ENVS 400-03 Sp25: Plants Out of Place Possible Framing Questions

Draft 2/1/25 JDP

Some of you entered possible framing questions regarding Plants Out of Place into our GoogleSheet by the initial deadline. I can tell that we need to brainstorm more together on possible framing questions!

For starters, review Liz's two resources on the ENVS 400-ALL topic for last week: "Framing questions: slides" and "Framing question guidance." Remember also our possible projects GoogleDoc, in which I proposed the following "meta-framing question," an overarching framing question we might apply to any project in N PDX:

> How might urban neighborhoods overcome past adversity,
> reckon with divergent future visions,
> and become livable environments again?

I call that a "meta-framing question," as it was intended to set the stage for a variety of projects. But now we are focusing on Plants Out of Place, and so our range of potential framing questions should address biodiversity.

How might we do this? One set of important clues comes from the literature research you have done: go back to your compiled invasive plants posts (and your key questions) to expand upon the below. But, from my background in biodiversity conservation, and in studying places, I recommend the following as a way for us to collectively think through a variety of possible framing questions.

Ideally, each of you will come up with a relatively distinct framing question that contributes to our overall Plants Out of Place project, so look at the below with an eye toward a particular interest/concern of yours.

1. *Let's remember that situated research is built on places*. Your framing question is not yet situated (your focus question will be), but situated research studies places as a way to bring together a wide range of processes related to environmental issues. Each process is often studied by a particular discipline; but ENVS is interdisciplinary, and places give us a way to explore how these processes interrelate.

    What are these processes? As a clue, look to the Studying Places resource page, and go to the bottom, where some are listed to suggest what you might keep in mind—the list is not exhaustive, just a good start. I'll repeat them here for your convenience:

    - Biological: Various biomes of the world
    - Climatic: Climatic zones (which correlate strongly with biomes)
    - Cultural: Predominant religions, languages, etc.
    - Demographic: Areas of high or low population density
    - Discursive: Constructions of place such as wilderness or wasteland
    - Economic: Types of development, e.g. core/periphery/semiperiphery
    - Geological: Landforms of the earth, or areas with common geomorphic processes
    - Historical: Changes in landscapes over time
    - Land Use: Forms of land use/land cover
    - Political: Various possible characteristics, e.g., form of democracy or refugee status
    - Settlement Type: Forms of human settlement

2. *Now, let's consider how any one process above—or others you might think of—suggests a challenge, controversy, or other important consideration that may lead to a framing question*. Let's take the first as an example: biological processes are clearly fundamental to studying biodiversity. What challenges, controversies, or other important considerations might apply?

    Let's brainstorm some sample questions—possibly moving toward framing questions—that highlight these biological processes as we think about biodiversity / Plants Out of Place, with an eventual interest

in invasive plant removal in urban landscapes. For each, let's also give their question type: (DE)scriptive, (EX)planatory, (EV)aluative, and (IN)strumental, remembering that [good framing questions](#) are usually EV or IN.

- [EV] What is our biodiversity goal in urban landscapes, as compared to their "original" biome?
- [EV] Invasive plants often biologically outcompete natives; who are we to say this is a bad thing?
- [IN] Are there ways we can harness biological processes to achieve optimal biodiversity?

We can repeat this brainstorming for each process. We can also brainstorm how some processes compete with others!: remember, a controversy or challenge suggests a good framing question. As one example that mixes biological and cultural processes:

- [IN] When optimal biodiversity and cultural preference for plants clash, what can be done?

3. *From the above brainstorming, we may come up with a rich variety of potential framing questions*. Here are some (a woefully incomplete list!) that we may wish to consider in our N PDX situated context.

- How might we understand, and encourage, removals and reintroductions of plants without invoking arguably militaristic and xenophobic language (e.g., "invasives" vs. "natives")?

    - Simpler wording: [EV] What language is best as we promote biodiversity?

- Promoting biodiversity in urban neighborhoods inevitably entails multiple households and businesses, each on their own private property. What can be done, given our lack of control?

    - Simpler wording: [IN] How encourage biodiversity enhancement on private property?

- Promoting biodiversity in urban neighborhoods is, in part, a biological challenge, as the diverse forms of property tenure and land use often favor opportunistic (usually introduced) species. What realistic ways can we consider in such mixed landscapes, given this biological challenge?

    - Simpler wording: [IN] How promote desirable vs. opportunistic species in cities?

- Differing cultural groups often have differing perceptions of plants: what is pretty to some may be ugly or harmful to others. How do we adjudicate competing perceptions of plants?

    - Simpler wording: [IN] How bring plural perceptions of plants into conversation?

- Areas with historically marginalized populations may be suspicious of mainstream environmental actions like biodiversity enhancement. How possibly are biodiversity concerns justifiable?

    - Simpler wording: [EV] How do biodiversity concerns address vs. avoid issues of racism?

Let's see if we can indeed come up with five relatively distinctive framing questions, one for each section -03 student, as you then move forward with your own mini-thesis, yet we all collectively move forward with our Plants Out of Place project.

If we can do this right, we can collaborate on important components—say, our MoH data collection and outcomes relevant to the community—while offering rich and varied insights arising from our unique framing questions.

Let's at least give this a try! Thank you.