

RECON 6 On Invasive Species

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«Invading the Invaders»



Introduction

Taking a train in Switzerland during late summer it is almost certain you will meet the golden yellow blossoming of *Solidago canadensis* in all its glory. Growing in large colonies along the train tracks and elsewhere, the *Canadian goldenrod* is maybe the most visible of the many «invasive species» that have been reproducing and spreading rapidly in Switzerland during the last years. This phenomenon is primarily linked to human action: to cultivation and gardening, to international traffic flows and the movement of goods, to large-scale ecosystem changes in the context of the climate crisis. Along with these colonies of displaced plants another system has been emerging. Invasive plants have been marked as a threat for native ecosystems and as a major cause for the accelerating extinction of endangered species, «black lists» and «watch lists» for alien plants and other living beings have been created and large scale activities to «fight» the «invasion» are taking place with the help of human hands, machines and a lot of public funding.

In 2015 and 2018 respectively, I've spent several months «fighting» invasive neophytes as part of my civilian service, a substitute to Switzerland's mandatory military service. This meant spending whole days wandering along train tracks, on wasteland, building sites and industrial areas, but also in swamps and dry meadows and other specialized and mostly protected ecosystems. It meant searching, kneeling, weeding, collecting, digging, chopping and cutting. It meant separating the ones who belong from the ones who don't, distinguishing «native» from «foreign», «inside» from «outside», «tame» and «peaceful» from «invasive» and «aggressive» and finally «good» from «bad», defending a nature «in place» from a nature «out of place».

The climate crisis and invasive species / the «fight» against invasive species in the Swiss context / information on three species I've worked on and with:

Wikipedia: Climate change and invasive species

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Climate_change_and_invasive_species

Global Invasive Species Database

<http://www.iucngisd.org/gisd/>

Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research WSL: Invasive Arten

<https://www.wsl.ch/de/biodiversitaet/invasive-arten.html>

Infloflora: Invasive species in Switzerland

<https://www.infloflora.ch/de/neophyten/listen-und-infobl%C3%A4tter.html>

Ailanthus altissima / tree of heaven, varnish tree / Götterbaum (on Switzerland's invasive species black list)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ailanthus_altissima

<https://www.wsl.ch/de/newsseiten/2015/09/etabliert-sich-der-goetterbaum-bald-in-der-ganzen-schweiz.html>

Rhus typhina / staghorn sumac / Essigbaum (on Switzerland's invasive species black list)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhus_typhina

<https://www.neophyten-schweiz.ch/index.php?l=D&p=1&t=14>

Prunus laurocerasus / cherry laurel, common laurel / Kirschlorbeer (on Switzerland's invasive species black list)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prunus_laurocerasus

<https://www.neophyten-schweiz.ch/index.php?l=D&p=2&t=30>

Swissinfo: How Switzerland is battling invasive species

https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/invasive-species-in-switzerland-_foreign-elements-endangering-swiss-biodiversity/44978842

The Anthropocene Atlas of Geneva: Stefan Eggenberg about invasive species in Switzerland

<https://head.hesge.ch/taag/fr/interview/stefan-eggenberg-2/#changing-environments>

The rhetoric of invasive-, native- and foreignness:**Banu Subramaniam: Article «The Aliens Have Landed! Reflections on the Rhetoric of Biological Invasions»** (2001)

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/40338794>

Banu Subramaniam: Book «Ghost Stories for Darwin» (2014); especially chapter 4

<https://www.press.uillinois.edu/books/catalog/24mxq3dr9780252038655.html>

«The idea of invasion is predicated on a discourse of „nature in place“ and „nature out of place“ – and by definition invasive species are introduced species that do not belong.»
(Subramaniam 2014, 97)

«Rhetoric, words, and symbols play a central role in the campaigns against invasive species because anti-immigrant rhetoric latches onto long-enduring, powerful, and familiar tropes of fear [...]. The fear of the outsider, impurity, and pollution tracks centuries of campaigns that have rendered some bodies as violent, frightening, undesirable, and worthy of being controlled, even exterminated. [...] What is the story that simmers beneath? It is the lives of the ghostly dispossessed – the bodies displaced, starved, colonized, violated, sterilized, experimented upon, maimed, killed, exterminated.»
(Subramaniam 2014, S. 122)

Banu Subramaniam and Sigrid Schmitz: Article «Why We Need Critical Interdisciplinarity: A Dialogue on Feminist Science Technology Studies, Postcolonial Issues, and EcoDiversity» (2016)

<https://www.genderingmint.uni-freiburg.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Subramaniam-Schmitz-2016.pdf>

Josef Barla and Christoph Hubatschke: Article «Technoecologies of Borders» (2017)

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/08164649.2017.1466648>

«In the age of global capitalism, the constant acceleration of the movement of goods and people also led to an acceleration of the spreading of so-called non-native plants and animals into new territories. In some ecological and biological studies – particularly in invasive ecology – alien species are defined as species not common or native to a particular ecosystem. [...] Alarmed by consequential changes in some ecosystems as well as the extinction of native species, a new spectre began to haunt ecological studies, namely the spectre of the 'invasive species'.»
(Barla and Hubatschke 2017, 400)

Nicholas J. Reo and Laura A. Ogden: Article «Anishnaabe Aki: an indigenous perspective on the global threat of invasive species» (2018)

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs11625-018-0571-4>

Avery P. Hill and Elizabeth A. Hardly: Article «Rethinking ,Native' in the Anthropocene» (2018)

<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/feart.2018.00096/full>

Nicholas J. Reo, Kyle Whyte, Darren Ranco, Jodi Brandt, Emily Blackmer and Braden Elliott: Article «Invasive Species, Indigenous Stewards, and Vulnerability Discourse» (2017)

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5250/amerindiquar.41.3.0201?seq=1>

Timothy Neale: «Settler Colonialism and Weed Ecology» (2016)

<https://aesengagement.wordpress.com/2016/11/02/settler-colonialism-and-weed-ecology/>

Ensia: «Should plants and animals that relocate because of climate change be considered invasive?» (2020)

<https://ensia.com/features/climate-change-nonnative-invasive-species/>

Background / further reading / works of art:

Alfred W. Crosby: Book «Ecological Imperialism. The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900–1900» (2014)

<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511805554>

Malcom Ferdinand: Lecture «A Decolonial Ecology: Voices from the Hold of Modernity» (2020)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NNaLugt7cdI>

Carolyn Merchant: Book «The Death of Nature» (1980)

<https://www.harpercollins.com/products/the-death-of-nature-carolyn-merchant>

Emma Marris: Book «Rambunctious Garden: Saving Nature in a Post-Wild World» (2013)

<https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/rambunctious-garden-9781608194544/>

Maja Smrekar and Robertina Šebjanič: Performance «Invasive Sounds» (2015)

<https://robertina.net/invasive-sounds/>