

Biosecurity and invasive species: change, challenge and creativity

Nicholas Gill, Sonia Graham, and Jennifer Atchison, UOW.

The presence, circulations, and consequences of COVID-19 have highlighted the agency, politics, and challenges of matter of biosecurity. COVID-19 has dramatically illustrated the power of non-human life and the possibilities that human mobility, divisions, activities, social structure, and technologies afford such life. In short COVID-19 has brought to greater prominence many of the issues and challenges long associated with biosecurity and invasive species be they plant, animal, or pathogen. Invasive species have been characterized as a key agent of global environmental change. While calculations of the costs of invasive species have been critiqued as excessive and poorly founded and have been poor at including environmental and social costs, newer estimates indicate that they are likely to be significant.

Biosecurity and invasive species speak to the conference themes. Invasive species bring change in environments, they can force change in human activities, and managing them can involve trying to bring about behavioural or cultural change. Invasive species bring multiple challenges. They challenge our thinking about nature and parceling it up into categories such as native and non-native and associating them with judgements of belonging and moral status. They further pose challenges in recognizing that designations of belonging and associated management responses can be culturally and geographically specific. They challenge people to accept environmental change that may not be wanted but which may be inevitable and to make difficult judgements and risk assessments. Invasive species challenge systems of production, often interacting with human technologies and practices, such as in agricultures, that themselves create the spaces for invasive species. Nonetheless, invasive species can be seen in terms of creativity. Creativity in coming to terms with a changed world and still finding value and ways of living with it and within it. Creativity might be found in how people organize for collective invasive species management or in contextually responsive management. Creativity in responding to the challenges when invasive species disrupt production systems. Creativity may also be evident in uses that are found for invasive species, including in supporting livelihoods and even markets.

In this session we invite papers that address issues such as we address above. Papers may be critical in nature, they may consider management or governance, or they may focus on some aspect of biosecurity more generally that speaks to the session themes.