A new way of living with nature? Zones of friction and traction in Nangarin Vineyard Estate, South West Sydney

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Abstract: Responding to concerns about adverse environmental impacts of amenity migration on the rural-urban fringe (Abrams *et al.*, 2012), this paper poses the question: is the rural residential estate (RRE) a settlement space where humans can improve ways of living with nonhuman nature? I address the question by identifying zones of traction and zones of friction: opportunities and threats towards a more convivial living relationship with the natural environment and its nonhuman residents (Gibson *et al*., 2013). The study site of Nangarin Vineyard Estate – located near Picton, NSW – evaluates the RRE. The materiality of this setting incorporates residential land use and remnant bushland, facilitating interactions between humans and nonhumans in a rural setting. This paper is framed by a relational ontology, acknowledging the co-constitutive role of humans and nonhumans in shaping space. Semi-structured walking interviews with residents, and regular self-tours were used to enrol the surrounding environment in research design. Findings focus on how residents negotiate 'outside' nature in the private lot, exploring frictions and tractions that are produced. There are still ideological and practical frictions expressed by residents that inform how they negotiate their living environment, resulting in the creation and enforcing of borders against undesirable nonhumans. Ultimately, living with nature is selective, contingent on whether the nonhuman in question has a native status, or whether or not their interventions adhere to fixed notions of comfort and cleanliness. Acknowledging such frictions begins to unsettle our normative, mundane relationships with nature, towards producing more convivial outcomes.

Introduction

Sydney's greater metropolitan area is undergoing a significant process of change. The need to house a rapidly expanding population has culminated in the proposed development of extensive residential projects on the rural-urban fringe. Such 'greenfield' areas are in flux, identified by State planning as important strategic sites for housing. NSW Planning's *Metropolitan Plan for Sydney* groups the greenfield South West into a Subregion (comprised of the Camden, Wollondilly, Liverpool and Campbelltown Local Government Areas), forecast to accommodate 155,000 additional homes by 2031 (NSW Department of Planning, 2007). As urban-rural migration increases there are significant concerns about environmental impacts – particularly the fragmentation of ecosystems and the displacement of their nonhuman residents. Such disruptions are characteristic of land subdivision and residential development (Abrams *et al.*, 2012).

Motivated by flashpoints of environmentally-based public debate – namely ecological sustainability and anthropogenic climate change – the humanities and social sciences have become more

interested in everyday attitudes and practices of humans, and how this informs and enacts our relationship with nature. We must re-evaluate our everyday connections with nonhuman nature, however commonplace and mundane they are seen to be.

Responding to these concerns, in this paper I ask whether the rural residential estate (RRE) can improve how humans live with nature. The RRE is an emergent form of master-planned estate in greater metropolitan Sydney (McGuirk & Dowling, 2007, Holmes, 2006). The point of difference that the RRE offers from other development forms is an increased presence of the rural environment in estate design – the retaining of remnant bushland, and elements of house design and regulation that are sensitive to the nonhumans that call the estate home.

In this research I evaluate the RRE through engagement with residents of Nangarin Vineyard Estate, 5 kilometres from the town of Picton, New South Wales (Figure 1). Residents largely hail from urban/suburban backgrounds, and can be considered amenity migrants. The central imperative of amenity migration is that people 'want nature where we live' (Cadieux & Taylor, 2013, xvi). People are drawn away from urban and suburban areas for the promise of a relationship with nature, and a perceived improvement in quality of life. By questioning some outcomes of living in a RRE, this paper responds to a broader question of how amenity migrants both conceive of and manage nature within their properties (Abrams *et al*., 2012).

Figure 1. Location map highlighting NSW Planning's South West Subregion, as well as the relative locations of Picton and Sydney.

I explore how combined with existing suburban pre-dispositions, elements of estate design and regulation pre-empt the attitudes and practices of residents towards their living environment, and consequently how this plays out within one everyday space of interaction: their private lots; where they *live*. I use zones of friction and traction as a framing tool (Gibson *et al.* 2013), to categorise incidents in which residents accept or reject a closer living relationship with nonhumans. Negotiating 'dilemmas of practice and circumstance' produces frictions and tractions:

> '…we identify frictions and points of traction to help think about the different elements of governance, materiality and practice interact in the context of the household… In many ways friction and traction are two sides of the same coin, but we use them to trace less and more sustainable pathways respectively. So friction may involve pathways of resistance to more sustainable outcomes, or contradictory practices that entrench problems. Traction can result from the de-routinising of previous practices…' (pp.16-17)

In this particular context, frictions and tractions are used to either confirm or contest orthodox ways of suburban living – whether a suburban legacy is stubbornly fixed, or transgressively 'new' ways of human/nonhuman cohabitation develop. The evaluation of this closer human/nonhuman relationship revolved around how 'outside', 'wild', nonhumans were negotiated in the private lot.

The aim of this paper is to contribute to understandings of how amenity migrants experience landscape, as well as exploring the RRE as a previously under-studied urban form. The paper is structured in three sections. The first section provides background to the RRE, paying particular attention to some design features that facilitate a closer human/nonhuman relationship. Second, I critique the role of nonhumans in homes and gardens, and consider methodological implications of undertaking such a study.

Third, I explore stories related to the private lot that emerged from fieldwork. A brief discussion of a series of examples provides a sense of the variety of complex entanglements that arise inside a residential estate with a rural vision. Nonhumans here can both support and unsettle the home: existing as neighbours, as challenges to cleanliness and order, and as a part of cleanliness and order.

The rural residential estate

Master-planned estates (MPEs) have increased in prominence over the past 20 years as a popular means of organising human settlement. MPEs share several characteristics: a comprehensive master plan, a single developer responsible for delivering the plan, distinct physical boundaries, uniform design features and an appeal to a community ethic (Cheshire *et al*., 2010). At its simplest, the master plan is a set of planning controls exacted over a landscape for the purpose of achieving a particular vision (Gwyther, 2005). The sheer diversity of how they are planned, designed and envisioned globally has made them compelling sites of inquiry for geographers and urban scholars.

Developing an estate typology specific to the context of Sydney's greater metropolitan region, the greenfield rural residential estate was identified by McGuirk & Dowling (2007) as a new form of estate that had no place within conventional frameworks, and which suffered from a lack of research. They define it as:

> '…the master-planned development of sizeable residential lots around privately or communally owned agricultural land and rural amenities held under community title by residents who are attracted by the lifestyle aesthetic but not its workload' (p. 30)

The RRE owes its existence to the prevalence of amenity migration. Beyond an institutional, planning-based rationale, the rural-urban fringe appears to be a very attractive place to live for some. Motivated by the search for an improved quality of life, amenity migration is the settlement of affluent former urban and suburban populations in rural and semi-rural areas (Taylor, 2011). An improved quality of life that rural areas are seen to provide is associated with access to natural amenities, lower housing density and a greater sense of community (Woods, 2004). The paradox of amenity migration, however, is that while seeking to live in a more natural environment than the city, new amenity migrants are altering the very nature of the landscape that they come to inhabit (Cadieux & Taylor, 2013).

After Holmes (2006), the consumption of rural land in Australia takes shape on the rural-urban fringe in diverse, individualistic ways, catering for variable incomes and lifestyles (notable examples include hobby farming, alternative lifestylers, welfare migration and prestige settlements). The RRE is an emergent form of rural residential settlement within this spectrum, and invites research. Here, I explore the RRE as an opportunity to improve how amenity migrants live in their environment, through certain design features and regulation measures.

Nangarin Vineyard Estate, Picton NSW

Nangarin Vineyard Estate, is located five kilometres from the town of Picton, NSW, and approximately 95 kilometres (80 minutes drive) from Sydney's Central Business District. Regionally, Picton is located within the Wollondilly LGA, on the fringe of metropolitan South West Sydney. Despite growth pressures associated with housing, the Wollondilly LGA self-identifies as rural. As such, there is a strong culture of resistance to landscape change in the local community. This is reflected in Wollondilly Shire Council's recent *Community Strategic Plan* for 2033, detailing a vision of future 'rural living'. The characteristics of this vision include protecting farmland and natural areas, supporting a viable agricultural sector, as well as retaining community values (Wollondilly Shire Council, 2013, p.8).

Nangarin Vineyard Estate broadly fits within this 'rural living' vision. Originally proposed in October 1997 as 'an integrated rural development with community ownership of a commercially viable farm' (Bradcorp, 1997, p.2), Nangarin is a small, boutique estate, supporting 115 low-density dwellings over 116 hectares of multi-functional land: community amenities, remnant bushland and two plots of Chardonnay vines, all under Community Title. Private lots are a minimum size of one acre, and as a

result homes can become particularly sizeable. Indeed, double and triple garages are common, driveways dramatic, and Kikuyu-dominated lawns extensive (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Sizeable homes are common in Nangarin Estate, enabled by block size. *Photo credit:* Author, October 2012.

Interspersed amongst sizeable homes is a landscape that has retained and encouraged many rural elements of the past. The site of Nangarin Estate previously existed as a feedlot cattle farm, leaving behind scattered tracts of pasture, dams, as well as early succession open eucalypt forest, belonging to the Cumberland Plain Woodland system (Keith, 2004). Large parts of this bush have been retained as Community Property, including a makeshift wildlife corridor running through the streetscape (Figure 3). As well as this, the estate site has not been levelled – topography is retained, producing a streetscape with varying gradient, and private lots with different vistas.

Figure 3. The streetscape, flanked by remnant bushland, and marked with kangaroo warning signs. *Photo credit*: Author, June 2012.

To support this vision in the building practices and conduct of its residents, the estate has various architectural and behavioural controls outlined as a list of covenants in a Community Management Statement (CMS). Gwyther (2005, p.59) refers to these sort of restrictions as a 'code of pecuniary beauty', supporting the primary development goal. Certain property features are detailed in the covenants with the expectation that they will complement the natural landscape. For example, certain building types are enforced to retain topography (no cut-and-fill), colour schemes must fit the Blue Mountains Code, and rural post-and-wire fences must be used on property borders, rather than the regular paling or Colorbond™ fencing found in higher density suburbia.

Residents buy into this vision, expressing an explicit desire to 'live with nature'. But what does 'living with nature' entail? The next section is a background overview into studies of homes and gardens which acknowledge the influence of nonhumans, placing this paper in a wider discussion about how we live with nature in the everyday. This section also outlines some methodological considerations.

'More-than-human' Homes & Gardens

It is an increasingly accepted notion in scholarship that the spheres of nature and culture are not ontologically separate. Rather, nature and culture exist as a 'hybrid', a series of entangled co-constitutive relations (Whatmore 2002). Reflecting such a relational understanding of the world, our political and ethical commitments should be understood as 'more-than-human'; unsettling binaries, and allowing reflection on the many ways that nonhumans are both enrolled in and help to shape our lives (Braun, 2005, p.635).

While the physical structure of the house is built by humans, regulated by humans, and occupied by humans, *home* is an intrinsically more-than-human site. Nonhuman nature relations in the household and the garden are increasingly popular research topics in human geography. These show how human intent becomes either supported or challenged by the efforts of nonhumans, highlighting the agency of plants (Hitchings & Jones, 2004, Head & Muir, 2007), animals (Power, 2009) and others (Kaika, 2005 – on water) in the production of space.

A more-than-human home, for example, begins to challenge the normative construction of the Western home space, which is often 'an exercise in carefully sealing off the outdoors and keeping 'everything in its place'' (Lorimer, 2005, p.87). Once 'outside' nature crosses this border into the regulated space of home, it is deemed either 'good' or 'bad'. Maria Kaika (2005, p.64) elaborates upon this distinction: "…The function of the modern home as safe and autonomous is predicated not only upon the entry of 'good' nature, but also upon the ideological and visual exclusion of 'bad' nature". Here, bad nature is 'dirt, fear and anxiety', confined to the outside.

Gardens and backyards are also a regulatory space, where people's 'intentional relationships with plants and soil' come to the fore (Head & Muir, 2007, p.53). In other words, they are a physical reflection of the gardener's values and attitudes towards nature. Considering this, the backyard is also

a ‘room’ in the home. Indeed, ‘walls’ (fences) go up, the ‘carpet’ (lawn) is laid down. Boundaries are also sought between the ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’. Nonhumans exhibit agency here through collaboration with the gardener – and, conversely, resisting these boundaries and transgressing human placement.

While such a focus may seem mundane, these ‘below the radar’, everyday border-makings have far-reaching effects when aggregated through the practices of millions of people (Robbins & Sharp, 2006). The production of a lawn, for example, is a normative response to suburban home-making. The lawn, reproduced and widespread, shapes what we expect from homes, the wider suburban landscape – and how we conceive nature collaborations in the home.

Methodology

To explore these themes, fieldwork was comprised of semi-structured walking interviews with Nangarin residents through their properties, and through the estate itself. There has been an emerging focus from ‘the horizon to the earth’ with regards to how we conceive landscape; from a visual understanding to a tactile, embodied one (Wylie, 2007). Walking is increasingly used as a means of exploring embodiment; how people connect with the surrounding environment and its nonhuman constituents. Interviews with a walking element allow the landscape to be present as the interview takes place, unveiling place-based memories and experiences. Nonhuman nature becomes a collaborator within the interview process, the success of which has been noted by Hitchings & Jones (2004), Power (2005) and Head & Muir (2007) in their analysis of suburban gardens. As Hitchings & Jones (2004, pp.9-10) elaborate:

> ‘The plants themselves were integral to the method as they prompted actions and conversations, and triggered a productive alignment of individual enjoyment and particular memory. This was research about plants with plants’.

Interviews were conducted with residents from 22 households, all of which included a resident-led tour of their gardens. Addressing my own embodiment with place, I coupled these interviews with 11 ‘self-tours’ around the estate, at different times of the day and in different weather conditions.

The remainder of this paper teases out some stories from these resident interviews, which explore complexities between estate design and intention, and everyday practice in the private lot. The interview transcripts form the main data source of the paper.

Borders & Boundaries

Borders are ‘not simply sites of division, but also offer opportunities for exchange, encounter and dialogue’ (Power, 2009, p.30). Certain design elements of the RRE support opportunities for exchange, encounter and dialogue between humans and ‘outside’ nonhumans. In Nangarin Estate, close proximity to remnant bushland and the enforcing of post-and-wire fencing work to blur the inside

and the outside. As such, the delineation of boundaries between good and bad nature is challenged. The following subsections discuss some border encounters in Nangarin Estate – first discussing tractions that support more convivial relationships, and second, frictions, which arise from fixed notions of comfort and cleanliness (Shove 2003). The final section troubles one precursor of modern suburbia replicated in the RRE – the lawn.

Traction stories: Nonhumans as neighbours

Through the welcome sign (Figure 4), residents are positioned to expect encounters with certain nonhumans as always and often – as 'everyday'. By grouping kangaroos, echidnas and wombats with human pedestrians, this both pre-empts the expectations of what you will see in the estate, and validates the presence of each. These particular nonhumans can be considered 'neighbours'.

Figure 4. Welcome sign to Nangarin Estate. *Photo credit*: Author, October 2012.

Similarly to Emma Power (2009), who found that possums' presence in suburban homes was conducive to a sense of 'homeyness', Nangarin residents expressed similar attachments to some nature encounters. Being at 'home' in the RRE is both informed by and entangled within nonhuman border encounters. They are part of this vision, inescapable through some design elements, and underwritten into the estate experience.

As such, when these 'neighbours' come for a visit inside private lots, they were welcomed – boundaries between the lot and the outside become flexible. One illustrative example is offered by Blake[1]. His backyard has been 'taken over' by a wombat:

> 'In particular we've got a wombat that seems to have taken over our backyard. He comes there most days and sits there and has a chew of the grass, wanders around… Well the wombat is sort of a daily event, he's coming closer and closer to the house actually… Quite often you see him sitting in the middle of the backyard… But so far he's not digging under the fence to get in, he's just managing to squeeze under the gate. I watched him, and I'm not going to try and keep him out.'

The wombat has become an unplanned 'tenant'. Blake discusses the wombat's visits as a daily event, sitting in the garden and eating grass. The wombat asserts territoriality in Blake's lot through these everyday and repetitive acts of presence. Blake tolerates the wombat inside and is willing to share the space – rather than attempting to control this particular frequent intervention with outside nature.

In some circumstances, residents accommodate nonhuman visits. Olivia altered the maintenance of her backyard so she could create a bush corridor, serving as a 'sanctuary' for echidnas and other nonhumans to use for a safe crossing of her block:

> 'I don't mow this little bit very often, and I don't mow that at all as you can see… It's also a sanctuary for any echidna or anything else that's trying to cross the block, otherwise they get harassed to death by the mynas. So it's designed to encourage echidnas and things, because they don't have to go over such flat land to get to the other side.'

Here, Olivia expresses a duty of care towards her nonhuman neighbours. This felt responsibility goes beyond simply living in a space built with flexible boundaries, and is a zone of traction towards more convivial human-nonhuman living. Amenity migrants want nature where they live (Cadieux & Taylor, 2013), and the above stories illustrate examples of the type of nature that they want.

Although positive, these stories also unveil a complex friction related to how the natural landscape is understood. This is tied closely to notions of belonging in the landscape – the divide between 'native' and 'invasive' still exists. This division informs conservation biology and ecosystem management (Warren, 2007, Hinchliffe, 2007), education systems (Head, 2012) – and, consequently, informs a national 'native' consciousness. The same applies in Nangarin Estate – an 'Australian native' theme filters through design and regulation. For example, residents are offered a set of planning guidelines in the CMS, largely consisting of endemic species.

As some of Australia's most emblematic fauna, echidnas, wombats and kangaroos are accepted into the lot as neighbours for their native status. Power (2009) found a parallel outcome with respect to

[1] For ethical purposes, all participants have been provided with pseudonyms. This is to address each person's confidentiality within a small, bounded community.

possums entering suburban homes: the perception was that possums belonged because they were native, and as such had a basic right to residence.

Friction stories: Nonhumans creating anxiety and fear

Beyond a general widespread acceptance of these 'neighbours' within the private lot, the RRE offered human-nonhuman entanglements requiring difficult negotiation. The 'dirt, anxiety and fear' that come from bad natures are dilemmas towards a transgressively new way of living with nature – and more often than not, expectations of comfort and cleanliness prevail (cf. Shove 2003). When nonhumans disrupt and frustrate fixed ideals, they became excluded from the lot. Among participants, snakes are a universal source of fear in the private lot. This fear is grounded in the fact that some snake species present an immediate threat to human safety. As Ryan illustrates:

> 'You'll often see them sliding across the backyard… We've got quite a large garden across the backyard, so you'll hear them slithering around… We accept that they have a right to live here, but I hate them, I'm scared shitless of them! [laughs]. Yeah, you just don't like the idea of having snakes.'

While being anxious and fearful about the presence of snakes, Ryan also accepts that they have a right to live in the landscape – tied to a perceived native belonging. This becomes unsettling for Ryan; how do you negotiate something fearful that also belongs?

Another prominent example of 'bad nature' inside the private lot was ducks – particularly, their faeces. While ducks are viewed as favourable nonhumans, the mess that they create outweighs this sentiment. Ducks would then experience a resultant exclusion from the block. Patrick and Liz express this 'good to bad' transition:

> Liz: And the ducks, the ducks are nice. I always wanted a duck-
>
> Patrick: [laughs] Yeah, Liz wanted a duck until the ducks crapped all over the driveway!
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> Liz: All over the driveway. Because they were always over in John's [a neighbour] and never in mine, I'd say "Oh why don't I have any ducks?" And then one day I did, and I said, "John can have them. I'll just look at them!" [laughs]

Ryan was in a constant renegotiation with ducks, who would leave their faeces all around his swimming pool (Figure 5):

> 'We don't want to poison them, we don't want to hurt them, but we don't want them – I know it sounds petty, but when you've got white pavers around a swimming pool and you've got ducks and their ducklings coming every morning and every evening to have their final swim and a drink, they literally shit all the way around the pool. So it becomes quite frustrating – you can't clean it when it's wet, and when it's dry it blows into the swimming pool'.

Figure 5. Ryan's pool, showing the remains of duck presence. *Photo credit*: Author, July 2012.

Born from expectations of comfort and cleanliness, the block prevents relations of accommodation and negotiation with ducks. This is a friction; rather than alter the design and composition of a swimming pool framed with white pavers, it is the ducks that are excluded. Returning to Ryan:

> 'We now put up fishing line [around the pool]. It can't be seen from the street, but it's quite extensive, and the ducks come down, see it, and they'll choof off. Once they've had one encounter with it, one thing I've learned is that they're very intelligent – so once they've encountered something that's not good for them they don't come back'.

Notions of comfort and cleanliness in the home and garden deflect the inclusion of more nature within the private lot. Bordering and boundary-making, open to good nature and closed to bad nature, here work to narrow what 'living with nature' entails in the RRE.

Troubling the lawn

One such outcome of the regulated home, which includes good nature, is the lawnscape. Despite being surrounded by bushland, and having porous lot borders, the majority of private lots are dominated by expanses of Kikuyu grass. Initially, this is considered a zone of friction. Regulated private lots with tidy homogenous lawns, with bushland on the other side of the fence, produces a border between good and bad nature on an estate-wide scale. As discussed by Paul Robbins (2007), a 'lawn aesthetic' is underwritten into modern suburban homes, where intensive maintenance is a 'civic good' owed to the community – and disregard to produce a green, homogenous lawn perceived as 'civic neglect' (p.99). A regulated, lawn-dominated private lot inhibits negotiation with any disruptions (weeds), as well as challenging the very *nature* of grass: creating a constant struggle against 'very basic material tendencies that come from well-established ecological principles' (p.38).

When the lawn becomes 'up-sized' onto an acre block, the efforts and inputs required to maintain a close-to-perfect lawn are remarkable. Mowing the lawn is time-consuming and input-heavy, usually requiring a ride-on mower. As well as this, an informal chat with a contract gardener revealed the use

of 20 tonnes of fertiliser to keep just one resident's lawn green. There is also an irony in resident's perceptions of nature as native, while still tending to non-native, Kikuyu lawns. The lawn here is a contradiction, confounding 'linear thinking about problems and solutions' (Gibson *et al*., 2013, p.183). Despite this, the lawn prevails.

Further, while tidy lawns are conceived as a suburban feature, a complex garden rich in biological diversity is not an ideal response for a mitigating a bushfire-prone landscape. A tidy, mown lawn is part of a successful fire safety strategy in rural landscapes.[2]. The lawn can act as a firebreak, reducing the fuel load around the home. As such, a fixed lawn aesthetic can be seen as a friction and as a traction, producing households that adhere to best practice for fire risk.

Indeed, residents' living relationship with fire is an important consideration for RREs. Eriksen & Gill (2010) have suggested a lack of preparedness exists for amenity migrants in bushfire-prone landscapes, which they term an awareness-action 'gap'. However, following a bushfire in 2006 (where one home burned down) fire risk has become part of resident's normative understandings of place in Nangarin Estate. Prioritised by community governance, fire mitigation efforts are now practiced on an estate-wide scale: residents have been trained to use firefighting equipment, and a Community Fire Unit (CFU) has been established in collaboration with the local RFS brigade. Such an active, community-led response to bushfire risk is a traction for negotiating everyday life in bushfire-prone locations.

Conclusions

Attempts have been made by design and regulation elements of the RRE to foster a relationship between humans and the landscape. Tractions are especially exhibited when residents accommodate certain nonhumans in how they set up and maintain their private lot. By allowing and assisting nonhuman movement through lots, residents adopt the concerns of some nonhumans in how they regulate and structure their living environment. Sporadic nonhuman visits were also an essential part of the expected living experience in Nangarin Estate. This expectation is a traction, opening up the private lot to 'outside' nonhumans.

Further, a zone of traction was expressed by residents towards bushfire preparedness. Community-led mitigation efforts are a constructive zone of traction for everyday life in bushfire-prone landscapes. Such a response can be used as foresight for future RRE developments.

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[2] For example, see the Bushfire Survival Plan released by the NSW Royal Fire Service (RFS), available at http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/file_system/attachments/Attachment_BushFireSurvivalPlan.pdf

Amenity migrants buy into the vision of the RRE for many reasons, but pivotally because they want nature where they live. However, this 'nature' becomes coupled with native - a clear friction to how people conceptualise their living environment. As outlined by Alice:

> 'Anything that's native, anything, we'll be putting up there [in the backyard]. The whole idea of this estate, really, is native… It's a native estate. Bradcorp built this estate around the animals that were already here, the native vegetation and the birds. We encourage everybody to keep it like that, keep them coming in'.

Another friction to overcome is a suburban expectation of comfort and cleanliness, which work to exclude 'bad nature'. Residents were unwilling to alter the design of their private lots to allow the presence of disruptive nonhumans, and would continue to adhere to producing lawns despite the effort involved. Troubling how residents conceptualise nature further, lawns are prolific despite Kikuyu not being a native species of grass. This contradiction largely went unquestioned, as producing a neat expanse of lawn is a normative practice of home-making.

The RRE may place its residents within an idyllic, rural setting, and attempt to foster this idyll through regulation and design, but this alone is not conducive to a transgressively new relationship with the landscape. There are clear ideological and practical frictions in place regarding how people understand their living environment. Acknowledging these frictions is a starting point for unsettling these mundane, everyday relationships with nonhuman nature, and producing more convivial living outcomes.

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