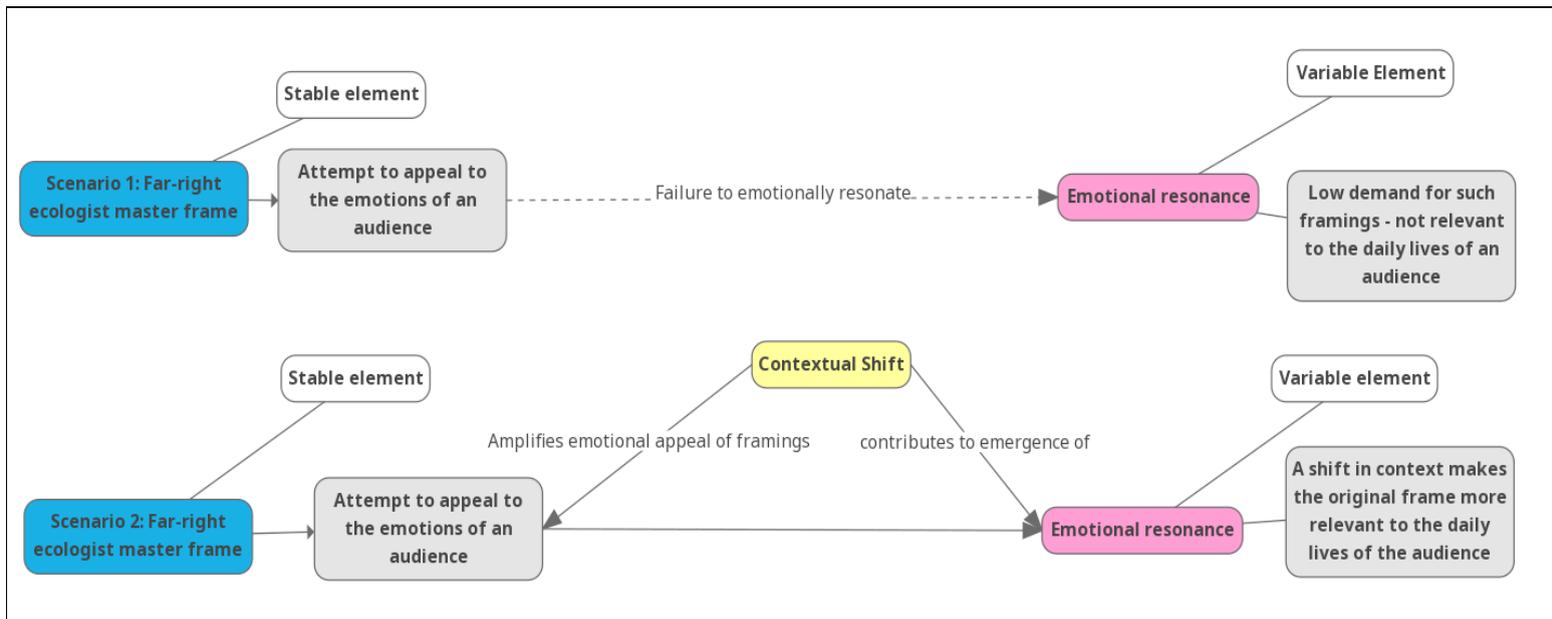


Diagram 1: A model of emotional resonance in FRE. In scenario 1 emotional resonance does not occur. In scenario 2 it emerges due to a change in context. In these examples, the FRE master frame is stable, i.e., it is not altered. Emotional resonance on the other hand is a variable element, i.e., emotional resonance emerges as the surrounding context changes.

Chapter 2 - Methodology

This chapter will outline the methodology of the thesis and show how the concepts derived from the analytical framework can be implemented as concretely researchable indicators of social life. The first section elaborates on the research strategy, the sampling method, the data collection method, and the stages of analysis.

2.1 Research Strategy

The research puzzle is aimed at examining the realm of texts, images, and the meaning contained within them. It assumes that actors *create* meaning through textual expressions and that this process has a real impact on social life. Therefore, epistemologically, I will take an interpretivist approach which allows for the interpretation of how far-right actors use texts and images to create narratives about nature and to channel emotional messages through these. In light of the ontological and epistemological choices, a qualitative research method seems most appropriate. By selecting key posts from an online community, i.e., public Telegram channels, I will undertake an in-depth case study analysis of the internal workings of these cultural texts in order to generate a deeper understanding of the mechanisms and emotional appeal of FRE values in the modern context.

2.2 Sampling method

The case studies of this thesis are Telegram channels from which a sample needs to be selected. In order to understand the emotional resonance of far-right ecologism in the illustrative examples of Telegram channels, any samples selected need to be able to provide information on (a) far-right ecologism values, and (b) on emotions. First relevant channels need to be identified from Telegram, and, secondly, posts relevant to the research puzzle need to be selected. As such, specific sampling criteria need to be applied to the case studies to generate data. Overall, the sampling method is strategic and follows inductive reasoning. This means that the selection of relevant channels and, within them, relevant postings is based on their representativeness of far-right ecologism. This means that there is a close relationship between theory (FRE), case selection, and sampling method.

Firstly, the sample needs to be representative of FRE. This means that only sections reflecting FRE values as outlined by Balsa Lubarda are of relevance to answering the research puzzle. These five values are (1) Naturalism, (2) Spirituality and Mysticism, (3) Organicism and Autarky, (4) Authority, (5) Nostalgia and Manicheanism. These five values can be operationalized as indicators of ‘cases of FRE’. For this, not all FRE values need to be present in every section at the same time. One would suffice as long as the overall picture indicates a correspondence to far-right ecologism. Therefore, the sampling is ‘theoretically charged’ in the sense that it selects a case study and relevant sections on the basis of the FRE framework.¹¹⁸

The most relevant Telegram channels were then selected through snowball sampling. This means that one channel served as a starting point to discover other channels through forwarded posts. Specifically, the ‘Pine Tree Party’ channel was a starting point which, as mentioned above, had already been identified as radically environmentalist by other writers.¹¹⁹ This channel provided a trail of forwarded messages and images to follow in order to find other potential ecofascist channels. This selection does not aim to represent the most important channels as such a claim would be hard to sustain, but rather provides a snapshot of existing channels.

After identifying relevant channels, relevant posts were identified based on their thematic content and when they were posted. Any post or section that did not comply with the FRE values were discarded as not directly relevant to the research puzzle. A relevant time frame was set to three months, i.e., posted between May and July 2021. The three months span corresponded to the average lifespan of many of these channels. Most channels were of a young age (~ 2 months) while others were deleted by Telegram during my sample collection. My interpretation is that the average life cycle of such a far-right ecologist channel is around 2-3 months before it is detected by Telegram for (presumably) breaching codes of

¹¹⁸ Mason, “Qualitative Researching,” 55.

In addition to this, specific ecofascist symbols as identified by the “Guide to Online Radical-Right Symbols, Slogans and Slurs” by the Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right (CARR) were used as indicators to identify potentially relevant channels.

¹¹⁹ Hanrahan, “Unabomber.”;
Walther, McCoy, “US Extremism.”

conduct.¹²⁰ Therefore, setting a thematic and time-restricted relevant range of posts offered the best possibility to capture telling instances of FRE.¹²¹

The final selection of channels and posts has been summarized in Table 2. It shows the names of the channels that were included and how many members they had at the last date of counting. The third column specifies the sample size, while the fourth column shows if the channel had been deleted at the time of writing, and, if yes, which date. As has been mentioned previously, the life cycle of an extreme right Telegram channel can be short. Therefore, it was not surprising that some of them were deleted while writing.

Name of Channel	Members and date of last count	Sample size (posts)	Deleted at time of writing Y/N
 Pine Tree Party 	703 (01.06.21)	13	Y (01.06.21)
ΥEcoFash PropagandaΥ (primary and secondary channel) ¹²²	1980 (20.08.21) + 593 (20.08.21)	11	N
 RAWMEATKVLTL 	1772 (05.07.2021)	11	N ¹²³

Table 2: List of channels including their size, how many samples were used and their deletion date (if applicable)

¹²⁰ It is challenging to know precisely why a channel was deleted, as some channels with images of violence and calls for terrorism remain online while others without such themes are deleted.

¹²¹ The short lifespan of a channel is worthwhile keeping in mind when considering the snowballing method: A short life span makes it challenging to establish which of these channels is the most relevant or important to the target audience. For instance, a formerly small channel can theoretically become a large channel within a month. A thousand members may seem small compared to other channels, however, if one considers that a channel managed to attract so many people within a few weeks, this number suddenly appears more significant. Further, they likely attract these numbers of people over and over again due to being deleted. # As such, picking a sampling time frame that corresponded to the usual life cycle of a channel seemed reasonable.

¹²² EcoFash Propaganda has a secondary back-up channel to pre-empt deletion. I counted both of them as one channel.

¹²³ Deletion was anticipated on July 5th as moderators noted that a preview of the channel had been restricted on some platforms. Mods requested members to backup content and expect that they would simply create a new channel with a similar name in the case of deletion.

2.3 Data collection method

This section concerns how data was generated from the sample. For this, it is worthwhile going back to the ontological and epistemological nature of the puzzle. Ontologically, the puzzle is concerned with symbols and meanings which means that epistemologically an interpretivist approach is most suitable. In other words, it makes sense to use an ‘interpretive reading’ to generate data, meaning that a reading of the samples needs to go beyond what is literally said in the text.¹²⁴ In this vein, the samples were coded cross-sectionally according to an *interpretive theme*.¹²⁵ Since the sample was selected based on the FRE values, they also served as an interpretive theme. Each relevant post was hand-coded according to the five FRE values that are contained within it (table 3; appendix B & C). While coding for FRE values, notes were taken on which emotions were being invoked and if mentions of contextual shifts occurred. Furthermore, emotions were grouped into three categories relating to (a) rootlessness and belonging, (b) pride, and (c) anger and hatred.

	🌲 Pine Tree Party 🌲	☹️ EcoFash Propaganda ☹️	🌲 RAWMEATKVLТ 🌲
Naturalism	4	3	6
Spirituality and Mysticism	7	3	0
Organicism and Autarky	2	1	2
Authority	4	7	5
Nostalgia and Manicheanism	2	3	6

Table 3: Telegram channels broken down according to FRE values

¹²⁴ Mason, "Qualitative Researching," 191.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

2.4 Stages of analysis

While the previous section has already touched on ways of interpreting data, this section will detail the stages of analysis in more detail.

Step 1: Understanding context

The first step was to understand the context of the data set. This meant foremost knowing the empirical context of far-right ecologism as well as online far-right culture. This is described in chapter 3.

Step 2: Identifying the diagnostic and prognostic frames in the sample

Step 2 shows how problems are identified within the sample (diagnostic frames) and which solutions are proposed (prognostic frames). The role of motivational framing is addressed later since it is first necessary to understand the role of emotions that may motivate an audience to act in the first place.

Step 3: Appeals to emotions

In this step, the emotions that are invoked in relation to the previously identified frames will be explored. It thus aims to answer how the texts do not simply reason with an audience at a cognitive level, but also at an emotional level.

Stage 4: Contextual shifts

In step 4, contextual shifts that are directly mentioned within the samples, either directly or indirectly, will be identified. This step aims to answer how a global context may further enhance the emotional resonance of the texts. Therefore, the aim is to establish if the frame articulators make use of mentions of contextual shifts in order to potentially enhance the emotional appeal of their messages.

Step 5: Emotions and motivational framing

The final step pools the evidence gathered above and seeks to explain how the above elements contribute towards a 'call to action', often meaning a call to violence. As such, the final step answers the research question about the role of emotional resonance in the incitement of violence.

2.5 Ethics and limitations

Since the sample was collected from Telegram channels, some ethical considerations had to be taken regards users' privacy. In order not to violate user privacy, everything was collected from publicly available content that can be accessed with a mobile phone number or through a browser preview. No usernames were collected, with the exception of the username of channel owners, and no content was engaged with. Therefore, users' anonymity was respected, and their platforms were left unaltered by the research process.

There are also some limitations to this thesis. On the one hand, the research is only able to provide a snapshot of the ideological diversity contained in radical environmentalist Telegram channels. There are many channels out there that have vastly different outlooks on the environment. Many of these channels were discarded as not directly relevant due to not being illustrative enough instances of FRE. However, many channels shared small aspects of FRE or white supremacist ideology without being a strong case of either. There certainly is more empirical work that could be done on these channels, potentially utilizing different frameworks.¹²⁶ There are also opportunities to extend the FRE framework and generate further subtypes on the basis of empirical reality.

Chapter summary

This chapter outlined the research strategy, the sampling method, the data collection method, and the stages of analysis. Overall, the different steps can be summarized as follows:

1. Specify key concepts to determine indicators that contribute towards the solving of the research puzzle
 - a. Specify definitions of far-right ecologism values

¹²⁶ To give a small example: There are a lot of channels focused on dietary advice based on a radical environmentalist and/or white supremacist perspective.

2. Code the samples for FRE values
3. Determine prognostic and diagnostic frames communicated through the FRE values
4. Determine appeals to emotions
5. Determine mentions of contextual shifts to imbed the sample in its empirical context
6. Pool the insights gained in steps 2-5 to generate a picture of emotional resonance
7. Explain how emotional resonance may contribute towards the incitement of violence

The important aspects here are to utilize the key sensitizing concept of the analytical framework to be able to use these to sample strategically. This means using the definitions of the key concepts of the FRE values to identify relevant channels and posts in conjunction with a snowballing method. This represents the first step. The second step encapsulates the stage of data generation during which the sample was coded cross-sectionally and according to interpretive themes derived from the analytical framework. Steps 3-7 describe the stages of analysis which by using frame analysis identify core frames, emotions, and contextual shifts with the aim of forming a complete picture of emotional resonance that finally leads to an answer to the research question.

Chapter 3 - Empirical Context

Chapter Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to illustrate the relevant empirical background of the case study. The chapter will elaborate on what is known about far-right online communities in general and in particular Telegram. The connection between online communities and offline violence will be discussed. Lastly, this chapter aims to establish a link to the theoretical literature.

3.1 Specific case: Far-right Telegram groups

Telegram is a private messaging service with around 500 million users.¹²⁷ Beyond private messaging, Telegram can be used to create public channels that anyone can join, and private channels that require an invite.¹²⁸ This platform has recently experienced an influx of far-right extremists due to a ‘ban-wave’ on other social media platforms.¹²⁹ The Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) notes that encrypted messaging applications such as Telegram are a major way for white supremacists to spread conspiracies and hateful messages.¹³⁰ Telegram is identified as a ‘hijacked platform’, meaning that Telegram is not a far-right platform per se, but provides a mostly safe environment for white supremacist to spread radical content.¹³¹ It is especially attractive to extremists since content is encrypted, meaning that users can remain anonymous.¹³² As such, Telegram has been identified as an online platform of concern for right-wing radicalization.

Due to the recent emergence of Telegram as a preferred platform of the far-right, there is little academic knowledge specifically on far-right environmentalist Telegram channels. Nonetheless, some of these groups are known to have previously been active on Twitter. For example, there is some information on the ecofascist group Pine Tree Party, as touched on before.¹³³ Investigative journalist Jake Hanrahan describes the Pine Trees as an online group

¹²⁷ Walther, McCoy, “US Extremism,” 102-3.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Urman and Katz, “What they do in the Shadows.”

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Brian Hughes, “‘Pine-Tree’ Twitter and The Shifting Ideological Foundations of Eco-Extremism,” *Interventionen*, no. 14 (December 2019): 18-25.;

Hanrahan, "Inside the Unabomber's Odd and Furious Online Revival," WIRED UK.

that are inspired by the writings of Ted Kaczynski, a terrorist who rejected technologies and industrialization.¹³⁴ A Medium article presumably written by a Pine Tree Member describes his community as a “a community of people tired of living in industrial shit world [sic] who want to return to a more holistic way of life free from the cage and closer to nature by whatever means”.¹³⁵ The Terrorism Research & Analysis Consortium (TRAC) identifies them as a white nationalist separatist group, and Homeland Security Today sees them as a potential terrorist threat.¹³⁶ This opinion is shared by extremism researchers Walther and McCoy.¹³⁷ While some care needs to be taken when using information from non-academic sources, it can be concluded that the Pine Trees (and likely other channels related to them) are a known far-right environmentalist group that also takes ideological inspiration for other sources beyond the extreme right. Nonetheless, the Pine Trees are simply the most well-studied ecofascist group among a myriad of ecofascist groups.

3.2 Online worlds and offline violence

Online communities are intricately linked to offline far-right violence. This can be demonstrated through the example of the Christchurch Mosque Shooting in 2019. The shooter frequented online forums which inspired many of his beliefs, including ecofascism. In a section of his manifesto, the shooter writes that his beliefs originated “[f]rom the Internet, of course. You will not find the truth anywhere else”, illustrating the strong relationship between online forums and the formation of ideological beliefs.¹³⁸ The ISD summarizes this relationship as follows:

“The Christchurch attack was intimately linked to extreme-right-wing culture which has grown around fringe platforms, and the strategy adopted by the perpetrator in the lead-up, execution and aftermath of the attack was designed with these audiences in mind. The choice of dumping the so-called manifesto and leaks to the Facebook livestream on 8chan prior to the attack ensured that the

¹³⁴ Brett A. Barnett, “20 Years Later: A Look Back at the Unabomber Manifesto,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9, no. 6 (2015): 60-71.

¹³⁵ Redux, “Who Are The Pines?,” Medium. August 04, 2018. .

¹³⁶ “Pine Tree Gang (PTG) - White Nationalist Separatist / Cascadian Region,” TRAC.

“'Pine Tree Party' Growing as a Violent Extremism Threat,” Homeland Security Today, 2021.

¹³⁷ Walther, McCoy, “US Extremism,” 111.

¹³⁸ Brenton Tarrant, “The Great Replacement,” Terrorist manifesto, March 15, 2019.

material made its way into the hands of the most ardent ideologues before being disseminated more broadly across the internet.”¹³⁹

The key message of this segment is that radical online forums and real life violence can no longer be separated in the case of far-right violence and terrorism.

The Christchurch shooting is not the only example of this relationship. Interviews with former right-wing extremists show that the relationship between on- and offline worlds is the norm rather than the exception.¹⁴⁰ Forums often serve as a space to intensify beliefs about the world which may inspire an interest in violent extremist ideologies.¹⁴¹ Once part of an extremist network, former extremists report having been increasingly immersed in these spaces, isolating them from other relations and facilitating violent radicalization.¹⁴² Radicalization often culminates in organizing violent extremist activities in the offline world.¹⁴³ As such, online content cannot be reduced to harmless joking, but can demonstrably be linked to real-life violence.

3.3 Frames and Symbols in far-right online spaces

The far-right has long made use of framing strategies to reach their audience. In particular, frame amplification has been identified as a common strategy of the far-right, i.e. "the clarification and invigoration of an interpretive frame".¹⁴⁴ Examples of this include conjuring up images of the "molesting foreigner" as a threat to local women to influence debates on immigration.¹⁴⁵ Fielitz and Marcks refer to this form of frame amplifications as a "gaslighting approach" through which foreigners are framed as aggressors and the native population as victims.¹⁴⁶ Similarly, Brebrier describes strategies of frame alignment and transformation by white separatists, describing processes of changing frames to be more relevant to an

¹³⁹ Davey, Ebner, "Violent Consequences," 24.

¹⁴⁰ Tiana Gaudette, Ryan Scrivens, and Vivek Venkatesh, "The Role of the Internet in Facilitating Violent Extremism: Insights from Former Right-Wing Extremists," *Terrorism and Political Violence* (2020): 1-18.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

¹⁴⁴ David A. Snow, E. Burke Rochford, Steven K. Worden, and Robert D. Benford, "Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation," *American Sociological Review* 51, no. 4 (1986): 464-481.;

Fielitz, Marcks, "Digital fascism," 9.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ Fielitz, Marcks, "Digital fascism," 11.

audience.¹⁴⁷ In particular, white separatists engaged in attempts to re-frame hatred against minorities as love and pride for one's heritage since obvious racism was not well-received by the public.¹⁴⁸ As such, strategic framing activities have long been part of the repertoire of the extreme right.

Appealing to emotions is an important part of this use of frames. Frame amplification forms part of what Fielitz and Marcks refer to as “dramatic storytelling”, ways of framing pieces of information that trigger “fear and notions of threat”.¹⁴⁹ This aims to strategically make specific threats appear larger than they actually are while appealing to an audience on an emotional rather than a cognitive level. In other words, factuality matters less than the emotional appeal of a given message.¹⁵⁰ Salzborn refers to this as “‘postfactual’ emotions” which “anchor in a dense fog of rumours nationalistic, racist and anti-Semitic worldviews”.¹⁵¹ The underlying goal of an appeal to emotions is again to increase the resonance of any given framings.

Furthermore, the far-right has been known to engage in framings of the environment.¹⁵² These often find expression in online forums in the form of images and memes about nature. For instance, analyses of Facebook groups show how the far-right uses images to portray nature as “an authoritative model for their ideal society”.¹⁵³ Nature is often used to express traditional values, showcasing nuclear families in idyllic, traditional scenery removed from urban landscapes.¹⁵⁴ Additionally, images often highlight beliefs in racial superiority by portraying blonde and blue-eyed families in nature.¹⁵⁵ The use of images by the far-right is often strategic as illustrated by a quote from a far-right handbook for guerrilla warfare: “People respond to images in a stronger way than to text. By using images, we can do excellent memetic warfare and bring our narratives to the people”.¹⁵⁶ Therefore, posts often

¹⁴⁷ Snow, Worden, Benford, “Frame Alignment Processes,” 464.; Brebrier, “Half the Battle,” 440.

¹⁴⁸ Brebrier 441-4.

¹⁴⁹ Fielitz, Marcks, “Digital fascism,” 10.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 11.

¹⁵¹ Samuel Salzborn, *Angriff Der Antidemokraten* Beltz Juventa, 2017: 16.

Translation by Fielitz and Marcks (2019)

¹⁵² Bernhard Forchtner, *The Far Right and the Environment: Politics, Discourse and Communication*, Routledge, 2019.

¹⁵³ Bernhard Forchtner and Christoffer Kølvrå, “The Nature of Nationalism: Populist Radical Right Parties on Countryside and Climate,” *Nature and Culture* 10, no. 2 (2015): 268.

¹⁵⁴ Lisa Bogerts and Maik Fielitz, ““Do You Want Meme War?”: Understanding the Visual Memes of the German Far Right,” (2019): 149.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 150.

¹⁵⁶ Generation D. (2017): “Handbuch Für Medienguerrillas: Teil I. Shitposting 1×1”.

convey ideological beliefs rather than to make statements about actual environmental catastrophes.¹⁵⁷

Chapter Summary

This chapter aimed to contextualize the research puzzle by introducing the relevant empirical literature about the extreme right . It aimed to show that while far-right environmentalist Telegram channels have been studied little, previous research has established the relevance of far-right online forums due to its demonstrable influence on real-life violence and terrorism. Additionally, this chapter aimed to establish a relationship to the theoretical literature by showing the relevance of the framing approach to the study of the extreme right. Within this, it was shown how the extreme right specifically frames the environment and how this relates to frame resonance and emotions.

Translation by Bogerts and Fielitz (2018).

¹⁵⁷ Forchtner and Kølvråa, “Nature of Nationalism,” 260.

Chapter 4 - Analysis

This chapter aims to work towards an answer to the research question of how emotional resonance emerges from far-right ecologist content on Telegram. For this, each section will work through the sub-questions generated by the research question, beginning with identifying the diagnostic and prognostic frames of the sample. Next, the emotions that are invoked through these frames are specified. This is followed by an analysis of mentions of global contextual shifts in the sample which may support the emergence of emotional resonance. The last section aims to explain the impact of emotional resonance and the invocation of emotions on motivational frames which aim to motivate the audience to engage in action and potentially commit violent actions. In sum, the analysis will illustrate the interplay of frames, emotions, and context in the case of far-right ecologist content.

Section 1: Far-right ecologism and core framing tasks

This section is primarily guided by the first two sub-questions generated by the research puzzle, and aims to identify the diagnostic and prognostic frames. For this, this section will make use of the previous conceptualization of FRE values as types of diagnostic and prognostic frames. Alternatively, the inquiry of this section could be posed as follows: Which problems and solutions are identified throughout the sample when examined through the theoretical lens of the far-right ecologism framework? The FRE framework hereby acts as a prism through which the ideas of the posts can be cast to help organize them into interpretive themes.

1.1 Diagnostic frames

The posts in the channel establish diagnostic frames by identifying specific problems in the world and relating these to understandings of group boundaries and nature. In particular, there are two notable diagnostic frames relating to three of the FRE values, i.e., a strong occupation with the ‘natural order’ or how the world ‘ought’ to be (naturalism and authority), and themes of group membership (autarky & organicism).

The first diagnostic frame relates to the notion that there is a natural order that dictates a societal order. In other words, there is a preoccupation with naturalism, a belief according to

which the laws of nature can be applied as a blueprint for society.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, themes of naturalism are difficult to separate from themes of authority, i.e., the desire for an authoritarian system.¹⁵⁹ Fig. 5, for instance, proclaims the slogan “Nature is fascism”, implying that the natural order is essentially fascist. Something similar has been noted by Forchtner and Kølvråa: “nature, for the extreme right, is to be regarded as an authoritative model for their ideal society”.¹⁶⁰ Additionally, nature appears to be vengeful when defying this order, e.g., the notion that nature desires revenge occurs frequently. This can be illustrated with Fig. 19 which portrays a Swastika rising from behind a mountain range with the words “One may defy nature for a certain time... But sooner or later she will take her revenge [sic]”.¹⁶¹ The suggestion is that there is an underlying natural order that cannot be resisted, or that resisting the natural order is wrong. The word ‘revenge’ further implies that nature in itself has authoritarian streaks and will punish those who defy it. Thus, these two examples illustrate two beliefs: Nature’s order is authoritarian and should not be resisted; and, secondly, that going against the order requires a violent response similar to as it might occur under an authoritarian government.

The idea of a natural order implies that there is an ‘unnatural order’ as opposed to the ‘natural’ order that needs to be defended. This unnatural order seems to be broadly identified as civilization as a whole and as global capitalism in particular. This is not entirely surprising as the far-right is known to take issue with global capitalism in general.¹⁶² The economic system is not only seen as destructive towards nature due to its tendency to prioritize growth above all else, but also as culturally universalizing.¹⁶³ In particular, consumerism and globalization are associated with global capitalism and are seen to eradicate differences between people and cultures, an effect that is seen as going against the imagined ‘natural’ order. Forchtner writes that “global capitalism and the desire for growth are viewed as destroying nature and therefore need to be countered by an economy of place that is not driven by global companies”.¹⁶⁴ An economic order with global reach is seen as unnatural and

¹⁵⁸ Lubarda, “Far-Right Ecologism,” 723.;
Staudenmaier, “Fascist Ecology.”

¹⁵⁹ Lubarda, “Far-Right Ecologism,” 725.

¹⁶⁰ Forchtner, “Extreme-Right Biodiversity,” 268.

¹⁶¹ Please note that the numbering of the images corresponds to the numbering of Appendix B where they are sorted according to channel and chronological collection date.

¹⁶² Forchtner, “Extreme-Right Biodiversity,” 293.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 294.

¹⁶⁴ Forchtner, “Extreme-Right Biodiversity,” 293.

should be replaced by localized or autarkic economic systems with clear boundaries between each other.

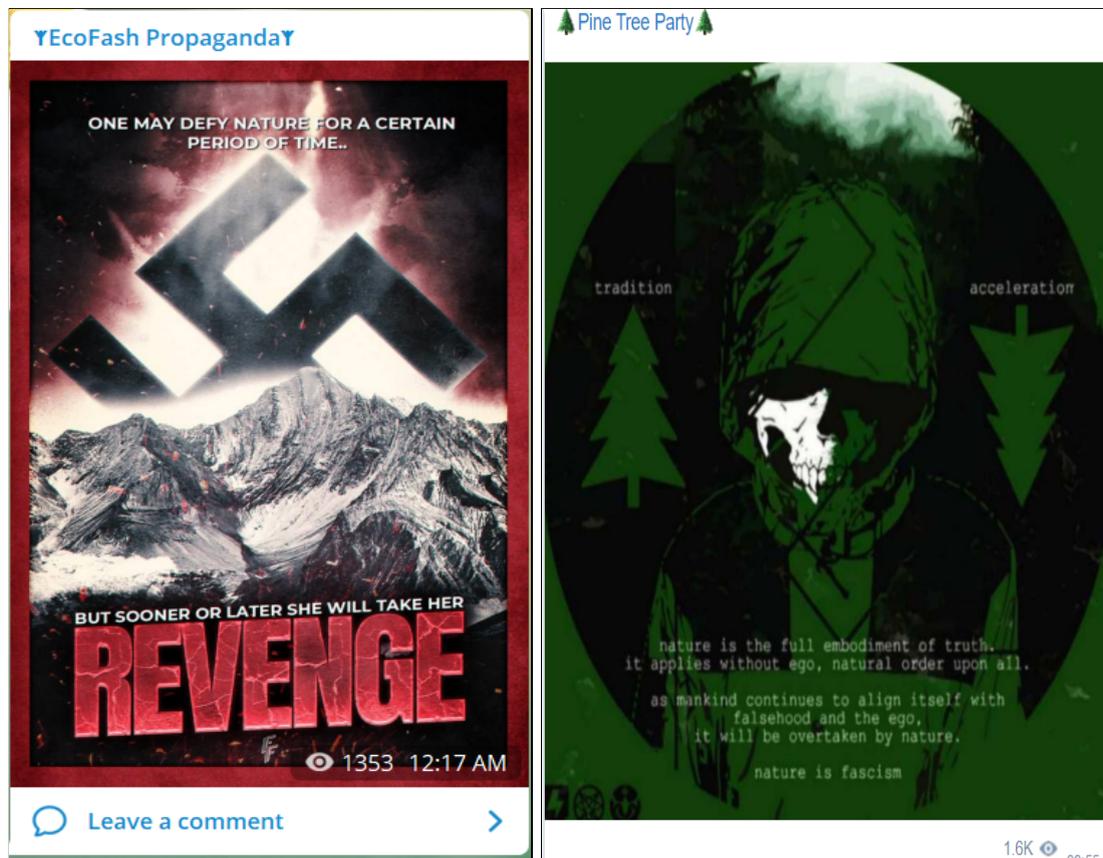


Fig. 19 & 5: Two images illustrating the themes of naturalism and authority.

This idealization of self-sufficiency is connected to the second diagnostic frame of autarky & organicism. Organicism refers to a belief according to which “[e]ach human community and culture is unique and authentic, forming a common ecosystem or biome with other organic and inorganic elements” and of which the local environment also forms a part.¹⁶⁵ This means there is an imagined unity between people of one ethnic origin and their local environment, again similar to blood and soil ideology. This unity relies on a *local* understanding of nature, putting it inherently at odds with *global* understandings of the world as is the case with, for example, globalisation.¹⁶⁶ Instead, environments and people inhabiting it have clear boundaries. Crossing these boundaries therefore disrupts the ‘organic whole’ of

¹⁶⁵ Lubarda, “Far-Right Ecologism,” 724.

¹⁶⁶ Forchtner 2019, “Extreme-Right Biodiversity,” 300.

people and environment which violates the natural order identified in the first diagnostic frame.

In the sample, organicism is a diagnostic frame in that this unity between people and nature is seen as disrupted. The disrupting force or the overarching enemy image here is the economic and social system in general. While the overarching orientation of the channels is white supremacist, the channels do not shift blame to particular population groups, but rather guilt the overarching system that enables the supposed ills of society, such as environmental degradation. This does not mean that there is no blatant racism in the sample, but rather that a larger enemy is identified in the organizational principles of modern civilization. This enemy image is seen as disrupting the ‘organic whole’ of people and their land by destroying the environment but also by eradicating differences between people (elaborated upon in section 3).

For example, Fig. 17 illustrates this by highlighting a strong connection between people and land. It shows a forest and a text: “The Folk without the soil is nothing. Nature will survive without the Folk, but the Folk will never survive without nature”. The word ‘Folk’ in this context comes from the German word *Volk* which can mean people, ‘race’, or nation, however, in the context of the extreme right, it refers to a racial or national group conceptualized as a self-contained ‘unit’.¹⁶⁷ In the post, this ‘unit of people’ is conceptualized as inherently connected with nature and inseparable from the physical ecosystem. Thus, organicism forms an integral part of the world conceptualization of these groups which, in relation with the values of naturalism and authority, are seen as the way society ‘ought’ to be.

¹⁶⁷ Fielitz, Maik, Yannick Lengkeek, James Downes, CARR Team, Dan Stone, Valerio Alfonso Bruno, Matthew Feldman, and Mark Potok, “Practicing the Radical Right Exit: The Case of the Völkisch Settlers,” Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right. August 07, 2018; Salzborn, *Angriff Der ANTIDEMOKRATEN*, 2017. The translation of the word *Volk* is mine. The precise meaning of *Volk* to the radical right is taken from the sources above.



Fig. 17: A post by Ecofash Propaganda illustrating the perceived inherent connection between the people and their soil.

1.2 Prognostic frames

The prognostic frames build on the previously identified diagnostic frames and aim to correct the identified issues. The prognostic frames have established that there is a desired social order involving proximity to nature, while the prognostic frames provide more details and how this could be achieved. Firstly, posts express a desire to ‘return to the past’ by providing idealized images of traditional living relating to the FRE value, nostalgia. Secondly, this ideal

can only be achieved through violent means by ‘collapsing’ the current system, again relating to authority.

The first prognostic frame concerns the theme of nostalgia which is “the desire for rebirth and the essentially conservative appreciation of nature and traditional livelihoods lost to the alien encroachments on the national being”.¹⁶⁸ There is a desire to return to an idyllic past characterized by rural lifestyles, however, one’s ability to realize this idea is obstructed. In the sample, this idea is mediated through idyllic images that portray traditional living styles. For instance, Fig. 9 shows a meme portraying a blonde girl in a field while the text references the idea of communal living. Similarly, Fig. 35 shows several images of nature overgrowing modern structures. These posts often express a desire to return to a simpler past, “as opposed to the ongoing industrialisation and cultural decadence” of the rest of the world.¹⁶⁹ Images, thus, pair beautiful sceneries of the countryside with idealized portrayals of a collapsed modern society.



Fig. 35: Image depicting nature overgrowing structures with a text that reads “Nature always wins in the end . Fig. 9: Meme with blonde girl in a field in Boho-style clothing

¹⁶⁸ Lubarda, “Far-Right Ecologism,” 725.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 720.

This ‘return to the past’ can only be achieved through a violent upheaval of the current order, a theme characterizing the second and predominant prognostic frame. Many posts show a preoccupation with accelerationism, the idea that the current world order is unstable and will inevitably collapse, a circumstance that is welcomed and longed for.¹⁷⁰ This can be illustrated by the frequent use of the dress code of Atomwaffen Division (AD) in the images, a far-right terrorist group known for their accelerationist intention.¹⁷¹ This can be seen in Figure 8 showing a person wearing the typical AD gear while burning papers with a call for violence against Jewish people.¹⁷² Furthermore, posts often directly call for “war” as in Fig. 10, depicting a person wearing a balaclava pointing at the reader with a text that reads “Declare war on the modern world”. At the bottom is the logo of Greenlight Front, a former ecofascist network, with the Pagan rune Algiz, the life rune representing the Aryan ‘race’.¹⁷³ Channel members are encouraged to engage in activities that further destabilize the order, and to be ready and armed for the moment of collapse. Thus, while the previous diagnostic framings identified issues with the system as a whole, this prognostic frame shows violence as the only possible solution. Negotiations or working within the current system is no longer seen as an option.

¹⁷⁰ “White Supremacists Embrace Accelerationism,” Anti-Defamation League. April 16, 2019.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁷² As mentioned previously, such images with direct calls for violence against specific populations are rare in the sample as most calls for violence are directed against the system as a whole. Nonetheless, the Telegram groups are not free from racism and Zionist conspiracies, but the focus lies with the overarching system.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

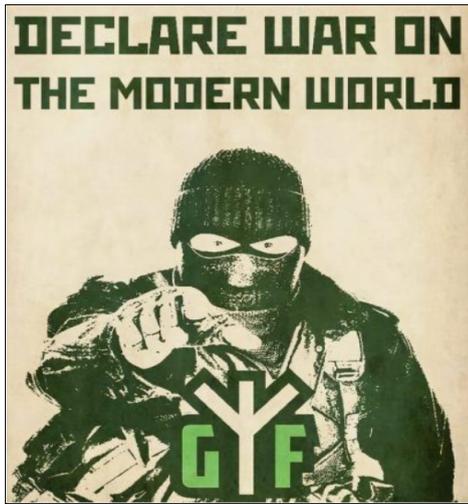


Fig. 10: Greenline Front image feat. Algiz Rune



Fig. 8: Calls to violence against Jewish populations while wearing clothes associated with the Atomwaffen Division.

Section 2: Appeals to emotions

Section 2 aims to address the next sub-question generated by the research puzzle: Which emotions are appealed to in the sample? While an audience might follow along *intellectually* with the ideas of the frames, interpretations of life also need to be able to touch people *emotionally* in order to motivate movement participation. In other words, there needs to be a congruity between frames and the emotional lives of an audience.¹⁷⁴ Specifically in the sample, appeals to emotions can be grouped into three overarching categories: Appeals to (a) rootlessness and belonging, (b) pride, and (c) hatred. These groupings are based on the previous core frames of section 1.

2.1 Belonging and rootlessness

Lubarda describes rootlessness as “humanity’s perennial craving for nature as the atavistic source of stability in tumultuous times”.¹⁷⁵ Many posts appeal to such a feeling of rootlessness, and a desire to discover roots in nature. Images describe the modern world in negative terms, characterized by soullessness and alienation, which is juxtaposed against the sanctuary of nature. For example, Fig. 36.1 describes the modern world as a “trash world” that can only be escaped by returning to a “primal order”. By contrast, nature is described using uplifting language, e.g., “the clear sun of a long noon”. This portrayal creates a binary between a modern, ‘artificial’ world and a reactionary, yet ‘natural’ world. The aim is to appeal to a feeling of rootlessness in the modern world that due to its artificiality cannot provide roots. Instead, there is a “primal order” that people can only ‘feel’, thus representing their true space of belonging.

¹⁷⁴ Schrock et.al., “Emotional Resonance.”

¹⁷⁵ Lubarda, “Far-Right Ecologism,” 724.

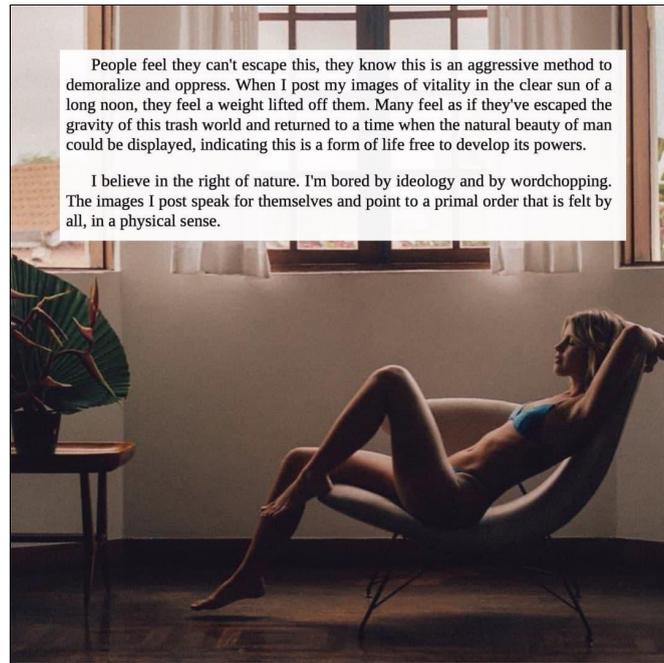


Fig. 36.1: Image of woman lying on a chair with an excerpt from the book “Bronze Age Mindset” (discussed below)

Posts like this aim to put themselves at odds with dominant narrations about the benefits of modern, urban life. This is not unlike Robnett’s description of how certain narrations may appeal not because they agree with dominant ideas, but precisely because they contradict them.¹⁷⁶ By specifically appealing to the negative feelings that may arise from a modern lifestyle, posts aim to provide an alternative reading on the world that provides novel solutions in the form of a ‘return to nature’. Figure 16 is illustrative here. It shows a hooded person in a snowy landscape walking into a pine forest, with the words “Your modern gods mean nothing in this part of the woods”. Visually, the image conveys a deep spiritual connection to nature established through physical proximity to the forest. This seeking for connection and belonging is represented as an individual path illustrated by the single person entering a forest. The forest symbolically represents a need and search for roots in the sense that both tree and person need to be firmly rooted. Additionally, the tree symbolically implies stability, in contrast to an urban lifestyle dominated by disorder. The text establishes a separation between the ‘modern world’ and the forest, and represents nature as a safe and quiet haven in comparison to the hectic, modern world. These ideas thus also relate to the FRE values of nostalgia and spirituality.

¹⁷⁶ Robnett, “Social Location,” 197.

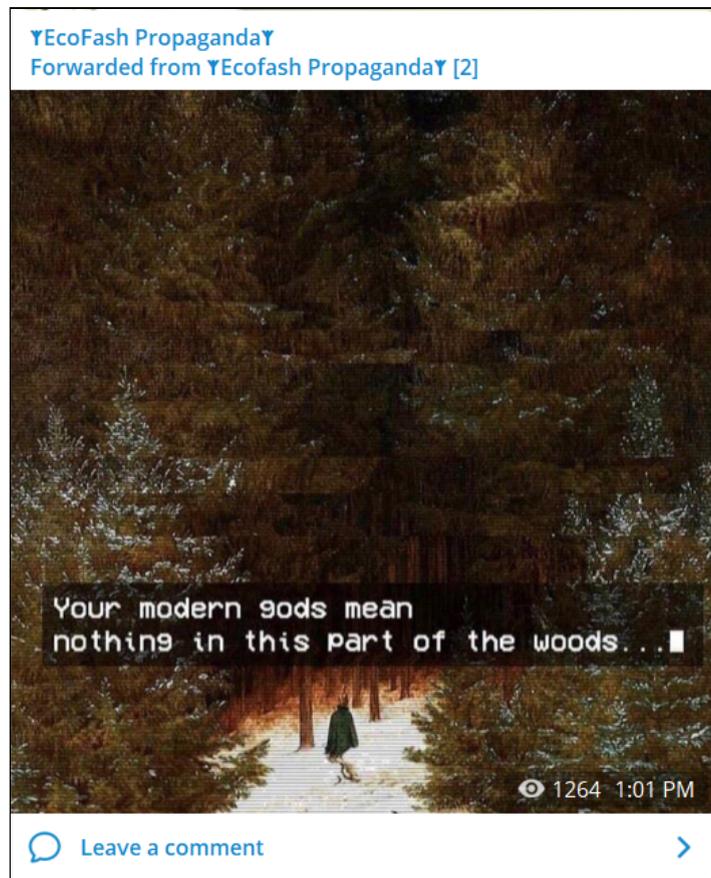


Fig. 16: Lonely person on a snow-covered track in the woods

Furthermore, symbols play a role in appealing to emotions and belonging by making use of Pagan runes which are commonly used by the far-right to convey spiritual messages.¹⁷⁷ These symbols specifically try to invoke ideas about victory, ‘racial purity’, and heritage.¹⁷⁸ For example, Fig 3 portrays the Sun Wheel, the German word *Heimat* (home/origin), and the rune Algiz which is associated with “improving the racial purity of the Reich”.¹⁷⁹ The Pagan Sun Wheel stands for Pagan virtues which are assumed by many white supremacists as if there was a historical continuity between Paganism and white supremacists today.¹⁸⁰ The word *Heimat* directly conveys that this post aims to send a message about origin and belonging which is associated with Pagan traditions and ‘racial purity’. Lastly, the forest in

¹⁷⁷ CARR, “Guide to Online Radical-Right,” 24.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 24-7.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 27

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

the background establishes that nature forms part of one's heritage. Similar to the emotional appeal of symbols described by Mateus, runes thus attempt to connect the symbolic qualities of the rune to the qualities of group members.¹⁸¹



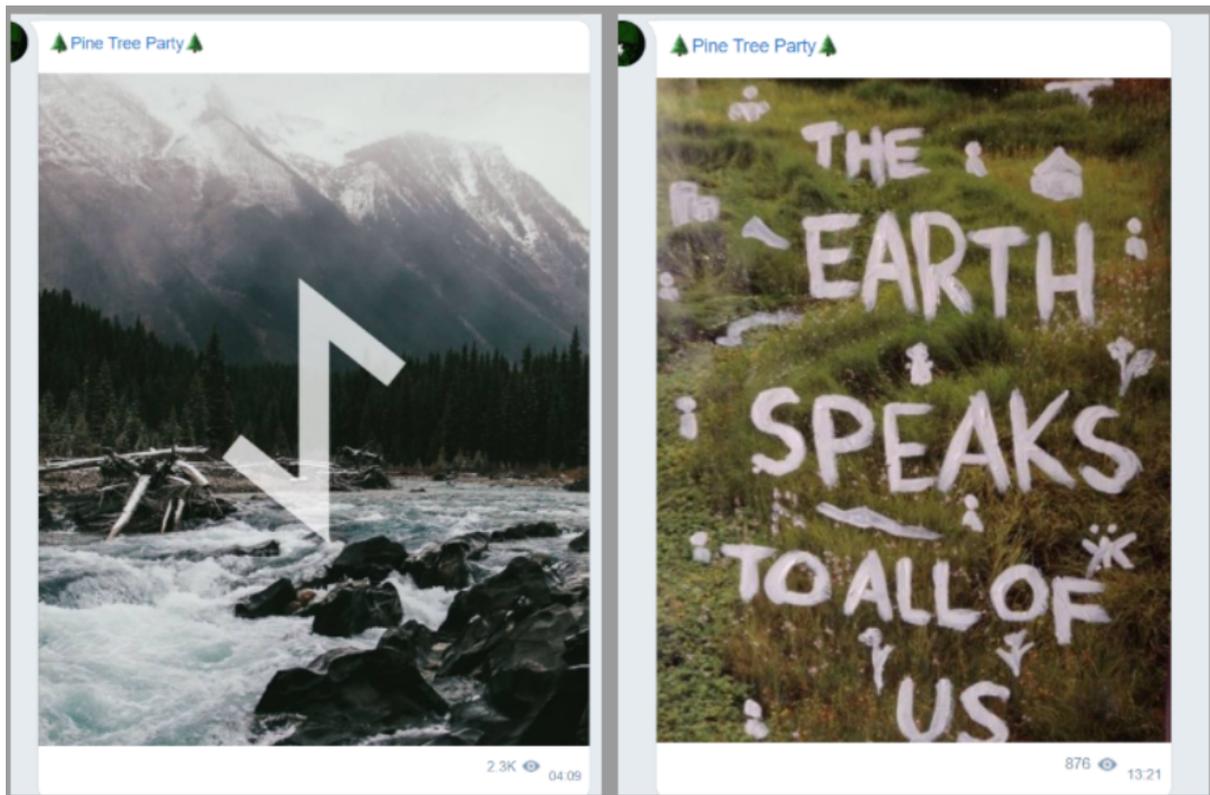
Fig. 3: Black Sun/Sun Wheel, Algiz Rune, the word 'Heimat', and a forest.

Themes of belonging thus also deeply interrelate with ideas about spirituality.¹⁸² Nature is assigned a mythic status as illustrated with Fig. 12 and 6. Figure 6 is especially striking due to the text “The earth speaks to all of us”, suggesting a mythic bond between people and land. Nature is essentially personified as an entity with its own will. Unlike the vengeful nature of the first diagnostic frame, this imagination of nature is peaceful, and promises a deep connection to those who belong to it and are willing to listen. Similarly, Figure 12 shows an idyllic landscape of mountains and river with the Pagan rune *Eiwhaz* which symbolizes mystery or secret knowledge.¹⁸³ Similar to Figure 6, the underlying idea is that those who are close to nature are also privy to some form of hidden knowledge.

¹⁸¹ Mateus, “Affective Rhetoric,” 71.

¹⁸² Lubarda, “Far-Right Ecologism,” 724.

¹⁸³ Andrew Parady, *Extremism and Paganism*, Welwyn Garden City, Herts: Police Pagan Association, 2019.



Figures 12 & 6: Mountainous landscape with river and the Eihwaz rune.

The aim of these images is to appeal to the reader’s own sense of rootlessness by representing the modern world as alienating. Specifically, images create a juxtaposition between the hectic modern world versus the calmness of the forest, a message with a near-universal appeal. At the same time, the images suggest an alternative point of belonging in nature, offering the reader a promise of finding belonging in ecofascism. Pagan symbols form part of the transmission of spiritual messages about nature. As such, posts aim to connect to feelings of distress about the modern world while simultaneously providing narrations of belonging in nature to alleviate the feeling of distress.

2.2 Pride

Appeals to rootlessness and belonging are accompanied by appeals to pride, aiming to further intensify a feeling of alienation from the mainstream while simultaneously increasing a desire to belong to the ‘natural’ order. For instance, Fig. 21 shows a soldier looking at the symbol of the Sun Wheel rising behind the mountains, like a literal sunrise. The words “The sun shines on those who stand” appear next to the soldier. The Sun Wheel is a common white

supremacist symbol appropriated from Paganism and symbolically represents a past supposedly “dominated by a white monoculture”.¹⁸⁴ As such, the Sun Wheel is linked to Pagan practices and connected to an imagined Pagan past to which white supremacists often lay claims.¹⁸⁵ At the same time, The Sun Wheel appears as a literal sun, visually linking the Pagan symbol to the force of nature, creating a nexus between religious-Pagan cultural origin and nature. The glow that shines on the soldier suggests a sense of superiority and pride in one’s heritage. At the same time, the appeal to pride aims to resolve the previous appeals to rootlessness and attempts to establish one’s cultural roots through nature. Thus, not only do posts aim to intensify a narration of belonging and origin, but they also aim to communicate to the reader that they can be proud of this origin. The reader, or so the images seem to communicate, is not lost and rootless in a world of urban landscape but has a place where they belong, and which requires their protection.

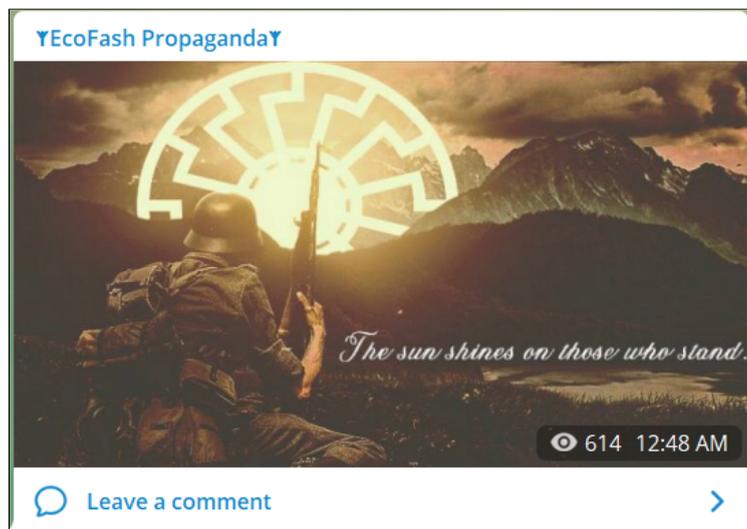


Fig. 21: A soldier looking towards the sun that has the shape of the Sun Wheel. The image text reads “The sun shines on those who stand.”

2.3 Activating emotions: Hatred and anger

The last set of emotions relate to the frames associated with authority by appealing to anger and hatred. As previously identified, the global system is faulted for a variety of issues, ranging from environmental degradation, eradicating group boundaries, to feelings of alienation. Instead of leaving readers with a paralyzing sense of defeat, posts instead aim to transform emotions that may promote violent action. For example, Fig. 11 shows two men

¹⁸⁴ CARR, “Guide to Online Radical-Right,” 12.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

wearing Atomwaffen Division gear and a text that reads: “We find a variety of antagonists on all sides trying to silence our efforts”. In general, militaristic gear occurs frequently, appealing to one’s willingness to fight. The suggestion is that while the current world order is largely negative and alienating, things can still be ameliorated, but only if one does not accept things as they are and is willing to fight.

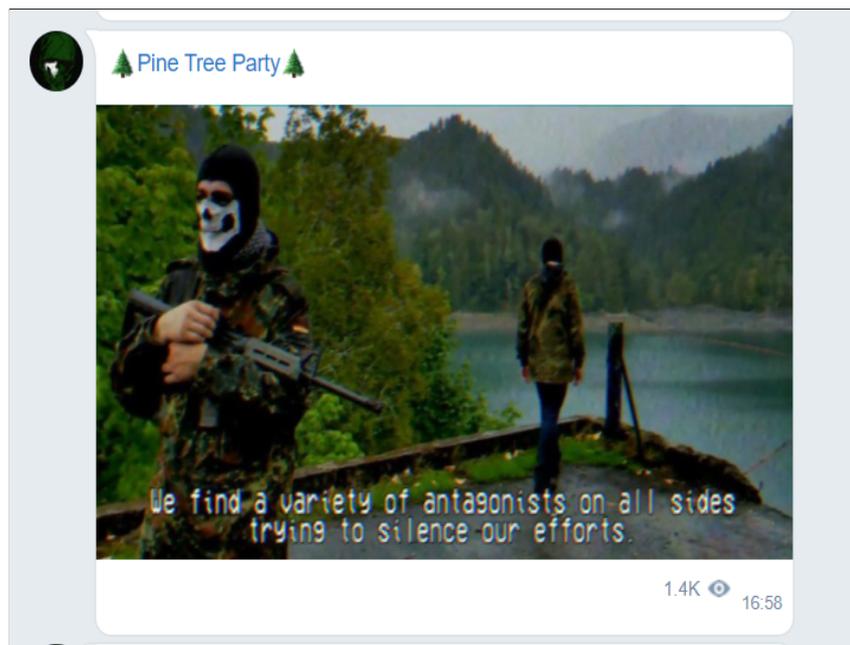


Fig.11: Two men wearing Atomwaffen Division gear. “We find a variety of antagonists on all sides trying to silence our efforts.”

Anger and hatred are important emotions as they aim to promote action. By identifying sets of problems, social movements run the risk of paralyzing their audience with hopelessness, and thus must find a mechanism to motivate their constituents to fight against movement antagonists. Appealing to anger is an effective way of doing so since this emotion usually has a target object, i.e., a concrete enemy to fight against. Posts usually instruct readers that the modern system is their enemy, and, while it is difficult to directly attack something so large and abstract, they also provide ideas about ‘proxies’ to attack that contribute towards the collapse of the system. Examples of this include calls of violence against Jewish people as in Fig. 8. Thus, appealing to anger and hatred can be understood as concrete, emotional mechanisms that attempt to transform frames into violent action.

Overall, by relating diagnostic and prognostic frames to specific emotions, posts often do not simply attempt to appeal to a cognitive understanding of the world. Instead, their

understanding appeals to the emotions and is Manichean, i.e., images show highly utopian worlds which are juxtaposed against a current, dystopian world order.¹⁸⁶ These idealized images of a potential future aim to instil a feeling of belonging and pride, while the negative images of the modern world appeal to rootlessness and anger about being obstructed in one's goal to achieve a utopia. As such, postings attempt to generate emotional resonance with their audience rather than appealing to a purely cognitive understanding of problems.

¹⁸⁶ Lubarda, "Far-Right Ecologism," 724.

Section 3: Contextual shifts

This section addresses how messages and symbols of the posts refer to contextual shifts. The previous sections have already touched on a global context by briefly discussing critique of global capitalism. Section 3 aims to dive further into these ideas while simultaneously connecting them to Bonikowski's concept of contextual shifts. On the basis of his work, there are three global contextual shifts: (a) Economic changes, such as rising inequality; (b) Demographic shifts; and (c) Alienation from mainstream culture. In addition, a fourth global contextual shift of environmental degradation is included. The aim of this section is thus to analyse how content creators put frames and appeals to emotion in a relationship with world events in order to potentially evoke stronger emotional resonance.

Previous research on online extreme right groups and images of nature have shown that postings do not necessarily invoke contextual effects, but rather use nature purely as a symbol. Forchtner and Kølvråa note that images related to nature in extreme right online groups show an absence of “key environmental issues of our time”.¹⁸⁷ Rather, the image of nature is used to create ideals of the family and the nation.¹⁸⁸ Similarly, Bogerts and Fielitz discuss online images of nature as expressing “idealized habitat for the German *Volksgemeinschaft*”, idealized Aryan families, and “cultural supremacy”.¹⁸⁹ In short, previous research has shown that a lot of the nature imagery found in far-right online spaces serves symbolic purposes, and does not comment on ‘real-world’ environmental crises.

While the sample certainly contains posts that use nature purely symbolically, it also shows that white supremacists in these particular Telegram channels *do* worry about environmental degradation. In fact, the need to protect nature is a dominant theme. For example, Figure 15 references logging activity while showing a person in AD gear with a text proclaiming “Shut the fuck up and stop destroying the forest”. The post makes a direct reference to the contextual shift of environmental degradation by mentioning deforestation,

¹⁸⁷ Bernhard Forchtner and C. Kølvråa, “Extreme Right Images of Radical Authenticity: Multimodal Aesthetics of History, Nature, and Gender Roles in Social Media,” *European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology* 4, no. 3 (2017): 260.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Bogerts, Fielitz, “Meme War,” 148.

Volksgemeinschaft translates to ‘national community’ or ‘people’s community’, although the far-right often uses the word *Volk* to refer to people of the same ethnic or ‘racial’ origin. In this case, the word would denote something like ‘racial community’. [Translation mine]

while the military-style clothing of AD suggests that violent means are warranted to protect the forest. Importantly, the forest in this image serves no symbolic purpose as it might do in other images of the sample (such as in Figure 16). Instead, the image plainly represents the issue of deforestation. The only symbolic layering stems from the implication of violence.



Fig. 15: Person in Atomwaffen Division dress and a text in Fraktur script

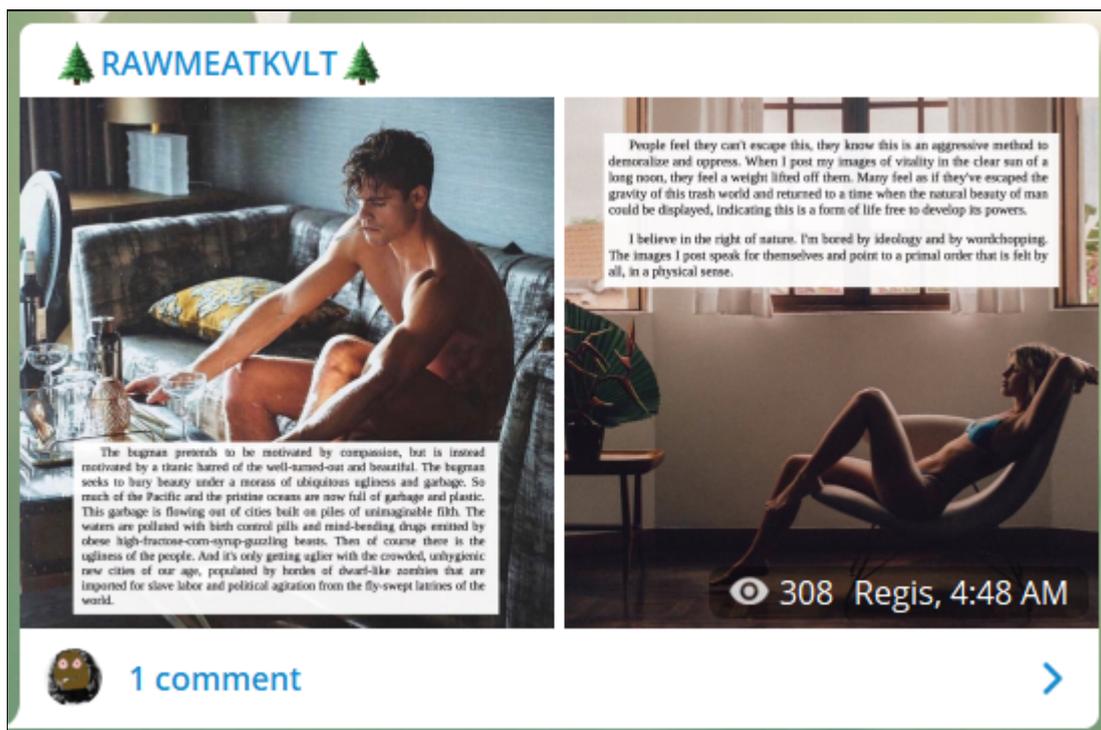


Fig. 36: Two Images with an excerpt from “The Bronze Age Mindset”

Environmental degradation, however, this is not the only contextual shift that is referenced in the sample. In particular, the channel 🌲RAWMEATKVLТ🌲 makes references to a complex array of global situations. For instance, Fig. 36 illustrates a strong occupation with several contextual shifts. The image text quotes a section from the book “Bronze Age Mindset”, and discusses the ‘bugman’, a derogatory term for a left-leaning person that expresses their identity primarily through consumerism.¹⁹⁰ The accusation is that underneath the purchases, the person is spiritually ‘empty’ and a ‘victim’ of an advanced capitalist society.¹⁹¹ The author of the text clearly seeks to distance themselves from consumerism, demonstrating a sense of alienation from mainstream culture. Furthermore, the surrounding world is described as filthy, overpopulated, and ugly, while “pristine oceans are now full of garbage and plastic”, relating to the theme of environmental degradation. Lastly, the text refers to immigrants as “hordes of dwarf-like zombies that are imported for slave

¹⁹⁰ Pervert, Bronze Age. "Bronze Age Mindset." *Independently Published* (2018).

The Bronze Age Mindset is a self-published book on Amazon. There is no academic literature about this text, however, there are some journalistic articles discussing this book as popular among conservatives and alt-right actors in the US. I was also able to access an excerpt of the section quoted in the post.

Ben Schreckinger, “The Alt-right Manifesto That Has Trumpworld Talking,” *POLITICO*. August 23, 2019.

¹⁹¹ Adam Winfield, “Bugmen,” →sync←, September 1, 2019.

labour”, showing racist rhetoric while also taking issue with demographic shifts as well as economic changes brought about by globalisation. Therefore, this post relates to all four different contextual shifts.

Figure 32 shows a similar preoccupation with the ills of society. It portrays a meme discussing the potential harm of ‘destroying civilization’, however, the collage in the background shows negative images that imply that destroying civilization would actually be beneficial. These background images can also be related to a variety of contextual shifts. For instance, there are representations of climate change such as hurricane images, a starving polar bear, and pollution, but also pictures of cramped labour conditions in factories, factory farming, and even images of colonialism. Furthermore, there are some images related to mental health such as a headline about the suicide rates in the US. Overall, this meme brings together as many negative aspects of modern society as possible all of which relate to contextual shifts.



Fig. 32: A meme about the benefits of destroying civilisation

It is fair to say that not every image in the sample refers to contextual shifts. Many images match the analysis of Forchtner and Kølvråa in which they note that depictions of environmental crises are absent.¹⁹² Instead, they link themes of nature to ideological functions, e.g., communicate ideas about fascism and the “majesty of the Fatherland”.¹⁹³ However, there is still a significant subset of images that connect imagery to primarily ongoing environmental crises as well as some other issues of global reach. These images therefore lead to a conclusion different from Forchtner and Kølvråa: In these Telegram channels, images of nature are not merely symbolic to express abstract values, but they also represent real-life situations and disasters.

The relevance of these insights is that while the ideological components of ecofascism may not have changed significantly over the years, they are now brought into connection with a global, shifting context. Most people already intellectually understand the urgency of most of these issues, and, in particular, of environmental crises. Posts simply connect a white supremacist, ecofascist worldview to this already existing cognitive understanding of environmental degradation. Additionally, posts relate images of nature to ideas about belonging, heritage, etc., to make abstract knowledge about environmental crises more personal: The destruction of nature can no longer be separated from personal histories, thus, the cognitive understanding also becomes an emotional understanding of the problem. The overall effect is that a shifting global context marked by environmental crises may lead to the sudden emergence of emotional resonance by making ecofascist framings more relevant to the daily lives of their audience.

Furthermore, the increasing occurrence of environmental disaster may increase the demand for alternate framings that help people make sense of environmental catastrophe.¹⁹⁴ Increasing awareness around climate change and its connection to modes of capitalist production may make people more susceptible to alternate narratives that criticize these aspects of society while also promising solutions about a utopian future in restored nature. Connecting framings to real issues of environmental catastrophe may thus be understood as both accidental (since the existence these framings precede the existence of the current

¹⁹² Forchtner 2019, “Extreme-Right Biodiversity,” 260.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 266.

¹⁹⁴ Bonikowski, “Collective Resentment,” S181-S213.

environmental crises) and as strategic (since frame articulators likely understand that the shifting global context makes their framings more relevant).

Section 4: Emotional framing and motivating action

This final section of chapter 4 aims to summarize and combine the results of the preceding section, and to assemble a complete image of emotional resonance. Thus, this section also aims to show how the elements of core frames, appeals to emotions, and contextual shift of environmental degradation lead to the emergence of emotional resonance as in Diagram 1. By showing the combined effect of the elements of the model, this chapter aims to answer the research question by showing how emotional resonance emerges in the illustrative example of ecofascist Telegram channels and how this may contribute towards motivating violence. Additionally, it will establish a link back to the theoretical literature to show how these insights connect to a larger body of work.

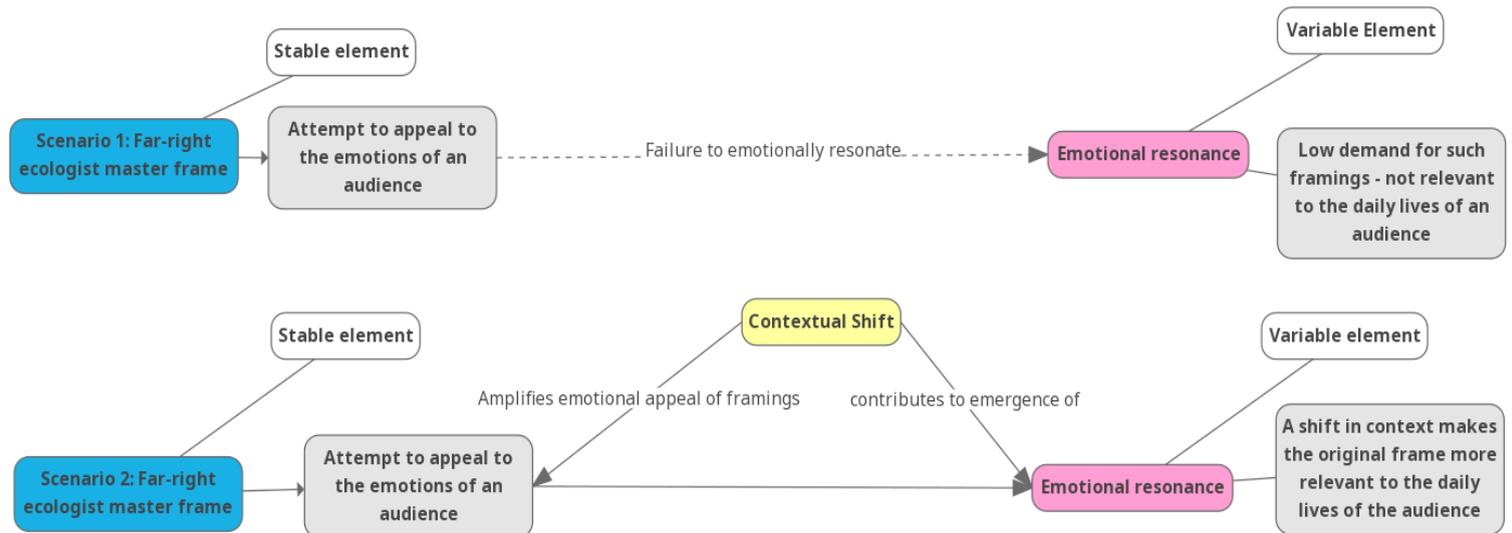


Diagram 1: A model of emotional resonance in FRE (same as page 26).

The first section of chapter 4 identified the dominant diagnostic and prognostic frames in the sample. The far-right ecologism framework hereby acted as a prism to help organize the content into distinct themes. The primary diagnostic frames concerned the need to upkeep a supposed natural order (naturalism, and authority), and the disrupted unity between people and environment (organicism & autarky). On the other hand, the prognostic frames suggested a need to return to an idyllic past or way of living in order to re-establish the ‘organic whole’

(nostalgia, and spirituality), and violence as the only means to achieve this goal (authority). Within these frames, there are attempts to appeal to the emotional lives of their constituents as specified in section 2. Specifically, these appeals to emotions include rootlessness, a sense of pride in one's cultural heritage, and hatred and anger. These appeals to emotions aim to go beyond an intellectual understanding of framings by establishing a connection to the emotional lives of their constituents. Lastly, section 3 specified contextual shifts whereby mentions of global environmental catastrophes were dominant. These shifts in context may contribute towards the emergence of emotional resonance. By connecting framings to environmental crises, frame articulators attempt to make framings more relevant to the daily lives of their constituents.

According to McDonnell et.al and Bonikowski, frames and targeted appeals to emotions are not necessarily sufficient to generate emotional resonance.¹⁹⁵ Frames and appeals to emotions also need to be in connection with the global political, social, and economic context in order to be relevant to the daily lives of the audience. Sometimes, such connections emerge spontaneously, i.e., framings stay the same, but a change in context suddenly makes them more relevant.¹⁹⁶ While previous authors have established that ecofascist online content does not necessarily make connections to a global context, the sample from Telegram shows a different picture:¹⁹⁷ Content creators specifically relate posts to a global context characterized by environmental degradation and other contextual effects. While ecofascist ideology dates back over a century, this change of global context can give renewed relevance to the ideology and lead to the emergence of emotional resonance. At the same time, frame articulators are able to strategically connect ecofascist framings to a context marked by environmental crises to intensify the relevance and urgency of their framings.

While appeals to emotions, and contextual effects both contribute towards the resonance of the framings, it is possible to further specify how these elements work in conjunction with each other. Firstly, many images appeal to *cognitive* understanding of environmental degradation before appealing to emotions. For instance, images depict issues of environmental catastrophe that are likely familiar to the audience, such as logging and climate change. Many people are aware that these are serious issues that require intervention,

¹⁹⁵ McDonnell et.al., "Theory of Resonance."; Bonikowski, "Collective resentment."

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Forchtner, Kølvrå, "Extreme Right Images," 260.

thus, images aim to grab the attention of the viewer with something that at this stage may be a purely intellectual understanding of a problem. However, understanding that environmental crises are a problem does not necessarily mean that the audience can relate to it *emotionally*.

Establishing an emotional connection to the framings is the second strategic element. This occurs by interrelating themes of environmental crises with white supremacist ideology. Specifically, postings draw on ideas that make attacks on the environment highly relevant to one's sense of self. Framings of nature create elaborate storylines about inherent connections between people and land, and of spiritual unity with nature. These images are juxtaposed to modern life that is represented as inherently alienating, destructive, and undignified. Appeals to emotions specifically concern these feelings of alienation and rootlessness, while suggesting that white supremacist and ecofascist ideology can offer relief and a sense of belonging. Idealized pictures of idyllic landscapes that aim to communicate a sense of spirituality are blended with images of real environmental catastrophe. With this, environmental degradation is no longer a distant problem that can only be understood intellectually but is made directly relevant to the *emotional lives* of the audience by relating it to personal feelings that may arise from issues with the modern world. In other words, the separation between nature and the audience is broken down, and environmental crises change from a distant problem to becoming a *personal* problem.

Thirdly, by bridging between a cognitive and emotional understanding of environmental crises that make such issues directly relevant to the daily lives of their audience, content creators are able to make more convincing calls to violence. Since nature can no longer be separated from one's personal life and from one's social group, the destruction of the environment is ultimately an attack against one's own people. Such an attack then warrants self-defence, explaining the frequent invocations of warfare. It also makes violence seem like the only reasonable response to what is ultimately portrayed as an existential threat. In this way, the emotional resonance that arises through a direct relationship to contextual effects contributes towards the effectiveness of calls to violence. In the words of Forchtner: the "protection of the ecosystem implies protection of the specific cultural formations wedded to it".¹⁹⁸

This final step specifies the role of emotional resonance for motivational frames, the "call to arms" movements engage in to motivate their audience to engage in social movement

¹⁹⁸ Forchtner 2019, "Extreme-Right Biodiversity," 294.

action.¹⁹⁹ One of the overarching goals of these channels is encouraging their members to engage in violence. Emotions form an important mechanism to encourage their audience to respond to such a call to violence. A purely cognitive understanding of the urgency of environmental crises may not be sufficient to promote action. The appeal to emotions is the element that ultimately makes a motivational frame convincing and thus is potentially able to promote violence.²⁰⁰

It is worthwhile illustrating how direct and detailed such calls for violence get with Fig. A. This image was not included in the sample as this specific post represents general white supremacist themes rather than relating to far-right ecologism. Nonetheless, it is a perfect example of a direct call for violence that occurs alongside otherwise nature-themed Telegram channels. While remaining purposefully vague, the posts provide readers with ideas of where to carry out a terrorist attack while implying their own terrorist intention. The poster described that they left their job and purchased a weapon, suggesting that they may or may not plan a terrorist attack. The poster also suggests railroad tracks, substations, and water treatment plants as good targets since they are unguarded. The post is purposefully non-specific, yet the intention is clear: Channel members are motivated to plan out their own attacks.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 617-8.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 617.

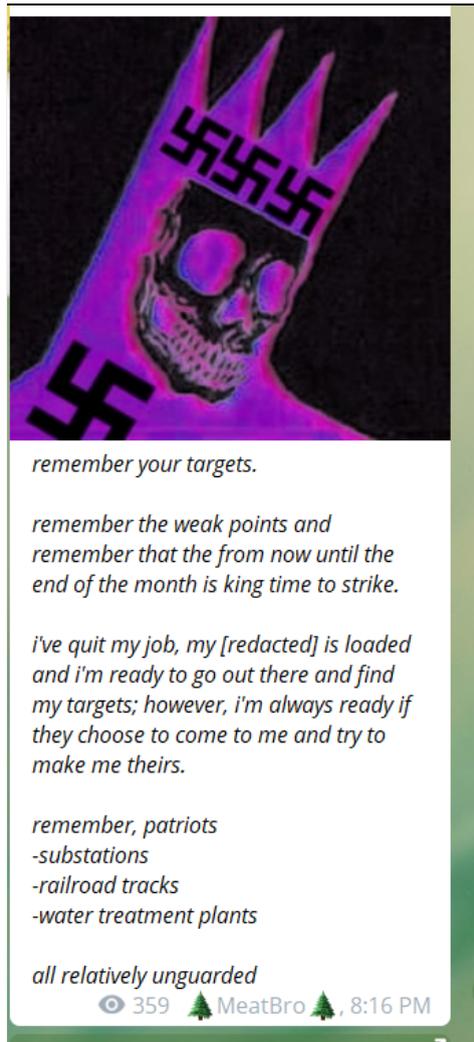


Fig. A: Image illustrating an encouragement to engage in terrorism. Image is not from the sample.

Conclusion

While ecofascism is an ideology that dates back to the Nazi era, it has recently found new relevance in far-right online forums and as a motivator for terrorist attacks. Yet, this renewed relevance of ecofascism on the far-right begs the question how far-right actors are suddenly able to resonate with their audience using a century-old ideology. This question was the starting point of inquiry of this thesis which was addressed using the framing approach. Frame analysis and specifically the adjacent concept of emotional resonance offer ways of explaining how ecofascist content is able to establish relevance to the daily lives of their audience. Additionally, the concept of contextual shifts was used to establish a relationship between framings, emotions, and global context changes.²⁰¹ Lastly, the thesis made use of the far-right ecologism framework and aimed to theoretically connect the framework to frame analysis.

The analysis aimed to demonstrate an interplay between framings, emotions and mentions of contextual changes. It intended to show how the ecofascist understanding of the world is paired with specific appeals to emotions as well as by establishing connections to contextual effects. In particular, issues of environmental degradation as connected to the destruction of one's group and connection to nature are central. Establishing a connection to real occurrence in the world increases the emotional resonance of framings by relating ideas to problems familiar to a large audience which make framings directly relevant to their daily lives.

Thus, the research question - *How does emotional resonance emerge within far-right ecologist online content that aims to incite violence in the case of posts of far-right ecologist Telegram channels collected between May and July 2021?* - can be answered as follows: Content creators on far-right ecologist Telegram channel establish a connection between framings and the contextual effect of environmental degradation. This contributes towards a cognitive understanding of the audience regarding the urgency of the situation. However, posts aim to go beyond a mere intellectual understanding of the situation and aim to invoke

²⁰¹ Rueda, "Neoecofascism.";
Lubarda, "Far-Right Ecologism."

negative emotions about the modern world which are juxtaposed against a utopian future world vision that appeals to more positive feelings. These appeals to emotions also aim to make environmental crises a personal rather than abstract issue that is directly relevant to issues of belonging and spirituality. Thus, ecofascist ideology receives renewed relevance and generates emotional resonance by establishing an intimate link to the personal lives of their audience.

Furthermore, there are following key takeaways: Firstly, the coincidental existence of environmental crises such as climate change contribute towards the emotional resonance of ecofascist ideology without necessitating a change to framings.²⁰² Secondly, frame articulators make strategic use of this coincidence by connecting framings to this new context. Thirdly, the increasing frequency of environmental disasters may lead to a heightened demand from the audience for alternative framings to make sense of the situation, and ecofascism is one ideology that responds to this demand.²⁰³ Lastly, ecofascists respond to this demand by using framings that are at odds with dominant narrations about the positive effects of the modern world.²⁰⁴ Instead, they emphasize negativity and a sense of decay about the current world order.

The results are relevant in following ways: Environmental effects such as climate change are becoming ever more pressing global issues which are evidently concerning to many people. Messages that urge an audience to act against environmental degradation are likely to become more relevant and resonant as climate change progresses. Furthermore, many people are aware of a connection between environmental crises and growth-driven capitalist practices. Thus, anti-capitalist framings that advocate for environmental protection are likely to gain in relevance. This may make concerns over the environment a new entry point into white supremacist ideology which, as in the case of the Telegram channels, may make use of environmentalist framings.

Secondly, due to the urgency of environmental crises, ecofascist framings may become more effective at motivating violent actions. This can be demonstrated by several recent right-wing terrorist attacks, such as the Christchurch Mosque Shooting and the El Paso Shooting. Both shooters cited disdain for the current global capitalist system and expressed

²⁰² Bonikowski, "Collective resentment."; McDonnell et.al., "Theory of Resonance."

²⁰³ Bonikowski, "Collective resentment."

²⁰⁴ Robnett, "Social Location," 197.

an interest in preserving the environment as motivations for their actions.²⁰⁵ In particular, they admitted to accelerationist intentions and wanted to contribute towards the destabilization of the current system through their actions.²⁰⁶ This is very similar to the accelerationist themes in the channels which are often directly related to calls for violence. As such, ecofascist online forums of the far-right represent a concerning trend and may contribute towards motivating further right-wing terrorist attacks.

Future Research

There are some opportunities to further expand the FRE framework. For example, images of masculinity and traditional manhood were often part of the Telegram channels. This includes images of men with weapons with a forestry background. Such images could suggest a search for an ancestral masculinity that is rooted in nature and therefore more ‘authentic’ and ‘natural’. Such themes have also been identified in the Christchurch manifesto in which manhood is often brought together with violence and the need to fight for one’s home country.²⁰⁷ It would be possible to also explore the relationship between these traditional representations of masculinity and globalising forces that may challenge visions of masculinity. It could thus be worthwhile analysing this relationship between nature and masculinity in order to include it in the FRE framework.

Furthermore, it is also worthwhile tracking all the ideological influences that play a role in far-right ecogism. The term ‘ecofascism’ is often exclusively associated with its Nazi predecessor, however, there seem to be a variety of influences from more recent sources. The influence of Ted Kaczynski’s manifesto is a relevant example here as this text is frequently referred to in posts, yet Kaczynski himself has never been affiliated with the far-right but continues to influence the far-right’s understanding of nature. This example illustrates the ideological complexities of far-right environmentalism that is not simply an ‘echo chamber’ in which old ideas are repeated but rather a space in which more recent ideas about the world are avidly adopted. Some attempts at this have recently been made in a MA

²⁰⁵ Davey, Ebner, “Violent Consequences.”

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ A. Önnfors, et.al., “‘The Great Replacement’: Decoding the Christchurch Terrorist Manifesto.” *Report by the Centre for the Analysis of the Radical Right* (2019).

thesis published at Baylor University which identified some ecofascist subtypes, illustrating the potential of this area of research.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁸ Smith, “The (Re)Emergence of Eco-Fascism.”

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Appendices

Appendix A - Glossary of Terms

a. Ideologies

Far-right: An umbrella term for the extreme and radical right.²⁰⁹ According to Am and Weimann it is “a political ideology that centres on one or more of the following elements: strident nationalism (usually racial or exclusivist in some fashion), fascism, racism, anti-Semitism, anti-immigration, chauvinism, nativism, anti-LGBTQ, and xenophobia”.²¹⁰

Extreme Right: Refers to an ideological movement which rejects democratic values and aims to encourage violence against ‘movement enemies’.²¹¹ Racial nationalism is a core belief of the extreme right.²¹² Furthermore, ethnonationalism is shared by both the extreme and radical right.²¹³ According to ADL, the extreme right includes different sub-groups that can be seen as distinct, for example the white supremacist and Neo-Nazi movements, and the ‘patriot’ movement in the US.²¹⁴

Radical Right: Refers to an ideological movement that does not reject democratic values but aims to replace dominant elites.²¹⁵ Cultural nationalism is an ideological component of the radical right.²¹⁶ It shares a belief in ethnonationalism with the extreme right (see above).²¹⁷

²⁰⁹ Prof. Tore Bjørgo and Dr. Jacob Aasland Ravndal, “Extreme-Right Violence and Terrorism: Concepts, Patterns, and Responses,” ICCT (2019): 3.

²¹⁰ Ari Ben Am and Gabriel Weimann, “Fabricated Martyrs the Warrior-Saint Icons of Far-Right Terrorism,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 14, no. 5 (2020): 133.

²¹¹ Bjørgo and Ravndal, “Extreme-Right Violence”, 3.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ “Extreme Right / Radical Right / Far Right,” Anti-Defamation League.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ According to ADL, radical and extreme right are synonymous with each other, however, not everyone agrees with this. For more conceptual depth and detail, I am using Prof. T. Bjørgo and Prof. J. A. Ravndal’s definition in preference of ADL in this instance.

Alt-Right: A loosely organized, far-right movement in the United States that advocates an ethnonationalist worldview, and has a tendency towards racial nationalism, though not as strongly as the Extreme Right.²¹⁸

Racial nationalism: A belief in a hierarchical existence of ‘races’, associated with the extreme right.²¹⁹

Ethnonationalism: A belief that people of different ethnic origins should be physically separated and remain in the countries of origin.²²⁰ Associated with both the extreme and radical right as well as the alt-right.

Cultural Nationalism: A belief in the hierarchical nature of different cultures, i.e., the existence of superior and inferior cultures, associated with the radical right.²²¹

Ecological radicalism: A form of extreme environmental protectionism, usually associated with the left of the political spectrum.²²²

Ecofascism: A form of extreme environmental protectionism, usually associated with the right of the political spectrum. It originates from the Romanticists of the early 19th century and is based on a rejection of enlightenment values in favour of finding transcendent unity in nature.²²³ It was later adopted by the Nazis and incorporated in other ideological movements such as *Blut und Boden* and the *Völkisch* movement.²²⁴ This thesis uses ecofascism as an umbrella term for extreme right environmentalism.

²¹⁸ Bjørgo and Ravndal, “Extreme-Right Violence,” 4.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Rueda, Daniel. "Neoecofascism: The Example of the United States." *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 14, no. 2 (2020): 96.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid.

Blut und Boden (Blood and Soil): An ideology that holds that the nation consists of shared ‘racial’ traits and a shared territory.²²⁵ In other words, there is a “metaphysical symbiosis between the Volk, its culture, and nature”.²²⁶

Völkisch Movement: A movement in Nazi Germany that conceptualized nature as a “living and mystic creature”, and which rejected the worldview of the sciences and values associated with industrialization in which nature was conceptualized as ‘dead’.²²⁷ Closely related to *Blut und Boden* (see above).

Nativism: According to the Anti-Defamation League, Nativism characterizes a trend of policy expressly for protecting an established group of people from perceived outsiders or immigrants.²²⁸

Neoeofascism: A term by Daniel Rueda. A form of modern ecofascism associated with the alt-right in the US.²²⁹

Far-right ecologism: A framework by Balsa Lubarda that identifies an ideal type of modern ecofascism, and which aims to be more precisely defined than ecofascism.²³⁰ It consists of 5 core values which are Naturalism, Spirituality and Mysticism, Authority, Organicism and autarky, and Nostalgia and Manicheanism.

b. People and Groups

Ted Kaczynski: The most well-known mail bomber in United States’ history, active from 1978 until 1995. Motivated by what has been called a ‘green anarchist’ or ‘anarcho-primitivist’ agenda, he sent 16 bombs that killed three and injured 23 people.²³¹ Kaczynski published a manifesto in which he rejected industrial society.

²²⁵ Rueda, “Neoeofascism.”

²²⁶ Ibid., 99.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Anti-Immigrant Sentiment,” Anti-Defamation League (Anti-Defamation League), 2021.

²²⁹ Ibid., 107.

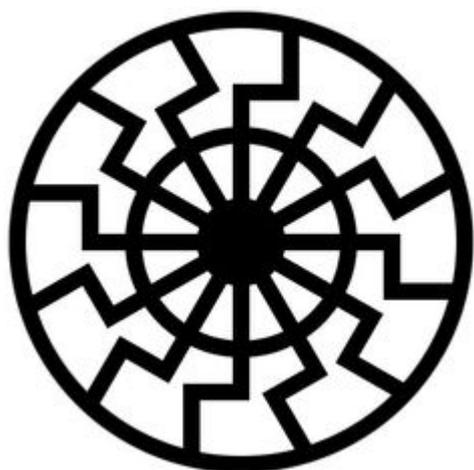
²³⁰ Lubarda, “Beyond Ecofascism,” 713-732.

²³¹ “Extremist Violence through the Mail,” Anti-Defamation League, October 26, 2018.

Atomwaffen Division: Formed at some point between 2013 and 2015 by white supremacists via the now-defunct neo-Nazi forum, *Iron March*, Atomwaffen Division is a neo-Nazi terrorist organization. They are Accelerationists dedicated to the cause of “contributing to the collapse of Western civilization”²³².

Pine Tree Gang: A loosely associated group of white nationalist/ecofascist separatists that share an accelerationist ideology. Initially associating themselves with the beliefs of Unabomber Theodore Kaczynski, and active on Twitter, they now blend their ideas with white supremacy on Telegram.²³³ This armed group creates propaganda related to rejecting modernity, materialism, technology, and contemporary work culture.²³⁴

c. Symbols



Black Sun/Sun Wheel: A pervasive image in numerous radical-right groups associated with white supremacy, the current interpretation of the “Black Sun” was first utilized in 1964 by the GBM (Greater Britain Movement) political party. It is extremely similar to the Wewelsburg symbol created by the Nazi party and is almost identical in appearance and purpose. Associated with Pagan Europe, “a member of the GBM described the Sun Wheel in

²³² “A Guide to Online Radical-Right Symbols, Slogans and Slurs,” *A Guide to Online Radical-Right Symbols, Slogans and Slurs* (Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right, 2020).

²³³ “Pine Tree Gang (PTG) - White Nationalist Separatist / Cascadian Region,” TRAC.

²³⁴ Ibid.

their party logo as, ‘forming a close link with the Nordic religion that flourished in Saxon Britain before the coming of foreign imported Christianity.’”²³⁵

ƒ	ANSUZ	A	Of the Æsir (Gods)	ƒ
ᚷ	BERKANA	B	Birch, Sanctuary, Birth	ᚷ
ᚨ	KENAZ	C, K or Q	Torch, Knowledge	ᚨ
ᚱ	DAGAZ	D	Day, Enlightenment	
ᚺ	EHWAZ	E	Horse, Trust	
ᚼ	FEHU	F	Wealth, Cattle	ᚼ
ᚸ	GEBO	G	Gift, Sacrifice, Marriage	
ᚹ	HAGALAZ	H	Hail, Change	ᚹ
ᚻ	ISA	I	Ice, Stillness	ᚻ
ᚾ	JERA	J or Y	Harvest, Year	ᚾ
ᚿ	LAGUZ	L	Water, Lake	ᚿ
ᚫ	MANNAZ	M	Man, Awareness	ᚫ

Elder Futhark: A variation of ancient Germanic, English, and Norse alphabets. Each character or rune in the Futhark alphabet has numerous emotional and conceptual associations. While the Futhark characters themselves are not rooted in any specific ideological tradition, they are often used by right-wing groups.²³⁶



Algiz: A rune associated with protection, divinity, and livestock.²³⁷ The far-right associates it with “increasing the birth rate of ‘Aryan’ children”.²³⁸

²³⁵ Andrew Parady, *Extremism and Paganism*, Welwyn Garden City, Herts: Police Pagan Association, 2019.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid.

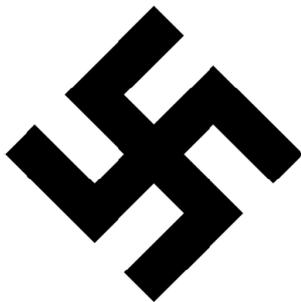
²³⁸ CARR, “Guide to Online Radical-Right,” 27.



Tiwaz: A rune associated with the god Týr, honour, justice, and sacrifice.²³⁹ Previously the official symbol of ‘blood and soil’, the far-right associated it with ‘race’ and ‘purity’.²⁴⁰



Sowilo/Sigal: A rune associated with the sun, this one’s Younger Futhark variation is recognizable as the one appropriated by the SS for their iconography and to symbolize eventual victory over their enemies.²⁴¹



Swastika: Once known as a symbol used across ancient Europe, Asia, and the Indian subcontinent, it was also used by Norse tribes (and known as the Fylfot rune). It was eventually expropriated by the Nazi party.²⁴²

²³⁹ Andrew Parady, “Extremism and Paganism.”

²⁴⁰ CARR, “Guide to Online Radical-Right,” 26.

²⁴¹ Andrew Parady, “Extremism and Paganism.”

CARR, “Guide to Online Radical-Right,” 25.

²⁴² Andrew Parady, “Extremism and Paganism.”

