

The National Socialist Movement of the United States and the turn to environmentalism –

Greenfingers or Brownshirts?

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Abstract

One of the largest North American neo-Nazi groups, the National Socialist Movement, became a prominent feature of protests especially around the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville. Through a multimodal analysis of its visual propaganda and supporting texts, this chapter explores how a key anti-democratic extreme-right actor within the United States far right has circulated traditional fascist and National Socialist tropes via the language of environmentalism. The chapter explores how the traditional Nazi understanding of the linkages between people and place, known as *Blut und Boden* (Blood and Soil), meant that environmentalist language and concern of the landscape could be used to transmit complex ideas to those within and without the movement. It also examines how appeals to a greater environmental good, and threat to the environment, are utilised in ecofascist rhetoric. This includes consideration of how visual discourse around the environment helped create a sacred space, and how this helped develop the sense of a cultic milieu. It also shows how ‘eco-activism’, custodianship of ‘the land’ (and its border) and outdoorsmanship were used to create a welcoming environmental space that the movement staked a claim to, and which it used to try and draw people deeper into the milieu.

Keywords

ecology; ecofascism; settler colonialism; cultic milieu; sacred space; heroic nationalism; green politics; fascist minimum

Introduction

While the Nazi phrase *Blut und Ehre* (Blood and Honour) is one many are familiar with due to its continuing legacy, in particular in neo-Nazi music and the eponymously named international music network, there was another similar phrase: *Blut und Boden* (Blood and Soil). Originating in nineteenth century nationalist thought, this phrase connected the concept of a people, the blood, with a specific land or place, the soil. More than this, it furthermore highlighted those unconnected to the land and its cultivation, as a threatening corruption (Kiernan, 2007: 2-9). Within Nazi Germany, the concept championed rural living, outdoor pursuits, and contrasted this with what they argued were the unconnected and transitive natures of their identified racial enemies, in particular the Jewish and Roma diasporas. As Uekoetter (2006) explores in *The Green & the Brown*, this appeal to environmentalism and the use of its language helped sections of the environmentalist movement more easily cooperate with the Nazi regime.

Blood and Soil linked Nazi and fascist ideals around the strength and purity of their people to concepts of the natural environment and the preservation of an idealised rural landscape. Dixon and Wallwork (2004), though focusing on the British nationalist milieu, also identified the natural geographical landscape as one area developed by nationalisms in support of identity politics. The natural landscape and its boundaries became a way of dividing those within from those without, an opportunity for the creation of a motivating threat through the depiction of an imagined, idealised natural heritage under pressure. Often, fascist movements discursively constructed such threat and pressure by claiming that existing power structures fail to address an issue of concern due to some form of corruption or subversive influence, and that only the fascist leadership, representing the true voice of the people, could prevent disaster (Griffin, 1993: 41-43). Furthermore, this environment is an imagined space with an idealised landscape – freeing the far right from often problematic narratives of the land the groups occupied (Boggs, 2019). Indeed, such a settler colonialist attitude, of an imagined *terra nullius* waiting for the imprint of White Europeans, has also played an important role in the development of the American identity (Glenn, 2015).

Against this background, this chapter will examine, first, the extent to which this connection with the physical environment, and its custodianship, is present within a leading actor of the contemporary American neo-Nazi movement. Second, it will investigate to what extent these expressions of concern over the environment are recognisable offshoots of mainstream environmentalism or whether they are a novel re-framing of traditional fascist tropes. That is, it will consider how far environmental concern, for a real or an imagined landscape, has been retained as a key part of at least some of these continuing fascist legacies – in essence examining whether environmentalism still burns within what Macklin (2007: 15) referred to as fascism's 'Sacred Flame'.

To do so, this chapter analyses the National Socialist Movement (NSM) – one of the most prominent and largest of the American neo-Nazi movements which was founded in 1974. More specifically, the chapter will consider their main propaganda outputs – specifically their website, their magazine *National Socialist Movement Magazine*, the precursor magazine *Stormtrooper*, and fliers distributed to local chapters for them to reprint and use. The chapter will examine content available on their website, from the time of the Charlottesville protests of August 2017, where the NSM gathered in support of the Unite the Right Rally, up until August of 2020. In analysing environmental activism and communication over this three-year period, this chapter will focus on what can be identified as three crucial campaigns by the NSM: from a classic case of eco-activism around the Adopt-A-Highway program that saw the NSM take responsibility for keeping a stretch of roadway clean to campaigns to protect the Mexican border and the promotion of outdoor activities.

The primary focus will be on their use of the environment and environmentalism within their visual outputs, 278 images in total, and how these are presented alongside textual material. This draws on Wozniak et al. (2015) who highlighted the need to consider the visual alongside its corresponding text in a multimodal fashion. This was built upon by Hansen (2017), who argued that textual context plays an important role in influencing how that environmental imagery is then understood. The chapter will also draw upon understandings of the far right as cultural movements, seeking to carefully cultivate and craft their own internal milieu as highlighted by the work of Copsey (Copsey, 2004;

Copsey and Richardson, 2015: 1). Visual references have also long played a part in cultural propagation amongst the far right, but have found new utility in the internet era where the far right have begun to use websites, YouTube, static meme images and social media to engage new audiences with images that can often reference or evoke earlier periods of far right strength such as the Third Reich (Klein, 2020; Rodriguez-Serrano et al., 2021).

Within these outputs, the NSM transmitted their cultural ideals to their members, but also sought to motivate them to act against what the NSM presented as threats to the nation and its environment. These messages often encourage members to take action despite the cost to themselves, and through a romanticised concept of the natural environment that offers an opportunity to revitalise the country – what Zimmerman (1995; see also Taylor, 2019) and others have called ecofascism. This particular fusing of fascist and environmental concepts rejects the biocentrism of radical ecology and instead is concerned with the impact the degeneration of nature has on the nation, as a society and in the conceived strength of the individuals within it. Rather than arguing for action to defend nature for nature's sake, it instead seeks to re-address the balance between man and nature for the continued moral and physical health of man, and by restoring that balance undo the decline and degeneration fascists see in modern society. In identifying the renewed relevance of ecofascism, Campion (2021) also highlights how the ecological harmony sought within ecofascism acts in effect as a call for racial segregation, but racial segregation that very much identifies races and peoples with the land and sense of place, with their home environment. As such, it is important as well to note that this chapter will be dealing with the extreme right section of the far right which rejects democracy, is often seen as violent and views the broader political establishment (including right and even other far right actors) as somehow corrupted or weak (Mudde 2019: 30-31).

In what follows, this chapter will, first, examine the campaigns around the Adopt-A-Highway program before turning to, second, campaigns to protect the Mexican border. It will, third, consider the ways in which environmental imagery was used as part of an appeal to return to outdoor activities,

with the creation of sacred spaces within NSM camps and activities, and the ways this represented the ecofascist notion of a restoration of moral and national health.

Neo-Nazism and the U.S. environment

As well as understanding and considering the ideological context, it is important to remember the historical context in which these movements exist. In the post-war period, Stone argued that Europe had settled into an anti-fascist consensus, that the experience of the Second World War had entrenched a passive cultural aversion to open fascism (Stone, 2014: 10). As Jackson (2014) observes, this discreditation of open fascism and Nazism went beyond the European continent and impacted in America as well, with openly fascist movements forced to seek connections internationally between one another rather than with a public that eschewed them as an undesirable fringe. Though, compared to Europe, there were also reasons that America in particular saw such open Nazism and neo-Nazism continue to exist even in the hostile cultural environment, in particular the broad American approach to Freedom of Speech (Mudde, 2018: 4-8). To survive in these hostile cultural environments, the fascist movements stripped away parts of fascist ideology as part of an adaptation that would ensure they could survive either in their own right or as a groupuscule within larger organisations. This reduced fascist ideological core – Macklin’s aforementioned ‘Sacred Flame’ – was more transmissible, thus, enabling its survival and its spread, often by the adaptation of other ideas that were still acceptable to wider society. Concern for the environment and increased activism for ecological causes can be argued to be one of these tropes – increasingly important to mainstream society and offering a rich language of counterculture that they could seek to infiltrate.

It must also be considered that within American mainstream society there has been the idealisation of rural communities and an imagined landscape. Goddard explored how Virginia Lee Burton’s *Little House on the Prairie*, first published in 1940, created a strong sense of anti-urbanism amongst the increasingly urban post-war American public (Goddard, 2011). It also engendered a conservationism and environmental concern, linking the simplicity of this preserved rural idyll with a

moral purity or simpleness that was attractive to a nation undergoing the upheavals of the early post-war years. These ideas fit well alongside the concepts of rebirth and renewal that nationalisms, including fascism, sought to evoke, where a decadent or decaying contemporary society is swept away in pursuit of the moral strength and purity of an earlier idealised age as the launching point for a new fascist future (Griffin, 1993: 32-36).

The most influential strand of post-war national socialism in America was George Lincoln Rockwell's American Nazi Party, who espoused a blend of open Nazism with classical American tropes – Rockwell himself was often pictured with a corn cob pipe and a Winchester repeating rifle. Following from Rockwell's assassination in 1967, several offshoots were founded by members seeking to continue this legacy (Clark, 2006). The NSM, founded in 1974 by Robert Brannen and Cliff Herrington, is one of these offshoots and its legacy then is very clearly from the avowedly Nazi political culture. By 1994 leadership had passed to Jeff Schoep under whom the NSM became the largest of the American neo-Nazi organisations by 2009, active across the country (Balleck, 2018: 242-243, 324-325; *Southern Poverty Law Centre – National Socialist Movement* n.d.). Charlottesville, which descended into violence and where anti-fascist activist Heather Heyer was killed, represented a key point of breakthrough of the NSM into the public consciousness, where their material came to a wider audience. Their presence at protests, with their familiar shields, became a regular fixture after Charlottesville. This success came as the NSM faced civil lawsuits related to Charlottesville and Schoep left the group, with control of the movement briefly passing to a black activist intent on destroying the movement. In response, Schoep took back control to organise a more orderly transition before attempting to decouple himself from the extreme right (Lapin, 2020). To understand how the NSM's website reflected its campaigning around the environment, this study will begin with the earliest campaigns still recorded on the website during this period – the Adopt-A-Highway campaigns.

Adopt-A-Highway and litter – early claims to be custodians of the environment

Taylor (2019) highlighted how the American far right utilises classic tropes of revolutionary antimodernism to engage in ecological discourse, but it is also important to note that this includes physical campaigning. For example, an ecological activist under the pseudonym “Problem Animal” highlighted (and rejected) such intrusions in the magazine *Earth First* in 2005 (“Problem Animal” 2005), pointing to two initiatives in particular: the NSM’s use of the Adopt-a-Highway program and the campaigns by White Aryan Resistance against the environmental cost of disposable chopsticks. While the linking of chopsticks to environmental damage in the form of deforestation of the Pacific Northwest has obvious xenophobic connotations, the NSM’s call to volunteer and pick litter to keep a stretch of public road clean seems a relatively uncontroversial affair with little obvious malice.

Indeed, the *Stormtrooper* (#19) highlights the use of the Adopt a Highway program by an anti-immigration group near to the border with Mexico in California, and the subsequent removal of that group from the program (*Stormtrooper* #19, 2008: 5). This appears again a year later in issue 32, where the NSM chapter in Missouri adopted a highway near Springfield (*Stormtrooper* #32, 2009: 7). Three photos are used to highlight this activity, showing members beside an open road, walking on the grass and with trees behind them (for example, Figure 10.1). In the photos the volunteers are carrying identical bags and male members wear co-ordinated clothing. These photos are clearly curated images designed to convey the aesthetic of responsible guardians. Though the written text speaks of needles and drug material found, the images present a clean environment – no litter is visible and judging from the full bag of one volunteer, these photos were staged after the event, thus, highlighting their achievement. These photos – all shot from a lower angle, ensuring a more open view with plenty of sky – present the NSM as curators of this space, as dutiful custodians of the natural environment.



Figure 10.1: Neo-Nazis picking litter (Image from 'NSN Missouri active on the streets', *Stormtrooper* #32 (2009), p. 7/ copyright National Socialist Movement 2009)

Where the images take on additional meaning is in their contrast with the other activities of the group in the same report. The photos of the cleaning are contrasted with two photos of the NSM attending an LGBT event, where members 'showed their discussed [sic] and contempt for the parade' (*Stormtrooper* #32, 2009: 7). An image of the NSM group is labelled 'Unity' – a concept shown visually as it is taken at distance and from a lower angle, allowing the NSM cadre to take on more heroic proportions, and emphasising their shared aesthetic of black uniforms and shields as it frames them against the sky and trees. This echoes what Yanay (2008) explored around the use of low-angle perspectives as a common technique in evoking a sense of heroic nationalism. This claim of unity is contrasted against a close in image of a NSM member, with SS tattoo, being confronted by angry counter-protestors, described as 'street filth' (*Stormtrooper* #32, 2009: 7). Taken from a higher angle that removes any sense of a wider environment, the close-up nature of the image creates a sense of crowdedness and disconnects the protestors from the space they occupy. The caption given to the

photo also directly draws a parallel between this confrontation and the ways in which the NSM activists had cleaned the streets of literal filth. Their propaganda seeks to represent the NSM as guardians of the environment and its natural landscapes, and from this argue for the NSM as ideal guardians of American society's moral and political future, and its careful curation into the idealised fascist state.

Border campaigns: putting 'Boots on the Border' and claiming landscape

As Hultgren (2015) observes, within the U.S. the issue of the environment was increasingly being widely employed to support anti-immigrant narratives. This was part of a wider and long-term anti-immigrant discourse in the U.S., the creation of fears and anxieties among the U.S. population towards migrants that culminated in the election of President Trump in 2016 (Finley and Esposito, 2019). Trump's campaign around the border coalesced around the threat that these immigrants posed to American society and failure of existing political structures to tackle this problem. It is important to understand how the NSM adapted their propaganda to fit in with this broader background, and how their campaigning shifted in order to maintain their claimed position as the guardians of white America and its environment.

The discussion mentioned in the last section around roadway litter clearing quickly faded from the NSM's national narrative as it transitioned to its new *NSM Magazine* production from 2010. Littering only appears again in textual form for things like warnings against leaving literature in yards for fear of citation by law enforcement (*NSM Magazine* Summer/Fall 2016: 48). Instead, just as their work with Adopt-a-Highway had followed efforts from other anti-immigration groups as identified in *Stormtrooper* #19, the NSM also copied anti-migration groups in establishing vigilante border patrols (*Stormtrooper* #19, 2008: 5).

Building on existing more mainstream anti-immigrant discourses, the environment and its preservation are continuously linked to migration in the NSM's outputs. As early as 2009, *Stormtrooper* reports NSM chapters being active at the border to monitor for illegal crossings

(*Stormtrooper* #26, 2009: 6). This is accompanied by three small images, one of a NSM activist brandishing a movement flag in front of the border wall, another with a figure with binoculars, and finally an image of the remote landscape, with large rock formations and arid scrubland. Again, this evokes a sense of guardianship or custodianship over the land and physical space, expressing that the NSM – and not the Government – are keeping people safe. To emphasise this, the pictures are captioned in red to one side ‘It’s our members that are protecting our borders’ (*Stormtrooper* #26, 2009: 6). As Wodak and Forchtner (2014) suggest, red is used to highlight danger or threats, but also to show passionate and warm speech – helping emphasise the point and showing the NSM’s desire to counter this threat.

The border issue has become a frequent topic in *NSM Magazine*, one often accompanied with visual images of members at the border and in nature. Just as with litter picking, the guardianship of the border is linked to street activity against anti-fascist protestors, proclaiming that ‘not only did the NSM put boots on the ground on our streets, but we placed boots on the border, too’ (*NSM Magazine* Spring/Summer, 2017: 35). This was repeated in Schoep’s speech to a rally in April 2015, stating that ‘We’ve put people on the borders where this government, the United States government refuses to do so’ (*NSM Magazine* Winter/Spring 2015: 6).

The documenting of this activity with photography continues with pictures of nature and of NSM figures using the land for their patrols (*NSM Magazine* Summer/Fall, 2010: 1-2). This early use also shows an interesting other side to these patrols, with pictures of the rubbish – backpacks, and even a dead horse – that they claim was left by illegal migrants (*NSM Magazine* Summer/Fall, 2010: 3-5). This particular theme of litter and the intrusion into the natural environment of the migrants is picked up again in mid to late 2012 in a report entitled ‘National Socialist Movement Border Operations’ accompanied by photography (*NSM Magazine* Summer/Fall 2012: 4-7) emphasising NSM activists’ connection and native status in the land. This is contrasted with images of litter (water bottles, jugs of suspicious brown water and discarded tents) left behind by migrants. In this way the migration they campaign against is also presented as a threat to the environment and, by extension,

to the U.S. itself. These arguments were not new and drew again upon existing concerns, as Hultgren (2015: 42) describes how parts of the environmental movement in the 1960s expressed concerns about natural resources and social resources alike being drained by population growth. This understanding, based on the ideas of Eighteenth-century British philosopher Thomas Malthus, who was concerned with the inability of food supply to match population growth. This included the national environmental organisation The Sierra Club, a group that first adopted a motion against over-population in 1959 (Hultgren 2015: 44-45). The moral decay the NSM argues is occurring in society is matched, in their visual propaganda, by the destruction of the natural environment and the litter left behind. This is juxtaposed against the image of the NSM as active guardians of the land, and large sweeping imagery of the open landscape (see Figure 10.2).



Figure 10.2: NSM Photo of the Sonoran Desert (Image from 'National Socialist Movement Border Operations: January Through May 2012', *NSM Magazine* Summer/Fall 2012, p. 5/ copyright National Socialist Movement 2012)

This link the images imply between the environment and its guardianship, and Government's failure leading to decay, is made clear when they declare that the issues around 'Border Control is a sign of US lack of self-control and an indulgence problem' (*NSM Magazine* Winter/Spring, 2016: 38).

This imagery combination, of wide-open landscape contrasted against pollution or crowding of land has an older pedigree. In his examination of American imagery around environmentalism and the Cold War, Robertson (2008) critiques how images of the American Wilderness are used to raise awareness of threats to the landscape but were mixed with images of crowds of Hindus bathing in the Ganges. In this case, *This is the American Earth* – a publication by the Sierra Club from 1960 – made the contrast between famine in India, described as a rich land wasted by poor guardianship, and America. It went so far as to warn that such a future would face America if it did not protect its environment. It was, in this, the encroachment of the "Non-American Earth" into the "American Earth" and shows the historic importance of discourse around population within consideration of environmental issues.

These border campaigns and the images that convey them also emphasise the imagined nature of the landscape and its history within NSM rhetoric. Equally, the sense of ownership of these stretches of the southern deserts and borderlands of America ignored the Native American past of the land. In part this can be explained by a traditional view that has come through some conservative groups in America that presented a narrative of Native Americans, along with other non-white groups, as being unfit or unworthy of the land due to imagined laziness or other moral and intellectual failings (Blee and Yates, 2015: 129-130). Within *Stormtrooper*, images of tools and stone-age finds are argued to prove that European-heritage pre-historic humans first settled in America, promoting the notion that the White European is in fact the true owner of America as its 'original settlers' (*Stormtrooper* #28, 2009: 1).

With the Government presented as corrupt, unwilling or unable, to protect the community from the threat of migration on the southern border, the NSM articulates a classic aspect of fascism:

an elite no longer representing the true values of the nation, while a fascist movement finally acts in the interests of the populace. In this, the fascists come to occupy an elite position in society as genuine interlocutors of public needs and desires, with the nation understood in monist terms by the populist far right (Griffin 1993: 41-43; Mudde 2021). So, through claims around the environment and environment guardianship, combined with the border issue, the NSM was able to transmit fascist thoughts without having to be overt about it.

The images of the border, with the NSM flags next to it and with NSM members patrolling, then stake a claim to this space as firmly – and arguably exclusively – theirs. In the text surrounding these images, they offered the opportunity to experience the reality of the border by joining the patrols and used it as a broader recruitment line, asking ‘Have you had it with illegal aliens streaming over the southwestern borders of this country and have been considering joining the NSM, find out more now’ (*NSM Magazine* Summer/Fall, 2015: 45).

Though in a limited fashion, this can be seen as an offer into a hidden or sacred truth – the attempt to draw people into the movement by offering knowledge of the hidden threat of migration, to both the nation as a body of people and the nation as a physical space. This offer is a typical recruitment tool which, furthermore, provides a small window into the cultic milieu that these groups cultivated. This milieu was the creation of a space and community through the offer of a sacred truth that helps establish “in” and “out” identities to encourage the valuing of information from within the group and therefore help conspiratorial ideologies held by groups like the NSM to take hold (Campbell, 2002: 14-15). Jackson (2017: 27-29) made a similar point with regards to how these movements are able to sustain imagined and conspiratorial narratives despite external societal pressures, and how movements continue to sustain themselves, drawing new recruits into the sacred space. Similarly, Kaplan (2001) observed that American Nazism exists within a sacred space and have an occult nature to their internal cultures, driven by a search for hidden or sacred truths. This is why the images of ownership, of showing largely empty natural spaces – in this case the border – with solely NSM

authority is important, giving credibility to their claim to be the sole authority for understanding the truth of the migrant threat within.

Outdoor pursuits: The creation of the sacred space with the environment

Ways in which the environment, and the presence of the NSM within it, are imagined, are visible in their photo album webpage. This page contains an abundance of photos from various events, including camping events, showing NSM members (alongside Ku Klux Klan members) in various rural and natural locations, with group pictures occurring in front of swathes of green trees. Other images show the burning of swastikas and of crosses, proudly declaring the connection of the movement with the land it was on, the link between the blood and the soil (*NSM Mississippi Meet & Greet – August 20 2016* 2016). In contrast to the images spoken of previously, these tended to be less staged, lending them to not just an air of authenticity, but also suggesting, again, that the viewer was given a glimpse of access into the private world of the NSM. They also present the NSM as existing within an open and healthy space, a pure National Socialist space, contrasted against a diseased and crowded space occupied by their opponents – something Westberg and Arman (2019) identify within European Nazi movements. This connection of a return to nature and outdoor pursuits to the revival of the nation's moral and physical health again draws on ecofascist ideas, and show how these environmental concerns are understood through a fascist lens.

Outdoor pursuits are even emphasised in the NSM's 25 Point Plan – a series of broad policy statements. These state a desire to create new green spaces using government grants, favouring natural space over development, and also encourage children to be taught survival skills and agriculture, with an emphasis on outdoor events. There is promotion of rural homestead living, offering grants to homesteaders as well as protection against foreclosures (*25 Point Plan* n.d.). Green policies are placed alongside policies that promote a return to an idealised romantic rural past, restoring a connection between the next generation and the land in an effort to improve the nation.

As mentioned previously, this return to an imagined rural idyll plays on existing tropes within American post-war culture, such as the nostalgia for a simpler and seemingly more morally pure living, played upon – as mentioned earlier by Goddard (2011) – in popular culture through, for example, *Little House on the Prairie*. Environmentalism in this representation becomes not just about conserving existing resources, but about pushing society back to that morally sound past while eschewing the existing society. A glimpse into this is given by the photo galleries highlighting their After Action Reports and rallies focused on more martial presentations. One such example is a photo of the Harrisburg Rally Nov. 5th 2016 which presents the NSM lined up with Klan and NSM flags, behind a NSM banner and in black uniforms with shields (*NSM News Archives* n.d.)

The other style of imagery offered are family friendly events and meetups, which show the NSM in, as mentioned, wooded locations. In images depicting events in Michigan from 2015, both a Summer Solstice event in June and a meeting from May, the NSM flags are still present behind the group, but in a far less martial atmosphere. While men are still largely wearing similar black outfits, there are women, children, babies and dogs (see Figure 10.3) in various outfits. As can also be seen from Figure 10.3, these were relaxed affairs, with the flags used to create a boundary of their space within the environment. There are even blends of these two styles, such as where meetings and rallies coincide (*NSM News Archives*, n.d.). The rural environment in these images presents a safe and entirely National Socialist space.



Figure 10.3: Neo-Nazis with their flags and dogs (Image taken from 'NSM Sept. 10th, 2016' NSM Grassroots Action Gallery on the NSM Website, accessed via <https://web.archive.org/web/20180812060801/http://gallery.nsm88.org/displayimage.php?album=71&pos=1> / Copyright unknown)

Examining the wider galleries shows many more images, including dogs and barbeques, which give the impression – save for the swastikas and Klan outfits – of what might be described as a welcoming, family weekend (for example, *NSM TX Meeting, June/11/2016* 2016). Though they were removed from the website in late 2019, these images illustrate how the environment, and the appeal of the rural idyll, is used to draw people into the NSM and its milieu, where environmentalist terms are used – such as concern over water rights or talk of mass transit – but where the space remains, and visually so, a fascist one.

This attempt to appeal is also notable when the NSM's imagery is contextualised by considering the written text and the reasons given for these environmental policies. In their *25 Point Plan* they propose a focus on homogenous communities, connected by mass transit for environmental benefit, with green jobs, green energy and secure water rights (*25 Point Plan*, n.d.). This was repeated in direct appeals to the electorate, where points on water rights and green jobs are once again emphasised, such as their open letter to voters in Riverside (Hall, 2010). Indeed, exploring the *25 Point*

Plan and the reasons it provides for their environmentalist policies reveals the links to the wider world view of the NSM. Green jobs and green energy are, the NSM says, to be brought in not just for their own sake but to end dependence on foreign energy supplies. Importantly, anthropogenic climate change is accepted by the NSM, but blamed on corporatisation and used as justification for rapid revolutionary change to avoid ecocide. In other words, an urgent threat calls for their green agenda which, in turn, justifies even violent action.

Even green spaces in cities are to promote close-knit 'organic' communities, which are to be based on racial purity, dividing the desired white communities from the non-white or blended ethnic communities (25 *Point Plan*, n.d.). The position of the NSM, supporting the idea of action against the threat of climate change, is not unique in the far right. In their exploration of the German Far Right and climate change, Forchtner et al. (2018) identified that some actors were willing to accept climate change as real to some degree. Interestingly, this also found that rhetoric around green issues was often refocused onto nativist policies, highlighting critique of buying green cars from foreign manufacturers as bearing hidden climate costs and thus it was better to support native conventional cars due to the lower cost in manufacture and transport despite ongoing costs in terms of petrol consumption.

This presentation of the NSM in green spaces and concern over urban environments are also shown in their use of images of opposition protests or of non-American spaces. In images from a Georgia antifascist protest in 2013, they frame antifa against brown backgrounds and the road surface, with the images taken from above and cropped in tightly to exaggerate the crowded nature (*NSM Magazine* Summer/Fall, 2012: 17; *NSM Magazine* Spring/Summer, 2013: 8). By contrast, the NSM within these urban spaces are – as discussed previously in relation to Yanay (2008) – photographed from below to give them a heroic presence, and also ensures they are framed against the sky and the large white civic buildings that give a more open, airy and, from an ecofascist standpoint, healthy symbolism (*NSM Magazine* Spring/Summer 2013: 6-10). Such scapegoating of non-white populations, and overcrowding, for environmental issues is identified by Dyett and Thomas (2019) as common

within certain parts of Western discourse, and represents an opportunity for penetration of ecofascist views into broader right-wing environmental discourse as it is a shared reference point.

It is especially telling that this emphasis on the environment in the *25 Point Plan* and the softer tone taken on communities, suggesting co-existence of the idealised white community with other communities that are homogenously non-white or are mixed race, is located in the front facing portions of the website. The *25 Point Plan* is intended as an introduction to their policies, while Schoep's successor Burt Colucci had explicitly rejected terrorism and emphasised the legality of the movement (Colucci c.2019). Yet a small amount of searching on the website reveals less tolerant voices: For example, *NSM Magazine* uses meme-like images to attack anti-fascists, the LGBT+ community and presents racial supremacist arguments (*NSM Magazine* Spring/Summer 2017: 10-11).

Conclusion

When the NSM represented themselves as the true guardians of America, both the physical space and the people, they did so using written text and images regarding the environment and its stewardship. Indeed, the use of multi-modal analysis allows for a deeper understanding of how the NSM's visual communication not just reinforced but at times led the way in presenting these ideas to their audience, especially in the online space. The call of the NSM, represented in their visual media and supported by textual propaganda, is to protect the landscape and environment of the U.S. by rejecting communities they see as foreign to their idealised, imagined white nationalist community. This is to be achieved through various modes of engagement with nature to, ultimately, restore the moral purity of earlier periods and use it as a springboard for a new future.

These proposed white communities would be connected through green travel networks, supported by green jobs, provided with clean water, and this would facilitate isolation from outsiders and remove dependence on foreign energy reserves. The necessity of such revolutionary steps is argued by the NSM to stem from the environmental threat facing America and the inability of the Government to act decisively, part of their ecofascist appeal to disregard potential cost and instead

to take action in defense of the physical environment of the nation so it can be reforged. This has forced the NSM to take on roles as genuine representatives of the American public through the provision of litter clean-ups, control of border areas as it patrols natural landscapes and outdoor pursuits.

Though wrapped up in a language of environmentalism as justification, the NSM's populist form of ultranationalism based around a palingenetic mythos (Griffin, 1993: 32) represents the classic fascist minimum. Environmentalism presents a language that is acceptable and even appealing in mainstream discourse, which allows the NSM to engage with a broader audience before unpacking how their particular use of these terms carries deeper and more ideological meanings. This is shown by the more public facing material containing more moderate language, as well as through the representation of their meetings as family friendly affairs with images of dogs and family. Indeed, the NSM is building on the notions described by Cook and Kelly (1999: 241) in their studies of the rise of violent extremism in America, who spoke of how 'the country has bred its own desperate groups who see themselves as victims of political forces that are in profound conflict with traditional cultures and values of rural America'. If the NSM does not see itself as one of these desperate groups, it certainly seeks to ally with those trends. In doing so, the NSM is not novel. For example, the Hungarian Jobbik has engaged substantially with environmental issues since its inception to reinforce rather than dilute their nationalist message (Kyriazi, 2019: 184-189; see Forchtner, 2019 for further contemporary cases).

It could be tempting then to think that their expressions of support for the environment and their carefully staged photographs were simply a manipulative tool designed to attract and radicalise recruits. In fact, Griffin (1993: 167-171) even highlights environmentalism as an ideal 'Trojan Horse' to inject crypto-fascist discourse into the political mainstream. However, this would not be the whole story. While mainstream environmentalists may not recognise the motivations of the NSM, they would recognise large parts of the discourse (see Lubarda, 2022 in this volume for more on this uncanny overlap) – even though for the NSM these terms held different meaning. Built on those ideas

of Blood and Soil, in the National Socialist world view the people and the land are one and the same (Kiernan, 2007: 2-3). Out of this, of a disturbing, profound, ecological stance that represents a serious, not just calculated, concern for 'our natural environment' can grow. While mainstream environmentalism is willing to accept compromise and de-prioritisation of human desires or even needs in pursuit of the greater overwhelming need of environmental survival, for the NSM and their ecofascist vision the welfare of the land and of the people are intrinsically linked, two halves of an important whole. The preservation of the environment is a route to a revitalisation of American society, and the threat against it a motivating tool that allows the NSM to draw individuals into active participation, even when that participation risks legal or social consequences. This romanticised environment, its landscape and its history – including those historical questions of ownership – are an imagined place that makes sense for those within its cultic milieu but confusing to those outside.

The understanding of this propaganda plays an important role in understanding that the NSM adapted classic National Socialism for a modern audience, and how we might see them continue into an age likely to see both an accelerating climate crisis and increasing awareness of environmental despoliation more broadly.

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