



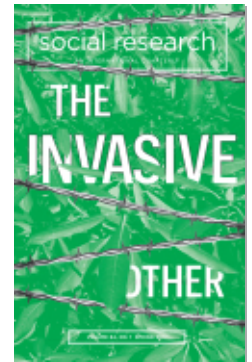
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Invasive Others: Toward a Contaminated World

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Invasive Others: Toward a Contaminated World

CONTEMPORARY MEDIA IS FULL OF IMAGERY ABOUT INVASIVE OTHERS. These Others take different forms, but perhaps the most recognizable are people, particularly those who are crossing borders, such as migrants and refugees. We regularly see images of people coming by the boatload from Syria or North Africa to land on European shores. Frontex, Europe's border patrol agency, sees these migrants as posing an "imminent danger" and uses cutting-edge technology to surveil and detect them. When caught, they are turned around at sea, or deported when they reach land. Considered invasives, they are kept in detention centers, or in camps on both sides of the Mediterranean.

Invasive others also cause concern in the area of ecology and conservation. In this case they are nonnative, or "alien," plants or animals that are extremely successful at adapting to (or taking over) their new habitats. Much energy and many resources have been directed at ridding ourselves of these invasives in order to protect native species and allow for a more biodiverse environment to flourish.

Pathogens are described today as the most serious type of invasive, crossing borders and boundaries at unanticipated speed and scale, and threatening pandemic-level infections. Notably, we use the political language of nation-states to discuss their containment. With Ebola, quarantine strategies involved the closure of national borders (Sierra Leone, Liberia), which many medical experts suggested did not make sense scientifically; here we see the containment of invasive pathogens getting mixed up with the containment of certain kinds of "invasive" people.

Finally, ideas can be understood as invasive. New surveillance technologies have been developed to control the spread of ideas understood as invasive—those understood as extremist or terrorist. Such technologies, piloted by Google, for instance, or by the United States government, now also threaten to invade private lives and spaces, as we have learned from WikiLeaks and Edward Snowden. In all of this, it is not clear who is allowed to disseminate ideas, and under what circumstances, or who or what is the most invasive idea or technology.

This issue of *Social Research*, based on a conference held April 20–21, 2016, at The New School, is grounded on the premise that while seemingly of different orders, invasive others—whether people, plants, pathogens, or ideas—are often described in similar ways, and patrolled and controlled through similar technologies, logics, and policies, and that these overlaps have real consequences. In the most basic sense, the idea of invasion in all these cases implies a metaphor of war and attendant processes of militarization, and helps to frame responses accordingly, i.e., one has to *fight* back. Of course, we ask when and how these orders influence one another and when they have their own logics, but broadening the frame to understand them together can help us understand the construction and management of Otherness in new ways.

In a world where the speed and scale of movement have changed, received notions of borders are being challenged and often dissolved—not just national borders but also borders between species, and borders between what used to be discrete social spaces. Jacob Silverman (this issue) calls this latter “context collapse,” where suddenly, via social media, something that would have been said only to a friend is visible to the world, or where one’s work and intimate lives combine, with new consequences. As part of the dissolution of borders and boundaries, things increasingly move as part of larger groupings or assemblages that include objects, capital, technologies, ideas, and other living beings. These other things have become more and more critical in how people move (or don’t move), and it behooves us to take seriously how they influence and change the movement of others.

With new transborder flows, then, the languages and technologies of invasive others come to intersect and play on each other in significant new ways, working to produce new demarcations, divisions, and exclusions. The work of invasiveness is engaged in rendering a new “political,” and it is doing so on multiple, intersecting fronts. If we are to create a world hospitable to those considered “Other” even while acknowledging that hospitality to all (the Ebola virus? White Supremacy?) may not be possible or desirable—if, in other terms, we are to protect the rights of others while not getting rid of ethical judgments—then knowledge of how these “invasive others” work is invaluable.

METAPHORS AND MORPHINGS

Invasive others overlap and inform each other at the level of metaphor. As Bridget Anderson notes (this issue), metaphors give us a cognitive frame to make our subjects understandable, and in often subtle, undetectable ways, they bridge the gap between logic and emotion. For instance, migrants have been recently described in language associated with insects or pests: they swarm, they scuttle. The then British prime minister, David Cameron, helped to shape the United Kingdom’s response to the refugee crisis when he described it as “a swarm of people coming across the Mediterranean, seeking a better life, wanting to come to Britain because Britain has jobs” (*The Guardian*, July 30, 2015). The response, of course, was to close borders, keep them out. Metaphors help us to render visible other aspects of politics, ideas that sometimes are unspeakable. So, in the South African case that Jean Comaroff describes (this issue), a discourse on invasive plants helped to authorize a new sense of nationalism that relies on claims to purity and exclusion—these were words and ideas that could not otherwise be spoken in post-apartheid South Africa.

There are many other metaphors that regularly shape our understandings, drawing on a mix of these different types of invasives: ideas “go viral.” Yet we should examine what it means to describe an idea as a pathogen; what associations and actions does that enable?

Similarly, people now talk about “digital hygiene,” which, according to Silverman, means that they securitize themselves against forms of digital surveillance and invasion. Yet what does it mean to use the metaphor of hygiene as a strategy against invasive technologies, if we acknowledge hygiene’s early relationship to eugenics? Metaphors not only render certain likenesses thinkable, but also shape and authorize certain kinds of action. In this case, hygiene directs us toward purity, toward isolation, toward a cleansing of everything that is seen to touch our boundaries.

Invasive others also work with and against one another at other levels, beyond metaphor; that is, once claims to conceptual or aesthetic likeness as “invasive others” have been made, technologies used against one invasive may be used against another, even if they are of very different types. In other words, the overlaps have real, material consequences. In colonial Namibia, first under German and then South African rule, for instance, segregation of domestic livestock on medical grounds transmuted into political segregation of people. Buffer zones instituted to keep infected cattle outside the colonial settler areas were gradually transformed into a physical, territorial border, dividing healthy and sick, “white” and “black” Africa, and instituting an official red line. This was aided by the “veterinarianisation of the police,” making control of stock an integral part of police work. A veterinary border soon made a flexible, porous border into a linear territorial one, with the goal of protecting settler societies from germs and viruses, which were now associated not just with their livestock, but with Africans themselves (Miescher 2012). Invasive pathogens got transposed onto and into invasive political others, literally reconfiguring political space. Similarly, in 2003, Botswana built a fence at the border with Zimbabwe, ostensibly to stop foot-and-mouth disease among livestock, but it also worked to stop Zimbabwean humans (Brown 2014). In this way, the language of invasiveness allows for the breaking down of ontological categories, confusing things like the eradication of disease with the eradication of people.

As a technology to manage invasives, pesticides present a particularly revealing example of the slippage between ontological categories. That is, we can follow the line from their use against insects to their use against people *as* insects. As historian Clapperton Mavhunga (2011) writes, in the African colonial context, the pesticides used to exterminate vermin in order to help agricultural development soon became the same technologies used to exterminate guerrillas fighting for independence, with the understanding that they, too, were subhuman “vermin beings” from which the white race needed to be protected. The treatment of people *like* animals became the treatment of people *as* animals. Similarly, during the Second World War, as Bridget Anderson reminds us, German chemical company IG Farben bought the patent for Zyklon B, which was used in the extermination camps of the Holocaust; it had originally been used as an insecticide, licensed for delousing Mexican migrants to the United States in the 1930s. Here again, the notion of “invader” gets carried from one context to another, justifying the use of the same technologies.

In this sense, an understanding of something as an invasive other in the realm of pathogens can make or remake boundaries in a totally different domain, such as that of people. Jean Comaroff shows how invading plants have been factored into efforts to remake the South African state—through increasingly direct connections between the war against “aliens” (first as plants, then as people) and the prosperity of the nation. Alien plants, which were blamed for a series of devastating fires along the Cape Peninsula, came to signify a spoiled national heritage, and their eradication was the means of communal rebirth, linked by Mbeki himself to an “African renaissance.” As Comaroff states, by way of the unconscious transferral of emotions and ideas, “aliens” jumped the species barrier, subsequently enabling the demonization of migrants by the state.

This skipping of species-barriers can happen in other domains, although it can also happen with different goals. David Napier (this issue) actually calls on readers to use new facts in the medical realm, in order to embrace Otherness in the social realm. In his radically

revised understanding of the immune system, he demonstrates that the immune system is constantly engaged in a *search* for difference, seeking it out so humans can assimilate information from our environments, rather than be surprised (or killed) by it. He calls this “xenophilia” (the opposite of xenophobia), and suggests, then, that our metaphors of Otherness and invasion must be rethought, letting biology lead the way: we actually *need* others, we need difference, for our individual health. This biological model can be extrapolated and used to think about our social wellbeing. In other words, metaphors and technologies can also go the other way, and be harnessed toward nonexclusionary ends.

SPACE AND TIME

One of the more powerful ways ideas about invasive others work is by allowing for the production and manipulation of space and time. In a world where the speed and scale of movement has changed, the concept of invasiveness is called on to create distance when too much proximity is felt, where one’s space feels invaded. And it is deployed to create notions of stability when things feel like they are moving too quickly—where the notion of who belongs is no longer easy to identify. Invasiveness helps to create new grammars of time/space, recreating distinctions between “us” and “them.” I want to briefly mention two particular concepts or political technologies that have been used in the management of invasive others. I am interested in how they work to divide space and time, and in the process, to create notions of home, or place: “sanctuary,” and “naturalization.”

Sanctuary

“Sanctuary” is a name for space set aside and protected from invaders. In fourteenth-century England, the term referred to a sacred space, such as a church, where people were allowed to take refuge for a limited period of time. This form of protection was tied to the ideas of the separation of church and state, and of creating a space outside the political order. There are now religious sanctuaries of all kinds, but

there are also political sanctuaries: asylum for refugees is one example. “Sanctuary cities” do not prosecute undocumented immigrants for violating federal immigration regulations. More recently, the New Sanctuary Movement in the United States—which originally began in the 1980s with interfaith communities along the American Southwest border providing protection to undocumented immigrants fleeing violence in Central America—was reactivated in 2007 to protect immigrants under threat of deportation. This is now being strengthened under the Trump presidency, and deployed in new political forms. The university has been described and protected as a sanctuary for ideas and learning. And of course, we also have nonhuman or wild-life sanctuaries, designated for the protection of animals, plants, and ecologies.

Spaces of sanctuary play with and against one another in interesting ways, providing protection for some, but often at the expense of others. So, for instance, Eleana Kim (this issue) describes how an unexpected ecological sanctuary was created in the Korean Demilitarized Zone, one of the most heavily fortified spaces on earth for humans. Here, the extreme militarization and the absence of humans have created a safe space for birds, particularly for the Red-crowned Crane and the Black-faced Spoonbill. On the one hand, this exceptional space has been cast as a form of hope for Korean reunification, through a “return to nature”; however, as Kim demonstrates, in fact, this ecological sanctuary is not free of human beings, but utterly dependent on them. These birds require militarization to secure their remaining habitats; they will not ease the national division, but depend on its continuation. Sanctuary for some, then, is enabled by extreme hostility between others. Again, paying attention to the way sanctuary works helps us to understand how creating isolated spaces of protection always has other effects on surrounding spaces and places.

Sanctuary spaces also raise the question of who has the power and authority to provide protection, to divide up space, to decide who is invasive and who is threatened. And these roles are slippery

and ever changing. In the case of sanctuary for undocumented immigrants, the church is called on to protect people from the state; and for refugees, one nation-state is protecting people from another nation-state. But the question of who has the authority to govern, and to create such spaces of exception, is increasingly contested today, with the breaking down of all kinds of borders. In the case of invasive ideas, for instance, Agnes Callamard (this issue) describes the ways in which governments may try but are unable to control the spread of ideas. Instead, private social media companies have gotten involved in censorship. Fearing terrorism, they police the internet for “extremist” content with the view of deleting it; yet it is not always clear how these private companies regulate content—they may do it without reference to the law. They end up deciding what is considered obscene, often with problematic consequences. For instance, Callamard recounts how Facebook censors images of breastfeeding. Silverman argues that, often in the name of protection, such social media and digital surveillance companies increasingly intervene in our lives, governing areas once considered private. Ultimately, they leave no possible space of “sanctuary”: with nothing to counter them, the result is a world of total surveillance.

Finally, setting aside space in the name of protection can also have violent consequences. As Kim states, citing Chrulew on captive breeding in zoos, it can be a form of “loving to death.” Perhaps more explicitly, architectures of sanctuary can open the way to more nefarious pursuits, insofar as these spaces of protection can also be sites of containment or imprisonment. In this sense, as Anderson recounts, in 2013 the Tripoli zoo was turned into an immigration detention center. To be turned into an inferior type of human, one is often likened to, or made into, a different kind of being altogether. In this case, immigrants were dehumanized by being imprisoned in the space once created for the care of nonhumans. We know the two-faced nature of spaces of protection from the case of refugee camps; while they are precisely created as zones of peace in the midst of conflict, much scholarship has shown that these spaces are often less safe than con-

flict zones themselves, containing new forms of violence, policing, and suffering (Ticktin 2014).

Camps not only protect the people in them, but also create a sense of distance from camp inhabitants for the rest of the population. In his presentation at The Invasive Other conference, Vinh-Kim Nguyen discussed the creation of treatment or isolation camps for victims of Ebola in Guinea. While such measures were put in place to provide treatment for patients, they often ended up as a form of forced protection and quarantine that subsequently turned into abandonment. This attempt to create distance in the face of perceived invasion has many instantiations. As Hugh Raffles writes (this issue), in pre-World War II Germany, ghettos doubled as places of confinement for Jews who were sick, not to treat them but to protect the outside population from them; however, the majority population's fears of contamination were simply amplified rather than assuaged by this, as the people began to fear escapees; the ghettoization further pathologized those inside.

Naturalization

If space is constantly manipulated to create “us” and “them,” how about time? How long does one need to be in a place before one is considered “native,” before one can claim full belonging? Enrolling the idea of nature, or calling something “natural,” pretends to transcend truth; it takes the thing called “natural” out of history. The term “native” is used for ideas, people, plants, and animals; yet, as Raffles claims, this denies the dynamism and constant change of both social and ecological processes. Fabio Parasecoli writes (this issue) that GMO foods have been rebuffed in these precise terms, as “unnatural,” even though farmers have searched for positive traits in their crops since the beginnings of agriculture. “Naturalization,” however, as a term, reveals the process of something becoming second nature, of finding a home. It reveals the process of change and acceptance. As such, it allows us some insight into the role of time in the making of belonging, linking time and place.

Jean Comaroff notes that “naturalization” has multiple connotations. In biology, for a plant or animal to become naturalized is to live in a region where it did not originate; it is to be new to a place and yet adapted enough to be able to reproduce on one’s own. Usually, this means that humans intervened and moved the plant or animal from its point of origin—this could be 200 years ago, but it could also be 3000 years ago; biological forms of naturalization are measured in evolutionary time. A naturalized plant will never be “native” but it functions as such; there is no substantive difference. To call it out as different, as Raffles says, would be as much about aesthetics, morality, or politics as about science.

For people, on the other hand, “naturalization” means to acquire citizenship or nationality in a place where one was not born. In the United States, this can occur five years after one has acquired permanent residency. For people, then, naturalization happens on an individual scale, and is purportedly resolved over the course of a generation. The children of someone who is naturalized are native; they should be able to call the place they were born “home.” However, we know that this is not always the case: some groups of people, like plants or animals, are considered impossible to fully naturalize; they will never be on their way to being “native.” For these groups, clearly, conditions other than time play into the inability to call a place home.

Discourses around natives and invasives often invoke the past. How long has someone or something been “here”? Naturalization is about past presence, about how safe one has been rendered. Discourses on invasive others also exist in the present tense: as medical, social, political, or ecological emergencies. Invasive others most often live in this state of emergency; indeed, the language usually calls crisis into being. However, invasiveness is read in terms of the future only to anticipate present invasions: pandemics, terrorism. Both Nathaniel Hupert and David Napier insist on bringing in the future tense to this discussion, which changes the terms of debate. In writing about the Zika virus, considered an invasive pathogen, Hupert (this issue) shifts our understanding of the invasive element from the Zika virus

to humans, who enable and propagate Zika by way of climate change and the production of plastics (on which Zika-carrying mosquitoes flourish). Humans are invading the future, making intergenerational health impossible. There is no more “us” versus “them” here, even if there is still an invader: we are the invaders of our own future.

Napier, too, focuses on the future, exploring the way the immune system engages with and *creates* the future. He suggests that rather than shying away from or defending itself against the unknown, the immune system searches for the unknown, participating in a form of reconnaissance activity. This looking outward creates a recursive engagement with the environment, encountering the unknown, assimilating it and changing, and going back out to explore. In other words, he argues, there is no “invasion” by viruses (even if other humans can be “invaded” by viral information transmitted by other humans), because the immune system is actively seeking new information from those viruses. It is creatively making a future, not defending against an invader. Naturalization here is a recursive engagement with unknown futures—it is never static, always and actively changing.

IN THE NAME OF IMPURITY

To conclude, then: how does it help to think across discourses and technologies of the invasive other? What alternatives emerge to address the exclusions that this discourse inevitably causes? The resounding conclusion is that we cannot move forward with an attachment to purity. Feminist scholars like Donna Haraway (1991) have long argued against a search for purity, suggesting that there is no innocent standpoint, no place of moral transcendence. Hugh Raffles shows in powerful and poignant ways how an affiliation to purity results in violence of the most profound kind: the search for purity allowed new discourses of hygiene to be brought together with techniques of quarantine and delousing, to exterminate “impure” people.

So how do we take into account a need for connection and political belonging, while recognizing the messiness and uncertainty of

the world, the instability in categories of being? Just as reading across domains of invasiveness can reveal how Otherness is constructed, such reading can allow us to imagine its deconstruction. Bridget Anderson ends her piece with a poem comparing children of immigrant descent to grafted cherry trees, and expressing hope for the fruit they will bear. The graft, in other words, is the way forward. The word “graft” originates with the botanical practice of inserting a shoot into another plant; but its medical meaning is to implant a part of living flesh onto another part, or onto another individual, thereby creating a union. But etymologically, “graft” also means corruption. On all levels, clearly, it offers a challenge to purity.

Others also turn to nonhuman realms for alternative futures: the parasite is one such example. Eleana Kim proposes the idea of “strange kinship,” which she takes from Merleau-Ponty, to describe the indeterminate ways in which humans and nonhumans exist together, in what she calls “parasitical relations of care and dependence.” For her, humans are parasites, shifting between being guests and hosts in an ambivalent relation of hospitality. While Hugh Raffles reminds us that using the metaphor of parasite has an incredibly dark history, having been instrumental in defining Jews as exterminable, Fabio Parasecoli uses it toward more progressive political ends: he thinks about the invisible invaders in food, such as the bacteria in cheese and yogurt. And he reminds us, building on the French philosopher Michel Serres, that “parasite” means something that eats next to or beside something else. He takes this to refer to symbiotic partners who live in continuous productive exchange with their hosts. This logic defies dualities and oppositions, in favor of interdependence and innovation, reciprocity and mutuality.

Without purity, it becomes harder to make categorical distinctions between self and other. We are left little choice but to turn to other models of relationality, not based on separation: hospitality and reciprocity replace the notions of wholeness or stasis embedded in the concept of “native.” In this sense, Michael Ignatieff (this issue) returns to the gift as a model, recognizing the failings of universal

abstract rights to compel. Asylum, he argues, should be understood as a gift relationship between a citizen who gives and a stranger who receives.

The articles in this volume demonstrate that invasive others travel across different orders, and work in subtle and complex ways to demarcate space and time and to create notions of belonging and exclusion. But perhaps most powerfully, they show that the languages and technologies of invasive others, when working together, often function to sort out who is human and who is not—not simply to create categories of subhumanity, but to produce people *as* animals or things. Indeed, as we have seen, the ultimate effect of bringing humans and other beings together to turn human into nonhuman is, as Raffles states, to render them killable. To create a better, more inclusive world, one that allows difference to flourish, it seems we would be better off acknowledging our world as contaminated, and letting that be the site of new political emergence.

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