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Author(s):
Essl, Franz; Hulme, Philip E.; Jeschke, Jonathan M.; Keller, Reuben; Pyšek, Petr; Richardson, David M.; Saul, Wolf-Christian; Bacher, Sven; Dullinger, Stefan; Estévez, Rodrigo A.; Kueffer, Christoph; Roy, Helen E.; Seebens, Hanno; Rabitsch, Wolfgang

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Scientific and Normative Foundations for the Valuation of Alien-Species Impacts: Thirteen Core Principles

FRANZ ESSL, PHILIP E. HULME, JONATHAN M. JESCHKE, REUBEN KELLER, PETR PYŠEK, DAVID M. RICHARDSON, WOLF-CHRISTIAN SAUL, SVEN BACHER, STEFAN DULLINGER, RODRIGO A. ESTÉVEZ, CHRISTOPH KUEFFER, HELEN E. ROY, HANNO SEEBENS, AND WOLFGANG RABITSCH

Biological invasions cause many impacts that differ widely in how they are perceived. We argue that many conflicts in the valuation of the impacts of alien species are attributable to differences in the framing of the issue and implicit assumptions—such conflicts are often not acknowledged. We present 13 principles that can help guide valuation and therefore inform the management of alien species. Seven of these relate to the science domain, representing aspects of change caused by alien species that can be measured or otherwise assessed using scientific methods. The remaining six principles invoke values, risk perception, and environmental ethics, but also cognitive and motivational decision biases. We illustrate the consequences of insufficient appreciation of these principles. Finally, we provide guidance rooted in political agreements and environmental ethics for improving the consideration of the consequences of these principles and present appropriate tools for management decisions relating to alien species.

Keywords: biological invasions, decisionmaking, environmental ethics, perception, values

Alien species have many impacts on the environment and socioeconomic contexts (Schlaepfer et al. 2011, Blackburn et al. 2014, Jeschke et al. 2014). The valuation of any given change attributed (directly or indirectly) to an alien species depends on a range of parameters. Key factors are the environmental and socioeconomic contexts, personal value systems of the assessor, vested economic interests, risk perception, and available alternative opportunities (Maguire 2004). Different stakeholders perceive such impacts differently; this means that an invasion of an alien species can be viewed as detrimental (often therefore termed “invasive” sensu CBD 2002), neutral, beneficial, or simply irrelevant (Estévez et al. 2015).

The variations in how alien-species impacts are perceived and the ensuing disagreements between stakeholders create substantial challenges when decisions must be undertaken by politicians and managers (Estévez et al. 2015, Redpath et al. 2015). In addition, the criteria for making decisions about interventions to manage alien species generally differ along the different invasion stages, from introduction into a region to subsequent establishment and spread (sensu Blackburn et al. 2011). Where interventions are undertaken, these often focus primarily on pre-entry precautionary measures (e.g., border control and pathway management) for alien species not yet present in the region of interest, early-response measures (e.g., eradication or containment) for alien species in their incipient phase of spread, and finally, long-term management for widely distributed alien species. Pest-management measures (e.g., biological control or the application of pesticides) tend to target only those species that are perceived to have a significant impact on agricultural production, forestry, biodiversity, human health, or agroecosystems. The role of government and private citizens in alien-species management also changes along the sequence of invasion stages. Government is expected to allocate resources for preventing new problems and eradicating alien species perceived to be harmful before they become permanently established. Once eradication or regional containment is no longer feasible, responsibility for management often shifts to individual landowners, local or regional governmental bodies, NGOs, or interested community groups (Lovett et al. 2016).
We argue that many conflicts in the valuation of the impacts of alien species are attributable to strong differences in both the framing of the issue and implicit assumptions, which are often unacknowledged or neglected (Humair et al. 2013). This lack of appreciation of normative predispositions has hindered communication among invasion biologists, as well as with scholars of other disciplines, policymakers, and practitioners; has hampered scientific progress; and has repeatedly caused heated discussions on how to value alien species and their impacts (Larson 2011).

We highlight the importance of recognizing such underlying core principles and distil recommendations for alien-species management and policy. We agree that totally eliminating conflicting views is impossible (Redpath et al. 2015). Rather, we aim to provide a framework that elucidates the causes for disagreement and conflict. Such elucidation is required to improve communication and pave the way for subsequent conflict resolution and hence for evidence-based environmental management and decisionmaking (Sutherland et al. 2004). Finally, we indicate how these recommendations can be applied to management and political agreements relating to alien species. We focus on how the principles are considered and weighed and discuss some of the ensuing implications for decisionmaking.

Core principles for valuing alien-species impacts

In a world where human agency and natural systems have become increasingly interconnected, decisionmaking in environmental policy is inherently complex (Gregory et al. 2012, Redpath et al. 2015). Such complexity is especially prominent in the case of alien-species management, because the evaluation of alien-species impacts demands the consideration and weighing of scientific evidence and societal or individual norms ("values"). In many cases, vested interests ("agendas") and personal biases (e.g., overconfidence bias and anchoring; www.boundless.com/management/definition/groupthink) are inescapable mediators of decisions that affect management and policy outcomes. This frequently leads to conflicts in evaluating the risks and impacts associated with alien species (Estévez et al. 2015). In addition, seemingly simple management solutions tend to disregard the full range of ramifications that they may cause. This is particularly so if impacts occur at locations far away (spatial discounting), if they occur in the far future (temporal discounting), if benefits and costs are enjoyed and incurred by different sectors of society, and if uncertainties are large (Gardiner 2011).

We have identified 13 core principles that, if addressed, will help to guide the valuation and therefore the management of alien species (summarized in table 1). The first seven of these principles relate predominantly to the science domain; they represent aspects of change caused by alien species that can—at least in principle—be quantified and measured at relevant spatial and temporal scales or otherwise be assessed or quantified using scientific methods (e.g., uncertainty, irreversibility, and risks). These different aspects of change require appropriate but different metrics for measurement, and such metrics are often not directly comparable, or they may interact with each other (e.g., across geographic or temporal scales; figure 1). Consequently, any process involving comparisons of different impact metrics (e.g., as is done in calculating the compound impacts of alien species; Blackburn et al. 2014, Kumschick et al. 2015) invokes normative decisions. This problem is often exacerbated by a lack of relevant data (Hulme et al. 2013), by proponents of particular views ignoring existing data (Sutherland et al. 2004), or by situations in which available data are equivocal or have large uncertainties that are difficult to quantify and sometimes impossible to reduce (figure 2; Gregory et al. 2012).

The remaining six principles (table 1) invoke values, risk perception, and environmental ethics but also decision biases related to cognitive (e.g., anchoring) and motivational biases (e.g., overconfidence; Hämäläinen and Alaja 2008, Montibeller and von Winterfeldt 2015). These principles relate to the decisionmaking process, articulating fundamental values, selecting relevant objectives and impacts, and ranking their importance during decisionmaking. In other words, there is unavoidably a strong normative element in evaluating the risks and impacts of alien species, which often results in "conflicts of beliefs and values" (Redpath et al. 2015). Such differences in normative perceptions can be nonnegotiable, which greatly reduces the likelihood of reaching consensus (Voinov and Farley 2007, Redpath et al. 2015). For instance, the widely used concept of human relationships with nature (Kellert 1993) distinguishes eight fundamental worldviews. These include seeing nature as resource ("utilitarian"), as physical attraction ("aesthetic"), or as something to be controlled ("dominionistic"). Although it is rare for one of these values to solely define the relationship of a particular person to nature, the relative importance attributed in a personal value system to these values may vary widely. However, even having a similar personal value system may lead to conflicting views when boundary conditions are set differently. A good example of the importance of such boundary conditions is the time scale that is considered when assessing impacts, in particular when short-term impacts attributable to alien species differ from those measured over longer periods (Strayer et al. 2006). Under a utilitarian view of the natural world, short-term costs associated with precautionary management (e.g., costs to agencies and commerce of implementing quarantine and phytosanitary measures) may be valued very differently from those under a long-term utilitarian perspective—the latter taking into account the merits of avoiding the full range of impacts of agricultural, horticultural, or forestry pests by applying such measures.

Another prominent example is the application of fixed annual discount rates, which effectively down-weigh long-term impacts. This effect increases with the discount rate and the period over which it is applied. For long-term and often irreversible environmental impacts (e.g., species extinctions and changes in ecosystem properties),
Table 1. Thirteen core principles for valuing the impacts of alien species, corresponding implications for decisionmaking in alien-species management, and recommendations for alien-species management and policy.

| No | Domain | Principle | Description | Implications | Relevance | Recommendations | Key references |
|----|--------|-----------|-------------|--------------|-----------|----------------|----------------|
| 1  | Impact metric | Changes inflicted by alien species can be measured with different metrics (e.g., numbers of native species affected, amount of resources preempted by alien species, yield reductions etc.) | Different metrics are generally not directly comparable, making it difficult to compare changes caused by alien species or impacts of the same species measured with different metrics | Impacts need to be measured using metrics appropriate for the purpose of the study and that are relevant to decisionmakers | Develop standard metrics for measuring impacts of alien species that allow comparisons of impacts caused by different mechanisms and alien species | Nentwig et al. (2012), Hulme et al. (2013), Humair et al. (2013), Blackburn et al. (2014), Blackburn et al. (2013, 2015), Jeschke et al. (2014), Kumschick et al. (2015) |
| 2  | Temporal scale | The length of the time considered | Long-term and persisting impacts become more relevant as the time period considered increases | The length of the time period considered affects the importance of long-term versus short-term impacts in the assessment | Consider alien-species impacts over long time periods to account for potential time lags and long-term impacts (more than several decades) | Simberloff and Gibbons (2004), Strayer et al. (2006), Jeschke et al. (2014), Essl et al. (2015) |
| 3  | Spatial scale | Impacts may be scale-dependent (e.g., an alien species may increase species numbers in a plot but may reduce between-plot heterogeneity and therefore beta-diversity) | The spatial scale considered for analyzing impacts may affect the direction and severity of changes | Impacts need to be analyzed on the appropriate scale with awareness of the limitations posed by the spatial scale used | Identify the relevant spatial scale(s) for a given policy or management decision | Jeschke et al. (2014), Hulme et al. (2013, 2015) |
| 4  | Reversibility | The likelihood that impacts can be reversed (by intervention or spontaneously) | The potential for reversibility of the impacts of an alien species may widely differ and be subject to future changes (e.g., the development of new management tools) | Irreversible (or practically irreversible) impacts are widespread in biological invasions; the likelihood of irreversibility increases as alien species spread | Assess the likelihood of the reversibility of changes on the basis of known and tested management measures | Hobbs et al. (2013), Blackburn et al. (2014) |
| 5  | Uncertainty | The outcome of a process in complex systems can only insufficiently be predicted or measured (epistemic uncertainty), and communication may amplify uncertainties (linguistic uncertainty) | The existence, type, and scale of impacts of an alien species are uncertain; uncertainty is higher at the onset of the invasion; uncertainties are larger for the more distant future; and the language used for communicating impacts may be vague and ambiguous. | Decisionmaking in alien-species management and policy is subject to partly irreducible uncertainties | Be explicit about the context sensitivity of available evidences, refine the level of uncertainty, and apply sensitivity analyses and precautionary approaches using clearly defined terms | Mastrandrea et al. (2011), Beckage et al. (2011), Liu et al. (2011), Blackbur et al. (2014) |
| 6  | Thresholds and tipping points | Small changes close to thresholds may cause large changes in a complex system | The impacts of alien species may change disproportionately close to tipping points by amplifying feedback (e.g., inducing regime shifts) | The predictability of alien-species impacts is limited, and the impacts may be profoundly different when tipping points are crossed | Develop methods and indicators for the early detection of tipping points (e.g., critical slowing down) | Scheffer et al. (2009), Boétiger et al. (2013), Hobbs et al. (2013), Gaertner et al. (2014) |
| 7  | Indirect impacts | The existence of relevant secondary impacts | The indirect impacts of alien species are widespread, are uncertain, may occur with time lags, and may be more important than direct impacts | The direct impacts of alien species cascade through different levels of, for example, ecological or socioeconomic systems by way of indirect impacts; considering at least the most important indirect impacts is essential to capturing the whole dimension of the impact of an alien species | Develop criteria to identify and rank indirect impacts according to their relevance | Lau (2012), Pyšek et al. (2012) |
discounting has profound consequences. For instance, if there are immediate or near-future positive socioeconomic impacts of introducing a particular species, even very large long-term negative socioeconomic impacts may be discounted to very small amounts today (Gardiner 2011, Voinov and Farley 2007, Stern 2015b). To put this in context, on the basis of high discount rates of up to 6% annually as used by the IPCC (1995) and advocated by Nordhaus (2007) for climate-change impacts, we would not spend US$2500 today to prevent a US$30 trillion loss in 400 years (Voinov and Farley 2007). This loss is approximately equivalent to the gross global product today. Environmental economists argue

Table 1. (Continued).

| No | Domain                  | Principle                          | Description                                                                 | Implications                                                                 | Relevance                                                                 | Recommendations                                                                 | Key references                                                                 |
|----|-------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 8  | Impacts and risk        | perception                         | The relevance attributed to different impacts and risks by people may differ, and there may be systematic differences due to gender and social and cultural factors | Different values, interests, and perceptions modify the valuation of impacts and risks | Different values, interests, and perceptions may lead to conflicts between stakeholders and social groups that preclude agreement on how to proceed | Apply methods (e.g., structured decisionmaking) that take into account the different objectives and value systems of stakeholders and social and cultural contexts | García-Llorente et al. (2008), Liu et al. (2011), Gregory et al. (2012), Redpath et al. (2015), Estévez et al. (2015) |
| 9  | Context dependency      |                                    | Impacts of the same magnitude may be valued differently depending on the environmental, spatial, temporal, or societal context in which they occur | The impacts of alien species inside or outside the region of interest may be valued differently, as well as the same impacts in different contexts (e.g., health or agricultural impacts in poor or rich societies) | The valuation of the same impacts but that occur at distant places (“spatial discounting”), that occur in the far future (“temporal discounting”), or that affect other people may differ from those that affect someone directly | Identify the context appropriate for the study | Clavero (2014), González-Moreno et al. (2014) |
| 10 | Commensurability        |                                    | Some values affected may be considered unique or of overriding interest (e.g., risks to human lives) | The impacts in natural ecosystems may be valued as more important than those in other ecosystems; the impacts on endemic species may be valued as more important than impacts on other species; the impacts on human health may be valued higher than those on socioeconomy | The impacts on unique values may be considered genuinely different from impacts on nonunique values; therefore, there may be noncommensurable trade-offs | Identify irreplaceable values (e.g., human lives or health) | Munda (2004) |
| 11 | Comparability           |                                    | Different types of impacts have to be evaluated by using appropriate but different metrics that are comparable | Assessment of overall impacts depends strongly on the methods used for aggregating different metrics | Only a traceable and transparent overall assessment of impact may provide the basis for agreement among (a majority of) stakeholders | Aggregation of metrics should be based on the principle of applying the logic of comparable “relative severity” | Nentwig et al. (2010), Blackburn et al. (2014), Kumschick et al. (2015) |
| 12 | Discounting             |                                    | Long-term impacts may be discounted by a fixed annual rate (or not)          | Impacts become less important the further they are likely to manifest           | Long-term and persisting impacts are (much) down-weighted by high discounting rates; relates to principles of environmental ethics and justice | Apply no or moderate discounting rates (to conform to the precautionary principle) | Zavaleta (2000), Voinov and Farley (2007), Gardiner (2011) |
| 13 | Personal decision       | biases                              | Widespread personal predispositions such as cognitive (e.g., anchoring or weighing biases) and motivational biases (e.g., overconfidence) influence decisionmaking | Widespread decision biases may increase or create conflicts in alien-species valuation and management | Personal but usually unaccounted decision biases modify the valuation of impacts and risks of alien species | Reduce personal biases in decisionmaking processes (e.g., by using appropriate analytical tools such as Bayesian Belief Networks) | Hämäläinen and Alaja (2008), Gregory et al. (2012), Humair et al. (2013), Montibeller and von Winterfeldt (2015) |

Note: The principles are grouped into two domains that relate primarily to the measurement and valuation of impacts, respectively.
for variable, generally lower discount rates or for applying none at all (Stern 2015a), because pure-time discounting “involves attaching lower social values to lives which start later” and “a high rate of pure-time preference is equivalent to discrimination against future generations” (Stern 2015a, p. 3). Clearly, applying high-discount rates may render any long-term impacts meaningless in relation to any short-term benefits or costs. This conclusion is particularly relevant in the context of biological invasions, because alien-species management usually involves immediate costs (e.g., ballast

Figure 1. The relevance of the interaction of metrics, geographic scale, and uncertainty for assessing the impacts of alien species on biodiversity. This hypothetical example is informed by conflicting interpretations of study results (e.g., Hulme et al. 2015, Thomas and Palmer 2015). The y-axis refers to the measured impacts of alien species on biodiversity, on which different metrics (e.g., species richness or abundance) and different taxonomic groups may be used. The x-axis represents the variation in geographic scale, from very small (much smaller than one square meter) to very large regions (much larger than one square kilometer), on which such an analysis can be performed. We report the results of using two different but closely related metrics (e.g., measures of alien-species occurrence such as species number, cover, and abundance) in black and red, their mean values at different scales with dots, and their variation due to different contexts (e.g., study ecosystems and biogeographic situation, such as islands versus mainland regions) with whiskers. Some data points additionally include measures of uncertainties (e.g., due to measurement errors), which are shown with lighter-colored whiskers, whereas others do not (because uncertainty was not considered). Different proxy metrics for impacts on biodiversity across scale may deliver different, even opposing results (a) with varying degrees of context dependency, and some metrics may have strong changes at a particular scale-dependent threshold, such as shown for the black dots in (b). Note that uncertainties may become very large and skewed (particularly at large scales), such as when additional aspects of uncertainty such as long-term impacts are included (c). Finally, at the largest scale (i.e., the global, separated by the broken orange line), the relationships in impacts may be reversed, because global species richness declines as a consequence of species extinctions caused by alien species (d). Abbreviations: ha, hectares; km², square kilometers; m², square meters.
root causes for differences in valuation of impacts of alien species have often been masked or made insufficiently transparent. We therefore agree with others (e.g., Sagoff 2005, Larson 2011, Schlaepfer et al. 2011, Estévez et al. 2015) that a stronger focus and more detailed reporting on the value dimensions of alien-species problems are urgently needed.

**Illustrating the consequences of different norms for valuing alien-species impacts**

Frames are cognitive shortcuts that people use to help make sense of complex information. They help to interpret the world around us and represent that world to others (Kaufmann et al. 2003). When we label a phenomenon, we give meaning to some aspects of what is observed while discounting other aspects because they appear less relevant or even counterintuitive. Thus, frames provide meaning through selective simplification by filtering people’s perceptions and providing them with a field of vision for a problem. Accordingly, norms play an important role in shaping frames and for interpreting the assessment of and management decisions about environmental issues such as biological invasions. Such norms may be widely shared within a society and therefore codified (e.g., in legislation, in international agreements, or implicitly as social norms), or they may differ strongly between different people within a society. Although there is little disagreement in cases in which the environmental and socioeconomic impacts of an alien species are both widely considered either negative or positive, conflicts arise in which different core principles for assessing impacts are given priority by different stakeholders (Humair et al. 2013, Simberloff et al. 2013). Such differences in framing are most evident between people predominantly interested either in impacts on the environment or on socioeconomy, but they are not restricted to such situations (cf. examples of conflicting views on alien-species impacts in supplemental appendix S1).

For instance, the American mink (*Neovison vison*) and black locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) are used in the fur and forestry industries, respectively, in Europe, where both species have been introduced and bring substantial socioeconomic benefits to people involved in these sectors. Consequently, well-documented impacts on the environment are often either externalized (i.e., not considered at all) or ignored (i.e., not considered relevant). Such “selective attention” has become particularly apparent during the development of the recent EU legislation on invasive alien species (see below). In contrast, people who base their assessments largely on the environmental changes, which are widely considered to be negative, arrive at opposing overall assessments of the existence and scale of impacts of these two species (e.g., DAISIE 2009).

However, in many cases, there is no simple dichotomy between socioeconomic and environmental impacts. Conflicts in the valuation of impacts also often arise when value systems lead to differences in the interpretation or consideration of core principles (figure 3). For instance, the

![Figure 2. Examples of sources of uncertainty in alien-species data sampling and model predictions.](http://bioscience.oxfordjournals.org)

The relevance of the core principles representing values and environmental ethics for assessing alien-species impacts has been inadequately acknowledged, which means that the

water treatment or border inspections), whereas the benefits (e.g., foregone losses from the invasion) do not accrue until (often considerably) later. As with temporal discounting, spatial discounting may also affect the valuation of alien-species impacts. For instance, impacts that occur at distant locations (e.g., other countries) may be considered less relevant (Hulme 2015). At local scales, impacts that seemingly do not directly affect the stakeholder are often down-weighted (selective attention; Clavero 2014).

The relevance of the core principles representing values and environmental ethics for assessing alien-species impacts has been inadequately acknowledged, which means that the
European plant *Echium plantagineum* causes detrimental economic impacts in Australian agriculture because of its toxicity to livestock but simultaneously provides beneficial economic impact on beekeepers because its abundant nectar is used by honeybees. This species also has contrasting environmental impacts on different taxa, because it replaces native plant species through competition but is beneficial to native pollinators early in the season (Cullen and Delfosse 1985). Therefore, different constituencies view this species very differently.

Sometimes, certain impacts of alien species are considered to be beneficial to the environment; these may result from a variety of mechanisms (e.g., trophic subsidy, pollination, or competitive or predatory release; Rodriguez 2006). However, widespread indirect impacts extending over different levels of organization (e.g., multitrophic interactions or invasional meltdown; Pyšek et al. 2012) and often associated with time lags (Essl et al. 2015) may lead to opposing overall assessments. This becomes particularly apparent in differing valuations of the impacts of zebra mussel (*Dreissena polymorpha*) and red swamp crayfish (*Procambarus clarkii*; appendix S1).

Another set of conflicting views emerges when considerations beyond the realm of biological invasions are considered. A prominent example is the potential of alien species to contribute to climate-change mitigation. Although for some stakeholders, the use of fast-growing plant species for biofuel production to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions is of overriding importance (e.g., discussion in Tilman et al. 2009), others consider the risks of detrimental impacts by fostering invasions highly relevant (Raghu et al. 2006). As another example, the eradication plan of gray squirrels (*Sciurus carolinensis*) in Italy was opposed and ultimately halted by animal-rights people (Bertolino and Genovesi 2003) on the premise that killing mammals is unethical.

### Recommendations for defining norms in alien-species management and policy

Providing recommendations for useful norms in considering and interpreting the 13 core principles may seem inappropriate at first, because the development of widely accepted norms usually is a long process based on a societal discourse that involves different stakeholders. In such a process, scientists play an essential but limited role (e.g., as information providers and advisors; Pielke 2011). Having said this, we believe that if the recommendations of scientists are clearly linked to principles of environmental policies and environmental ethics, they provide a useful foundation for further discussions (Santo et al. 2015).

We argue and recommend that environmental ethics needs *inter alia* to account comprehensively for intergenerational justice, irreversibility, and uncertainties (table 1) and therefore should prioritize public interests over those of individuals or sectors that do not give consideration to the full range of impacts (Gardiner 2011, Stern 2015b). These aspects are becoming increasingly prominent in international political agreements (e.g., CBD 2002, FAO 2009, EP and COE 2014, including the forthcoming global Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity...
Different impacts of alien species demand different metrics; direct comparisons between different impacts are therefore problematic (Nentwig et al. 2010, Hulme et al. 2013) and usually subject to strong normative decisions (Gregory et al. 2012). Therefore, calculating the overall impacts for a given alien species is a complex, value-laden task (e.g., Humair et al. 2013). A possible solution—and the best approach, in our opinion—is to follow the logic of “relative severity” as has been suggested by Blackburn and colleagues (2014) for environmental impacts. This concept is based on a scaling of the magnitude of different types of impacts ranging from minimal to massive, in which the scaling may be quantitative or qualitative. For instance, Blackburn and colleagues (2014) defined 13 impact mechanisms of alien species on the environment, and five semiquantitative scenarios of different magnitudes of impacts for each, thereby accounting for uncertainty. For other types of impacts (e.g., to socioeconomic, health, and ecosystem services), no such framework is yet available. However, once such complementary frameworks are developed, the scaling of the impact scenarios should ideally be done qualitatively in the same way for each type of impact (cf. Blackburn et al. 2014). This would facilitate the application of the principle of relative severity across different types of impact. These could then also be weighted in a decision-making process to account for specific purposes and needs and within different contexts.

However, we note that the full potential impact of many alien species may be masked by management interventions (e.g., many agricultural plant pests that are controlled by pesticides). For instance, some risk-assessment schemes for alien species include ongoing management activities, which means that they better reflect current reality but downplay the gross impacts that would occur in the absence of management. The current impact of the Colorado potato beetle (Leptinotarsa decemlineata) in Europe is under substantial (chemical) control. Because of this intervention, the species is not considered a high-risk alien species. The future impact of ragweed (Ambrosia artemisiifolia) without control in Europe would be an order of magnitude higher than current estimates (Richter et al. 2013). Particularly, socioeconomic impacts are often assessed in combination with existing management activities, which masks the full range of impacts that would occur without management.

In principle, the concept of ecosystem services provides the means to place impacts of alien species firmly on political agendas (Pejchar and Mooney 2009, but see Silvertown 2015), and considerable research has been done to develop methods and frameworks for comparing different kinds of impacts caused by alien species. Cost–benefit analyses (e.g., Keller et al. 2007) and multicriteria analyses (Liu et al. 2011, Monterroso et al. 2011) are examples of promising methods. Although useful, these approaches are anthropocentric and utilitarian and explicitly ignore other values of nature (sensu Kellert 1993). Another problem is that from an economic perspective, many ecosystem services represent public goods—that is, goods and services whose consumption is nonexcludable (i.e., if they are provided to one, they are provided to all, irrespective of who pays) and nonrival (i.e., the benefits obtained from them do not depend on the number of people who benefit). Many regulating ecosystem services that depend on biodiversity, such as water retention or carbon storage, fall in the category of services for which market prices that accurately reflect the full benefits they provide to society are difficult to compute. Provisioning ecosystem services (e.g., timber production and agricultural products) do not represent such public goods, and market prices are well established and easy to justify. Incentives are therefore skewed toward the production of market-valued goods and away from public goods, contributing to clashes in alien-species valuation and management when a particular species causes negative impacts on public goods but positive ones on market-valued goods. Nonmarket damages are often difficult to quantify because of the complex interactions among species in an ecosystem and the lack of information about the public’s preferences across alternative ecological states. In addition, ecosystem services that are being negatively affected by alien species require the calculation of replacement costs (i.e., costs that incur by technical or restoration efforts). Monetizing such replacement costs is problematic and can lead to distorted outcomes (e.g., because some costs cannot be calculated in monetary terms), and some impacts are unrealistic to be replaced at all. As a result, only very few studies have produced estimates of nonmarket damages attributable to alien species. Consequently, outcomes differ widely depending on which ecosystem services are considered relevant and how they are weighed.

Alien-species management and policies as a test case for applying the core principles

National laws and international legal agreements aim to promote and safeguard societal interests and therefore reflect shared sets of societal values (Trouwborst 2015). Although the process of developing such agreements involves certain idiosyncratic factors (e.g., access to information, lobbying, and the interests of decisionmakers), some commonalities exist that are relevant for alien-species policies.

Many of the policies addressing alien species in principle give fairly equal consideration to negative impacts on society and the environment (e.g., USDA 1999, EP and COE 2014). In fact, alien species that harm humans, livestock and crops have been relatively well managed (Keller et al. 2015) because there is general agreement that such impacts are important and undesirable. However, it has become clear that “all alien species that are not human, livestock, or crop diseases” have been managed much less effectively (Keller et al. 2015), because their impacts are typically distributed
across society (and thereby externalized—i.e., not reflected by the polluter-pays principle) and in many cases, there is disagreement on whether such impacts (and if any, then which ones) justify management intervention (and if so, to what extent). Therefore, many invasive alien-species policies have been biased in favor of addressing the direct impacts of alien species on socioeconomic and land use (e.g., phytosanitary and aquaculture regulations), whereas impacts on the environment with indirect consequences for society have been less considered.

The newly adopted EU regulation “on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species” (EP and COE 2014) will become a key instrument in European alien-species management, because it regulates a wide range of issues (from prevention to eradication) for 28 member states. This legal instrument requires inter alia risk assessments to consider “the potential benefits of uses [of alien species] and the costs of mitigation to weigh them against the adverse impact, […] to further justify action” (emphasis added). This explicit requirement for weighing benefits against adverse impacts in the new EU invasive alien species regulation clearly calls for protocols for considering positive and negative environmental and socioeconomic impacts. For instance, when alien species have socioeconomic benefits to some sectors or stakeholders, understandably, the framing for valuing the overall impacts of these species by people with vested interests tends to be reflected in an interpretation of the principles that conforms to their interests. Consequently, although socioeconomic benefits are often accrued by a few people or economic sectors, other impacts are externalized (e.g., long-term consequences, as well as impacts other than those considered socioeconomically positive), and damage is transferred to society, the environment, or future generations (Gardiner 2011). In New Zealand, the Biosecurity Act (PCO 1993) requires a detailed assessment of the costs and benefits of proposed alien-species management under different proposed control strategies, including an assurance that the net benefits of government intervention outweigh the benefits of pest control by the public (e.g., landowners). Such an approach helps ensuring that the regional government has determined the least costly way to achieve pest management. Cost–benefit analyses can also be important for mitigating legal challenges from landowners and other rate-payers that dispute regional government priorities.

Such a framing of alien-species impacts has received prominence in the implementation of the EU legislation on invasive alien species (EP and COE 2014). For instance, several EU member states have linked their support of the legislation with the commitment of the European Commission that alien species that are economically important in their country will not be included in the “List of Invasive Alien Species of Union Concern,” which is the central instrument of the legislation. For instance, Hungary, the country with the largest stands of black locust trees in Europe, requested that this species should not be listed, and Denmark, home to a major mink industry, did the same for the American mink (Tollington et al. 2015). More generally, stakeholders representing several sectors have articulated the view that, according to their principles of valuing alien-species impacts, benefits of several species are of overriding public interest and that they should not be regulated by EU legislation. In this regard, the forestry sector was most articulate and vocal (e.g., Vor et al. 2015); therefore, despite the fact that 22% of all alien plant species on the list of 100 of the worst invasive alien species in Europe (DAISIE 2009) were trees, no alien tree species was suggested for inclusion in the first list for the EU regulation (EC 2015). Consequently, and despite pressure from the scientific community for a more inclusive approach (Tollington et al. 2015), the first list of 37 alien species of EU concern is fragmentary and includes only a small number of the more than 1000 alien species in Europe that are considered to have negative impacts on biodiversity or socioeconomic value (Vilà et al. 2010).

Unfortunately, the establishment of the EU invasive species legislation has not been accompanied by providing a European Union–wide funding scheme for implementing it (Tollington et al. 2015). Ultimately, this lack of resources deepens the gap between political will (as is enshrined in the provisions of legislation) and enforcement: Member states and the institutions that have to implement the EU invasive alien species legislation carry the full financial burden, and given strained public budgets, reducing short-term institutional expenditures by cautiously implementing the legislation is consequent. Furthermore, an integrated assessment of potential long-term consequences of inaction of invasive alien species management is hampered by highly fragmented competences between institutions in EU member states.

**Of facts and values: Structured decisionmaking for alien-species management**

Making decisions about complex environmental issues requires (a) the identification of the scale and boundaries of the issue and the stakeholders concerned and (b) a transparent unpacking of scientific evidence, values, and risk perceptions. This can be best achieved in a structured decisionmaking and conflict-solution process (Gregory et al. 2012, Redpath et al. 2015). Several techniques have been developed and tested for solving conflicts in conservation (e.g., multicriteria analyses, consultation and consensus processes, and voting systems), each of which may be appropriate in some situations but inappropriate in others (e.g., Maguire 2004, García-Llorente et al. 2008, Monterroso et al. 2011, Gregory et al. 2012, Redpath et al. 2015). In addition, risk assessments, cost–benefit analyses, multicriteria frameworks, and sensitivity analyses may support the decisionmaking process by providing information on risks and uncertainties associated with the outcomes of different decisions (e.g., Liu et al. 2011). However, such methods have rarely been used for making decisions about alien-species management.

Decisionmaking in alien-species management often involves people from different domains (e.g., the natural
Point of consideration
- Separate means and objectives

| No | Points of consideration                                                                 | Purpose and relevance                                                                 |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | Clarify the context of the decision                                                      | Define the scope and bounds of the decision, including who are the relevant stakeholders and what are the time horizon and available resources for the management |
| 2  | Identify objectives and performance measures                                           | Define the relevant objectives and suitable performance measures (e.g., reduction in alien-species populations size) |
| 3  | Identify alternatives (e.g., management options or alternatives to the planned introduction of a species that might become alien), the available means to implement them, and their likely consequences | Broaden the horizon, identify and consider different options to ensure that the full range of available opportunities is being taken into account |
| 4  | Identify uncertainties and trade-offs between different alternatives                    | Investigate explicitly the pros and cons, the trade-offs and risks associated with the different alternatives available |
| 5  | Identify the key points for implementing a decision, and ensure adaptive implementation | Identify the decisive points of implementation once a decision has been made, identify potential obstacles and how they can be overcome, and develop indicators that allow for monitoring and tuning the implementation |
| 6  | Achieving consensus: desirable but not always imperative                                | Aim for consensus, but allow for disagreement. Document unresolved (minority) views and perceptions and the reasons for disagreement |
| 7  | Avoid double counting and omissions when possible                                       | Double counting (i.e., including the same impacts more than once under different criteria), as well as omissions (i.e., only a fraction of the relevant impacts is considered), may bias the decision process and results |
| 8  | Separate means and objectives                                                            | Clearly separate means (measures to achieve the desired outcome) and ultimate goals (objectives) |

Note: Based on Maguire (2004), Gregory and colleagues (2012), and Redpath and colleagues (2015).
lack of consensus among researchers regarding management options and their effectiveness; and the need for scientists to be independent, honest brokers of information to assist in framing problems and providing the means for the evaluation of potential outcomes of different intervention options (Pielke 2011) rather than acting as advocates for any option. This ambitious expectation can only be achieved if pitfalls and biases in the valuation of alien species are made explicit and accounted for. The concept of relative severity, the precautionary approach and taking into account the 13 core principles we have proposed here seem particularly relevant to us.

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Supplemental material
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(IGB), in Berlin, Germany, with the Department of Biology, Chemistry, and Pharmacy, at Freie Universität Berlin, in Germany; and with the Berlin-Brandenburg Institute of Advanced Biodiversity Research (BBIB), in Berlin, Germany. Reuben Keller is with the Institute of Environmental Sustainability at Loyola University Chicago, in Illinois. Petr Pyšek is affiliated with the Institute of Botany in the Department of Invasion Ecology at the Czech Academy of Sciences, in Prague, Czech Republic, and with the Department of Ecology in the Faculty of Science at Charles University, in Prague, Czech Republic. David M. Richardson is with the Centre for Invasion Biology in the Department of Botany and Zoology at Stellenbosch University, in Matieland, South Africa. Sven Bacher is affiliated with the Unit Ecology and Evolution unit in the Department of Biology at the University of Fribourg, in Switzerland. Stefan Dullinger is affiliated with the Division of Conservation Biology, Vegetation, and Landscape Ecology at the University of Vienna, in Austria. Rodrigo A. Estévez is with the Center of Applied Ecology and Sustainability (CAPES) in the Departamento de Ecología al Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, in Santiago, Chile. Christoph Kueffer is affiliated with the Centre for Invasion Biology in the Department of Botany and Zoology at Stellenbosch University, in Matieland, South Africa, and with the Institute of Integrative Biology and the Department of Environmental Systems Science at ETH Zurich, in Switzerland. Helen E. Roy is with the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, in Wallingford, United Kingdom. Hanno Seebens is affiliated with the Senckenberg Biodiversity and Climate Research Centre, in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. Wolfgang Rabitsch is with Environment Agency Austria’s Department of Biodiversity and Nature Conservation, in Vienna, Austria.