

Introduction

The Value of Place and the Place of Values

Simon Levin (1992) noted that “(scale is) the fundamental conceptual problem in ecology, if not in all of science.” Often, what we believe to be opposing theories are a matter of equally valid concepts being advanced at different scales (Allen and Hoekstra 1992). As such, when intelligent people’s perceptions are in conflict, the tension may be a function of mismatched scales, rather than diametrically opposed philosophies. The debate that has arisen in the context of biological control may be such a conflict. It might be said that this issue pits society’s deep concern for personal health and well-being (a small spatiotemporal scale) versus its concern for Nature (a larger spatiotemporal scale). In fact, one might argue that the differences encountered in this book frequently derive from how a scientist views his or her *place* in the world.

For those who see their responsibility to serve the interests of farmers and agricultural communities, the regulation of biological control might represent a hindrance of their efforts to protect fellow humans. And for those who see their obligation to stewardship of the natural world, constraining the introduction of biological control agents is often a means of preventing potentially egregious harm. Both parties need to understand the opposing view, lest they become blind-sided by unanticipated problems. Agriculturalists should recognize that the risks stemming from biological control introductions include threats to agriculture and human well-being, and deep ecologists should recognize that agricultural productivity and profits are necessary for a healthy society capable of protecting the natural environment.

The source of conflict lies in the very nature of biological control agents—they persist, spread, and evolve. Germany and Denmark’s exclusion of non-indigenous organisms is seemingly pointless given the complete lack of restrictions in Belgium. And the United States Fish and Wildlife’s desire to maintain an exclusively or primarily native fauna in Hawaiian forests can only be realized if scientifically sound and meaningful safeguards on the release of non-native biological control agents are enforced by state and federal agencies.