Sonja Pietiläinen is a geographer interested in socio-spatial injustices on a burning planet. Building on theories on race and space and the racial Anthropocene, this doctoral dissertation advances research on the political ecologies of the far-right by investigating how the far-right reproduces and shapes racial ideologies and structures that underpin the climate crisis. In doing so, the dissertation analyses two far-right groups, the Finns Party in Finland and the Izborskii Club in Russia. The doctoral thesis shows that through racist ecologies, the far-right obstructs climate policies and reproduces the meaning of race by naturalising the uneven impacts of the climate crisis as an outcome of racial difference.
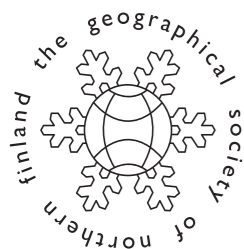
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The Racialised Geographies of the Far-Right: Climate Politics in Finland and Russia

Sonja Pietiläinen

The Racialised Geographies of the Far-Right:

Climate Politics in Finland and Russia

Sonja Pietiläinen

Supervisors   Doctor of Philosophy
Bernhard Forchtner
School of Arts, Media and Communication
University of Leicester
United Kingdom

Doctor of Philosophy
Hidefumi Nishiyama
Geography Research Unit
University of Oulu
Finland

Pre-examiners Professor
Laura Pulido
College of Arts and Sciences
University of Oregon
United States

Doctor of Philosophy
Manès Weisskircher
Institute of Political Science
Dresden University of Technology
Germany

Opponent   Professor
Tuija Saresma
School of Humanities
University of Eastern Finland
Finland

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Abstract

As the climate crisis is worsening, we have witnessed a re-emergence of the authoritarian and racist far-right. The interdisciplinary scholarship on political ecologies of the far-right has shown that the far-right has found an array of different responses to the global ecological crisis. The far-right obstructs climate politics by disputing humans' role in causing it and proposes border walls in the name of environmental protection of the 'homeland'. Whilst studies have made a significant contribution to our understanding of the far-right's role in the Anthropocene, the questions of race and racism have become the elephant in the room for a significant part of the scholarship. The role of race as an analytical focus is understudied and underconceptualised, and racism is either treated as ancillary to nationalism or as something that will happen in the fascist future. Building on theories on race and space and the racial Anthropocene, this doctoral dissertation advances research on the political ecologies of the far-right by investigating how the far-right reproduces and shapes racial ideologies and structures that underpin the climate crisis. In doing so, the dissertation analyses two far-right groups, the Finns Party in Finland and the Izborskii Club in Russia. Consisting of three independent research articles and a synopsis, this doctoral dissertation analyses how race is produced in their ecological and climate change-related politics by focusing on whiteness and fossil imperialism (Article I), racial ecologies (Article II), and climate obstruction and coloniality (Article III). By focusing on racism in the study of three examples of the far-right's engagement with climate change and the environment, the doctoral thesis shows that through racist ecologies, such as environmental determinism and populationism, the far-right obstructs climate policies and reproduces the meaning of race by naturalising the uneven impacts of the climate crisis as an outcome of racial difference.

Keywords: race, racism, space, political ecology, white nationalism, climate obstruction, climate coloniality

List of original publications

Article I   Pietiläinen S (2023) The new Russian civilisation: Arctic fossil fuels, white masculinity, and the neo-fascist visual politics of the Izborskii Club. *In* Forchtner B (ed.) *Visualising far-right environments: Communication and the politics of nature*, 125–145. Manchester University Press. https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526165398.00013

Article II   Pietiläinen S (2024) Bordering and racialization through the language on nature: The anti-immigration discourse of the Finnish radical right. *Journal of Language and Politics* 23(3): 369–390. https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.23085.pie

Article III   Pietiläinen S (submitted manuscript) Make Finland green again - Climate coloniality and the racialised climate obstructionist politics of the Finnish far-right.

The three original publications are available in the appendices of the printed version of this thesis. Article I is reprinted with permission from Manchester University Press. Article II is reprinted with permission from John Benjamins Publishing Company. Article III is included as the author's submitted manuscript.

Acknowledgments

1 Introduction

The scientific consensus has emphasised the urgency of climate change action for decades, but climate change mitigation remains inadequate, and carbon dioxide emissions continue to rise (Stoddard et al. 2021). The impacts of the accelerating climate crisis, such as more frequent wildfires, drought, and extreme heatwaves, are unevenly distributed because of severe inequalities in the distribution of power and wealth, which impact people's abilities to respond and cope with climate change (Sultana 2022a). The brunt of the climate crisis is falling hardest on colonised and racialised communities – those who have contributed least to the climate crisis (Vergès 2017). Minimising climate change-induced suffering and deaths requires addressing structural racism and the historical and contemporary racial underpinnings of colonialism (Sultana 2022a). However, the current era has been characterised by a global rise of the racist far-right that has normalised and mainstreamed different forms of racism and become a key actor in slowing down climate change-related policymaking.

By the term 'far-right', I mean a range of political parties and non-party actors, from radical-right to extreme-right ones, characterised by authoritarianism and ethno-nationalism (Pirro 2022). Although best known for their anti-immigrant stance, it is well documented that the far-right also practices climate obstruction (Ekberg et al. 2022; Forchtner et al. 2024; see also Brulle & Spencer 2024). The far-right *denies*, *downplays*, and *delays* climate change, for instance, by opposing the phasing-out of fossil fuels and expansion of renewable energy or downplaying the need for climate mitigation due to its alleged harms (Bettini & Casaglia 2024; Conversi 2024; Ekberg et al. 2022; Forchtner et al. 2018; Forchtner 2019a, 2019b; Forchtner et al. 2024; Hanson 2024; Hultman et al. 2019; Lockwood 2018; Malm & Zetkin Collective 2021; Vowles 2024; Weisskircher & Volk 2025; Yazar & Haarstad 2023). Such climate obstructionist politics are often accompanied by locally scaled concerns about the homeland's nature and various ideas on how to 'tackle' them, including the fortification of borders (Benoist 2024; Forchtner & Kølvraa 2015; Forchtner 2019; Malm & Zetkin Collective 2021; Turner & Bailey 2021).

Although existing studies have provided a significant contribution to our understanding of this party family's role in the Anthropocene, *the question of race and racism has become the elephant in the room for a significant part of the scholarship*. With a few exceptions (see Malm & Zetkin Collective 2021; Pulido et al. 2019; Simpson & Cheever 2025; Varco 2023), the most dominant framework through which the spectre of far-right climate and environmental politics has been approached, analysed, and explained is the lens of nationalism (Bettini & Casaglia 2024; Conversi 2020, 2024; Dalby 2021; Forchtner & Kølvraa 2015; Hanson 2024; Hultgren 2015; Hultman et al. 2019; Lubarda 2019), as well as eco- or fossil fascism (Malm & Zetkin Collective 2021; Moore & Roberts 2022; Simpson & Cheever 2025). Even if some scholars cite *white* (masculinised) nationalism as a driving motive for the far-right's climate obstruction (Hultman et al. 2019), the role of race as an analytical focus is seriously understudied and underconceptualised when it comes to these politics. Whilst this is a wider issue in the study of the far-right (Bhambra 2017; Mondon & Winter 2020; Mondon 2020; Sengul 2024), this lack of discussion on race within the scholarship on the far-right's environmental and climate politics has gone hand in hand with treating racism as ancillary to nationalism or reducing it to some potential ecofascism or fossil fascism in the future. Consequently, it has been widely overlooked how the far-right, through their racist ecology and climate obstruction,

reproduce and exacerbate the racial ideologies and structures that underpin the racial Anthropocene.

My dissertation has been guided by the following research question: *How does the far-right's climate and environment-related politics racialise certain people and spaces?* To answer the research question, I build on interdisciplinary research on political ecologies of the far-right (Ekberg et al. 2022; Malm & Zetkin Collective 2021; Pulido et al. 2019), geographical theories on race and racism (Gilmore 2022, Kobayashi & Peake 1994), and theories on race in the Anthropocene (Gonzales 2021; Pulido 2018; Sultana 2024; Tuana 2019; Vergès 2017). By approaching far-right climate obstructionism and ecologies through the theoretical framework of the racial Anthropocene (Pulido 2018), the dissertation takes the next step in interdisciplinary research on the far-right and the climate crisis by investigating the role of race in the far-right's environmental and climate politics. My approach enables a historicised and contextualised analysis of far-right climate politics in which the existing configurations of racism and colonialism that shape today's politics of global ecological crisis are considered. Racism, "*the production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerabilities to premature death*" is a structural socio-spatial process (Gilmore 2022: 108) that underpins the ongoing ecological crisis through various structures and ideologies such as Eurocentric epistemologies of environmental knowledge, racial geographies of fossil capitalism, and racial risks and vulnerability (DeBoom 2022; Pulido 2018; Sultana 2024).

Despite its structural characteristics and socio-spatial materiality, the meaning-making around racial classification varies to some extent as different historical periods charge and add new connotations to the meanings of race, renewing it (Guillaumin 1995; Hall 1997; Omi & Winant 2014). Furthermore, geographical theories on race have emphasised the co-constitutiveness of spatialisation and racialisation. Thus, engaging with a spatial approach to the production of race enables an understanding of how race is (re)produced, also in relation to space-making practices. Far-right politics have had an important influence in shaping racial formations through sensational and visible racism as well as the normalisation of white nationalism (Pulido et al. 2019), also through subtle and seemingly neutral utterances about 'naturally emerging' cultural differences and incompatibilities (Balibar 1991; Lähdesmäki 2019). Because race is subject to constant conflict and reinvention (Omi & Winant 2014), paying attention to the production of racial differentiation in the less scrutinised context of far-right climate and ecology politics enables wider lessons on how the racist structures that underpin the global ecological crisis are justified, naturalised, and renewed on a burning planet.

My doctoral dissertation analyses the Finns Party and the Izborskii Club, two far-right groups which both revolve around ethno-nationalism, racial and spatial differentiation, and climate obstruction (Arter 2010; Bergmann 2017; Gaufman 2025; Lähdesmäki 2019). Studying Finland and Russia, two contexts characterised by differences and similarities, and their respective actors, promises three wider lessons concerning far-right racialised climate and environmental politics. First, it enables an understanding of how race is produced in two political contexts where racism is structural and institutionalised, yet highly different in its intensity. Both countries' processes of nation-building rely on racial whiteness (Bergmann 2017; Zakhrov 2015). Importantly, the intensity of oppression (e.g., the subjugation of racialised groups) differs significantly between the two countries. Russia has turned out to be a fully authoritarian and partly totalitarian regime due to Vladimir Putin's repressive politics (Kolesnikov 2022). The Kremlin has, for instance, launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, manipulated elections, and reduced media freedoms. Sharing the same land border with Russia,

Finland is, by comparison, a rich Nordic welfare state which performs highly in democratic assessments.[1] However, the country has also been named one of the most racist in Europe (EU-MIDIS II 2017; EU-MIDIS 2018; Kataja 2020) and has a long history of colonisation, assimilation, and subjugation of the Sámi people, whose land, the Sámpi, is divided by the territorial borders of Russia, Finland, Sweden, and Norway. By acknowledging structural racism in both countries, the research setting enables a perspective that goes beyond the stereotype of Finland as the model society of the world (Bergmann 2017).

Second, studying these actors enables further lessons about the ideological and strategic differences and similarities of far-right political mobilisation (especially regarding racism and climate and environmental politics) in Russia and Europe, as both groups have contributed to further normalisation and mainstreaming of racism. The Izborskii Club is one of the most vigorous and influential racist movements in Russia and operates in tandem with the state. For instance, it has introduced neo-fascist language and Nazi symbolisms into the mainstream (Eberhardt 2018; Laruelle 2019). The Finns Party, in turn, as the largest far-right party in Finland, has been among the three biggest parties in the last four parliamentary elections and has played an important role in shaping racism, for instance, by normalising Islamophobia (Bergmann 2017; Horsti & Saresma 2021).

Third, the countries' situatedness in the Arctic region offers specific *geophysical conditions* for analysing how the far-right racialised politics has transformed mainstream climate and environmental politics in these two states. The Arctic has moved to the centre of many political debates as climate change warms polar regions at a higher rate than elsewhere (Dittmer et al. 2011; Dodds 2010; Dodds & Rowe Wilson 2021; Silva 2022). Many of the effects are unknown and hard to predict, but climate change has disastrous impacts on ecosystems and various communities, such as the Sámi. However, rejecting the need for climate mitigation, the climate obstructionist politics of the Russian state focuses on ensuring greater access to the Arctic resources (e.g., through colonial violence, see Silva 2022), climate adaptation, and expanding agriculturally viable land (Henry & Sundsrom 2024). In this context, and following the general principles of the Russian state, the Izborskii Club practises climate obstruction and advocates for the more aggressive exploitation of fossil fuels (Prokhanov 2016; Scherbak 2024). Whilst in Russia, climate obstructionism is the pillar of mainstream politics, Finland's country image is based on exceptional climate and environmental politics. Yet, it is well documented that the Finns Party, both as an opposition party and a member of the coalition, has increasingly impacted and transformed climate mitigation-related political consensus (Hatakka & Välimäki 2019; Vihma et al. 2021). My research setting thus enables wider lessons on how the Finns Party's and the Izborskii Club's climate obstructionist politics unfolds in the context of the wider climate politics of these two Arctic states and their racist dimensions.

Empirically, this doctoral dissertation draws on qualitative research methods, visual analysis, and interviews, which are less commonly used forms of inquiry in researching the far-right. Studying images in relation to national representations enables an analysis of how value-laden racialised spaces and ideologies are produced (Foxall 2013;

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[1] According to the Democracy Matrix Research Project (2024), in terms of democratic quality, as of February 2024 Finland ranked at number 3 (with a total value index of 0,946). Russia ranked at number 144 (with a total value index of 0,262). The matrix accounts for political freedoms, political equality, and political and legal control.

Livingstone 2010; Rose 2012). Indeed, images are never objective portrayals of the world but connected to normative assumptions and ideologies (Rose 2012). Interviews, in turn, offer valuable insights by enabling the respondents to explain their reasoning in their own terms (Damhuis & Longe 2022; Ellinas 2021) and help to understand the possible inconsistencies and topics of disagreement among respondents, as well as how sensitive topics, such as those related to the rejection of scientific consensus (e.g., in the context of climate obstruction or race), are articulated outside well-tailored public programmes (Ellinas 2021).

Consisting of three independent research articles (Table 1) and a synopsis, the doctoral dissertation analyses how race is produced in ecological and climate change-related politics by focusing on whiteness and fossil imperialism (Article I), racial ecologies (Article II), and climate obstruction and coloniality (Article III). Drawing on a visual analysis of the Izborskii Club's political programmes, Article I analyses how different racialised imaginaries and aesthetics are mobilised in the Izborskii Club's geopolitics of fossil fuel extraction to produce and justify white Imperial Russia in times of melting Arctic ice. By contrast to Article I, Articles II and III draw on interviews with Finnish far-right politicians. Article II scrutinises the production of racialising discourse in relation to ecological narratives. In doing so, it investigates how politicians produce racialised discourse by mobilising determinist conceptions of the human–nature relationship, animalistic metaphors, and the idea of environmentally conscious Finns as the opposite of polluting migrants. Article III investigates how climate obstruction by politicians perpetuates climate coloniality into the future, both within and beyond the borders of Finland. Each of the original articles brings together different yet interlinked discussions concerning the far-right and race, whilst the synopsis further develops my theoretical considerations on spatialities of racism and their manifestations in the Anthropocene by contextualising the articles by situating my perspective in broader discussions within geographical scholarship concerning the multifaceted interlinkages between racism and the global ecological crisis.

My doctoral dissertation makes three key contributions. First, I make a *theoretical* contribution to the cross-disciplinary literature of the far-right in the climate crisis (e.g., Ekberg et al. 2022; Forchtner 2019; Malm & Zetkin Collective 2021; Vowles 2024) and the geographical literature on racism (Kobayashi 2003; Gilmore 2022) by showing how, in times of the surging far-right and the deepening global ecological crisis, race continues to matter, but in ways different from any other time. I show that, through racist ecologies, such as environmental determinism and populationism, the far-right obstructs climate change and reproduces the meaning of race by naturalising the uneven impacts of the climate crisis as an outcome of racial difference. Second, studying the production of race in the context of far-right politics in Finland and Russia offers an *empirical* contribution because, although the European far-right has several ideological similarities with the Russian far-right (Klapsis 2015), the Russian far-right is regularly researched in isolation (Arnold & Umland 2018). Furthermore, the Izborskii Club's perspectives on climate change and fossil fuels have not been studied before (except for Scherbak 2024), and research on the Finns Party's climate and environmental positions is still limited (see Hatakka & Välimäki 2019; Vihma 2021). Third, alongside its theoretical and empirical contribution, the thesis *methodologically* expands scholarship on the intersection of the far-right and the climate crisis by going beyond the analysis of textual material, the most applied method of analysis in researching the topic (for example, see Hatakka & Välimäki 2019; Vihma et al. 2021).

    The doctoral dissertation proceeds as follows. Chapter 2, after discussing the notion 'far-right', contextualises the research articles by providing a brief overview of the socio-historical contexts of Finland and Russia and the two far-right actors under investigation, the Finns Party and the Izborskii Club. Chapter 3 presents a theoretical framework, which consists of four interrelated discussions: after giving an overview of how race and racism are defined and conceptualised from a spatial perspective, I discuss how geographers have approached the interlinkages between space and race in the context of the climate crisis. Next, I highlight the racial nature of the climate crisis, before discussing two dimensions of the far-right's climate and environmental politics, that is, climate obstruction and ecology. In presenting how scholarly work has discussed these two themes, I shed light on striking analytical silences regarding race and racism, what I refer to as the 'elephant-in-the-room' situation. The data, methods, and ethical considerations are presented in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 summarises the results of each of the three research articles and presents the contributions of the articles individually. In Chapter 6, I return to the two research questions, synthesise my results, and conclude by highlighting the thesis's significance for the subfield of political ecologies of the far-right, and present avenues for racism-conscious future research on the far-right's role in the climate crisis.

Table 1. The three research articles of the thesis.

	Article I	Article II	Article III
Title	*The new Russian civilisation: Arctic fossil fuels, white masculinity, and the neo-fascist visual politics of the Izborskii Club*	*Bordering and racialisation through the language on nature: The anti-immigration discourse of the Finnish radical right*	*Make Finland warm again: Climate obstruction as a form of climate coloniality in the politics of the Finnish far-right*
Research aim	To understand how the Izborskii Club's visual politics regarding Arctic fossil fuels produce white nationalism	To understand how politicians of the populist radical right Finns Party use the rhetoric of environmentalism to justify and rationalise their anti-immigration politics, simultaneously (re) producing racialisation and bordering of the Other	By approaching climate obstruction as a form of climate coloniality, the aim is to understand how the far-right racial politics of climate obstruction intensify vulnerabilities and perpetuate climate coloniality into the future
Empirical material	The Izborskii Club's journal *Russkia strategii*	Interviews with 24 politicians from the Finns Party	Interviews with 24 politicians from the Finns Party

2 The far-right in Finland and Russia: contextualising the thesis

This section provides the theoretical and empirical background to my research on the far-right in Finland and Russia. First, I review the existing geographical literature that situates the emergence of the far-right in the wider historical context of structural racism. Whilst this body of literature empirically focuses especially on the context of the United States, in sections 2.2 and 2.3, I outline the socio-historical context of my dissertation by introducing Finland's and Russia's recent political changes. I will focus on white nationalism and racism to better understand and conceptualise the two investigated far-right actors, the Finns Party and the Izborskii Club that, as I elaborate below, share the same ideologies of racism, white nationalism, and climate obstruction.

2.1 What is the far-right?

Globally re-emerging far-right politics and consequential phenomena, such as the fetishisation of border walls and the intensification of racially motivated violence, have attracted the attention of scholars across disciplines (Miller-Idriss 2020; Pinheiro-Machado & Vargas-Maia 2023; Toscano 2023). The umbrella term of *the far-right* encompasses a spectrum of 'radical' (illiberal and anti-establishment) to 'extreme' (anti-democratic) segments of right-wing politics (Pirro 2022). Whilst the far-right is not a homogenous political family (both internally and in relation to each other) and instead encompasses various, sometimes even conflicting, beliefs, organisational structures, and strategies that also vary across geographical and historical contexts (Reid Ross 2017; Rydgren 2018), Pirro (2022), among many others (see Forchtner 2019), have stressed the usefulness of one umbrella term, 'far-right', because of shared ideology and often overlapping memberships and political agendas.

Geographers have contributed to the booming research on the far-right over the past decade by investigating, for instance, their anti-immigrant sentiments (Czaika & Di Lillo 2018), the intertwining of sexuality and national belonging (Lagerman 2023), and the multifaceted ways in which bordering and the constitution of territory is practised along bodily, communal, urban, national, and regional scales (Casaglia et al. 2020; Casaglia & Coletti 2023; Lizotte 2020; Paasi et al. 2022; Richardson 2020; Lamour & Varga 2020). Scholars have shown how far-right politics revolve around ethno-nationalism, in other words, the mythicised idea of an ethnically homogenous nation living on its 'natural' spatial extent (Casaglia et al. 2020). Furthermore, scholars have shown that the metaphorical and material spatial division of insiders and outsiders (e.g., asylum seekers) is the key foundation of far-right ethno-nationalist politics. The far-right's historical narratives romanticise the nation's distant past and mobilise the myth of ethnonationalist rebirth in which the nation achieves its glory only after the unwanted one is excluded from the nation's living space (Ince 2019). Ethnic homogeneity and the rule of the major ethnic group is advanced through the ideal of an authoritarian state through which the exclusionary national belonging, hierarchical order, and other rights can be governed and maintained (Ince 2019).

Increasingly, attention has also been paid to geographies of whiteness and racism (Gökarıksel & Smith 2016, 2017, 2018; Nagel & Grove 2021; Inwood 2019; Ince 2019; Page & Dittmer 2016; Pulido et al. 2019; Santamarina 2020). Apart from a few exceptions (Ince 2019; Santamarina 2020), to date the vast majority of this scholarship

has focused on the racial dimensions of the far-right in the context of the United States, focusing especially on Donald Trump's rhetoric, politics, and emergence (Gökarıksel & Smith 2016, 2017, 2018; Nagel & Grove 2021; Inwood 2019; Oza 2013; Pulido et al. 2019; Steinberg et al. 2018). Scholars have observed that hatred and love for the community go hand in hand. Far-right politics target racialised and minoritised bodies and spaces and, in so doing, build mass appeal by nurturing and boosting a racially defined heteropatriarchal nation (Pulido et al. 2019). According to Gökarıksel and Smith (2016), Trump's embodied and celebratory performance of white masculinity and the promise to 'Make America Great Again' is a defensive strategy that shows a strong position against perceived *white decline*. In doing so, Trump locates threats to the nation in non-white and non-male bodies, thus turning 'the bodies of Muslims, women, immigrants, minorities and other Others into vulnerable territory in a war' for the future of the nation (Gökarıksel & Smith 2016: 81).

The emergence of the far-right is closely connected to existing racial inequalities, such as racist institutions and structures of white privilege and institutional racism (Gökarıksel & Smith 2016; Inwood 2019; Page & Ditter 2018; Santamarina 2020). As noted by Nagel and Grove (2021: 1), "*Donald Trump's 'Muslim ban' and his punitive treatment of asylum seekers, for instance, were presaged by decades worth of xenophobic laws and policies*". Similarly, Santamarina's (2020) research on the far-right in Spain argues that the grounds where xenophobic populism thrives are produced through structural racism, adding that "*institutions play a key role in the reproduction of racist conflicts in the neighbourhood, the urbanisation of border regimes and the intertwining between political parties, neo-Nazi groups, neighbours and the police in the politicisation of everyday inequalities*" (Santamarina 2020: 897). Page and Dittmer (2016) note that Trump's policy proposals are not very different from those of other Republican candidates, but rather it is Trump's 'affective' performance in the public sphere that makes the difference, for instance, in normalising white nationalism (see also Reid Ross 2017). Such affective and performative racial politics have played an important role in popularising white nationalism and shaping meaning-making around racial categorisations. As Laura Pulido et al. (2019) note, Donald Trump's *spectacular,* in other words, sensational and visible racism has marked a shift in the racial formation so that explicit white supremacy is normalised, which has paved the way for dehumanising policies.

Far-right racism exists alongside many other forms of racism, such as institutional and structural racism (Pulido et al. 2019; Santamarina 2020), which makes it important to pay attention to the sociospatial context of the studied far-right groups. As such, before I introduce the two studied groups, the Finns Party and the Izborskii Club, I place these two groups in the wider context of the particular geographical configurations of white nationalism that characterise both countries' long-term nation-building processes.

2.2 The far-right in contemporary Russia: The case of the Izborskii Club

The modern Russian state has undergone various authoritarian and totalitarian developments in recent decades during the rule of the cabinet of Vladimir Putin (Kolesnikov 2022). At the time of writing this doctoral dissertation, Putin has been the head of Russia for 25 years: as a president from 2000 to 2008, prime minister from 2008 to 2012, and returning to the presidency in 2012. During Putin's tenure, Russia has experienced severe repressive developments that have gradually hardened over time. Ruled by Putin and his associates, the Kremlin has launched various military

campaigns (e.g., against Georgia and Ukraine) and introduced restrictions on individual citizens' everyday lives in the name of the 'nation' (Naterstad 2025; Zakharov 2015). Furthermore, research has documented manipulated elections, reduced media freedoms, and revitalised scientific racism (Burrett 2025; Kolesnikov 2022; Stoner 2023). Migrants, minorities, and dissenters have encountered a higher level of aggression, hate, and repression (Kosygina 2010). Although different racialisations occurred in the Soviet Union, too, the ideological cornerstone of contemporary authoritarian Russia is specific forms of ethno-nationalism that rely on civilisationism, anti-Westernness, and strict racial hierarchies (Tolz 2017; Zakharov 2015). As noted by Zakharov (2015), since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian's narratives of great power as well as the ongoing process of nation-building under the conditions of globalisation have been accompanied by strong racialisation, as whiteness has been used as "*the reliable anchor keeping Russia firmly within the 'family of civilized others*" (Zakharov 2015: 2).

According to Vera Tolz (2017), it was especially Vladimir Putin's third presidency, starting in 2012, that marked a significant change in Russian's discourse of nationhood: to a great extent, Putin and various state-owned actors, such as state-controlled broadcasters, started to highlight 'ethnic' Russians' special place in the national community and promoting a hierarchical view of people. Tolz (2017) links the shift in public discourse to the Kremlin's attempts to build support for a repressive regime: by emphasising ethnic forms of nationalism, the political system's stability was better maintained and justified.

Putin's Russia has been systematically attempting to refine a policy of publicly funding nationalist actors that promote patriotic civil society (Laruelle 2019). Although enjoying relatively modest electoral success and power in the Duma, different systemic and meta-political far-right groups have held relatively significant political power in the Russian political sphere, for instance, by holding powerful positions in the Kremlin ecosystem (Arnold & Umland 2018; Umland 2007). One of these actors is the Izborskii Club, a far-right think tank that has attempted to incorporate different far-right factions under a single umbrella and, in doing so, has become one of the most prominent far-right actors in Russia (Arnold & Umland 2018; Bacon 2018; Bluth 2017; Laruelle 2019). The Izborskii Club plays an influential role in defining far-right national geopolitical imaginary in Russia as it operates in tandem with the state and gains economic support from the central authorities of the Russian Federation (Eberhardt 2018). Founded in the city of Izborsk in 2012, the metapolitical group is a loose collective of well-known politicians, thinkers, and public figures, including Alexandr Prokhanov and Alexandr Dugin, both important intellectuals in Russia (Arnold & Umland 2018; Ingram 2001). Many of the members are closely connected to the Kremlin, for instance, through their government positions (Bluth 2017). The Club promotes authoritarianism, ethnonationalism, and imperialist, or Eurasian, stances that glorify the idea of a powerful Russian empire that is established over the Euro-Asian continent (Arnold & Umland 2018; Bacon 2018; Laruelle 2019). Eurasianism is a political movement that seeks to expand Russian territory to encompass the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and parts of Asia. Indeed, according to Natasha Bluth (2017), for Russian Eurasianists, such as those in the Izborskii Club, 'liberating' southeastern Ukraine was the first step to getting Russia better access to the European continent.

Although the Club's climate politics have not been systematically examined, Scherbak and his co-authors (2024: 28) show how different conservative and nationalist groups, including the Club, share the same traits with their "*Western colleagues*" in denying "*the scale and character of the problems caused by climate change*" and rejecting the "*suicidal*" demands

of the "*left-wing ecological movement*" to phase out fossil fuels. Instead, the far-right in Russia shifts the blame for the global ecological crisis onto the West, such as Western overconsumption of natural resources and "*the predatory attitude to nature*" (Scherbak 2024: 30). In the Russian context, climate obstructionism cannot, however, be limited to the radical segment of Russian society; instead, it is the mainstream of today's Russia (Henry & Sundstrom 2024; Tynkkynen & Tynkkynen 2018; Poberezhskaya & Martus 2024). Instead of climate mitigation, Russian climate politics focuses on adaptation, as well as utilising the opportunities and advantages of climate change, including the expansion of agriculturally viable land, greater access to Arctic resources, and lower heating energy costs (Henry & Sundsrom 2024; Pobrtrzhskaya & Martus 2024).

The Russian lack of political will in mitigating climate change stems from its economic and political dependence on fossil fuels (Tynkkynen & Tynkkynen 2018; Tynkkynen 2019; Poberezhskaya & Martus 2024). Russia is the fourth largest emitter of greenhouse gases, and in 2019, its fossil fuel industry accounted for 14.2% of Russia's GDP and 59.9% of its export earnings, making Russia the world's largest fossil fuel exporter (Makarov 2021). One of the most important buyers of Russian fossil fuels is the EU (Raghunandan & Katinas 2025). For instance, in 2024, the European Union's fossil fuel imports from Russia (€21.9 billion) surpassed the financial aid (€18.7 billion) sent to Ukraine by the EU (CREA 2025). Russian fossil fuels, oil and gas, are the cornerstones of Russia's authoritarian rule and geopolitical power (Tynkkynen 2019). Recognising this, the Izborskii Club, among many other nationalists, advocates for more aggressive exploitation of fossil fuels (Scherbak 2024) as, for them, the state's current pace is not quick enough (Prokhanov 2016). In doing so, as I will discuss in more detail in Article I, attention is being directed primarily towards the Russian North, the Arctic. Such interests are driven by the region's changing geographies, such as the seasonally ice-free Arctic Ocean and the strategic importance of the Northern Sea Route, which encourage resource exploration and geopolitical competition. For Eurasianists, the Arctic holds strategic importance in terms of imperial expansion. It also holds spiritual importance: the Club has long been known for their efforts to introduce neo-fascist language and neo-Nazi symbolism to the Russian nationalist landscape, especially in the context of the Arctic, as the Russian Arctic, or 'Hyperborea', is perceived as a homeland of Aryan, white Russians (Laruelle 2019; Shnirelman 2014).

The mobilisation of such spatial narratives of a mysticised homeland illustrates well how, through different romanticised landscapes, certain socio-spatial arrangements and relations are naturalised and depoliticised through naturalistic assumptions of biology. It also raises further questions about how Eurasianism and whiteness – the cornerstones of the Russian far-right's politics – are cultivated and produced in relation to Arctic fossil fuels and with what consequences.

2.3 The far-right in contemporary Finland: The case of the Finns Party

In 2025, Finland was – for the eighth time in a row – the happiest country on Earth (Helliwell et al. 2025). Although the Finnish (as other Nordic countries') image has relied on the idea of peace-making and racist exceptionalism (the idea that Nordic countries are exempted from a history of colonialism and racism), the success of the Finnish welfare state model has been heavily dependent on exclusionary and racist politics, such as strict immigration policy and settler colonialism (Bergmann 2017; Hoegaerts et al. 2022; Loftsdóttir 2020). Finland is a settler colonial state that has a long history

of assimilation and subjugation of the Sámi people, the only indigenous people in the European Union (Junka-Aikio 2023; Kuokkanen 2020; Lehtola 2015). Furthermore, in Finland, racially motivated harassment and discrimination are more common than in other European countries: for instance, in 2017, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights ranked Finland as the most racist country in the European Union (EU-MIDIS II 2018; Kataja 2020).

In this context, in which racism is embedded in structural and institutional arrangements, in the past decade, the ethno-nationalist Finns Party (formerly known as True Finns) has played an important role in shaping public discussion, for instance, by mainstreaming Islamophobia (Arter 2010; Horsti & Saresma 2021). The party has been among the three biggest parties in the past four parliamentary elections. The party, established in 1995, has its origins in agrarian populism (Arter 2010; Bergmann 2017; Koivulaakso et al. 2012). The party made its electoral breakthrough in the 2011 parliamentary elections by securing 19,1% of the votes.

According to Tuuli Lähdesmäki (2019), the Finns Party's ideological views and political principles centre around fostering 'the nation' that is defined as an ethnically homogenous community (see also Arter 2010; Bergmann 2017). Whilst the Finns Party's politics are based on racism and xenophobia, explicit discriminatory communication is avoided or veiled under seemingly neutral utterances, such as the emphasis on cultural incompatibility (Lähdesmäki 2019). In doing so, the party claims to be the protector of European cultures, histories, and heritage (Lähdesmäki 2019). As a method of normalising its racist politics, in addition to emphasizing cultural 'incompatibility', the Finns Party has also been distancing itself from openly anti-Semitist and xenophobic actors through internal 'cleaning' projects, in other words, by discharging some of its members or subgroups from membership (Lizotte & Kallio 2023). Yet, according to recent journalistic investigations, one third of the party's members of parliament have spread fascist material, participated in fascist events, or have overlapping memberships with fascist groups (Björkqvist 2023).

The tightening of climate targets has raised new climate policy conflicts and dividing lines in Finland, which are reflected in the rise of the Finns Party as a new force transforming national climate policy (Toivanen & Lähde 2024). Whereas 10 years ago, the party hardly referred to climate change or the environment, since 2017, the party has applied various obstructionist methods that are not limited to literal denial (Hatakka & Välimäki 2019; Vihma et al. 2021). Opposition to climate regulations is rooted in reference to the national economy, as climate mitigation is positioned vis-à-vis the interests of Finnish industry (Hatakka & Välimäki 2019). In their analysis of the election manifestos of the party, Vihma and his co-authors (2021) show how the party downplays climate mitigation by arguing that Finland accounts for 'only' about 0.1% of global carbon dioxide emissions. Instead, the party shifts the blame onto developing countries and their population 'explosion', consumption habits, and pollutive industrial production (Vihma et al. 2021). Following traditional Finnish nationalist iconographies (Paasi 1996), different references to nature are, however, not absent from the party's political communications. Instead, the party emphasises the role of nature in Finnish folklore and identity, romanticises Finland's exceptional relationship between humans and nature and, echoing the thoughts of Finnish ecofascist thinker Pentti Linkola, frames overpopulation as the mother of all environmental problems (Malm & Zetkin Collective 2021).

Finland has a history of seeking global leadership in climate politics (Vihma et al. 2021). However, in recent years, the Finns Party has played an important role in

transforming climate mitigation-related political consensus by strongly and loudly opposing the tightening of climate regulations (Hatakka & Välimäki 2019; Vihma et al. 2021) and, more recently, by transforming national climate legislation. In 2023, the right-wing National Coalition Party formed a coalition with the Finns Party, which, campaigning around gasoline populism and opposition to the 'fanatic' climate politics of 'cursed' environmentalists, took second place in the parliamentary elections (Pietiläinen & Kellokumpu 2024). Riikka Purra, the leader of the Party, who dreams about killing migrants (Mykkänen et al. 2023), became the Minister of Finance, while Mari Rantanen, a believer in the Great Replacement conspiracy theory, became Minister of Interior Affairs (Piirainen 2023). Lulu Ranne, who calls the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) "a *propaganda-advancing political organisation"* (Suomen Uutiset 2021), was in turn appointed as the Minister of Transport and Communications, a ministry that also governs the Finnish Meteorological Institute. At the time of writing this chapter, the coalition is launching various austerity measures and attacks on workers' rights and social security and has cut over €30 million from environmental protection. Furthermore, the coalition is implementing various restrictions in immigration and citizenship policy, has adopted a 'pushback law' that human rights organisations call against international migration law and has indefinitely closed the 1340-kilometre Finnish–Russian border (Jochecová 2024). Whilst some of these laws, such as the closure of the border, have been justified by Russia's weaponisation of migration, many of the party's nativist and racist dreams that they have been advocating for over two centuries have finally become true. Yet, the Finns Party did not implement the laws alone: for instance, the pushback law was supported by the vast majority in parliament, 167 out of 200 lawmakers.

My introduction to the two studied political contexts, Finland and Russia, shows the persistence of racial differentiation, both at the structural level and in the political programmes of the two groups. In the context of the far-right's expanding influence, both countries have witnessed a re-articulation and a thriving of authoritarian forms of racialisation, which is enabled by structural conditions that perpetuate racist social relations. Whilst the intensity of authoritarianism and consequential policies differs, the Finns Party and the Izborskii Club hold key roles in shaping mainstream nationalist and racist discourses by advocating highly exclusionary and racial beliefs of belonging, as well as opposing climate mitigation. These groups thus provide an excellent starting point for my attempt to study the role of race in far-right climate and environmental politics. However, first it is essential to discuss what I mean by race and racism and how racism relates to the ongoing global ecological crisis.

3 The racial politics of space in the Anthropocene

In this chapter, I present the theoretical framework of my thesis. The chapter is structured into three interrelated discussions. First, I engage with rich scholarship on the spatiality of race, laying out my spatial perspective on racism. As I explain, race is not just about spatial inclusions or exclusions and dichotomies between 'us' and 'them' but is a structural phenomenon that renews the fatal couplings of power and difference. In the second section, I discuss the Anthropocene and its racial nature, highlighting how a geographically oriented focus on the production of race can help us understand the differentiated risks, responsibilities, and impacts of the climate crisis to shed light on various ways race unfolds and structures it. Specifically, I focus on three elements: Eurocentric epistemologies of environmental knowledge, the racial geographies of fossil capitalism, and racial risks and vulnerability.

The third section turns the spotlight on the far-right's pro-fossil fuels and climate obstructionist politics that have become a new norm in many countries. Through a brief but by no means exhaustive literature review, I show how scholarship has approached the far-right's array of different, sometimes contradictory, responses to the climate crisis and ecological crises at large. In doing so, I also demonstrate that, while nationalism and fascism are the two main frameworks through which the far-right's climate and environmental politics are approached, race and racism have become the elephant in the room for a significant portion of the scholarship. Racism is either treated as something that will happen in the future or as ancillary to nationalism, and its structural role in the global ecological crisis is not considered. After discussing in detail the conceptual uncertainties that researchers studying the topic encounter regarding race, racism, and nationalism, I outline the principles of my perspective on the racial Anthropocene.

3.1 A spatial perspective on racism

Western societies are characterised by the concept of tolerance and a democratic, sometimes even anti-racist, nature (Lentin 2008). However, racism is not obsolete; instead, it is a persistent feature of everyday life. Although sometimes reduced to (pseudo)racial science or vulgar acts against individuals based on skin colour, race is a structural socio-spatial process (Gilmore 2022) that signifies social conflicts and interests where humans are differentiated and categorised based on their phenotypes and other visual features (Omi & Winant 2014).

The mutually constitutive projects of racialisation and spatialisation play a key role in the past and present construction of geographical knowledge and, thus, "*geography matters just as 'race' matters, not because either infers essentialized characteristics of human beings of landscapes, but because both result from processes of human differentiation*" (Kobayashi 2003: 552). Because spatialisation and racialisation are co-constitutive processes linked to the categorisation and differentiation of humans, geographers' spatial approach to race allows us to understand the myriad of, sometimes even subtle, ways in which racial difference and inequality define and structure space. Reciprocally, it also enables an analysis of the active role that space plays in the organisation and production of racial injustices, thus shedding light on how certain space-making processes are simultaneously processes of racialisation.

In fact, geographers, in their thinking about space, have long been complicit in the development of the idea of race. Kobayashi and Peake (1994), among many

others (see Kobayashi 2003; Livingstone 1992; Peet 1985), have stressed geographers' responsibilities in developing and legitimising biological and essentialist understandings of race. Geography – as a master's tool – has played an active role in mapping out, classifying, and hierarchising people and places (Livingstone 1992). According to Aníbal Quijano (2007), such racial classification played a key role in the construction of the relationship between the colonised and the coloniser in the form of domination, also justifying the spatial expansion of European powers and the exploitation of 'inferior' territories, natures, and peoples. Geographers, for instance, developed and perpetuated scientific racism and established principles for naturalistic and determinist approaches to society to justify imperial conquest and domination (Bassin 2003; Bassin 2016; Livingstone 1992; Peet 1985).

Friedrich Ratzel, the father of modern geography, developed[2] the *naturalistic* view in which a human society ('organism') was understood in terms of the same laws that govern the natural world (Bassin 2003; Bassin 2016; Dalby 2015; Peet 1985). Such an idea of naturalism was an important premise for the development of environmental determinism, which refers to a pseudoscientific explanation for the connection between the natural environment, race, and society (Bassin 2003; Dalby 2015; Peet 1985). Ratzel's student Ellen Churchill Semple further developed the idea that geophysical factors (such as climate and terrain) determine the racial characteristics (such as human consciousness), cultural and political qualities, and, thus, 'destinies' of peoples (Peet 1985). The naturalistic and environmental determinist views developed by Ratzel, Sample, and their fellow geopoliticians were advanced and executed in various contexts, which has led to various disastrous consequences, such as the genocide of various indigenous peoples, South Africa's apartheid, historical Nationalist Socialism's principles and practices (including Nazi ecologies, see Bruggermeier et al. 2005; Uekoetter 2006), and the legitimation of the Holocaust (Bassin 2016; Bhatia 2004; Gilmore 2022).[3]

During the second half of the 20th century, geographers started slowly rejecting the positivist and essentialist understanding of race. This resulted in increased critical attention to the history of the relationship between geography and race and the booming interest in avenues for anti-racist geographies (Bonnett 1997; Kobayashi & Peake 1994; Kobayashi 2003, 2014; Nash 2003; Peake & Kobayashi 2002). Geographies of race and racism have been studied, for instance, in the context of colonialism (Blaut 1993), settler colonialism (Bonds & Inwood 2016), and space (Kobayashi & Peake 1994; Kobayashi 2003; Neely & Samura 2011). Influenced by critical race theory as well as relational understandings of space (see Lefebvre 1991; Massey 1992, 1994), those studying the interconnectedness of space and race reject the essentialist perspective and instead approach race as an ideological and historicised socio-spatial process linked to material relations of power. By a relational understanding of space, I mean the notion in terms of which space is not treated as a passive stage in which things just happen. Instead, as Doreen Massey (1993) has theorised, space, constituted through social relations and material social practices, plays an active role in the organisation of social life. Space is

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[2] As Peet (1985) shows, Ratzel's thinking was partially inspired by Darwinian and Lamarckian understandings of evolution and the work of Herbert Spencer, who developed analogies between biological and social processes.

[3] Kobayashi (2003: 546) notes that geographers did not accept environmental determinism universally; instead, in the 20th century, 'no issue was of more significance to the discipline – and certainly none was more vehemently debated – than that of environmental determinism versus human agency' (Kobayashi 2003).

contested and infused with difference, and racial inequality is a critical principle through which spaces are organised and defined (Neely & Samura 2011). At the same time, racist practices are also about how spaces are made and remade (Neely & Samura 2011).

Racism shows in a variety of conscious and unconscious discourses and institutional structures and is always linked to other forms of oppression, such as class and gender (Guillaumin 1995; Davis 2021[1981]). For Gilmore (2022: 107), racism, a "*fatal coupling of power and difference*", is the "*production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerabilities to premature death […] and other life-limiting inequalities*". Racism is a form of political struggle linked to material inequalities and normative (thus ideological) reasoning. Naturalisation and depoliticisation of racial injustices, for instance, through essentialised and deterministic notions of racial spaces or the idea of cultural incompatibilities (e.g., so-called cultural racism), according to Gilmore (2022: 114), secure such conditions:

> "[…] *secure conditions for reproducing economic inequalities, which then validate theories of extra-economic hierarchical difference. In other words, racism functions as a limiting force that pushes disproportionate costs of participating in an increasingly monetized and profit-driven world onto those who, due to the frictions of political distance, cannot reach the variable levers of power that might relieve them of those costs*"

The process of racialisation is the key to scrutinising in more detail the production of race and the naturalisation of hierarchical difference. Racialisation refers to "*the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice or group*" (Omi & Winant 2015: 13). It is a spatial process because it constitutes racialised places, for instance, through social or spatial segregation or by constraining people into specific living conditions (Kobayashi & Peake 2000). The complexity but also efficiency of racialisation and, thus, racist practice derive from the spatial and temporal fluidity of connotations assigned to the concept of race. As Stuart Hall (1997) argues, the meaning-making around racial classification is adaptable and variable across times and spaces. Treating race as an empty sign that "*floats in a sea of relational differences*", Hall argues that it is exactly due to its relationality that the meaning around race can never be finally fixed, but "*s subject to the constant process of redefinition and appropriation*" (Hall 1997: 9).

Scholarship has effectively documented how contemporary racialising discourse is increasingly framed through *cultural* arguments that use specific semiotics to (re)produce the racialised Other, often appearing as 'racism without race' (Bonilla-Silva 2017; see also Balibar 1991; Mbembe 2023). Furthermore, racism, as an ideology, is not always clearly observable but can function through the most subtle, modest, and taken-for-granted cultural meanings (for instance, regarding nature or spatial organisation).

An important perspective through which race and its structural dimensions have been approached within geography is through the concept of whiteness (Baldwin 2012; Bonnett 1997, 1998; Bonds & Inwood 2016; Pulido 2015). By carefully tracing the historical emergence of the *territorial* notions of whiteness, Alastair Bonnett (1998: 1038) has shown how whiteness became associated with moral lineage, creating "*a triple conflation is White = Europe = Christian*". Recent contributions have called for careful distinction between white privilege and white supremacy. Whilst white privilege can be characterised by *unintentional* practices, such as individuals' "*desire to create the best opportunities for themselves and their families, which, in a highly racialized society, reproduced racial inequality*" (Pulido 2015: 810) white supremacy refers to the structures of white power, as well as explicit attitudes of racial superiority (Bonds & Inwood 2016; Pulido 2015). As summarized by Bonds and Inwood (2016: 716), "*while white privilege remains an*

important analytic frame to analyse the taken-for-granted benefits and protections afforded to whites based upon skin colour, the concept of privilege emphasises the social condition of whiteness, rather than the institutions, practices and processes that produce this condition in the first place" (see also, Pulido 2015).

Race's fluid yet structural nature sheds light on how race and space are inherently co-constitutive processes. Additionally, within geography, a rich body of literature exists that has shown how race and space are articulated in relation to various environmental issues, such as pollution and, more recently, climate change. The deepening global ecological crisis and its various inequitable impacts have raised various new conflicts over the distribution of power and wealth. Examples of this are different contestations over race and space, such as the far-right's nationalist and racial politics of climate obstruction and ecology, the focus of my study. To understand the nexus, the theories on racial Anthropocene, which I turn to next, become particularly fruitful and useful in their ability to shed light on how race unfolds and structures the ongoing climate crisis.

3.2 Race and space in the Anthropocene

Mainstream discussions on the Anthropocene often hold the whole of humanity accountable for climate change and propose technocratic or market-driven solutions to deal with the various manifestations of the crisis. Such a view has been criticised for providing a de-historicising and universalising description of climate change, ignoring the unevenness in the distribution of wealth, responsibilities, and vulnerabilities and dismissing the key roles racism and colonialism play in mediating climate change-related injustices (Pulido 2018; Sealey-Huggins 2018; Vergès 2017; Yusoff 2018). Noting the importance of connecting climate change to wider processes that are structured through racial capitalism, colonialism, and imperialism, many scholars on climate crisis have attempted to establish the connections between climate change and racism (Pulido 2018; Sealey-Huggins 2018; Tilley et al. 2023; Tuana 2019; Vergès 2017), showing the multitude of articulations of space and race at play. As the conceptual and theoretical discussions around this topic are vast, I focus on three geographical aspects: *Eurocentric epistemologies of environmental knowledge, racial geographies of fossil capitalism*, and *racial risks and vulnerability*.

The first aspect, *Eurocentric epistemologies of environmental knowledge*, points to the knowledge foundation and outlook characterising and reproduced by the Anthropocene (Sultana 2022a; Yusoff 2018). Tracing the dawn of the Anthropocene to the arrival of Europeans in the Caribbean, Yusoff (2018) shows how, through racism and extractive colonial violence, humans and nature were objectified and exploited, which laid down vocabularies in which the extraction of the natural world was co-constitutive with the racial codings of inhuman. For instance, the doctrines of human factors influencing societal development (the above-discussed environmental determinism) laid down the idea that the favourable environmental circumstances explained racial superiority (e.g., European civilisation), in contrast to the more challenging tropical environments of the colonies (Dalby 2015). Indeed, the vocabulary of Western civilisation emerged in tandem with the creation of race and nature, and such epistemes facilitate and structure racial capitalism and colonialism also today (Asaka 2010; Soper 1995; Yusoff 2018).

Race also underwrites the Western narratives around ecology and environmentalism (Anantharaman 2024; Hendrixson et al. 2020; Vergès 2017) and different climate adaptation and mitigation processes, as certain forms of knowledge (Western, rational,

universal, masculine) are considered superior to other forms of knowledge (Sultana 2022a). Many have, for instance, pointed out how Global North and its fossil fuel corporations hold the power in the key institutions and platforms regarding climate change – such as the IPCC or the Conference of the Parties (COP), whilst the non-Eurocentric, non-masculinist, and non-capitalist understanding of the global ecological crisis has been structurally and systematically ignored (Haverkamp 2024; Sultana 2022a).

Many also point to the role of racial population control ideas in transnational climate change mitigation programmes (Angus & Butler 2011; Bhatia et al. 2020; Sasser 2018; Tilley & Ajl 2023). Populationism refers to the idea that social and ecological problems are associated with population (Sasser 2018). Populationism has deep historical roots in Malthusian population 'theories' (Sasser 2018). Such theories have been an important part of Western-led development projects in the 20th and 21st centuries, but climate change has made these narratives even more silent (Bhatia et al. 2020; Sasser 2018). Populationism has also played an important role in right-wing politics (Bhatia 2004; Harvey 1974) such as the work of misanthropic and ecofascist thinkers such as Pentti Linkola (Macklin 2022). Linkola, a Finnish ecofascist thinker, has argued that only through a strong totalitarian state and massive measures (e.g., restrictions of rights and massive killings) can nature be secured. Linkola is celebrated globally among various radical and extreme right-wing individuals and groups, but his admirers extend beyond the far right. In Finland, he is considered by the public as one of the most important intellectuals, 'the Finnish national treasure' (Nieminen 2017). Indeed, as Tilley et al. (2023: 143) remind us, "*environmentalism, with its multiple lineages, influences, and formations, contains the sediments of colonialism, imperialism, and white nationalism, as much as it contains the sediments of liberatory projects*".

The second aspect considers the *racial geographies of fossil capitalism* and the consequential unevenness in the distribution of power and wealth that is connected to white privilege, a structural advantage that maintains racial, imperial, and colonial relations of power (Jurema & König 2023; Sultana 2022a). Colonialism is integral to capitalism's expansion and deploys race and racism as techniques of exclusion and control, acquiring lands and creating sacrifice zones and expendable people (Bhambra & Newell 2023; Gonzales 2021). Labour is divided based on racial practices, and the exploitation of racialised people and lands is justified. Harms deriving from the extraction and combustion of fossil fuels place a heavy burden on especially racialised communities in the global North and South (Gonzales 2021). As a historical process, this has led to what Malm and Warlenius (2019) call *a climate debt*. As noted by Malm and Warlenius (2019), wealthier countries owe post-colonial countries *a climate debt* due to historically unequal climate exchange and the colonisation of the atmosphere. The history of fossil fuels – the main driver of human-induced climate warming – is characterised by racial violence, genocide, war, military invasion, and robbery of land and labour, which is reflective of racial capitalism that is dependent on the imperial expansion of the energy base and access to cheap nature and labour (Jurema & König 2023). As noted by Gonzales (2021: 118), "*the North's bloody resource wars, its collusion with despotic petro-states, and the resulting death, destruction and displacement of racialized Muslim and Arab population are amongst the most violent ongoing manifestations of climate injustice*".

The white (ruling) classes in the Global North have extensively benefited from fossil capitalism, which has enabled imperial modes of living in the non-peripheral parts of the world (Brand & Wissen 2021). It is thus not a surprise that white conservative men have been among the loudest climate obstructors and leading fossil fuel proponents (see also McCright & Dunlap 2011). Western white privileges are, according to Cara

Daggett (2018) 'oil-soaked' and 'coal-dusted' and thus admitting climate change would also mean leaving behind billions of dollars' worth of profits. Indeed, climate inaction, or what Ekberg (2024) and his co-authors call *climate obstruction*, is a wider structural phenomenon linked to the protection of material interests and luxury lifestyles. The concept refers to the multifaceted discourses, political influence, policies, and cultural beliefs that deny, downplay, and/or delay climate mitigation (Ekberg et al. 2024). Such an umbrella term is useful because oppositional strategies extend beyond any singular discourse or tactic (Ekberg et al. 2022; Brulle 2021; McKie 2021). Climate obstruction is upheld by various actors, discourses, and cultural norms that oppose climate regulation (Brulle & Spencer 2024; Ekberg et al. 2022; Forchtner et al. 2024), but previous analyses especially emphasise the role of conservative political actors and the fossil fuel industry in manipulating and influencing climate action, for instance, by opposing climate regulation and mobilising climate change-related misinformation to slow down industrial regulations (Brulle 2021; Dunlap & McCright 2015; McKie 2021; Oreskes & Convay 2011).

In light of decades of inaction and inadequate mainstream climate politics (and other forms of colonial and racial environmental destruction), environmental and Indigenous activists and scholars across the world have shown how such inaction perpetuates climate coloniality, for instance, by intensifying risks and vulnerabilities (Pulido 2018; Sultana 2022a; Sultana 2024). Considering the political inability to phase out fossil fuels, past, present, and future racial and geographical differences will differently affect how the climate crisis is experienced. As such, the second dimension in which the racial nature of the Anthropocene can be approached is *the racial distribution of risk and vulnerability*. A long tradition within geography and environmental justice scholarship and grassroots activism has examined how race determines the production and distribution of environmental harms, such as pollution and toxic waste, resulting in environmental racism (Bullard 1993; Pulido 2000). In recent decades, scholars have also started to discuss the unevenness of climate change, noting that it is the formerly colonised communities, frontline communities, and racialised and minoritised people and their lands across the world (those who have contributed the least to climate change) that are the ones who are most burdened and harmed by it (Davis & Todd 2017; Pulido 2018; Sultana 2022a, 2022b, 2024). As Sealey-Huggins (2018) remarks, *vulnerability* cannot be explained through environmental factors but instead is mediated through political and economic structures, as those people and states that are least able to deal with climate-induced harms are often those most indebted or least resourced. The spatial distribution of risk and vulnerability follows pre-existing lines of racial inequality that intersect with other axes of oppression, such as class, gender, and sexuality (Pulido 2019).

Within geographical scholarship, uneven climate impacts have been studied in recent years through the concept of climate coloniality (DeBoom 2022; Islam et al. 2024; Sultana 2022, 2024). Climate coloniality refers to the experiences of the racialised populations whose vulnerabilities are intensified through the increased risks to climate impacts that are co-constitutive with various expressions of coloniality, such as racism, Eurocentric hegemony, and uneven consumption (Sultana 2022, 2024). In a similar vein, climate coloniality is maintained and expressed through racial categorisation and hierarchisation of people and places (Sultana 2022b, 2024). Such racial underpinnings are shown, for instance, in the dehumanising logics that render some people and places as disposable and sacrificial for the protection of the economy or lifestyles of a few (DeBoom 2022; Sultana 2024). Such dehumanising logic is also an example of the violence of climate coloniality that many call, drawing on the work of Mbembe,

necropolitics, in other words, "*the power and capacity to dictate who may live and who must die*" (Mbembe 2003: 1).

Acknowledging longer histories of Eurocentric epistemologies as well as racial violences and privileges linked to the extraction of fossil fuels is important because they structure our environmental understanding and the ongoing climate crisis. Addressing climate catastrophe and minimising suffering and death requires acting in accordance with planetary limits as well as climate justice in the form of anti-imperialism, decolonisation of colonial epistemologies, and recognition of the rights of climate-displaced persons to migrate (Agarwal & Narain 2019; Forsyth 2014; Gonzales 2021; Sultana 2024). The current era has, however, been characterised by a global rise of the authoritarian far-right that has not only normalised and mainstreamed different forms of racism but has also become a key actor in slowing down climate change-related policymaking. The far-right, enabled by ongoing racial structural conditions, has become a crucial power, transforming and normalising racist authoritarianism, as shown in Chapter 2. Furthermore, the far-right has also become an increasingly important actor in slowing national and regional climate politics, to which I now turn.

3.3 The far-right in the Anthropocene and the elephant in the room

Research has shown that it is more the rule than the exception that the far-right obstructs climate politics. Far-right anti-climate politics is often accompanied by ecological concerns about the homeland's nature and various ideas on how to 'tackle' it, including the revival of the natural order or the fortification of borders (Forchtner & Kølvraa 2015; Turner & Bailey 2021). As I show below, the most dominant framework through which the contemporary far-right's climate and environmental politics is approached is nationalism. Even if some scholars cite *white* nationalism as a driving motive for the far-right's climate obstruction (e.g., Hultman et al. 2019) or discuss the potential of an fascist future (Malm & Zetkin Collective 2021; Moore & Roberts 2022), the role of race as a concept is highly understudied and underconceptualised when it comes to the far-right's climate and environmental politics.

First is the far-right's well-documented *climate obstruction* (Forchtner et al. 2018; Forchtner 2019b; Hess & Renner 2019; Hultman et al. 2019; Küppers 2024; Lockwood 2018; Malm & Zetkin Collective 2021; Oswald et al. 2021; Schaller & Carius 2019; Schwörer & Fernández-Garcia 2024; Żuk & Szulecki, 2020). As explained above, climate obstruction refers to the multifaceted discourses, political influence, policies, and cultural beliefs that deny, downplay, and/or delay climate mitigation. Research has recognised the far-right's increasing influence in shaping and slowing down climate change-related policy processes and legislations, as well as public views, for instance, denying climate science and (anthropogenic) climate change (Hultman et al. 2019), shifting the responsibility for climate mitigation elsewhere (Vowles & Hultman 2021b), downplaying climate change due to its alleged harms to national economy/sovereignty/ the people (Forchtner et al. 2018; Vihma et al. 2021; Oswald et al. 2021), and opposing the phasing out of fossil fuels and renewables (Malm & Zetkin Collective 2021; Yazar & Haarstad 2023).

Scholars have noted that the far-right's (often selective) denial of scientific consensus, spread of misinformation, and outright hostility towards scientists and environmental defenders (Pietiläinen 2024) is far from a new political phenomenon but instead reflects a wider neoliberal agenda in which environmental and climate regulation is opposed

because of economic and market-related motives (Anshelm & Hultman 2014; Daggett 2019; De Pryck & Gemenne 2017; Ekberg et al. 2022; Hultman et al. 2019; Malm & Zetkin Collective 2021; Neimark et al. 2019; Pulido et al. 2019; Vowles 2024). For instance, Ekberg et al. (2022) show that the far-right has taken up many of the discourses and tactics of organised climate obstructionist groups (such as the fossil fuel industry that I discussed above), becoming one of the most vocal actors criticising climate action and exacerbating the existing structures of climate inaction (Forchtner 2019b; Malm & Zetkin Collective 2021; Selby 2019).

However, recent research on far-right climate politics has noted various differences between conservative and far-right actors. Subsequently, the far-right's specific form of climate obstruction has been examined and explained through the framework of nationalism, such as the tensions between national ideology and sovereignism and acting on 'global' climate change (Forchtner & Kolvraa 2015; Kulin et al. 2021; Kulin & Johansson Sevä 2024; Lockwood 2018; Vihma et al. 2021). From this perspective, the far right obstructs climate action because climate change is a global phenomenon that requires transnational solidarity, which weakens national sovereignty. Such a perspective is often underlined by the assumption that the far-right's nationalist politics 'disturb' current Western climate consensus. As such, the far-right is positioned vis-à-vis 'meaningful climate politics', which, whilst producing a dichotomy between pro-climate and anti-climate politics, elevates mainstream liberal climate politics and dismisses the racial and colonial legacies of the Anthropocene.

Others have linked the far-right's climate obstruction and (often masculinised) attachments to fossil fuels to the protection of the white industrial nation (Allen 2021; Daggett 2019; Hultman et al. 2021; Hultman & Pule 2018; Vowles & Hultman 2021b; Vowles 2024). Hultman and his co-authors (2019: 129) argue that "*the merge between far-right nationalism and climate change denialism is based upon the ideological similarities in viewing the world from an industrial masculinities viewpoint, not wanting to let go of the colonial extractive logic that has served these men, but violated the planet*". Vowles and Hultman (2021b: 422) explain the far-right's opposition to a climate agenda with the perceived threats to "*the fossil fuelled modern economy and thus the wellbeing of the nation, which [...] is argued to have been built by white men*". Whilst providing important insights into the gendered dimensions of far-right climate obstruction, these scholars do not conceptualise or define the concept of whiteness, which invites further questions concerning the processes by which racial categorisation and differentiation (such as the production of whiteness) occurred in far-right climate obstructionist politics and how such politics of climate obstruction intensify racial injustices at the structural level. Indeed, whiteness, as a form of white privilege, is dependent not only on the violation of the planet but also the *violation of the racialised places and people* who, through dehumanisation, are made sacrificial for the economic benefits of a few (DeBoom 2022; Pulido 2000).

In addition to the above-discussed climate obstruction, another well-documented key dimension of far-right environmental and climate politics is far-right ecology. Indeed, it has been widely noted that far-right anti-climate politics are often accompanied by locally scaled ecological concerns (Benoist 2024), and various ideas on how to solve them, including the fortification of borders and populationist arguments in which the attention is shifted from the climate crisis by presenting population growth and the subsequent resource scarcity (e.g., in food supply) as the mother of all environmental problems (Forchtner & Kølvraa 2015; Forchtner 2019a, 2024; Lubarda 2023; Malm & Zetkin Collective 2021; Turner & Bailey 2022; Ungureanu & Popartan 2024; Varco 2023).

Scholars point out that the far-right has not 'captured' nature to advance their social agendas but that its allure to intertwine nature with their agendas derives from 19th- and 20th-century ecology's 'dark' history, such as social Darwinism, Malthusianism, German Romanticism, Nazi 'blood-and-soil' thinking, and the first- and second-wave environmental movements in the US (Forchtner 2019; Hultgren 2015; Lubarda 2019). Emphasising the ideological connection between nature and nationalism, the much-cited Jonathan Olsen (1999, see also Lubarda 2020; Forchtner 2019) describes the far-right's green thought as a distinctive environmentalism in which each human community is perceived as unique and authentic. According to this view, the far-right's ecology is rooted in the idea of *a differentiated idea of cultures* and protection of *"identities"* (Lubarda 2019: 13). Thus, changes in ecosystems (e.g., migration) will have negative effects on both the nation and nature, as every nation, people, and plant species have their 'natural' place (Forchtner 2019a). Whilst, for instance, Lubarda (2019) notes Ratzel's influence on some tenets of far-right ecology, discussion on how far-right ecology is connected to race/racism or other forms of social hierarchies and (in)justice remains absent. Instead, Lubarda and Forchtner argue that focus on race is "*too narrow*" (Lubarda & Forchtner 2023: 94), whilst Olsen (2000, see also 1999) argues that because far-right ecology is rooted in the idea that each community is unique and firmly rooted in its place, it *does not* reproduce hierarchical ideas of society.

Echoing similar logics, others also approach the far-right's ecology through a national focus (Forchtner 2019; Hultgren 2015; Malm & Zetkin Collective 2021; Turner & Bailey 2021). Focusing on territorial borders, Hultgren (2015) argues that anti-immigration movements aim to reconfigure (American) sovereignty by appealing to nature discourses and deploying nature as a form of walling (Hultgren, 2015). In a similar vein, Malm and the Zetkin Collective (2021) and Turner and Bailey (2021) also stress the connection between territorial/national bordering and ecological thought. Inspired by Hultgren (2015), Malm and the Zetkin Collective (2021) introduce the concept of *green nationalism*, arguing that the core of green nationalism is reinforcing territorial sovereignty by building stronger borders. In their words, far-right green nationalism is about "*a belief in protection of the white nation as protection of nature […] the ecological crisis is not denied but enlisted as a reason to fortify borders and keep aliens out*" (Malm & Zetkin Collective 2021: 154–155). Similar arguments have also been advanced by Turner and Bailey (2021), who identify the emerging discourse of *ecobordering* among far-right parties in Europe, in which borders are presented as a form of environmental protection. Whilst providing important insights into bordering and the environment, linking racism to nationalism and territorial exclusions/inclusions provides a simplified understanding of state borders as 'containers' overlapping with (racial) national identity.

Whilst the present violence surrounding the racial Anthropocene is not discussed, through the concept of eco-fascism, scholars have linked the violence of racism to the future. Eco-fascism has become a new buzzword in mainstream discussions, but also in the academic literature. Yet, contemporary scholarship around the term (that is by no means limited to the far-right) is fractured (Simspon & Cheever 2025), and the only agreement among scholars seems to be that there is no agreement on the meaning of the term (Conversi 2024). *Eco-fascism* is used to refer to, for instance, German Nazism and the 'blood-and-soil' ideology (Biehl & Staudenmaier 1995), or the intersection between authoritarianism and environmentalism, in which an organic whole is valued in terms of its intrinsic value to be preserved through racial purity (Zimmerman 2008). It is also approached as a movement geared towards national renewal premised on the

violent expulsion of the Other threatening the natural people–environmental order (Moore & Roberts 2022).

Many researcher on the far-right's ecological and climate politics argue that eco-fascism as a concept is too limited to describe the contemporary far-right's commitments (Benoist 2024; Forchtner 2019; Forchtner 2024; Lubarda 2019, 2023; Staudenmaier 2021). For instance, Lubarda (2019: 1) argues that "*the nationalist sentiments informing far right environmental discourse*" cannot be captured through the term of eco-fascism due to "*the breadth of discourses on the natural environment*". Similarly, according to Staudenmaier (2021: 10), "*since the array of far right, authoritarian, and nationalist politics extends well beyond explicitly fascist forms, a term like 'eco-fascism' is not the most useful way to refer to all varieties of the environmental sentiment of the right*". From this point of view, eco-fascism is thus understood as a marginal position linked to individual terrorists (Macklin 2022) or treated as a future scenario on the eve of ecological breakdown and racist authoritarianism (for examples, see Bettini & Casaglia 2024; Malm & Zetkin Collective 2021; Moore & Roberts). For instance, according to Bettini and Casaglia (2024), the fact that the far-right is increasingly rejecting literal climate denialism (which, I conceptualise above as *one* form of climate obstruction) might signify wider developments towards eco-fascism. As they argue (Bettini & Casaglia 2024: 9), "*we would not be surprised if, even in the near future, the threat of climate change started being invoked as justification for more bordering and racism, with more explicit forms of eco-fascism becoming mainstream*".

From the perspective of the racial Anthropocene, there are, however, problems with such futuristic descriptions, as well as race-neutral descriptions of far-right ecology presented above. By overlooking how the far-right, through their racial climate and environmental politics, perpetuate and reinvent racism and racial violence in the present, such descriptions also erase histories of racism that underpin ecological destruction and decades-long inadequate climate action. As Sultana (2022: 8) points out, "*narratives of a climate apocalypse or dystopian futures, popular in hegemonic climate framings and the media, are not a futurity for all, but a past and present of colonial oppression of people of colour*". As Simpson and Cheever (2025: 1127) rightly note in their important contribution, eco-fascism, with its different manifestations, is "*foundational [mechanisms] to the Western colonial project and its attendant racial capitalism*". As such, eco-fascism should be viewed as "*a culmination of the intersecting logics of colonialism and the intentional overlap in definitions of biological race and nature*" (Simpson & Cheever 2025: 1127). As they argue, the racist policies of the far-right

"*[...]are only possible in the broader context of climate colonialism, which itself originates from the intertwinement of race, nature, and capitalism at the heart of 16th-century colonialism. After all, blood and soil as an ideology did not simply appear from nowhere, in much the same way that the contemporary intersection of racist violence and climate harm is no mere accident.*"

Simpson and Cheever (2025) take an important step in the discussions on racist and fascist forms of climate and environmental politics by situating them in the broader context of climate colonialism and the historical constitutiveness of the ideas of race and nature. Whilst they approach eco-fascism as a broader phenomenon (not limited to the far-right), their article invites further investigations, such as those related to *how* contemporary far-right politics is *reinventing* racial formations that underpin the global ecological crisis.

Recent decades have been characterised by more widespread public concern over climate change due to the growing power and visibility of Indigenous and climate justice movements that are committed to anti-racist principles. For instance, they call

for different structural changes in the global distribution of power and wealth (e.g., in the form of debt cancellations, see Sultana 2022a, 2022b). As such, the climate crisis has sparked many conflicts around racial injustice (Tilley & Ajl 2023), which is also reflective in the global rise of the far-right. Because race is subject to constant conflict and reinvention (Omi & Winant 2014), it is important to go beyond the idea of the permanence of race and instead pay attention to how it is naturalised, justified, and renewed on a burning planet.

To sum up scholarship on the political ecologies of the far-right, although existing studies provide a significant contribution to our understanding of this party family's role in the Anthropocene, *the question of race and racism has to a significant extent become the elephant in the room*. This has shown in different variations. As I illustrated, some scholars position far-right 'nationalist' climate politics vis-à-vis mainstream climate politics, thus producing a dichotomy between mainstream liberal pro-climate and anti-climate politics and dismissing the racial and colonial legacies of the Anthropocene. Even if some scholars cite whiteness as a component of the far-right's nation-building process, the role of race and racism as an analytical focus of these politics is highly understudied and underconceptualised. Furthermore, as I illustrated, the far-right hierarchical and racist political agenda is downplayed or minimised, and instead concerns over the homeland's nature are reduced to the preservation of arguably static and unchangeable national and spatial identities. Furthermore, I showed how eco-fascism, a new buzzword, either treats racial violence as a marginal phenomenon or shifts it into the future, thus erasing histories of racial and colonial violence that have underlined and enabled the current racial Anthropocene.

The dissertation takes the next step in the research on political ecologies of the far-right by investigating how the far-right reproduces and shapes racial ideologies and structures that underpin the climate crisis. In doing so, I take a spatial approach to race. Recognising the fluidity of racism (Hall 1996) enables an analysis of various (subtle and hidden but also loud and spectacular) racist practices, but also an understanding of how, through the shifting racial formations, fatal power-difference couplings are renewed. Far-right politics have had an important impact on shaping racial formations through sensational and visible racism as well as the normalisation of white nationalism (Pulido et al. 2019), but also through subtle and seemingly neutral utterances about 'naturally emerging' cultural differences and incompatibilities (Balibar 1991; Lähdesmäki 2019). Thus, paying attention to the production of racial differentiation in the less scrutinised context of far-right climate and environmental politics, the topic of my doctoral dissertation enables wider lessons on how the racist structures that underpin the global ecological crisis are renewed and with what consequences.

4 Studying the far-right: Methodological considerations

In this chapter, I discuss my methodological decisions, including methods, data collection, and analysis. After presenting my methodological principles, I present the methods of the first phase of the analysis that draws on photographic images and texts published in the Izborskii Club's political magazine. This is followed by the second phase of analysis of the data collection, which relied on interview data and ethnographic observations. The results of the first part of the data collection were presented in one paper (Article I), whilst the results of the second phase of the data collection process were presented in two papers (Article II and Article III). In the last section of the chapter, I reflect on positionality and ethical challenges that arise from my research, that is, from interviewing far-right politicians.

4.1 Methods, research material and analysis

Some scholars have problematised the usage of the concept of race as an analytical category on the grounds that it reproduces and legitimises its meaning (for an example of such debates, see Miles 1993: 2–9). By contrast, scholars such as Omi and Winant (2014) point out that using race as an analytical category helps us to understand how spatially and temporally varying definitions and meanings attached to race are deployed to create and reproduce racist structures. As they argue (p. 111), racial categories and meanings are "*often constructed from pre-existing conceptual or discursive elements that have crystallized through the genealogies of competing religious, scientific, and political ideologies and projects*". Identifying and studying different meanings attached to race is thus important because "*once specific concepts of race are widely circulated and accepted as a social reality, racial difference is not dependent on visual observation alone*" (p. 111).

Omi and Winant's (2014) approach sees the notion of race as *socially constructed*, which, methodologically, points to the tradition of social constructivism, a scientific theory that argues that knowledge is constructed through societal interaction (Saaristo & Jokinen 2010). The social constructivist approach can, at worst, frame race as merely a question of language (for a critique of social constructivism and race, see Saldanha 2006). At best, it recognises the material and political dimensions also in relation to how race and space are mutually constituted (Gilmore 2022; Omi & Winant 2014).

Informed by a constructivist approach, my doctoral dissertation studies race and racism by focusing on the meaning-making around it, such as its definitions and different meanings associated with it (Omi & Winant 2014). I do so by paying attention to the different aesthetics and visuals (first phase of data collection), as well as the metaphors, stereotypes, and framings (second and third phases of data collection) through which racial (and spatial) differences are produced.

Phase I: Visual analysis of visual and text material

The first phase of the analysis draws on the visual analysis of photographic images. Studying images in relation to geopolitical and national representations, these studies have shown that visuals matter in narrating and producing racialised social relations, ideologies, and spaces (Foxall 2013; Livingstone 2010; Rose 2012). Images do not give an unbiased view of the world but instead interpret the world in certain ways, thus

depending on and producing normative assertions (Rose 2012). The current research on the far-right relies on written material, and less emphasis has been put on the role images play in the far-right's political communication (but Forchtner 2023). Yet, as noted by Forchtner (2023: 7), visuals bear a special meaning in far-right political communication as they are a "powerful loci in boundary-making" due to their pervasiveness and ability to evoke emotions.

The empirical material was collected from the Izborskii Club's journal, called *Russkie Strategii* (*Russian Strategy*). Belonging to the Russian tradition of thick journals, the journal has been published more or less monthly since 2013. Due to the richness of the journal and its primacy for the group's political communication, it provides an encompassing lens for analysing the political communication of the Club. I analysed all issues published to date – from the first published article in 2013 to the time of the analysis in June 2021.

Before proceeding with the analysis, I built an image corpus by searching 79 issues of the journal for the terms 'Arctic' (*Arktika/arkticheskaya/arkticheskiy*) 'Polar' (*Polyarnaya/polyarnoy*), and 'North' (*Sever*). I selected articles that mentioned these terms in their headline or lead paragraph to ensure that the article's focus was on the analysed subject. This resulted in a corpus comprising 16 articles and 57 images. A two-phase method was utilised for the analysis: a *quantitative content analysis* of visuals and a *qualitative iconographical analysis*. Quantitative visual content analysis refers to a process in which I analysed all visual images (N = 57) attached to articles, policy reports, and columns regarding the Arctic. This phase aimed to examine the dominant themes through which the Arctic space was imagined, as well as the connections between the themes. All images were categorised by assigning at least one code to each image. In developing and defining the main categories (people, nature, industry/technology), I drew on existing studies on the environment and the Arctic (Hansen 2018; Runge et al. 2020).

Next, I conducted a *qualitative iconographical interpretation*. The method departs from the notion that images communicate by a logic of symbolic association (Muller & Özcan 2007). The method explores the meanings of images by situating them in specific historical and geographical contexts and by identifying the intertextualities which give the images their meanings (Müller & Özcan 2007; Müller 2011; Rose 2012).

My iconographic interpretation revolved around the three most important themes found in the content analysis: *ice*, *maritime transportation*, and *scientists*. I studied the different meanings the images produced regarding national identity, gender, and race by examining the different associations that the images communicated. Because images can communicate an enormous amount of politically and culturally specific information that is context specific, the accompanying texts were used to help define the meaning of the analysed images. Drawing on van Straten (2012), the analysis was conducted, first, by describing each image. Second, I situated each image in relation to the other analysed images. Third, I explored the images' symbolic meanings by analysing them in relation to their wider historical and cultural contexts. The results of the analysis are reported in Article I.

Phase II: Ethnography

The second phase of the analysis draws on ethnographic material gathered between March and November 2022. Ethnography, a qualitative form of research in which the researcher spends time in the field, has been an important tool for geographers due

to its ability to study politics at various scales, also shedding light on people's agency (Ghoddousi & Page 2020; Kuus 2013). Contemporary empirical research on the far-right's climate and environmental politics mainly analyses social media communication and public political programmes and election materials that are often carefully tailored by the party elite (see, for instance, Malm & Zetkin Collective 2021; Schaller & Carius 2019; Weisskircher & Volk 2025). Consequently, interviews are a less commonly used form of empirical inquiry (but Beyer & Weisskircher 2025; Lubarda 2023). However, interviews offer valuable insights by enabling a more holistic understanding of the research participants' experiences described in their own terms (Damhuis & Longe 2022; Ellinas 2023; Smith et al. 2020) and to (anonymously) freely articulate their thoughts on topics perceived as politically sensitive. Interviews can help to understand the possible inconsistencies and topics of disagreement among respondents, as well as how sensitive topics, such as those related to the rejection of scientific consensus (e.g., in the context of climate obstruction), are articulated outside the well-tailored public façade (Ellinas 2023).

In the context of my doctoral dissertation, methodological choices were decisive for the results. Studying the well-tailored political programmes (those of the Izborskii Club) led to empirical materials and thus analytical possibilities other than interviews, which enabled more nuanced interpretations. The strength of the interview situations was the respondents' ability to articulate their thoughts freely, and my ability to ask and challenge the respondents through follow-up questions. These dynamics enabled interesting insights of the logic behind their environmental and climate politics, as well as new insights on inconsistencies within the party.

Applying the methods of interviews and field notes, both tools of ethnography (Ghoddousi & Page 2019), I interviewed Finns Party politicians during two periods: the first period took place from March to June 2022, and the second from September to November 2022. To ensure a variety of voices, I approached party members at all organisational levels and from geographical locations and places of different sizes.

The sample was comprised of participants complying with the following three criteria. The first criterion was party membership, and that the person would be politically active at the national, regional, or municipality level. These three levels form the organisational structure of the party (Hatakka 2021). From the national level, I approached members of parliament (N = 38) and the party executive board (N = 10). At the regional and municipal levels, I applied geographical sampling methods to ensure voices from different regions and cities of different sizes. Finland is divided into 19 regions, and I approached politicians from every region. At the municipality level, I approached those politicians who actively talk about climate change and the environment or who work with the themes (e.g., who sit in the municipality's environment working groups), thus those who were best able to provide rich descriptions in relation to the environment and climate change (Smith et al. 2020). This framing was applied because of the high number of municipality politicians (approximately 700) – contacting all of them would have been impossible. I also applied snowball and convenience sampling by asking politicians to recommend further interviewees. Convenience sampling means that I contacted those municipality or regional politicians or political activists in smaller towns through which I passed on my way to interviews in other locations.

I recruited people by sending emails. I first contacted and interviewed members of parliament, which enabled access to further potential participants (see Smith et al. 2020), such as grassroots activists who were more sceptical about the project. Approximately 10% of all the people I approached agreed to be interviewed. Most of the approached

people did not reply to me, whilst some rejected my invitation because of a lack of time or because of scepticism about my project.

During my fieldwork, I travelled to the cities where those politicians and party activists who had agreed to participate worked and/or lived. I met with them in various places: the parliament, party offices, city halls, libraries, coffee shops, restaurants, and bars (see Table 2). I met most of the participants (22 of the 24) face-to-face. I encouraged the participants to suggest a place for an interview, as previous interview experiences had shown this to be a successful strategy (Dobratz & Waldner 2020). My travelling to their hometowns became a successful strategy in situating the politicians as part of their local contexts, but also for gaining trust. Many of them said that, since I had come all the way to them, they were willing to tell me more. Sometimes, after the interview, interviewees showed me around or suggested places to visit. Many even related party gossip after I switched off the recorder. After each interview, I asked the participants about their feelings about the interview situation, and the feedback I received was positive. One municipal politician even tried to recruit me to the party.

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured way to allow the conversation to move in directions not anticipated by the researcher to achieve a more holistic understanding of the participants' experiences described in their own terms (Smith et al. 2020). Semi-structured interviews require some flexibility from the researcher but also resilience because they are the product of social interaction (Hammer & Wildavsky 2018). The interviews lasted between 40 and 90 minutes. Interviews were audio recorded, and I subsequently transcribed them. Ethical protocols, personal data procession, and anonymity were discussed with each participant before the signing of informed consent, in which I also asked for permission to record the interviews and use direct citations in the data reporting.

I relied on an interview guide that included predefined questions or topics. However, semi-structured interviews allow flexibility to digress and access people's thoughts in their own words. I let the discussion flow naturally, for example, by asking follow-up questions, probes of clarification, and additional inquiries. In the first part of the interview, I asked about the interviewees' roles in the party, the history of their political activism, and the values that guided them in their work. In addition, I asked them to define and elaborate their views on Finnishness, nationalism, and migration – the core public topics of the party's political mobilisation.

In the second part of the interview, I shifted the discussion to climate and environmental change. After first asking interviewees to elaborate on the party's environmental thinking, and its role in the wider politics of the party, I asked about their concerns and proposed solutions when it comes to environmental change. If climate change as a topic had not come up by that time (as happened in most of the interviewees), I asked them about their views on climate change, its effects, and proposed solutions. In this context, I also directed the focus to climate justice and wider questions of social justice by discussing the proposed (in)action in relation to the unequal distribution of power and wealth and inequalities in climate effects and responsibilities. In the last part of the interview, I asked interviewees about their personal relationship to nature.

To avoid pre-empting answers, my interview guide did not explicitly include questions containing 'race', 'racism' and/or 'racialisation'. Instead, the discussions with the interviewees enabled me to identify and understand the central role racialisation played in their communication regarding climate and ecology. This concerns especially the prevalence of environmental deterministic and overpopulation discourses, which

was surprising to me. As such, the findings of my project reports (racialisation) emerge from my interpretation of the data.

All interviews were anonymised (Table 2). Although the interviewed politicians are public figures, anonymisation was decided on because the interviews were not only about formal politics but also about the politicians' personal experiences. Whilst the degree of openness varied among interviewees, anonymity ensured more in-depth material that provided new insights compared to party programmes. Many interviewees, especially those who have been in politics for a long time, were highly articulate and said that anonymity allowed them to say things that were not possible to voice otherwise (such as their scepticism about climate change). Some participants were discreet and careful with their words, despite the anonymisation.

Following the data collection and transcription, the data were coded, categorised, and analysed. The analysis was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, in which I studied how the politicians rationalise anti-immigration policies in relation to the environment, I focused on those parts of the transcripts in which interviewees *frame migration and national belonging by employing conceptions and semiotics of nature and human–nature relations*. Here my aim was to understand meaning-making by investigating the semantic structure of racialising discourse, which was analysed by examining different codes and metaphors and by situating them in their wider socio-historical contexts (Dick & Wirtz 2011; Herzog & Porfillo 2022). In the course of the inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clark 2006), four key bordering processes emerged: territorial borders, the West/the rest, the 'green' homeland, and the internal outsiders. Subsequently, I studied the semantic structure of racialising discourse as it emerged through these four bordering processes by identifying how the Others are constructed as inferior and a threat to 'our' bounded space (Herzog & Porfillo 2022). I looked at dominant semiotics as well as metaphors, which I approached as devices through which we talk and think about one thing in terms of another and which are known for their power to stir emotions and create cognitive frames for making social issues intelligible (Charteris-Black 2006; Herzog & Porfillo 2022; Musolff 2012). The results of this analysis are reported in Article II.

In the second phase of analysing the interview data, I studied how racialised climate obstruction perpetuates climate coloniality within and beyond Finland. I applied framing analysis to study the different climate obstructionist framings that are articulated in reference to racialisation. Framing refers to the process by which individuals or groups filter complex situations to make them salient in ways consistent with their political orientations and norms (Shmueli 2008). Framing analysis enables the researcher to identify a dominant mode of reality-creation and elements that are used to support the circulation of that frame (Entman, 1993). In Entman's conceptualisation, framing consists of four dimensions: *problem definition*, *causal interpretation*, *moral evaluation*, and *solution* (Entman, 1993). My analysis focused on those parts of the transcripts in which climate change was discussed. I analysed the politicians' meaning-making of climate change politics through content analysis and, subsequently, inductively located three key frames in which racism and climate obstructionism were articulated co-constitutively: (i) *Shifting the blame onto the Global South,* (ii) *Opposing 'carbon' immigration,* and (iii) *Making Finland green again*. Drawing on the findings of the framing analysis as well as theories on climate coloniality, the second part of the analysis examines how racialised climate obstruction perpetuates climate coloniality into the future within and beyond Finland.

Table 2. Contextual details of the interviewees.

Pseudoname	Gender		Interview length	Interview location
Aamu	Female	Regional party activist	1:11 h	Restaurant
Antto	Male	Municipal councillor	53 min	Library
Auni	Female	Municipal councillor	1:25 h	Café
Elmeri	Male	Municipal councillor	48 min	Party office
Enni	Female	Municipal councillor	55 min	Teams
Henrikki	Male	Municipal councillor	42 min	Hotel
Jemina	Female	Municipal councillor	55 min	Interviewees workplace
Joonatan	Male	Municipal councillor	57 min	Café
Matti	Male	Regional party activists	1:21 h	Café
Moona	Female	Municipal councillor	59 min	Café
Netta	Female	Regional party activist	56 min	Café
Nuutti	Male	Member of Parliament	56 min	Parliament
Nyyrikki	Male	Member of Parliament	1:4 h	Parliament
Ohto	Male	Municipal councillor		Café
Paavali	Male	Municipal councillor	1:15 h	Restaurant
Paulus	Male	Regional Party Activist	58 min	Café
Ruut	Female	Municipal councillor	57 min	Teams
Solja	Female	Member of Parliament	36 min	Parliament
Sylvia	Female	Municipal councillor	52 min	Café
Tiitus	Male	Municipal councillor	54 min	Library
Valo	Male	Municipal councillor	1 h	Interviewee's workplace
Veikka	Male	Member of Parliament	49 min	Parliament
Viola	Female	Municipal councillor	44 min	Café
Visa	Male	Municipal councillor	1:1 h	Municipality hall

4.2 Researching far-right politicians: Ethical considerations

Research using human participants is always sensitive. However, due to minimal risk to my security, I was not required to apply for ethical permission in Finland (such ethical guidelines are in stark contrast to those of, for example, the United Kingdom). Nevertheless, one of the central principles in research with human participants, also in Finland, is obtaining informed consent from the participants that they agree to participate in the research (Kohonen et al. 2019: 51). Before each interview, I asked the participant to sign a consent form that they agreed to participate in the research, as well as consent to process their personal data. The informed consent form contained the following information:

- The participant gives her/his consent to participate in the research.
- The participant has received information on the content and the aims of the research, and how the research will be conducted in practice.
- The participant understands that participation is voluntary and also that refusing to participate will not lead to any negative consequences.
- The participant understands that he/she can withdraw from the study at any time without suffering any negative consequences. After the interview has taken place, the participant has the right to withdraw from the study within five days. The participant does not have to give any reason for withdrawing from the research.
- The participant gives his/her consent for the processing of personal data relating to him/her.
- The participant has received information about the anonymisation and processing of personal data.

Research participants did not benefit materially from participating in the research. However, I offered the participants a cup of coffee or tea and some snacks during the interview.

Whenever I communicated with (potential) research participants, my guiding principles were respectfulness and explaining the research in such a way that participants outside academia could also understand the research study and its different phases. However, due to their political status, I treated the participants as active subjects who use power in relation to me (Kuus 2013).

Gathering information about far-right groups may be emotionally challenging as the actors may be secretive, intimidating, and prone to giving evasive answers (Blee 1996). Discussions with the interviewees were sometimes emotionally difficult due to slurs, racism, and sexism. Inspired by previous researchers on the political elite (Sharp 2004) and interviewing the far-right, I created 'a veil of partial invisibility' (Sehgal 2009), where I was honest about certain aspects of my research but covered certain aspects that I consider private. This is a useful method when a researcher is not privileged and might want to hide their true identities and beliefs (Sharp 2004). As a child, I migrated to Finland from another country, I grew up in a multicultural family, and I have experienced various forms of racism throughout my life. However, my gender identity, whiteness and Finnish name, providing me with a *veil of whiteness*, gave me with extra help in the interview situations.

However, at every stage of the research, I was aware of different risks that related to my well-being, and I took measures to protect my privacy and mental well-being.

I did not share any personal information on social media accounts and took other measures to protect sensitive personal information. A few times, when I received more serious threats (after I spoke publicly about my research), I reported these cases to my employer.

Another important ethical dilemma concerning my research is my positionality, which refers to the researcher's worldviews and ontological and epistemological assumptions that are shaped by personal values and beliefs but also to subject positions regarding my nationality, gender, class, and age (Holmes 2020). Because a researcher's experiences and context influence research (such as the interpretation of data), research can never be completely objective (Haraway 1991). It is thus crucial to be transparent and to reflect on possible bias in relation to the research (Haraway 1991). Furthermore, qualitative interviews that depart from the reactive method of data collection require careful problematisation and reflection of the researcher's positionalities. This includes, first, my philosophical and political beliefs, which revolve, for instance, around anti-racism, feminism, and grassroots organising. I am working towards these principles, for example, by engaging in non-parliamentary political activism. My political activism is partly fuelled by my own experiences as a person who has migrated to Finland. The perks of being an outsider are that I can analyse the parties' and organisations' cultures and politics from different perspectives and perhaps identify in greater detail some taken-for-granted perspectives and assumptions.

Throughout the research process, I kept a fieldwork diary to reflect on my experiences and feelings. As also documented in the field journal, the most challenging part of the interviews was forming follow-up questions. Occasionally, it was difficult to find a common language, especially when the interviewees argued that climate science is a hoax. In some instances, I could see that our different views frustrated them. At such times, I directed the topic elsewhere as I wanted to maintain the interviewees' trust and did not want the interview situation to turn into arguments. To overcome this challenge, I started transcribing during the interview process and practised active self-reflection to be able to think further about my questions. In other words, I actively tried to learn from and through my methods. Active self-reflection was also needed because most of the interviewees were experienced politicians, and were thus able to resist the power relations that ethnography usually implies (Kuus 2013). Indeed, the interviewees were not only part of a well-established political party (a few of them also hold relatively important roles in the party organisation) but have long been involved in policy-making, either in parliament or municipal councils. Even though regional party activists (four interviewees) might not have had direct roles as policymakers, through the party structure, they had direct access to the party core (Hatakka 2021). The interviewees – especially those who were in parliament or have had a long career as municipal politicians – actively influenced the interview situations, for instance, by giving long responses (and *not* allowing me to interrupt them), questioning my questions, or shifting the attention to topics they perceived as more favourable.

Even though I disagree with the political views of the interviewees, it was important to build mutual rapport and be respectful and kind. However, it was difficult to find a balance between being kind and not being too sympathetic. As reflected in previous research (Dobratz & Waldner 2020), I had, for instance, to think about how to control body language in a tense situation. Whilst I was aware that I should not nod to racist comments just to be nice, this happened many times, which was shocking to me.

5 The racialised geographies of the far-right

In this section, I present the results of my doctoral dissertation. The three sections summarise the results and contributions of research articles. First, 'The new Russian civilisation' is introduced, an article which offers an analysis of the Izborskii Club. Drawing on visual methods, Article I illuminates how the Club's geopolitics on fossil fuel extraction and the latter are intertwined with racialised and gendered civilisationist nationalism to perpetuate fossil imperialism in a time of melting Arctic ice. Whilst the first article (Article I) focuses on racialised and gendered *nationalism*, the second and third articles take the reader to Finland and examine how *the process of racialisation* occurs in reference to nature (Article II) and climate obstruction (Article III). As also noted previously, although nation-building and racialisation go hand in hand in far-right politics, the interviews enabled me to understand the centrality of racialisation as an independent process when it comes to climate and environmental politics. 'They will not survive here' shows how politicians racialise certain people and places by mobilising determinist conceptions of the human–nature relationship, animalistic metaphors, and the idea of environmentally conscious Finns as the opposite of polluting migrants. By building dialogue between the concepts of climate coloniality and climate obstruction, Article III, in turn, shows how racialisation constitutes far-right climate obstruction and, subsequently, how such racialised climate obstruction perpetuates climate coloniality.

5.1 Article I: The new Russian civilisation

The changing geographies of the Arctic, such as the 'Arctic resource boom', is an example of the continuity of the historical project of colonialism that has shaped Arctic spaces (both within and beyond Russian borders) (Silva 2022) and perpetuated fossil imperialism (Jurema & Köning 2023). Using the political programmes of the Izborskii Club as empirical material and drawing on theories on gendered nationalisms (Anderson 2006; Werbner & Yuval-Davis 1999), political and visual geographies (Rose 2012) and the political ecologies of the far-right (Forchtner 2019), the article examines how the Club's geopolitics of fossil fuel extraction and the latter are intertwined with racialised and gendered civilisationist nationalism. The article asks three interrelated questions: *What themes do the Izborskii Club's Arctic images portray, and in what ways are these themes connected? How is a gendered and racialised notion of national identity produced in reference to Arctic nature and hydrocarbons? How are ideas of white masculine national identity used to justify fossil fuel extraction?*

To answer these questions, I utilised a two-phase method: first, quantitative visual content analysis, where I analyses all images related to the Arctic (N = 57) to identify relevant themes and, second, qualitative iconographical analysis of three images to analyse the production of national identity and its gendered and racialised dimensions.

The content analysis of the visuals illustrates how non-living nature, such as soil, bedrock and frozen water, plays the most important role in the images. Arctic nature is represented in terms of its potentialities for capitalist expansion (especially the hydrocarbon industry), as an empty and easily exploitable (not frozen but melting) frontier of the expanding Imperial Russia. The subsequent iconographic analysis revolved around the three most important themes found in the content analysis: *ice*, *maritime transportation*, and *scientists*. The results show that, through naturalistic and mysticised, even spiritual, imaginaries and positive connotations, the Arctic (and its

untapped oil and gas resources) are framed as the source of the Russian race and spirit, the place where the white 'Arctic civilisation' should be (re)created by conquering the land and its richness. Through various choices, even spiritual-aesthetic ones (such as aspects related to colour), Arctic space is portrayed as a site of white and masculinised resource exploration, heroism, and patriotism, with Arctic fossil fuels becoming the past, present, and 'destiny' of the ethnically defined Russian nation. The subject positions allowed in this endeavour and space are white and masculine: a white heroic man was the protagonist of the Russian Arctic story, and women, Indigenous people, non-white Russians, and workers (for instance, those who operate the oil platforms) were absent or inactive. This shows how whiteness can be as "*much about the absence as the presence of people of colour, and it works independently of their existence*" (Kobayashi 2003: 550).

The article contributes to the literature on the political ecologies of the far-right (e.g., Forchtner 2019; Malm & Zetkin Collective 2021) *empirically* by studying the Izborskii Club, a group whose perspectives on climate change and fossil fuels have not been studied before (apart from Scherbak 2024). The *theoretical* contribution stems from the article's ability to show how spatial whiteness is produced in relation to the exploration of fossil fuels in the context of the imperialistic endeavours of the (Russian) far-right in the Arctic. Indeed, some scholars of the environmental politics of the far right conceptualise *far-right ecologism* as a distinctive environmental view where "respect for everything 'natural' arises from instinct qualities of nature" (Lubarda 2020: 13). However, the analysed material of the Izborskii Club's Arctic visualisations shows a different picture. The Izborskii Club does not romanticise the Arctic living nature (e.g., flora, fauna). Instead, by mystifying Arctic space and its geology, the Club depoliticises fossil imperialism and the resulting violence.

5.2 Article II: They will not survive here

Different romanticised, symbolic, and affective cultural framings of nature have traditionally played a key role in the production of spatial distinctions (Paasi 1996) and racial differences (Soper 1995), and in justifying and depoliticising exclusionary politics such as xenophobia (Brahinsky et al. 2014; Subramaniam 2001). Using 24 interviews with Finns Party politicians as the empirical material and drawing on the theories of bordering and racialisation, the article studies the semantic structures that convey racist messaging by focusing on how far-right politicians use the rhetoric of environmentalism to justify and rationalise their anti-immigration politics, simultaneously (re)producing racialisation and bordering of the Other.

Four key bordering processes emerged from the inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clark 2006): *territorial borders*, *the West/the rest*, *the 'green' homeland*, and *internal outsiders*. The article shows that people and places were racialised, first, by utilising determinist notions of connection between (territorially specific) race and nature, second, through animalistic and environmental disaster metaphors, and third, by mobilising the idea of the environmentally conscious Finn as the opposite of the littering migrant. The racialising discourses were produced in relation to various bordering processes, exemplifying the complex and multi-scalar nature of racial bordering and the production of racial spaces. The main rationale and justification against which the bordering occurred was the *naturalistic and deterministic conception of Finns as a culturally homogenous and nature-loving nation*. The construction of Others as backward (e.g., because they cannot and do not recycle) and as culprits of the ecological crisis that deserve their fate was a powerful strategy for

justifying inhumane immigration restrictions. Although there were genetic arguments (e.g., 'Africans run faster' p. 12), racial classification was especially produced based on naturalistic and deterministic arguments that asserted a racial connection between the environment and people's qualities. Intimately amalgamating environmental morality with rationality functions as a strategy by which white supremacy, historically intertwined with the white West, is (re)produced. At the same time, it is a powerful strategy for justifying climate obstruction (Malm & Zetkin Collective 2021) and claiming that the Global North has no responsibility for the climate crisis.

As shown in the earlier parts of this synopsis, existing interdisciplinary research studies offer a nuanced analysis of the far-right's nature politics through the concepts of sovereignty and nationalism (Hultgren 2015; Olsen 1999; Turner & Bailey 2021). However, less attention has been paid to the role of race in far-right ecological or environment-related arguments. Taking the next step, the article *theoretically* expands the literature on the political ecologies and political geographies of the far-right by exemplifying the complex and multi-scalar nature of racial bordering and the production of racial spaces.

Alongside its theoretical contribution, the thesis *methodologically* expands the scholarship on the far-right's role in the climate crisis by going beyond the analysis of textual material, the most often applied method of analysis in researching the topic (see, e.g., Hatakka & Välimäki 2019; Vihma et al. 2021). Research on the far-right in Finland is mostly based on media analysis (Horsti & Nikunen 2013; Pettersson 2020) and typically does not consider the relevance of the environment as a topic in anti-immigration politics (apart from Hatakka & Välimäki 2019). By contrast, the paper provides *an empirical* contribution by interviewing politicians from the Finnish far-right.

5.3 Article III: Make Finland green again

The accelerating climate crisis and its varying climate impacts on lands, livelihoods, and populations continue and intensify the reach of coloniality (Sultana 2022b). Despite widespread recognition of the political importance of the surging far-right as well as the party family's influence in delaying or slowing down climate politics, surprisingly little attention has been given to the racist and colonial dimensions of the contemporary far-right's climate obstructionism. Instead, discussions on race and racism are often either absent or treated as ancillary to nationalism. However, focusing solely on national identities and sovereignty erases histories of racism that have underpinned ecological destruction and decades-long inadequate climate action, and reproduces a de-historicised, universalising, and race-blind description of the position of the far-right in the climate crisis.

Taking the next steps, the paper aims to examine how, through racialised climate obstruction, Finnish far-right politics shapes and reinforces ongoing relations of climate coloniality into the future within and beyond Finland. Drawing on theories on climate obstruction (Ekberg et al. 2022), the far-right (Pulido et al. 2019) and climate coloniality (Sultana 2024), this paper asks: *How does racialisation constitute far-right climate obstruction? How does the far right's racialised climate obstruction shape ongoing relations of climate coloniality within and beyond Finland?* To understand the link between climate obstruction, coloniality, and racialisation, the article utilises interviews with 24 politicians from the Finns Party.

The article identifies three frames in terms of which racialisation and climate obstructionism are co-constituted: (i) Shifting the blame onto the Global South, (ii) Opposing 'carbon' immigration, and (iii) Making Finland green again. The results show that the far-right influences political discussion around climate change and climate justice by mobilising alternative framings to climate justice: through racialisation, the far-right denies victims of climate change, shifts responsibility, and instead proposes biophysical elimination of the Others as a response to the climate crisis. The politicians assigned various degrading and negative connotations to people and places, which constructed a hierarchical relationship between non-whites and whites as certain places are rendered inferior and problematic, thus sacrificial for the well-being of the white nation. The racialised climate obstruction of the far-right reinforces ongoing relations of climate coloniality and intensifies vulnerabilities to worsening climate-induced impacts *by shaping and recontextualising the meaning-making around racial differentiation* and *proposing biophysical elimination as a solution for environmental degradation.*

The article's contribution is threefold. First, my paper advances the literature on the far-right and climate change *theoretically* by situating the far-right climate obstruction in the wider context of decades of racially motivated climate inaction and, in doing so, illustrating how racialisation plays out and unfolds in their politics of climate obstruction and *reinforces* ongoing relations of climate coloniality. The *methodological* contribution of this article, in turn, stems from my interview-driven approach that offers insights into how party ideology is mobilised and into differing opinions (for instance, regarding climate change obstruction). Finally, studying racialisation in the context of far-right politics in Finland makes an *empirical* contribution because it investigates climate coloniality in the less scrutinised geographical contexts of the Global North.

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6 Conclusions

In line with the existing research (Barla & Bjork-James 2021; Gemenis 2012; Malm & Zetkin Collective 2021; Pulido et al. 2019; Vowles 2024), my articles show the constitutive ways in which the far-right denies the current global ecological crisis and instead advocates for aggressive fossil fuel extraction, climate obstruction, and environmental deregulation. Article I illuminates how the Izborskii Club's geopolitics of fossil fuel extraction and the latter are intertwined with racialised and gendered civilisationist nationalism to perpetuate fossil imperialism in times of melting Arctic ice. In light of the new Russian Arctic strategy, Russia is expanding its fossil imperialism. As such, dreaming about untapped fossil fuels is not new in the Russian political context (Tynkkynen 2019). However, by mystifying Arctic space and its geology, the Club depoliticises fossil imperialism and the resulting violence, also calling for more aggressive exploitation.

Article II shows how far-right conceptions of nature produce bordering and racialisation. Framing environmentalism deterministically as the innate characteristic of Finnish people, the romanticised rhetoric regarding Finland's exceptional relationship between humans and nature serves as a justification for business as usual (e.g., the forest industry and climate obstruction).

Article III analysed how racialisation underpins the far-right's climate obstruction. The article shows that obstructionist arguments are co-constitutive with the process of racialisation, for instance, in the arguments in which the victims of climate change are denied and biophysical elimination is instead offered as a solution.

The three research articles shed light on the myriad ways in which people and places are racialised. My research question asked: *How does the far-right climate and environment-related politics racialise certain people and spaces*? I argue that far-right politics racialise people and places, first, by mobilising *environmental determinism* and, second, *through the geographies of surplus population*. These concerns can be viewed as a form of racial ecology: through determinism and populationism, the far-right renders certain people and places superior and others disposable and responsible for the climate crisis to perpetuate fossil imperialism or an imperial mode of living.

The Finns Party and the Izborskii Club, albeit slightly different in their approaches, political and cultural traits, and distinctiveness and inherent inferiority/superiority, are marked with racial difference and environmental and geographical conditions. Both political groups' politics are based on the idea of the homeland of a specific and allegedly ethnically homogenous group of people (the Finns or the Russians). Such an essentialised and ahistorical notion of space produces a naturalised understanding in which spatial difference is framed by natural law. By mobilising various deterministic notions, racial differences and qualities (environmental consciousness for the Finns Party and Arctic greatness for the Club) became geographical conditions. Human essences were fixed and static and a feature of natural rather than political processes, offering a biological/environmental/geographical explanation for the functioning of human societies.

Article I shows how a naturalised and deterministic understanding of the Arctic frames it as the cradle of the Russian race and spirit, where the white 'Arctic civilisation' is (re)created. In this context, a deterministic notion between space and race is asserted, as Russian race is defined through its Arctic geography (for environmental determinism and Eurasianist geopolitics, see Ingram 2001). The Russian race is seen as the product of the land; the land leaves its mark on the past through inherited abilities

and characteristics. Race is defined through different positive meanings associated with the exploration of fossil fuels (such as heroism, masculinity, and drilling). Race is also defined in relation to the absence of non-white bodies, such as those people whose lands are colonised for the expansion of the Imperial State. Such an idea, in which the Arctic is framed as the home of the White Russian, is an example of the myth of Hyperborea, an idea in which the Arctic is perceived as a homeland of Aryan, white Russians, "*the forefathers of the White Race, and all the other 'white people'*" (Shnirelman, 2014: 127). Fossil fuels are mystified through various references to their spiritual meaning to the Russian white race; imperial expansion and the conquest of lands and resources are the destiny of the Russian race, which depoliticised the acts of fossil imperialism, in other words, the right to conquer, drill, and destroy.

Articles II and III show how the interviewees mobilised the idea of the environmentally conscious Finns, whose exceptional traits make the nation (ecologically) superior. This distinction is a product of climatic and environmental conditions: coldness, geographical sparsity, and vast forests. Whilst Article I focused on positive meaning-making around race, Articles II and III show how environmental deterministic and naturalised claims are co-constitutive with explicit inferiorising and dehumanisation, a process of racialisation through which non-white bodies are rendered problematic and inferior. In Finland, Islamophobia and other forms of racism are often framed through the seemingly natural rationale of 'cultural' differences (Lähdesmäki 2010), but in the context of my material, through environmental determinism, culture, biology, and biophysical reality become fused. The respondents drew on widespread portrayals of Muslims as hypersexual and animalistic invaders (see Hage 2017; Said 2003). At the same time, environmental consciousness becomes a cultural trait, carried in the blood. Positive traits such as co-operation, quietness, and respect for nature become geographical conditions marked by racial difference and environmental character, whilst those coming from other 'terrains' (e.g., arid regions) are assigned negative characteristics such as destructiveness, laziness, and hatred. Thus, because migrants come from different 'terrains', they would not survive in Finland. Although directed to the vague notion of migrants, such rhetoric not only racialises migrants but also citizens within the borders, thus reflecting the multi-scalarity of racialisation (see Omi & Winant 2014).

Environmental determinism has been historically intertwined with various imperial, colonial, and racial projects, in which biology has been used to explain violent practices and exclusions such as anti-immigration measures (Asaka 2010). Racial differences are produced and naturalised through mutually constituted references to blood, genes, cultures, and the environment, through which a causal link is drawn between biophysical and cultural characteristics, on the one hand, and mental aspects, on the other. To my knowledge, environmental determinism has not been identified as an element in far-right politics. On the contrary, Jonathan Olsen (1999, 2000) rejects the notion that far-right ecology is deterministic, or that it would *reproduce hierarchical ideas of society* because it is rooted in the idea of cultural differentiation (or what some call 'ethno-pluralism', see Rydgren 2005, Havertz 2025). From this viewpoint, the far right's idea of cultural differentiation is treated as a race-free ideology.

My empirical data show a very different picture. While the Izborskii Club's determinism is connected especially to *imperial motives* in which expansion is justified by drawing on deterministic and naturalistic claims about the connection between some particular space and geophysical conditions, in the Finnish context it is evident through how it is mobilised to shift responsibilities, in which white superiority is constructed in

relation to justifying environmental deregulation and climate obstruction. Racialisation is an inherently hierarchical project that can be deployed in various ways *to create and reproduce racist structures.* In the context of the Club, spatial imaginaries played a crucial role in naturalising racial superiority, whilst in the context of the Finnish far-right, race is deployed through positive meaning-making as well as inferiorising and dehumanising. Different societal processes become products of natural rather than socio-spatial capacities: people's inherent traits can never be changed; rather, these traits determine their fates (such as vulnerability to environmental disasters or premature deaths).

The second way to racialise people and places is through the production of geographies of 'surplus' populations, which is the key theme in Articles II and III. The respondents framed population growth (or what they called 'overbreeding' or 'surplus' population) in developing/poor countries as the mother of all environmental problems. In terms of this view, racialised people and places become *an environmental threat,* and the idea of a territorially limited 'carrying capacity' is mobilised. Territorial limits, determined by geographical and climatological features, are threatened by the "surplus" population and thus these "highly fertile" people should be forbidden from entering Finland. Population arguments are thus interlinked with environmental determinism as the characteristics of migrating people are seen to be determined by some alleged geographical environments. Those characteristics (such as fertility behaviour and big families) were biologically determined by their race (and location) and as such are preserved despite the people living in Finland (and despite 'them' having Finnish citizenship). This resembles Semple's theorisation (the mother of environmental determinism), in which migration results from the 'natural' increase of population beyond local subsistence. Following this vagueness of racist thought (Hage 2017), entire continents are racialised: the perceived threat (such as animalistically framed herds) or problem (the too rapidly reproducing people) is 'intercontinental' migrants, those coming from 'arid countries', 'warm countries', 'big places', 'different terrains', 'Arab countries', 'Africa', and 'overseas', to name just a few.

Such narratives reflect the reality that the colonial world is "a world divided into compartments" (Fanon 1973: 29), locking the entire colonised world into limited and stereotypical narratives of uncontrolled and explosive population growth and erasing histories of injustices, colonisation and imperialism that the colonised world has experienced. As further discussed in Article III, these narratives are accompanied by policy proposals that concern tightening of immigration policy (e.g., limiting the social security of non-citizen's rights in Finland) as well as proposals to manipulate population size and structure through fertility reduction schemes (such as birth control and a one-child policy in colonised word). At the same time, a rise in the fertility rate in Finland was desired.

Linking environmental degradation with population numbers and structure is a form of populationism, in other words, a configuration of ideas in which social and ecological problems are associated with population size (Angus & Butler 2011; Sasser 2018). Empirical research studies in France and Finland have shown that the far-right has increasingly started to talk about population growth (Malm & Zetkin Collective 2021; but for an oppositional point see Forchtner & Lubarda 2023). According to Malm and the Zetkin Collective (2021), such overpopulation rhetoric, or what they call 'green nationalism', aims to fortify borders and keep aliens out. As the articles demonstrate, this is a gendered racist strategy to racialise multiple peoples and places, not only on the scale of territorial borders but on a global scale as well as within national borders. Racialisation extends the racial meaning to peoples and places on various scales (Omi

& Winant 2014). Even though the far-right often targets migrants, articles show that overpopulation rhetoric not only problematises the bodies of those who are seeking shelter or have migrated for other reasons, but also citizens *within* the national borders by rendering some people (e.g., "big families" of the racialised) abundant.

Loosely borrowing the term from Nishime & Williams (2018: 5), populationism and environmental determinism can be labelled as forms of *racist ecology*. Racist ecology reduces different environmental injustices caused by extraction, pollution, and other harms linked to capitalism, imperialism, and its various manifestations to racial difference. Different understandings of nature and ecology (territorially bounded or deterministic) inform racial differentiation and vice versa, as different politically produced inequalities (e.g., environmental degradation, pollution) become an outcome of racial characterisation (e.g., destructiveness). Such racist ecology naturalises and essentialises the outcome of human action (the various harms of environmental degradation and climate crisis determined by extractive logics) as a matter of ecological and not political outcomes.

Different applications of environmental determinism, such as naturalistic assumptions about 'racial nation', have historically been intertwined with wider political struggles and aims connected to imperial and colonial material and ideological interests, for instance, regarding extraction. The global ecological crisis threatens the white 'oil-soaked' and 'coal-dusted' (Daggett 2019) privileges that are rooted in fossil capitalism, the imperial expansion of the energy base, and access to cheap nature and labour. Fossil capitalism, with its racist, colonial, and imperial underpinnings, has extensively benefited the white ruling classes, for instance, by enabling imperial modes of living in the non-peripheral parts of the world (Brand & Wissen 2021). Consequently, many have directed their attention to how the far-right mobilises white nationalism to protect the privileges that have derived from the violation of the planet (e.g., Hultman 2019). However, as my dissertation shows, whiteness is dependent not only on the violation of the planet but also on the violation of the racialised peoples and places who, through dehumanization and necropolitical logics, are rendered sacrificial for the protection of a few (DeBoom 2022). As argued by Laura Pulido (2000: 16), capitalism materialises through the intertwined geographies of white supremacy and privilege. It is thus "*impossible to privilege one group without disadvantaging another. White privilege comes at the expense of nonwhites*".

Racialisation, such as directing the blame to the Global South, creates a single story of the various histories, places and political communities of the Global South and functions as a powerful tool for displacing social responsibilities and renewing fatal power-difference couplings by constraining people into specific living conditions and justifying environmental degradation (an outcome of racial capitalism) through racial difference. As Gilmore (2022: 111) notes, environmental determinism entails the belief that inequality is an outcome of natural rather than political processes. Thus, "*while culture might revise, it can never fully correct. In this view, inequality is irremediable, and thus should be exploited or erase*". The far-right renders certain peoples and places superior and others disposable and responsible for the climate crisis to justify fossil imperialism or the imperial mode of living. Racialisation, through naturalistic, deterministic, and population-related narratives, provides scientific explanations for which nations are fittest in an ecological crisis: because vulnerabilities and human suffering are nature's fault, there is nothing we can do. As Peet (1985: 311) comments:

> "*The need to escape from guilt over the destruction of other people's lives, a guilt that survived even in a racialist view of the world, meant that motivations for actions had to be located in*

forces beyond human control – 'God', 'Nature', or some amalgam of the two. What began as a scientific explanation of the bases and causes of intersocietal competition and conquest ended as its naturalistic justification."

Although environmental determinism and populationism keeps informing various geopolitical and sustainable development programs (see Dalby 2015; Sasser 2018) they, as all racist ideologies, *require constant legitimisation and justification*. The (re)appearance of environmental determinism and the explicit dehumanising logic that populationist rhetoric shows indicate how racism is explained and legitimatised in the times of global ecological crisis and rising awareness of it. Whilst in liberal politics, population-environment advocates frame population control measures (e.g., family planning programmes) in terms of women's empowerment and justice (Sasser 2018), the far-right shifts the logic of the argument from calls for liberal feminism to the elimination of a problem: the racialised population should be controlled not because they should be "empowered", *but because their elimination would strengthen the continuity of the white lifestyles and privileges of the few.*

Such logic directs attention away from the structural changes needed to solve the climate crisis and instead, by shaping racial formations, *creates conditions for dehumanising policy*. Furthermore, from this point of view, racist ecology should be viewed *as a form of climate obstruction*. As I show above, racial ecology, first, *denies the victims of climate change*, second, *shifts the political and moral responsibilities elsewhere (to the Global South)*, and third, *proposes dehumanising policies and other forms of white supremacy as a solution for protecting the current environmental privileges that the ruling classes of the Global North are enjoying*. Furthermore, due to its *explicit* attitudes of racial superiority as well as racial hostility (see Pulido 2015), such racist ecology can be best understood as *white supremacy*. This was evident, for instance, in the framings in which whites (the Russians of the Finns) were framed to deserve their environmental privileges (e.g., the right for overconsumption, expansion of fossil fuels) because they are better, whilst those most vulnerable were framed as being locked in their destinies.

Racism requires constant justification and legitimisation for its ideological and structural functioning, and my data show how racial differentiation is recreated through the politics of climate change and ecology. In doing so, I make three key contributions. *First*, my work theoretically advances the scholarship on the political ecologies of the far-right (e.g., Ekberg et al. 2022; Forchtner 2019; Malm & Zetkin Collective 2021; Vowles 2024) by situating the far-right in the wider context of the racial Anthropocene. In doing so, the dissertation shows that in times of a surging far-right and the deepening global ecological crisis, race continues to matter, but in different ways, as the far-right mobilises racist ecologies to obstruct climate change and perpetuate fossil imperialism and climate coloniality. Racist ecology frames climate impacts through an essentialised frame, not as an outcome of human-induced climate change, but instead as an outcome of racial (spatial) differences. The far-right intensifies vulnerabilities by creating conditions for dehumanising policy and by shaping meaning-making around race.

The theoretical contribution also stems from the fact that my research enables the analysis of environmental and climate politics under a singular framework. In contrast to recent findings that emphasise that far-right obstruction also relies on the expression of positive emotions related to the homeland's nature (Forchtner 2019), my dissertation shows how racist ecology obstructs climate politics by denying the realities of the global ecological crisis, such as the victims of climate change.

Studying the production of race in the context of the far-right politics in Finland and Russia offers, *second*, an empirical contribution because, although the European far-right has several ideological similarities to the Russian far-right (Klapsis 2015), I show that the Finns Party and the Izborskii Club share the same ideologies of racism, white nationalism, and climate obstruction, as well as the belief in various possibilities a warming climate possibly brings to the nation. Alongside its theoretical and empirical contribution, the thesis, *third*, *methodologically* expands the scholarship on the far-right and the climate crisis by going beyond the analysis of textual material. The interview method enabled an in-depth analysis of the logics behind such naturalistic and determinist claims (that cannot be found in public material).

However, I am careful to explain my findings solely on the basis of methodological or empirical choices.[4] Interviews enabled me to see many things that political programmes were not able to show, yet theoretical decisions matter too. Recognising how theoretical (and thus analytical) decisions help us see things differently is important, because especially parliamentary far-right politics often rely on subtle racism or the discursive denial of racism (Pettersson 2020).

This dissertation provides a geographically aware analysis of the role of race in far-right politics. There was a need for such an approach due to the complete silence on the topic in research to date. However, as much as it is important to study race, it is a fact that it operates and is co-constitutive with other axes of oppression, such as gender, class, and sexuality (e.g. Davis 2021[1981]), which require further investigation. A broader analysis is needed at these intersections especially from the perspective that considers the differentiated experiences of people of colour to environmental harm, racism *and* intensifying authoritarianism of the far-right. As Toscano (2023: 43) rightly argues, we need to

"[...] *attend to the mediations between the extreme levels of classed and racialised violence that accompany actually existing liberal democracies (think, for instance, of the administrative and military violence that pervades so-called 'migration crises') and the emergence of movements and ideologies which paradoxically argue that state and culture have been occupied by the left, that discrimination is now meted out against formerly dominant ethno-majorities and that deracinated elites have conspired with the wretched of the earth and deviant others to destroy properly national populations.*"

Many other questions remain to be answered too. Among the most important issues is the need to direct attention to the whiteness of knowledge production within the scholarship of the political ecologies of the far-right. The absence of discussions on race and racism is striking yet not surprising in light of the broader silences and understatements of the role of race and racism in the research on far-right politics (Mondon & Winter 2020; Mondon 2022; Sengul 2024). The current state of political ecologies of the far-right is white[5] and structured through conscious and unconscious forms of white privilege (this, of course, is not exceptional to this field). As Kobayashi

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[4] This argument is based on my personal experiences of different workshops and seminars. Presenting my material has triggered discomfort among other scholars, and some have even approached my findings as deviant. For insightful field notes on experiences of researching far-right racism in today's academia, see Sengul (2024).

[5] My personal experience from the conferences of political ecologies of the far-right in Lund 2019 and Uppsala 2024

and Peake (2000: 394) argue, "*whiteness is indicated less by its explicit racism than by the fact that it ignores, or even denies, racist indications*". Focusing attention on those that the far-right inferiorises and dehumanises forces people to face the various structural privileges that white academics are enjoying. Studying race is not only about studying race elsewhere but also about considering our (the academics') role in producing racialised geographies on a burning planet.

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