Beyond the divide: University and community engagement, wildlife and relational ethics

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BEYOND THE DIVIDE: UNIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, WILDLIFE AND RELATIONAL ETHICS

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ABSTRACT:

Post-colonial attitudes to nature in many parts of Australia and elsewhere have ensured the human/ native animal divide has remained strong among institutions charged with managing the way society interacts with the natural environment. Rules have taken over principles, and conservation (decisions about too many and too few), not welfare, has become the dominant discourse. Anthropocentric institutionalism has replaced moral geography and ethical understanding when it comes to the connection between native animals and communities.

While some of the blame for this situation results from power wielding institutional regulators, a failure to define and articulate a coherent ethical underpinning to animal welfare that is not anthropocentric has contributed to this situation more broadly. This has ensured that in an increasingly urbanised society, the psycho-emotional distance between humans and native animals, if anything, is increased locking-in a range of societal fears, encouraging vested interests, and enabling animal cruelty. There is a discussion to be had about the way geographic space is configured that includes animals and humans that has serious implications for issues of community fragmentation and its associated problems in a globalising world. This relational view about humans and native animals also has implications for animal welfare, where the discourse has been to maintain the separation, focus on 'rights', and differing anthropocentric views about distress. We argue such approaches miss the 'intrinsic' characteristics and mutual benefits that a co-habitation model built on respect can bring.

In this paper we discuss three interrelated engagement aspects with respect to the way we view the human/ native animal divide from an ethical perspective. First, we are concerned to address limitations in animal welfare discourse to ensure it is not suppressed by anthropocentric arguments and the conservation agenda. We articulate a relational ethic predicated on mutual understanding as a framework for achieving this. Second, there are implications for the design and occupation of community space to ensure fragmentation pressures are minimised. There is evidence around the world where human/ nature connections in urban living are being 're-invented'.

Third, because they are places of learning, are autonomous with a hoped for concern for the public good, and may have access to large areas of land, we can identify an engagement role for universities in meaningfully contributing to strengthening non-human engagement in communities. While some universities see their ethical contribution to the public good in relation to native animals in 'funding-conditional' terms, or in tinkering with animals for human benefit, at least one, which we report on in this

paper, sees it has a responsibility to the ethical treatment of the native animals that are a characteristic feature of its campus.

1. INTRODUCTION

It would be nice to begin this paper saying Australians have a deep affinity for their unique wildlife. However, apart from that which is intrinsic and special to Indigenous Australians we, generally, cannot.

"Australia already has the worst rate of mammal extinction in the world. Almost 40 per cent of mammal extinctions globally in the last 200 years have occurred in Australia. This incredible continent is losing species at an unprecedented rate and, as most species found here aren't found anywhere else, the loss of Australian species is a loss for the whole world "(WWF 2008). And

"...more than 104 million native mammals, birds and reptiles have died or will die as a result of the clearing of native vegetation approved in NSW alone between 1998 and 2005" (WWF 2007). This figure does not include the impact of illegal clearing, commercial harvesting and other legal and illegal shooting.

Why do we have an incongruity where Australia has the most diverse and richest wildlife on the planet and at the same time is racing at a pace, in the most diabolical ways, to ensure its extinction at a rate many times faster than any other country? What role does higher education and regional community engagement have in providing solutions in this area?

The human/nature divide is a western worldview based on the Aristotelian-Christian ethic which distinguishes human animals from non-human animals so as to locate human existence at the centre of a moral order. Aristotle regarded animals as existing for utilitarian purposes, simply to provide food and clothing for humans, and Augustine and Aquinas thought that animal existence was of no account (Atterton and Calarco 2004). In the present postcolonial neoliberal period the binary divide conceptualises humans as distinctive and oppositional rather than complementary and relational to animals and nature. The neat separation of nature into the biophysical world objectifies animals and nature to facilitate an anthropocentric view where animals and nature exist for the sole purpose of human utility (Soule and Lease 1995, Wolch and Emel 1998). This view of the divide has become institutionally entrenched in recent decades.

The most extensive critique of the binary divide is found in ecological feminism where it is argued that the dualism establishes a way of thinking that polarises as oppositional a condition that is in fact inseparable and relational (Plumwood 1993: Warren 1987). Parallel arguments are found in feminist critiques of science where modern science "seem to provide more precise and empirically compelling evidence of just where the boundaries between nature and culture are to be found" (Harding, 2006).

Institutions and their supporting scientists now have native animal 'management plans' to ensure the animal 'others' do not encroach on the spreading human domain. Nature has become a numbers perception game dressed up as 'conservation'. If we perceive there are too many, we should get rid of the 'excess', usually by barbaric means, called 'humane' so as to pander to societal 'fear' and soften community outrage. If we perceive there are too few, we should invest in preserving the remainder in the same way that economists might price according to marginal value concepts. An ethical approach to native animal welfare, based on close association with humans, does not rate

institutionally in this received instrumental paradigm that separates and divides human and non-human animals.

In particular, we are stimulated in this paper to discuss the entrenched human/ animal divide from the perspective of an relational ethics of place and of learning, particularly university learning, where solutions to this entrenched divide can be found and then acted on, in a manner, which we term 'enterprising', rather than where right and wrong are merely ascribed instrumentally and left as statements according to certain moral values. In relation to the first of these, space, the rapid rate of 'progress' and the consequent disconnection of non-Indigenous humans in their everyday life from the land and sea and its many native animal inhabitants has contributed to a trend in community 'mixophobia' and fostered a 'clinical' homogeneity (Bauman 2007) of society. In this increasingly urbanised world, the psycho-emotional distance between humans and native animals, if anything, has locked-in a range of societal fears about wildlife, encouraging utilitarian vested interests, and enabling animal cruelty. Cruelty has become the 'new cool' in relation to the way we view our wildlife in these homogeneous communities.

The notion of a context-sensitive ethics of place (Smith 2001) provides part of the solution in building a stronger relation between the human and non-human. Through this, the idea of community as an embedded intimate relation that is reflexive of environmental and cultural diversity, Bauman's (2007) 'mixophilia', can be strengthened. We are concerned here with matters to do with behaviour, having an ethical concern for the other – or 'being for' in the Bauman (1995) sense, but going beyond having a simple 'concern' to the implementation of ethical practice and in so doing going beyond humanist assumptions that the 'other' resides entirely in human form (Derrida 2004).

Smith's (2001) relational view about humans and wildlife in geographic space and place has implications for how we ascribe meaning and practice to animal welfare, where the dominant discourse has been to maintain the separation and 'object-focus' towards animals – typically the perspective of 'conservation'. Animals, as 'objects', are not recognised as being 'place' connected. As a result we have tended to focus on other abstractions such as animal 'rights', and impose moral rules and ethical principles without questioning the location foundations of a relational life between humans and the other.

Second, education, and in particular for this paper higher education, has provided us with few learning resources through which we might interrogate more closely the relationship between humans and animals for mutual benefit in our places and communities. Indeed, we argue human education has failed animals, and as a result humans are failing themselves. Education has failed to provide a relational understanding of the interconnection of all planetary life and existence. It is clear from the role of the physical sciences in supporting tinkering with wildlife through so-called 'management plans', experimentation for human gain, and in supporting 'conservation', that little attention has been paid to the role of a range of non-physical science disciplines - the humanities, social sciences, ethics and futurism, in these debates.

As Orr (1991) suggests, education does not guarantee wisdom, welfare or indeed survival. It is not education that will save us, but education of a certain kind; one that emphasises hope, integrity and caring over theory, abstraction and efficiency. We do not want a learning environment that teaches the lessons of hypocrisy, cruelty and despair.

The work of Derrida (2004) is explored in the paper as a means of highlighting forms of education required to think differently in relation to the way humans and animals interact in particular spaces and locations. Following Derrida, learning is, for us, the second part of the solution in strengthening the connection between humans and non-humans. A relational ethic towards wildlife must have a dialectic, in our learning practice, that is oriented away from the 'other' being viewed as 'objects' and oriented more towards a comprehension of the way wildlife might view humans and as humans might comprehend the feelings of wildlife (happiness, grief, sadness, fear), aspirations (such as having off-

spring), and their skills and knowledge in disciplines we ordinarily take for granted or disregard.

By considering and combining the role of place, space and learning we are naturally drawn to the new engagement role of universities for finding a way forward that reduces the divide in communities, not only in a teaching and learning sense, but in a place-based practical (or 'enterprising') sense, which elsewhere (Garlick and Palmer 2007, 2008) we have termed 'sp-ethics'. We focus on the engagement role of universities for two reasons. First, the university's responsibility for human capital generation, hopefully free of the usual captured entity constraints of institutions and corporations and free of a 'consequent' approach to ethics. Second, universities in particular have the independence, global links and focus on knowledge and learning to better engage with place-oriented communities and their connection with the non-human than any other institution. For engagement to occur in such learning situations, the community must desire to encourage internal diversity.

2. HUMAN - NATURE / NATURE AND COMMUNITY

The philosophical and historical tendency to separate humans and non-human nature in academic discourse is recently being challenged. Theorising relationships in terms of flows and connections between human and non-human elements of networks and cultures help to transcend previous conceptions of a human-nature divide, and enable understanding of relationships and connections in terms of hybrid forms and interconnected essences (Braun 2004, Latour 1993, Whatmore 2002, Lease 1995, Wolch and Emel 1998). Complexity, interaction, change, flows, connections and critical reflexivity is present in events, processes and relationships (Howitt 2001). These more recent geographical insights into a world of liquid knowledge can be applied and extended to relationships with the non-human other.

"Social inclusion is absolutely central to human morality, commonly cast in terms of how we should or should not behave ....human morality may indeed be an extension of general primate patterns of social integration, and of the adjustment required of each member in order to fit in. If so, the broadest definition .... would be as an investigation into how the social environment shapes and constrains individual behaviour" (de Waal 2003:123).

Animal geographies range across a diversity of human-nature studies (Wolch and Emel 1998, Wolch 1998). Some highlight the centrality of 'wild' animals or align wildness with rurality while cities are argued to house tame animals. Others question the wild/tame distinction on the basis that it perpetuates dualisms between city (tameness/ domestic) and country (wildness, nature), and particularly excludes hybrid forms of human-animal interaction.

Such separations and similarities in the human-nature discourse are also increasingly the subject of empirical investigation. In Colorado, for example, a zoological tourism development proposal engendered community resistance and the eventual enactment of a local government bylaw against the proposal. Residents felt that the caging of wild animals, particularly when authentic animal forms existed freely in the nearby wildness of Yellowstone National Park, was a stain on their community character and identity. Their resistance invoked ethical dilemmas and

"the inevitable conceptual stickiness which results when humans attempt to define the animal world in terms of 'wild' and 'domestic', 'good' and 'bad'" (Wondrak 2002:72).

Sustainability discourse claims to integrate social, environmental and economic paradigms, yet, Wolch (1998) notes that sustainability is rarely defined from the animal's perspective. Environmental planning and management, and the conservation sciences, exacerbate the debates and imagined separations between the value of wild versus domestic animals. Planning controls the use of geographic space for human benefit:

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granting 'amenity' to residents or real estate through covenants that prohibit domestic animals or demand wildlife corridors but simultaneously legitimise urban expansion into wild areas (Wolch 1998). Wildlife reserves:

"are "out there", remote from urban life, reserves can do nothing to alter entrenched modes of economic organization and associated consumption practices that hinge on continual growth and make reserves necessary in the first place." (Wolch 1998:124).

Such separatist approaches privilege some non-human forms, such as mountains and tigers, at the expense of others, for example, by trivialising the welfare of chickens or lambs and domesticated nature (Anderson 1997). Some animals such as pets or livestock are ignored and others become embedded in anthropocentric conceptions of the environment (Wolch 1998), although Franklin, very optimistically, argues that this trend may be marginally changing, mostly aligned with the animal rights movement:

"Australia is among those post-colonial countries in which there is a distinct biopolitical tension between native and introduced species. Although nativism (a totemic, pro-native stance) is pronounced and evident in a range of data collected in this survey, it is also true that a more generic animal rights trend can be detected both in terms of questions related to moral equivalence with humans and product testing and in terms of organizational support and membership" (Anderson 1997:26).

However, there remains a tendency to view human-nature from an anthropocentric gaze or to indulge in anthropomorphism, the ascription onto animals of human traits. Despite attempted paradigmatic shifts the contemporary anthropocentrism present in much allied literature perpetuates the human-nature divide. Howell (2006) suggests combining anthropomorphism with scientific rigour, rather than anthropo-denial (avoiding anthropomorphism), which is no more objective. He argues that a naïve or self-referential anthropocentrism reflects a poor knowledge of animals. A more animal-centric anthropomorphism works with accepted ecological knowledge yet enables researchers to interpret observations in recognition of animal subjectivities. He maintains that animal-centric anthropomorphism avoids human-nature dualisms and notes the similarity between human and non-human animals (counter intuitively demonstrated by the need to experiment on animals for human benefit!).

When humans place the laws of nature as a foremost principle in all ways of thinking then planning, conservation, sustainability, urbanism and urban design, development and everyday practice and activity can more increasingly be attuned to the inequities presented by anthropocentric perspectives and their inability to transcend the human-nature divide (Smith 2001). Part of the necessary shift is to encourage and design human-nature interactive space and place.

3. THE DESIGN AND OCCUPATION OF SPACE AND A RELATIONAL ETHIC

Smith (2001) explores how an ethics of place connects individuals, nature and culture in a moral and physical space. It gives humans the tools and the location to engage in a genuine dialectic, rather than have their ethic constrained by an anthropocentric bias toward production and environmental antinomianism and quantification, institutionally stifled by instrumental rules and regulations. His ethics of place acknowledges the agency of nature and takes account of the importance of situation and context.

There is no particular historical precedent or clear cut logic underpinning the separationism of human-nature as certain animals were historically included while others were excluded from urban areas. The acceptability of human-nature interactions within urban space was to some extent dependent on class and gender and in turn influenced both government and community responses to human and non-human interaction (Gaynor 2007).

Yet, animals enhance social capital, networks and experiences of community (Wood et al 2007). Franklin (2007) records a contemporary spatial shift of domestic animals, who increasingly occupy indoor spaces and furniture, and nurture unique attachments that ground their place in new hybridized families. That research further revealed a concomitant rising concern over the commercial production of animals and denial of their rights, yet increasing globalism, urbanism and economies of scale mitigate against these concerns for animals.

Anderson (1997) calls for more animal-inclusive landscapes that will transform sociospatial relations but warns against simply reproducing zoos or controlled care environments (protected areas) that prohibit alternative models or imaginings of the human-nature connection. Wolch's (1999) trans-species framework is designed toward this end, to anthropocentrism yet remain grounded in urbanism, nature-culture, ecology and environmental action. She stresses that cities are considered as human rather than animal habitat which

"ignores the lives and living spaces of the large number and variety of animals who dwell in cities." (1998:121).

Her zoöpolis model proposes urban spaces that have been renaturalized to provide local, situated, everyday knowledge of animal life. These shared urban spaces provide opportunities to engage in animal-centric anthropomorphism, rather than scientistic or anthropocentric standpoints, to explore human-nature kinship and diversity. She argues that increased understandings of the non-human other will impact and transform our ways of landscaping, development design, eating habits (e.g. non-commercially produced foods) and entire institutional, ethical and political practice in ways that acknowledge animal subjectivity. Shared urban spaces permit critiques, observation, experimental ecology, and similar modes of learning to be complemented with ethnographic accounts of animals and other anthropomorphic enquiry. They can also help to amalgamate the conservationist and rights-based movements (see Regan 2003, Singer 2003), which are often deeply opposed in their perspectives, and build the situated ethics ascribed to above.

More recently, some conservation bodies have recognised the benefit to humans and animals by blurring the divide in cities. The World Conservation Union (IUCN 2003) proceedings about how protected areas can build stronger constituencies for nature conservation in large cities provides a number of case study examples of large city initiatives seeking to bring nature back to the centre for mutual benefit.

As Smith (2001) has observed, our values emerge not only from our relations with the social environment we occupy, but with the natural environment. "Nature is an active participant in the production of self, society and our ethical values." (Smith 2001:212). Thus spaces designed for human nature interaction help shape human values and ways of being as much as they protect wildlife and the natural environment in a relational ethic.

Bauman's (1995) ideal 'forms of togetherness' are also important in considering a relational ethic between humans and non-humans in space of the kind proffered by Wolch (1999). Bauman's 'being-for' ethic provides the glue for building a sense of "...a community woven together from sharing and mutual care." (Bauman 2001:150).

"The being-for I propose, means an emotional engagement with the Other before it is committed (and before it can be, conceivably committed) to a specific course of action regarding the Other" (Bauman 1995:62).

Clearly, a resistance to objectification of the other is invoked in our relational and hybrid communities.

Like Smith (2001), these forms of togetherness acknowledge our varied spatial experiences and are fundamental to us contributing these attributes to redesigned

communities (Davidson 2000). The resulting community diversity from this mutuality is what Bauman (2007) terms 'mixophilia'. The opposing more usual trend in the global neoliberal world of today is 'mixophobia' where the trend in community living by humans is toward homogeneity and exclusion, where relations are more akin to Bauman's 'being-aside'. Ironically, as Bauman (2007) observes:

> "The drive towards a 'community of similarity' ('mixophobia') is a sign of withdrawal, not just from the otherness outside, but also from commitment to the lively yet turbulent, invigorating yet cumbersome interaction inside." (Bauman 2007:87).

The battleground in cities between the self-reinforcing, sterile and growing anxiety of 'mixophobia' (sameness) and the abundant, somewhat chaotic, opportunities spawned by encouraging difference ('mixophilia') will vary from place to place depending on a range of considerations. While governments, planners, architects, property marketers and institutional regulators are doing their best to feed mixophobia, a re-evaluation of the human/ nature divide in space will do much to foster "...the propagation of open, inviting and hospital public spaces, which all categories of urban residents would be tempted to attend regularly and knowingly and willingly share" (Bauman 2007:91).

The classification of urban centres based around criteria about engaging otherness in a relational way as it involves wildlife, is an area of further research to be undertaken.

4   ANIMALS, PHILOSPOHY, EDUCATION

"Everybody knows what terrifying and intolerable picture a realist painting could give to the industrial mechanical, chemical, hormonal, and genetic violence to which man has been submitting animal life for the past two centuries. Everybody knows what the production, breeding, transport, and slaughter these animals has become." (Derrida 2004:120).

In this section we discuss the failure of dominant Western philosophical traditions and Western education systems to address or expand ethical questions concerning the treatment of animals. We consider what it means for education that knowledge derives from a form of comprehension that enshrines the view that human-beings are morally ascendant, superior and the categorical antithesis of all other beings. This view is notable since social theory has of late been preoccupied to the point of obsession with alterity in relation to human others, and post-humanist philosophers have incessantly pondered the question of the 'the human', the 'inhuman' and the 'post-human'. It is remarkable then that philosophy and education have managed to remain untouched and uninterested in ethical questions raised by the proximate otherness represented by animal-beings.

Western philosophy has failed animals. Few philosophers have challenged the profound and violent anthropocentrism of western metaphysical thinking, a view that since Descartes identifies human subjectivity as comprising a unique form of existence that is superior and privileged in relation to all other forms of being. While few contemporary humanist or post-humanist philosophers would subscribe to the Cartesian view that non-humans are mechanical automations that function according to their internal biological impulses, or that animals have only sensation because they lack the distinctive human capacity to reason and to speak, none have gone so far as Derrida to undermine the human/animal binary and demonstrate 'a heterogeneous multiplicity of the living' (Derrida 2004:124). Derrida does not seek to obscure the differences between animal and humans, or to establish an essential continuity between them, rather he demonstrates the multiplications and complications of ways of being that are obscured in binary divisions which draw on singular or essential human/animal differences (Calarco 2002).

In disrupting forms of thinking that set 'human-being' over and above 'animal-being', Derrida (2004) prompts consideration of what forms of thinking might follow, or come after the binary divide. Current conceptions involve tacit acceptance that human ethical and material priorities take precedence over all others and that the destruction of non-

human others though systematic and institutionalised violence is ethically acceptable. Current conceptions justify colonisation by identifying non-European cultures as bestial, savage and uncivilised; cultures which importantly accommodated different understandings of the relationship between humans, environments and animals (Huggan and Tiffin 2008). The place of native animals in the spiritual culture of the Australian Aboriginal is a case in point here.

However, what follows in Derrida's view need not sustain complicity and intellectual closure but locate 'conceptual possibilities for a material transformation of the world' (Huggan and Tiffin 2008:10). What follows might challenge and pave the way to re-imagining alternative ways of being human in the world.

Derrida observes that highlighting the lack of cogitative sophistication of animal-beings in comparison to the human capacity to reason disregards the question of whether they are able to address us. If addressing and being addressed are modes of communication and responsibility, then to acknowledge that we can be observed by an animal-other is to:

"... see, who I am- and who I am (following) at the moment, when caught naked, in silence, by the gaze of an animal, for example the eyes of cat". (Derrida 2004:113). And

... - it can look at me. It has its point of view regarding me. The point of view of the absolute other, and nothing will have done more to make me think through this absolute alterity of the neighbour than these moments when I see myself seen naked under the gaze of cat." (Derrida 2004:117).

For Derrida, the animal question is not about whether or not 'animal-being' can be defined and characterised as comprising this or that type or species, or this or that level of similarity or distinction from 'human-being'. The capacity to be like us, to reason, to speak, to worry, to feel stress 'is the thesis, position or presupposition maintained from Aristotle to Heidegger, from Descarte to Kant, Levinas and Lacan'(Derrida 2004:121). The 'first and decisive question' is an ethical one and was raised by Jeremy Bentham 200 years ago. It is to know whether animals *can suffer* (Derrida 2004:121). This question throws into relief the anthropocentrism of ethics itself which is silent in face of the known violence and unprecedented proportions of animal subjection. The violence is at the same time material and symbolic (Derrida 2004). We establish a binary division that prevents us from thinking relationally about ourselves as living creatures and as animals, and then we reaffirm the symbolic distinction between 'us'/human and 'them'/animal others in disavowals and dissimulation that prevent us from seeing or thinking through our carnivorous, cruel and exploitative practices (Wood 2004).

Education has also failed animals. We have failed to educate about and for animals, and in doing so, education has failed itself. We know a great deal about animals in terms of their biology, behaviour and habitat; their use-value to us and even how we might care and show them compassion, but education has not prepared us to think about ourselves in relation to the animal-others and is no guarantee of decency, prudence or wisdom. More of the same kind of education is likely to compound rather than solve our problems (Orr 1991). For Orr (1991) solutions are not to be found in education that promotes any old form of knowledge. They are not located in technological solutions; untrammelled belief in human goodness; the assumption that Western culture represents the 'pinnacle of human achievement'; the assumption that the things we have destroyed can simply be fixed; and current instrumentalist views of education as simply a means of securing economic advantage and social mobility. Rethinking education must involve knowledge of the natural world, of 'personhood' responsibility and the effects of our actions and power over others.

How might universities become the places of learning that, following Derrida (1983), raise new questions about the principles of reason that enable us to see and say so little? How might they 'awaken or resituate a responsibility' (p14)? One small step

forward is to ground responsibility in institutional, structural, pedagogical and curricular changes; to engage universities with their communities of people, animals and environments.

5.   UNIVERSITY ENGAGEMENT WITH THE 'OTHER' AND THE PUBLIC GOOD

Neoliberalism has brought with it the threat to the ethical citizenry purpose of universities, where the public good is central to higher education scholarship (Dewey 1956 and 1961, Boyer 1996, Benson and Harkavy 2002) - emboldened in a "...larger purpose, a larger sense of mission, a larger clarity of direction in the national life." (Boyer 1996: 20). As we have seen, neoliberalism has also brought with it a threat to the kinds of communities and types of associations universities might care to engage with in pursuing this greater public good – particularly as it relates to the non-human other.

Where can an engaged university stand in a liquid world where humans are regarded as fundamentally and unequivocally divided from nature and animals? We want to argue that universities can contribute to the public good through a relational ethic with its community in terms of the 'other' even when, as we have seen, the pressure is for communities to be more homogeneous and exclusionary and where the financial pressure is on universities to be only consequentially ethical at best? Elsewhere we have argued that the notion of 'sp-ethics' might provide a vehicle to assist (Garlick and Palmer 2008). We argue a spatial context, local circumstances and needs, including those of the non-human, can provide the frame for mutuality in scholarship. But this scholarship, as we have said earlier, must also have a capacity to view things from the 'other than human' perspective. This represents an interesting challenge for universities in the values they embed in pedagogy, research, innovation and consultancy. There are instances where a culture of animal cruelty, institutional dishonesty and general community apathy towards the non-human other can be traced to a failure by universities to engage in their learning processes with knowledge about animals.

The scholarship of university engagement with communities in their broadest sense we are talking about here embraces Boyer's (1996) concepts of discovery, integration, knowledge sharing, and on-the-ground application. A key instrument for universities in this is the creation of the kind of human capital that not only appreciates the significance of the wildlife other in helping to create heterogeneous and ethically-oriented communities, but, importantly, has the 'enterprising' skills to work with communities to achieve these outcomes (Garlick and Palmer 2007, 2008).

Here we are mainly referring to the human capital role of the university in equipping individuals with an understanding of the environment they are a part of (social and natural), the processes of change impacting on this environment, and the ways they might effect change through a relational ethic. But we are also referring to the entire gamut of technical knowledge of universities through research, innovation and consultancy; institutional mission and values and the impacts on estate management and staff recognition and reward; and policy advice and local leadership roles. Indeed, in some cases we can argue universities are engaging in brutality in their learning and the non-human other.

6.   UNIVERSITIES IN PRACTICE

By way of postscript, we would like to say that universities are already engaging with their communities in ways that exhibit an ethical concern for the wildlife other, but we cannot. Indeed, our attention has been drawn to universities that have put the 'development' of their campus estates above the interests of the wildlife inhabitants that are located there and brought harm to them as a result. Our attention has also been drawn to learning disciplines advocating wildlife 'management' in the form of eradication practices on perceived quantitative grounds, and processes that preference only human benefit in animal experimentation and that value animals as a free good to be discarded when the experiment is completed.

The ethical treatment or otherwise by universities of wildlife, either through estate management, learning and research programs, animal experimentation and the provision of other technical and consultancy advice will be the subject of further analysis by the authors as an engagement mechanism to build more resilient and heterogeneous communities and greater respect for our unique wildlife. Our sense is that there is a considerable way to go in this area of university and community engagement.

The University of the Sunshine Coast campus occupies a site of around 110 hectares, including remnant bushland and waterways that provide habitat for a variety of mammals, birds and reptiles. Of particular note is the population of eastern grey kangaroos that have become a visual feature of the campus and attraction for students and visitors. While the campus zone of the University has been designated a wildlife reserve and corridor, it is now seeking to become a wildlife sanctuary and to tailor its campus development plans around the habitat needs of the animals that reside there. It is designing wildlife friendly underpasses, fencing, and vegetation plantings and is seeking to give greater campus centrality to the various learning and research programs that have wildlife as a focus. It is enrolling the social sciences and humanities in this wildlife focus as well. It also wants to engage, through this work on wildlife, with the surrounding urban community to build greater levels of appreciation for our unique nature. It is this desire that offers a unique opportunity to create a truly engaged university, one that offers ethical learning perspectives and practices about the human-nature connection that is cognizant of the relational aspects of such a connection and their dependence on their unique geographical place.

7. CONCLUSIONS

In this paper we have been concerned to emphasise the growing human/ native animal divide in many communities as an unfortunate consequence of post colonial neoliberalism and entrenched institutionalism and instrumentalism. We have suggested there is an important role for universities in engaging with their communities in reducing this divide and building stronger diverse communities and enhancing a respectful relational ethic between humans and native animals. We have argued the two interrelated pillars for university engagement action in this area refers to intimately knowing the space (social and natural) and place in which the university and its community, including wildlife, are located, and giving focus to the learning, research, consultancy, mission, policy and leadership roles of the university. The other charge that can be laid against universities is that by failing to engage ethically in their scholarship in relation to the non-human other they risk engaging in brutality in relation to wildlife.

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