

Collection introduction: Everyday and emergent ecofascisms

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In September 2023, when we began the collaboration that would gradually grow into this collection, it took work to make the case that fascism is an ambient condition. Common knowledge confined it to the sensational (cf. Ahmed, 2004; Arendt, 1963; Billig, 1995): concentration camps, police states, massacres. One month later, the world watched as genocidal violence erupted in Gaza, at the behest of an increasingly fascistic state (Ohana and Heilbrunner, 2024). As we write, Israel's assault on Palestine continues unabated. Resistance continues, too—but many spectators have disengaged, letting fascism recede into the everyday and genocide become life's background noise (see Figure 1 from Glazer, 2023).

This collection takes on a specific kind of fascism—ecofascism, or fascism waged in the name of protecting “the environment”—of which there is no shortage of spectacular examples, not least of all in Israel. There, Zionist claims to “ma[ke] the desert bloom” have long justified the expropriation of Palestinian land, sought to erase Indigenous lifeways, and bolstered settler conservation projects (Braverman, 2023; Stamatopoulou-Robbins, 2020). Those projects include decades-old afforestation efforts used to greenwash occupation and more recent calls to “cleanse” the Gaza Strip and build “green” kibbutzim on its ravaged grounds (Luzzatto, 2024). But we could also point to the “blood and soil” politics of the Third Reich as a ghastly case of green fascistic violence (Biehl and Staudenmaier, 1999). We could draw attention to the genocidal environmentalism of the US settler state (Paperson, 2014; Whyte, 2018). We could call out mass shootings by avowed ecofascists who insist that eliminating racialized people will ease Malthusian pressures (Achenbach, 2019).

But our contention here is that, if we wish to comprehend and subsequently counteract these movements, then we must tend to the mundane ways their tenets organize the everyday, normalizing the ecofascist commonsense that some lives are environmental goods while other lives pose existential threats (also see Govindarajan, 2022; Menrisky, 2025). Why? Because it is harder to fight full-fledged fascist projects than their “fash-ish” antecedents (Ahmann and Giles, 2024) and because routinized dehumanization tends to naturalize the use of force.

Consider the mass shootings in Christchurch, Buffalo, and El Paso, which did not emerge in isolation. They responded to environmental anxieties and nationalist antipathies that pervade mainstream political discourse. In Australia—the birthplace of the Christchurch shooter—anti-immigration hawks frequently invoke population pressures to justify refusing asylum seekers from the Global South (Richards et al., 2023). “Green” bordering regimes are just as prominent in the United States, where the conservation and eugenic movements were born from the same source (Bhatia, 2003; Brune, 2020;

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Figure 1. The wife and child of a high-ranking Nazi official enjoy their garden on the outskirts of Auschwitz. Scene from *Zone of Interest* (2023), dir. Jonathan Glazer. Source: [A24](#).

Hultgren 2015; Taylor 2016). France’s far-right National Rally, under Marine Le Pen, has embraced a platform of “green nationalism” based upon the case that immigration degrades the environment (Forchtner, 2019). The list goes on (see, e.g. Braverman, 2023; Coțofană, 2022; Gattinara, 2016; Lubarda, 2024; Pates and Lester, 2021; Shoshan, 2021; Walia, 2021). Blending racism and xenophobia with the language of sustainability, narratives like these frame nation-states as fragile ecosystems that must be shielded from rapacious overuse by the wrong people, creating fertile ground for violence against “ecological others” (Ray, 2013).

These trends mark a sea-change in the climate denialism long associated with the global right, which increasingly admits the fact of climate change while denying and displacing its systemic causes. Nor are such tendencies exclusive to the West. In Narendra Modi’s India, the displacement of tribal communities under the guise of wildlife conservation and the purity politics espoused by the Hindu right both exemplify deep ecofascist inclinations (Bhan and Govindrajana, 2024; Sharma, 2012). In Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro’s regime denounced Indigenous land claims as anti-environmental, while green-lighting harmful agribusiness projects said to shore up food security (Fernandes, 2022). In the Philippines, Rodrigo Duterte’s administration used the country’s disproportionate exposure to climate risk to advance his authoritarian agenda (Theriault, 2020), while conservation efforts still justify white settler claims to space in Zimbabwe (Suzuki, 2016). In Russia, the right frames forest conservation as a nationalist project waged in the face of hostile forces—enemy states, ethnic others—who would threaten Russia’s purity (Etkind, 2020; Kolstø and Blakkisrud, 2016).

And beyond the framework of the nation-state? Ecofascist ideologies readily “creep” into mainstream environmental spaces (Anson et al., 2022; Ross, 2017) when, for example, groups like the

Sierra Club advocate population control in the Global South to blunt the force of climate change and its ensuing resource conflicts (Bollay, 2020; also see Murphy, 2017). Ecofascist impulses loom large in popular culture, too, trickling into public consciousness through stories, metaphors, and media. Take the dietary puritanism embraced by certain wellness influencers, driven by obsessions with “clean eating” and the rejection of “unnatural” foods, which can augment hierarchies of both race and class (Belew, 2022; Leidig, 2023; Shotwell, 2016). Or take the memes that circulated early in the Covid-19 pandemic—when global travel dropped, air pollution waned, and some wildlife rebounded—which remarked that “humans are the virus” and evinced broad misanthropic tendencies (Anson, 2020; also see Bosworth, 2022; Kanngieser, 2020). While not overtly political, practices like these foster a cultural terrain where ecofascist logics can and do take root. If we wish to recognize these logics before it is too late to mobilize against them (Mahmud, 2020), then we must take their subtler forms seriously.

Doing so means attending to both ordinary (Das, 2006; Lambek, 2010; Stewart, 2007) and emergent (Fisher, 1999) forms of life: to the everyday domains where political possibilities are forged, negotiated, and enacted before they sediment themselves as dominant formations. This feels particularly urgent to us as ethnographers, trained to locate politics in the mundane, but in truth this analytic project is distinguished more by object than by methodology. Specifically, this work invites us to begin in the affective, aesthetic, and embodied spaces where ecological attachments first take root and environments are felt to be at risk—concerns that must exist before they can be mobilized to countenance state violence. It requires us to locate these concerns in time and place before we ask how they become ambient, and certainly before they scale up into national or planetary projects. Most of all, it demands we study ecofascism as lived, not only ecofascism as typified in theory.

So while ecofascism as an ideal type claims “not only to save the earth, but to save it for specific people and from the allegedly polluting force of racialized others” (Ahmann et al., forthcoming; also see Rueda, 2020; Taylor, 2019; Zimmerman, 1995)—while it promotes eugenic solutions to environmental problems, whether at the border or the barrel of a gun—then ecofascism as lived names a much broader tendency to sever real environmental problems from their structural causes and instead pin them on scapegoats. It does not address overconsumption in the Global North, pervasive corporate avarice, self-devouring growth imperatives (Livingston, 2019), or the staggering environmental cost of war (Guarasci and Kim, 2022; Khayyat, 2022; Pedraza et al., 2023; Reno, 2019; Rubaii, 2020). It weaponizes difference (also see Moore et al., 2004). This misdirection is a core feature of fascism writ large, which always answers the frustrations of the masses with the Manichean promise of a (racial) enemy (Eco, 1995; Stanley, 2018).

The essays in this collection all grow from this broader analytic project, tending not just to extremist movements but to people’s intimate engagements with notions like stewardship, purity, order, enchantment, nature, belonging, and decay that take different forms in different times and spaces. From post-hurricane Appalachia to occupied Kashmir, and from sites where forests burn to those where wolves return, they suggest a present marked by embryonic ecofascisms that traverse the Global North and South—similar but not identical, networked but not duplicative—and confound conventional political divides thanks precisely to their ambiguity. Among their many interpenetrating themes, these works explore the everyday fascistic fantasies that animate green infrastructure projects (Bhan, Bosworth) and ecotourism regimes (Theriault), interrogate how blame gets parsed in the wake of ecological disasters (Coțofană, Ahmann and Proctor, Oguz), and ask how more-than-human beings (Leser, Suzuki, Braverman) and “enchanted” landscapes (Govindrajan) get enrolled in making racial difference. Along the way, they challenge several mainstream misconceptions: that environmental politics inherently lean left; that the far right is an anti-environmental force full of climate-change deniers; and that fascism lives in the spectacular. And they show why scholars of society and space should pay attention to these matters, given how often ecofascism takes the form of territorialized violence—

enacted at the border, in the “homeland,” and across “degraded” landscapes as a repertoire of spatial strategies.

To be sure, these strategies are not altogether novel. Liberal states have long sorted people into categories: us and them, citizen and non. They have long asserted sovereignty through land “cultivation” and bordering regimes. These practices have long found imitation and inspiration in the vicissitudes of ordinary life. And indeed, this collection builds on early work in political ecology (Bookchin, 1988; Guha, 1989; Peet and Watts, 1996) born just as the globalizing forces of neoliberal development were beginning to take hold, exacerbating environmental injustices worldwide—a fact some movements fought and other movements naturalized. But as the impacts of climate change become more widespread, and as the climate denialism of past few decades grows increasingly untenable, we are witnessing “changes in degree [that can and do] become changes in kind” (Haraway, 2015). This is, of course, the story of fascism’s own emergence which, contra claims to being liberalism’s other, historically relied on the internal weaknesses and then sustained collaboration of liberal democracy (Mahmud, 2020).

The fact of the matter is that we are in the mid of a dangerous convergence where ecological interventions and authoritarian politics increasingly claim to authorize each other, reworking contradictions between ecology, economy, and ethnonationalism in the process (Roberts and Moore, 2021: 10). In this moment of cascading crises, we need careful, comparative, and collaborative research on these matters more than ever. Without it, we risk normalizing climate change responses—armored borders, resource wars, “cleansing” projects of all kinds—that treat survival on this planet as a zero-sum game, rather than a product of deep cooperation and global solidarity (Masco, 2010). This research is no easy task, not least when rising fascist forces put up obstacles to academic work. But it is vital to achieving climate justice, understood as a process of dismantling the conditions of extraction that produced our planetary crisis and building life-affirming systems in their place, a process which those most affected lead (Bond, 2010; Roberts et al., 2007; Shue, 1993; Sultana, 2022).

In time, this work might just equip us with the foresight to meet everyday and emergent forms of ecofascism with everyday and emergent forms of antifascist care for each other and the planet that we share. Collective land stewardship initiatives, mutual aid networks in climate-affected communities, experiments in abolition, indigenous-led environmental movements (Dawson, 2024; Estes, 2024; Gilmore, 2022; Spade, 2020; Sultana 2024), and other ecologies of liberation are already paving the way—including in contemporary Palestine, where we began. May they lead us to a world defined by relation not division, collectivity not ownership, mutualism not supremacy.

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