

A Small Old Plot



Andreas Ervik

Metode

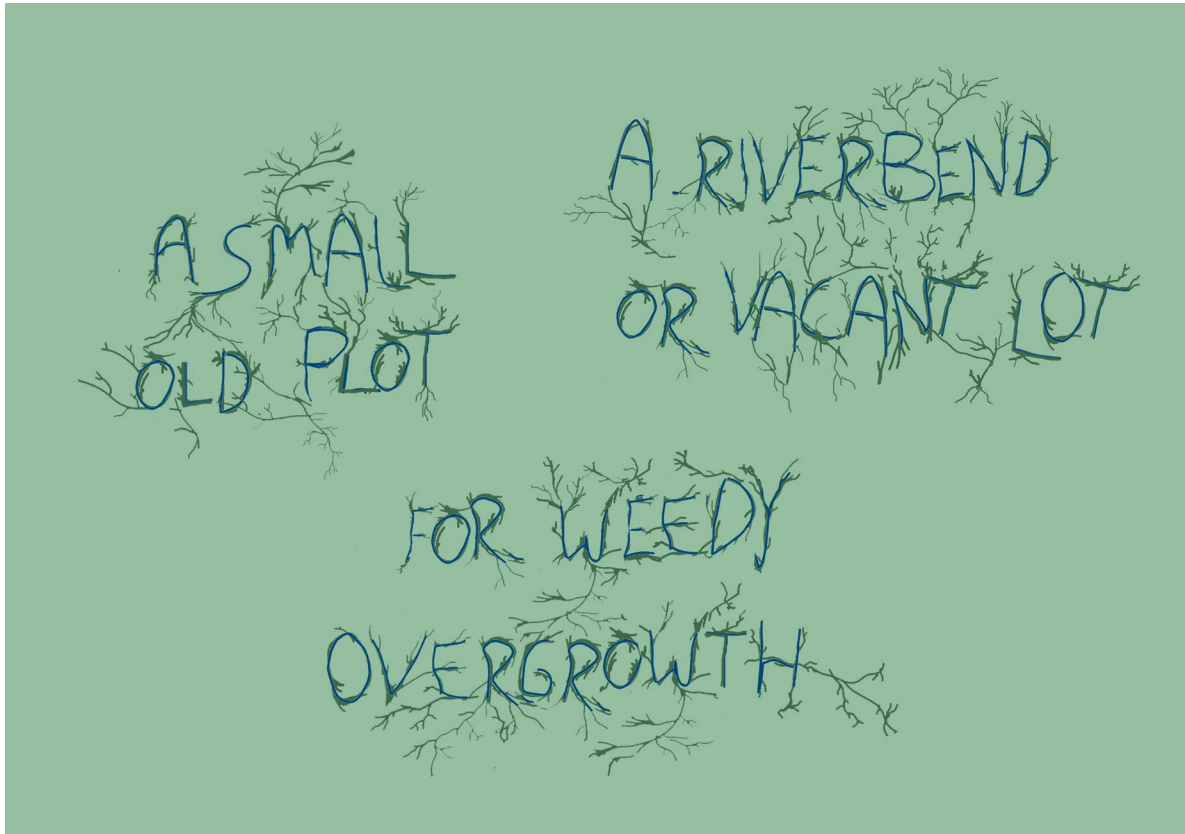


Figure 1

This essay attempts to weave together a series of thoughts on green growing surfaces. It weaves together reflections on movies, video games and memes, as well as materialist philosophy and more-than-human phenomenology, infused with autoethnographic accounts of specific locations of lived experience and perspectives from an eco-oriented artistic practice. The essay does not seek to turn the reflections into a unified field, to be read from start to finish. It offers thoughts as a thicket, a deep surface intertwined with non-linear interconnectivity. This is a mood board of overgrown aesthetics, to be read in any direction. Click any icon to begin reading.



Figure 2. A small plot of new land generated by the AI image generation software DALL-E.

A small plot of new land

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari offer a seed for an ecological philosophy in one of their most quoted passages: “This is how it should be done: lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous place on it, find potential movements of deterritorialization, possible lines of flight, experience them, produce flow conjunctions here and there, try out

continuums of intensities segment by segment, have a small plot of new land at all times.”¹ The duo here bombards the reader with their notoriously difficult terminology, including lines, flights, flows, conjunctions, deterritorializations, segments and stratum. The quote ends by exchanging the potentially dizzying theoretical expansiveness with everyday concreteness. I think there are two main ways of understanding this last part of the quote. It could potentially offer something to ground oneself, something to latch onto to avoid going too far in experimental lines of flight. Yet earlier in the same chapter the philosophers state that whereas psychologists insist that people should not go too far in destabilizing their own senses of self, “we should say instead, ‘Let’s go further still, ... we haven’t sufficiently dismantled our self’.”² I think therefore that something else is being put forward, which can perhaps be teased out from their inclusion of the term *new*.

Newness has a specific meaning in ecology. Manuel DeLanda writes on ecosystem growth and how it involves transitions between states.³ In the Northern hemisphere this takes the form of fast-growing settlers (lichen and moss), succeeded by perennial shrubs and other small plants, reaching a climax state dominated by large trees (birch and aspen, followed by pine, and then oak, lime and elm). In an ecological sense, a new plot of land is a specific kind of system. Concretely, it is made up of specific sets of organisms – fast-growing settlers. Philosophically, a plot of new land is intense, because it holds great potential for change.

Not all plots of new land are the same. The smell of freshly cut grass is often encountered as a welcome indicator of spring, but for the grasses themselves the signal is sinister. Mowing the lawn causes the grass to chemically signal the threat to its neighbors. The grass is screaming in scent form.⁴ Mowing is a way of keeping the grass in a perpetual state of newness. Lawns are ecosystems that are never allowed to mature. The grass is the start and endpoint for these ecosystems, which are locked into being endlessly refreshing plots of new land.

¹ Deleuze and Guattari 1987/2016: 161.

² Ibid: 151.

³ DeLanda 1997/2000: 105-106.

⁴ Chamovitz 2013.



Figure 3. Lawns photographed by the author.

We're tired of grass

“We're tired of trees,” write Deleuze and Guattari.⁵ Their reason is that trees form hierarchical structures. Trees start from a point and branch out, as the central trunk originates and gives rise to several branches and a multitude of twigs. Deleuze and Guattari propose the rhizome as a countermodel to trees. Rhizomes are forms of vegetation without a central foundation. The rhizome is instead a multitude of connections, growing non-linearly in any direction. When trees grow, they reach a certain height and their bodies stiffen, requiring increasing force to be moved. When rhizomes grow, they multiply, creating a vast field of entanglement where any single sprouting growth is connected with several others. While trees are vertical individuals, rhizomes are horizontal multitudes.

In the work of Darwin, evolutionary descent is rendered as a tree of life.⁶ But with the influence on evolution by microbes and viruses, creating criss-crossing

⁵ Deleuze and Guattari 1987/2016: 15.

⁶ Darwin 1859/1985: 171.

interconnections between the seemingly separate species-lines of descent, the evolution of life starts bearing more similarities with rhizomes than a tree.⁷

As Deleuze and Guattari point out, common grasses are rhizomes. But trees and grasses are closer to each other than they are made out to be in Deleuze and Guattari's book *A Thousand Plateaus*. Michael Marder has pointed out that the tree also has a rhizomatic structure: "Trees can branch out in quite unpredictable ways; they can accommodate the grafts of other species; they can give rise to shoots that can survive independently of them; they can change their sexes to become hermaphrodites for a limited stretch or for the rest of their lives; and the list continues."⁸ Yet the opposite is also true, as both trees and grasses create hierarchies of dominance. Where trees grow upwards to shade other organisms and hinder their growth, grasses colonize the land with their patchworks of roots and make it inhospitable for other plants.



Figure 4. Lawns photographed by the author.

⁷ See Margulis and Sagan 2002.

⁸ Marder 2016: 136.

What if the tree and the grass are not distinct types of plants, but rather tendencies of growth? While we tend to think of all trees as related, genetic sequencing has revealed trees to be an evolutionary process in which multiple species respond to environmental challenges by converging upon similar growth forms.⁹ Any given tree may thus be more closely related to a small flowering plant than to another type of tree. Bamboo is commonly labeled a tree but is actually a form of thickened and stiffened grass. Growing upwards and spreading across land with great speed, bamboo forms monolayers that outcompete other vegetation.¹⁰ Bamboo combines the growth forms of grass and trees in a tendency of horizontal and vertical dominance.

When humans engage with vegetation, we regularly share the bamboo's unification of horizontal and vertical growth tendencies. Among our favorite ecosystems is the park, consisting of monocultures of unified flat fields interrupted by symmetrically branching trees. Tree trimming and lawn mowing create surfaces and lines of dominance that prevent other organisms from growing. To rephrase Deleuze and Guattari: We're tired of trees, but also of grass.

⁹ Groover 2005.

¹⁰ Xu et al. 2020

You: "Why are the bees and butterflies dying out?"
Your yard:



Figure 5. Image from "Anti-Lawn Memes", *Know Your Meme*.

Ecological wastelands

A popular insult against the terminally online (the people who fall into rabbit holes of logic that only makes sense when one has spent an unnatural amount of time online) is to tell them to "go outside and touch grass". Against the dissociative surface of screens, another surface is supposed to serve as an antidote. The lawn is regularly understood as a necessary foundation in urban landscapes, whose social, symbolic, ecological or aesthetic values are rarely discussed.¹¹

In Etterstad, the neighborhood in eastern Oslo where I live with my partner,

¹¹ Ignatevia et al. 2015.

opportunities to touch grass abound. The area is an idyllic grassland dotted with apple and cherry trees. In order to be able to not only touch grass but to dig into the soil, we co-founded a group, open to anyone interested, that plants herbs and vegetables in planter boxes in the park. A few neighbors were displeased with the initiative and complained to the municipality. This led to a meeting between our group, the neighbors and a representative from the Agency for City Environment.

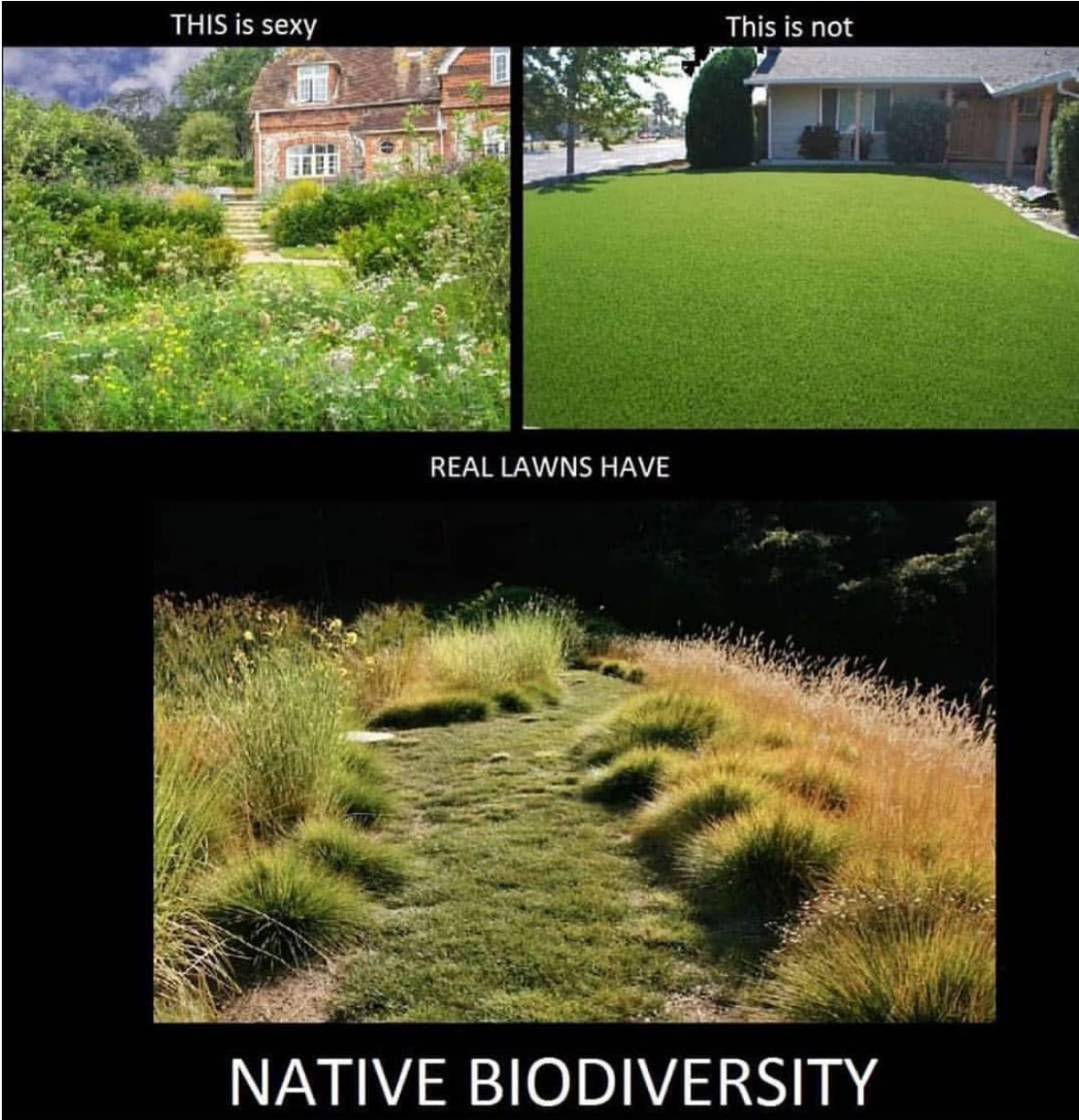


Figure 6. Image from “Anti-Lawn Memes”, *Know Your Meme*.

The neighbors had a multitude of objections: The vegetable boxes deprived kids of a football field, and the benches we built provided a hangout for substance abusers. The most vocal opponent was certain the vegetable boxes would diminish the value of her property (no matter that the main real estate market, Finn, regularly includes pictures of our vegetable-growing in apartment prospects from the neighborhood). Ultimately, the problem turned out to be predominately visual – the boxes disrupted window views of the green field. The longing for the undisrupted green field can be understood through Timothy Morton’s framing of the lawn as the first form of abstract art: “Its flat, opaque, monotone surface reminds one of nothing so much as a horizontal version of a painting by Mark Rothko or Barnett Newman.”¹²

The agency representative concluded that the boxes were a desired development, because what are commonly labeled the “green lungs” of cities are more often green deserts. Lawns require enormous amounts of water to upkeep, not only in sun-drenched and forest-fire-prone California, but also in the water-scarce Oslo summer. And for what? For a barren field creating a uniform green sensation for the human gaze. No vegetables, herbs or berries grow for sustenance. No flowers grow for pollinators, and thus the grassland contributes to the collapsing insect populations. No animals graze this land. Covering anything from courtyards to gardens, golf courses, graveyards and parks, lawns are ecological wastelands. Even though Oslo’s goal is ecological diversity, the lawns at Etterstad continue to be meticulously mowed.

¹² Morton, 2004: 35



Figure 7. Screenshot from *Blue Velvet*, David Lynch (1986).

Suburban protection against communism

Lawns are socio-ecological surfaces. There is something decidedly suburban, middle-class and heteronormative about lawns. In a suburban neighborhood a lawn is at once a private property and a social signal putting the state of the home on display. A well-kept lawn signals a well-functioning family. The unkept lawn poses a moral threat or promises sexual promiscuity or horror. The more thorough the neighborhood rules for maintaining lawns are, the stronger the social pressure will be on how to behave. And nowhere is the social pressure of lawns more dominant than in the USA, as depicted in a range of movies and series.

Lawnmowing is the leisure activity of men, done by the patriarch or given as an order to his teen son. At one point in the first season of *True Detective*, Marty and Rust – the two hard-boiled detectives who are the lead characters – quarrel over lawn mowing.¹³ Marty returns home to find that Rust has mowed his lawn and is now chatting leisurely with Marty's wife. Marty confronts Rust: "What the

¹³ Fukunaga 2014.

hell do you think you're doing here, at my house when I'm not here? I just don't ever want you mowing my lawn, all right? I like mowing my lawn". Lawnmowing here holds the potential to be a euphemism for sleeping with his wife. It does not reflect well to have another man do the work of the patriarch; it gives the impression that the man of the house is about to be replaced.

David Lynch's movie *Blue Velvet* opens with a series of shots of flowers against white fences and blue skies, with children waved across the street by an elderly lady – in short, suburban perfection. When Donald Trump in his presidential pitch would “make America great again”, he hinted towards the nostalgic glory depicted here. As Helen Hester and Nick Srnicek point out, the garden care, as well as home improvement and the driving distance to everything, has meant that house ownership functioned as a safeguard against political radicalism. They quote a property magnate of the 1940s who stated, “No man who owns his own house and lot can be a Communist. He has too much to do.”¹⁴

In the opening of *Blue Velvet*, we reach a homeowner watering his yard. The hose becomes tangled into a branch. While attempting to pry it loose, he clasps his neck in agony before collapsing. He lands on a patch of soil, barren against the otherwise perfect lawn. The scene thereafter turns decidedly strange. A dog aggressively gulps water from the still spraying hose, and a toddler walks over to see what is happening. The scene ends with a dive, deep into and beneath the grass. Viewers lose the sense of scale, sent into the ungrounded horror lurking under the current order. This order was seemingly upheld and protected by the suburban middle-class masculinity and is now overtaken by pure chaos.

¹⁴ Hester and Srnicek 2021.



Figure 8. Image found on the website Know Your Meme, showing a combination of characters from *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* with the background image of Windows XP.

Clear screens

A photo of glowing green California hills and a cotton-cloud blue sky might be the most viewed image ever. In the early 2000s, it was the first thing shown to countless people, at offices and schools and homes, when they booted up a computer with the Windows XP operating system. In an edit of this image, a figure from the videogame series *The Legend of Zelda* has been included in the landscape. Although it could be considered as much due to technological limitations as a stylistic choice, the main part of this classic fantasy game is an open field of grass.

There is a nostalgic purity in the open fields of grass, found not only in fantasy games but also in the central understanding of the origin of the human species. Humans supposedly emerged at the wide expanse of the savannah. The

prevalence of a cultural preference for the open field could thus seemingly be traced to the emergence of our species. There are counterindications to the notion that humans emerged at the savannah – from fossils to reconstructions of ancient environments, to the oldest known cave art, discovered in a cave in an Indonesian forest. Paleoarcheologist Patrick Roberts therefore makes the case that the first humans emerged among the pleasures and perils of the thicket of tropical forests.¹⁵ Why does the myth of the savannah persist? What gives the field its allure?

Open fields are the foundation of games of navigation, from football to golf to video games. For Martin Heidegger, being itself is described as a clearing.¹⁶ His notion of the clearing is an opening in the forest, where the walker emerges out of the thicket. While the German original *Lichtung* (derived from *lichten*, “to thin out” or “to light”) connects openness to light, the English word “clearing” includes somewhat more aggressive connotations. Patches of light can be natural openings in the forest, whereas clearing is a human landscaping act. This points to the human way of being as one that removes diversity. To think, people seem to enjoy clearing – whether their schedule, their minds or their surroundings. The computer background image offers what in some regards is considered an ideal day, a pristine and open day without any worries, open to be traversed whichever way one would like.

¹⁵ Roberts 2021.

¹⁶ Heidegger 1927/2008.



Figure 9. A moss garden in Japan, photo by the author.

Moss lawns

Landscaping is an art form that requires interventions into ecosystems, often greatly reducing ecological diversity. Where classical French and Italian gardens are formal and geometrical, English gardens are designed to appear to grow more freely and wildly. What is shared between these gardens, however, is a penchant for grass. And any grass yard is plagued by intrusive species. In addition to flowering weeds, moss creeps into shaded and moist areas. Efforts are generally made to remove moss with herbicides or home remedies. What about the opposite strategy, of intentionally allowing moss to overgrow the grass?

Both moss and grass can form green surfaces. Yet there are major differences between how these surfaces function. Grasses flatten and overwhelm, whereas moss folds and weaves. Moss creates patchworks of different types, growing

over and into other organisms and objects. Whereas grass is established and maintained against existing ecosystems, requiring fertilization, cutting and weeding, moss gardening is a way of working with these ecosystems. Moss also takes up greater amounts of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere than grass.¹⁷

In Japanese culture, moss gardens hold a prominent place, both in ceremonial tea gardens and Zen Buddhist ones. Moss landscapes are said to provide a feeling of being deep in the mountain and of a landscape enduring, which thus gives a sense of time passing.¹⁸ These sentiments are tied to the notion of *wabi-sabi*, an aesthetic quality of finding beauty in imperfection and the inevitability of decay. Moss gardens teach us that everything we know will someday wither and die, to allow something else to grow.

¹⁷ Max Planck Society 2012.

¹⁸ Oishi 2022.



Figure 10. Image from *Aesthetics Wiki* entry “Soft Apocalypse”, which features as key motifs “overgrown cities” and key values “Hope, harmony with nature, anarchy, Nature taking it back”. The photo shows vegetation growing through concrete in the city of Pripyat, Ukraine. The city was abandoned after the nuclear disaster in Chernobyl in 1986.

Undoing the Anthropocene

Our current period has been named the Anthropocene. It is a period in which human terraforming of the earth impacts the planet’s ecosystems, climate and geology. Terraforming is a process that turns humans into planetary park personnel as the lawnmowers of the world. Significant for the forming of the Anthropocene is perhaps the way that humans generally think of our surroundings, and in particular of plants. The word “plant”, with its etymology coming from the Latin verb *plantare*, means “to drive into the ground”. It frames the human as the active participant, imposing our will on the docile plant. Opposed to this is the concept of the vegetative, which comes from the Latin verb *vegetare*, “to be characterized by a power of growth”.

What happens after the Anthropocene? Dystopian speculation can roughly be

divided into two. The first is the ecological wasteland, in which humans through some apocalyptic disaster have cleared our planet of its hospitability. This dystopia could be considered an intensified version of the human tendency towards driving things into the ground and clearing the land of its diversity. The other is an ecological reclaiming of the land, an intensified version of the vegetative tendency to overgrow whatever plot of land becomes forgotten over a period of time.

The overgrown is my favorite aesthetic. There is something melancholic yet hopeful in the way that no matter the human desire for clearing, life finds a way. The overgrown creates a weird sense of time in which our present becomes a relic. For overgrowing to occur, humans need to recede, to forget, with perhaps even themselves disappearing and being forgotten. Michael Marder writes about Chernobyl, which after the nuclear disaster there in 1986 was shunned by humans for decades, turning it into a “miniature postapocalyptic laboratory for imagining ‘the world without us’”.¹⁹ It is tempting to extend this into the non-anthropocentric pleasure of the end of our world. Are humans a virus that the planet needs to rid itself of, or can modern humans become part of nature again, to replace economic with vegetative overgrowth?

¹⁹ Marder 2022.



Figure 11. Video posted to Instagram by the author, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CZpAgYyLE6M/>

Immersing myself in the Alna river

Unknown to us when we moved to Etterstad, there was a great outdoor area in the neighborhood, called Svartdalsparken, featuring a river with surrounding old-growth forest. The area seems tiny when the winter cold clears it. The barren surface allows people's eyes and feet to speed through. In spring and summer, it becomes overgrown, and grows in subjective size. The thicket invites you to slow down, to stay, respond and reflect.

As I am writing this, I happen to be squatting on a fallen tree in Svartdalsparken. I am surrounded by the sound and cooling feel of the river stream. The tree is partly moss-covered and cold and soft under my bare feet. This is a place where

I regularly hang out, doing nothing. I have brought my *shakuhachi*, which is a Japanese bamboo flute, commonly played for meditative purposes. Sitting on the fallen tree I suddenly notice a rat. I am certain that it must have seen me as well. I could nevertheless sit there and watch it for some time, even though it was moving, likely as fast as its tiny legs would let it. I could watch the rat for some time because it was swimming, upstream in the river, passing by my meditation spot.

There are numerous terms both for what I am doing and for what kind of ailment it rids me of: the Japanese practice of *shinrin yoku*, forest bathing, which works against nature-deficit disorder and *solastalgia*, the distress caused by environmental change (both locally and the global climate crisis) by tapping into *biophilia* – our evolved love of nature.²⁰ As a body of water, the river offers a place to dip one's body into water. I share the rat's penchant for river bathing. From June to January, I have dipped in the river. And when I tell people, they usually respond that the river must be too polluted for that to be healthy. I avoid telling them that I have also drunk from the river, attempting to infuse myself with the microorganisms of the area.

²⁰ Wilson 1986; Albrecht et al. 2013.



Figure 12. *SANKE* exhibited in the show *Tipping Points: Flourish and Collapse in the Circularity of the Geostory*, curated by Angela Chan. Photo: Podium.

A contemporary gatherer art style

My artistic practice is ecologically oriented, in the sense of reflecting with more-than-human companions and responding to environmental pressure. Rather than an abstracted generality of “the environment”, which could be anywhere or nowhere at all, I am focused here on the influence of my specific place of habitation. The old-growth forest surrounding the Alna river in Svartdalsparken has weaved into my artistic practice, as a place for experiencing and interacting with vegetation, as well as being a source of both inspiration and materials and creating artwork.

Sanke is the Norwegian word for gathering. It denotes something slightly archaic, a bygone era of living off the bountiful land, with plenty of playful free time. It is a central word for my artistic practice. From the Alna river I can gather anything from unfiltered river water, the smell of soil after rainfall, snail mucus and birch bark to simple clay and sludge. I work with the materials in ways that

are decidedly primitive, in the sense that I test the limits of how little can be done with them, of how minor the adjustments can be in order to turn them into artwork. It is a way of working with, rather than against, the tendencies of the materials.

Part of the environmental pressure my artistic practice responds to is also the prosperity and the paradoxical relation to nature in Norway. An American artist once told me that “Norway is itself a luxury branding.” The country is a leading exporter of oil, while simultaneously reserving vast areas for untouched nature for a population that loves the outdoors. Through *SANKE* I attempt to encapsulate and challenge such paradoxes. The project is conceptualized as an avant-luxury brand, rendering basic natural materials as desirable luxury. The main nexus of the project is a webstore, selling what is at once products and art objects: soil perfume, snail mucus moisturizer, birch bark shoes, pit-fired tea cups and sludge soap. *SANKE* sells luxury, the luxury of denouncing civilization as progress. There is nothing more luxurious than going out, taking a mud bath, drinking from the river, eating dirt and rubbing snail slime on your face.



Figure 13. Photos from Chicago by the author.

Legalize Weeds

“Weed” is not a biological category. To label something a weed is a way of signifying its unwantedness for humans. The term also commonly refers to cannabis. In the USA weed is nearly everywhere. It is a pungent smell across the public spaces of big cities, and in my experience, commonly in buses. During a spring stay in Chicago, a woman turned to me on the bus to ask whether I was smoking weed while sitting there. Police officers are nearly everywhere as well, armed and ready to stop-and-frisk anyone expected to possess unlawful substances. A young radical told me that the mayor of the city could not be trusted because she used to be a cop, before saying, “Now we’re going to do something a bit illegal”, as he steered us from the paved path onto the park grass.

Walking around the neighborhood I lived in, I picked flowering weeds in vacant lots and next to graffiti-covered, abandoned industrial buildings. I put the flowers in an empty bottle of CBD oil. CBD is one of the two main parts of cannabis, with THC being the other and psychoactive ingredient. While CBD does not intoxicate, it is indicated as having benefits, such as pain relief and easing mental disorders, protecting neurology and alleviating cancer symptoms.²¹ In several states weed has been legalized, flattened into unified fields of

²¹ O'Brien 2022; Hoch et al. 2018, Ożarowski 2021.

production and controllable flows of distribution. Reparations for the war on drugs, with its effect on the black community, remain woefully inadequate. As I walk through a dark, junk-filled underpass on my flower-picking stroll, a pair of eyes look up from a mattress.



Figure 14. Left: Image by Wild Green Memes posted to Twitter by @anatfln; right: photo from *Open-End-Ed*.

When cities are greened, in the traditional and bureaucratic sense, it requires effort, carried out by mostly low-paid workers. Cities green as tidily organized spaces, neatly separating vegetation into vegetable growth boxes, planted trees and rolled-out lawn carpets. This can be connected to what Sybille Krämer calls “[t]he bureaucratic organization of modern societies” which are “hardly conceivable without the rectangular form of personal documents, forms files, credit cards, scoreboards and tickets of all kinds”.²² Rather than reintroducing wilderness, the greening of cities, as the legalization of weed, is an extension of bureaucratic forms of organization. Public spaces are planned and overseen to produce uniform green sensations for the people that run through them.

To allow for unproductive and creative thinking, we need to leave plots to age, to under-develop into overgrown thickets. Cities should be de-planned, to include old-growth forests, but also to allow for vacant lots. Neglect need not necessarily be negative. In vacant lots, weedy wildflowers grow and youthful potential can flow, wither and regrow.

²² Krämer 2022

References

- Aesthetics Wiki. n.d. Soft Apocalypse. https://aesthetics.fandom.com/wiki/Aesthetics_Wiki (Accessed 27 November 2022).
- Albrecht, G., et al. 2013. Solastalgia: the distress caused by environmental change. *Australas Psychiatry*. 2007; 15 Suppl 1:S95-8.
- anatfln. 2022. Twitter post, <https://twitter.com/anatfln/status/1521151748370489344> (Accessed 11.12.22).
- Chamovitz, Daniel. 2013. *What a Plant Knows. A Field Guide to the Sense of Your Garden and Beyond*. XX: Oneworld Publications.
- Darwin, Charles. 1859/1985. *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. London: Penguin Books.
- DeLanda, Manuel. 1997/2000. *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History*. New York: Swerve Editions.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. 1987/2016. *A Thousand Plateaus*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Fukunaga, Cary Joji. 2014. *True Detective*. Season 1. Episode 3. "The Locked Room." HBO.
- Groover AT. 2005. What genes make a tree a tree? *Trends Plant Sci*. 2005 May; 10(5).
- Heidegger, Martin. 1927/2008. *Being and Time*. XX: Harper Perennial Modern Thought.
- Hester, Helen, and Nick Srnicek. 2021. "Shelter Against Communism". *e-flux* December.
- Hoch, E., D. Niemann, R. von Keller, et al. 2019. How effective and safe is medical cannabis as a treatment of mental disorders? A systematic review. *Eur Arch Psychiatry Clin Neurosci* 269, 87–105.
- Ignatieva, Maria et al. 2015. Lawn as a cultural and ecological phenomenon: A conceptual framework for transdisciplinary research, *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, Volume 14, Issue 2.
- Know Your Meme. n.d. Anti-lawn Memes. <https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/anti-lawn-memes> (Accessed 27 November 2022).

- Know Your Meme. n.d. Windows XP. <https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/windows-xp-bliss-wallpaper> (Accessed 27 November 2022).
- Krämer, Sybille. 2023. The Cultural Technique of Flattening. *Metode Volume 1 'Deep Surface.'*
- Lynch, David. 1986. *Blue Velvet*. De Laurentiis Entertainment Group.
- Marder, Michael. 2016. *Grafts. Writings on Plants*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Marder, Michael. 2022. Trenches in Chernobyl. *Aeon*, <https://aeon.co/essays/what-did-the-russians-dig-up-when-they-dug-trenches-in-chernobyl> (Accessed 27 November 2022).
- Margulis, Lynn, and Dorion Sagan. 2002. *Acquiring Genomes. A Theory of the Origin of Species*. New York: Basic Books.
- Max Planck Society. 2012. Algae, lichens, and mosses take up huge amounts of carbon dioxide and nitrogen from atmosphere. *Phys Org*: <https://phys.org/news/2012-06-algae-lichens-mosses-huge-amounts.html> (Accessed 27 November 2022).
- Morton, Timothy. 2004. Woodsworth Digs the Lawn. *European Romantic Review*, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 317-327.
- O'Brien K. 2022. Cannabidiol (CBD) in Cancer Management. 10; 14(4):885.
- Oishi, Yoshitaka. 2022. Why are the aesthetics of modest mosses highly valued in Japanese gardens?. *The Bryologist* 125(1), 61-69.
- Open-End-Ed. Are.na. n.d. <https://www.are.na/open-end-ed/lawns-and-prairies> (Accessed 11.12.22).
- Ożarowski M, Karpiński TM, Zielińska A, Souto EB, Wielgus K. 2021. Cannabidiol in Neurological and Neoplastic Diseases: Latest Developments on the Molecular Mechanism of Action. *Int J Mol Sci*. 22(9):4294.
- Roberts, Patrick. 2021. *Jungle. How Tropical Forests Shaped World History*. XX: Penguin Books.
- Wilson, Edward O. 1986. *Biophilia. The human bond with other species*. XX: Harvard University Press.
- Xu, Qiu-Fang, Chen-Fei Liang, Jun-Hui Chen, Yong-Chun Li, Hua Qin, Jeffrey J. Fuhrmann. 2020. Rapid bamboo invasion (expansion) and its effects on biodiversity and soil processes +. *Global Ecology and Conservation*, Vol. 2.

“Andreas’ essay charts out tensions between lawns – these domesticated, normative urban surfaces – and the deep, unruly surfaces created by the vegetation of thickets, moss and weed. One of the compelling aspects of his text is how he plants it upon different kinds of green surfaces, moving across them. This provides fertile ground on which the political stakes of these different surfaces’ formation and habitation come to light.”

“The playful and ‘strolling’ character of the text reminds me of what Andreas describes as the practice of ‘sanke’, the Norwegian word for ‘gathering’. He offers us a collection of green surfaces: lawns, images of lawns, plots of land, thoughts revolving around gardening, vegetation, moss, weed. However, his writing not only gathers fragments, but also overgrows and pollinates their understanding.”

- Neda Genova, author of “Thinking with Labyrinths: A Fictional-Topological Exploration,” *Metode* (2023), vol. 1 ‘Deep Surface’

“In a certain sense it has the feeling of a manifesto, as it proposes a need for ways of working against, or beyond, the lawn as a manifestation of patriarchy, capitalism and further types of human violence.”

“Andreas’ essay opens up to the multitudes of ways to reflect upon surfaces as ambiguous political situations. This might be of relevance with relation to the form of the essay, as a reader might also be invited to repeat the reading of certain passages, through the weave like, non-linear character of its construction.”

- Jakob Oredsson, author of “Surfaces Surfacing,” *Metode* (2023), vol. 1 ‘Deep Surface’

“The human urge to control ‘the wild’ is so evident, yet rarely discussed. The text has many ideas and I like the manifold lines it follows; spectrums between maintenance/care and control/withdrawnness – gardening/ownership/leisure/work in relation to political stability or radicalization – accessibility; how thickets make you slow down and how open fields symbolizes efficiency and speed. Another path goes into the lawn as a gendered surface which I think takes on very important socio-ecological issues.”

- Julie Barfod, author of “The room that I am, the room I give birth to,” *Metode* (2023), vol. 1 ‘Deep Surface’

Cite this essay:

Andreas Ervik, "A Small Old Plot," *Metode* (2023), vol. 1 'Deep Surface'

Metode

Metode (2023), vol. 1 *Deep Surface*
ISSN 2704-0550

ROM