Abandonment and authenticity in Australian rural landscapes

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Abstract
Australian landscape cover has been impacted by Aboriginal burning over millennia, then reshaped by colonising settlers into farming estates. Now large farmland areas have been amalgamated into agribusiness aggregations or revert to shrublands for grazing and for nature conservation. This simultaneous process of abandonment and aggrandisement has resulted in loss of detailed local knowledge and intangible heritage, while new technologies and increased productivity in large-scale farming have caused loss of tangible heritage. Abandonment and transformation of landscape have occurred around the world throughout history.

International heritage practice regards cultural landscapes as illustrating ‘the evolution of human society and settlement over time’ (UNESCO 2016, para. 47) without considering that today, land uses and activities are still being transformed or adapted. Change is inevitable, but it is not clear how the established heritage concepts of ‘authenticity’ and ‘integrity’ can incorporate these dynamics in heritage assessments for abandoned places, which are both historical and undergoing the process of transformation following abandonment.

This paper argues that abandonment and decay should be valued as part of the conservation process. For a rural landscape to have heritage attributes of legible authenticity and dynamic integrity, a continuing relationship with the landscape is required. A new framework incorporating this dynamic needs to be devised so that all the processes entangled in the multivalued rural habitat are considered.

Introduction
Australian rural landscapes were impacted by Aboriginal burning for more than 60,000 years before British settlers arrived and adapted their agricultural practices to a new environment. After the invasion by pastoralists of large areas of open wooded country and native grassland for sheep and cattle runs (or ‘stations’), there were policies from the 1860s for smaller scale settlement – farms for yeomen in the British model of agriculture, and farms for returned soldiers after World Wars I and II, many of which were too small and located on poor soils (Pearson & Lennon 2010).

Today, the smaller farms have been amalgamated into larger aggregations for agribusiness operations. The number of farm holdings in Australia decreased from 144,860 in 1997/8 to 85,681 in 2015/16, with some areas reverting to shrublands for grazing and nature conservation (ABS 2016-17). Amalgamations result in abandoned hill slopes or land not wanted for more intensive production. This process of abandonment, the giving up of land managed
for productive resources, has resulted in loss of population with detailed local knowledge of natural systems, and loss of both built heritage and intangible heritage. In many places, the once productive or occupied small farm complexes, tracks and fence lines have become relics in a changing landscape. Concurrently, new computer-driven technologies have led to increased productivity through innovative farming techniques, scientific developments in plant and animal breeding, and improvements in management of crops, livestock, land, water and pests in large scale farming often eradicating traces of tangible heritage. Old place names, property layouts, connections and memories disappear along with manual farming practices.

The Australian rural landscape experience is also a global phenomenon. Internationally accepted heritage conservation practices have been too narrow in applying their concepts of authenticity and integrity to landscapes in transformation and adaptation. Binary concepts like cultural and natural, rural and urban, pristine and degraded, abandoned and occupied do not fit well in landscapes of entangled attributes where transitions loop back and forwards depending on many factors and unintended consequences. This paper argues that rural landscape conservation needs a new framework in which to assess these tangible and intangible changes as part of authenticity and integrity.

Abandonment

I am a product of landscape abandonment. My ancestors in the late 1840s were forced off their clan lands in Scotland (see Preeble 1969) and their tiny crofts above Loch Ness later became extensive forest plantations or at Loch Tummel sheep lands. My ancestors emigrated to Australia where land was available, but their old ways of farming did not suit the low fertility of ancient eroded soils and there was much boom and bust as they learned to adjust. My family moved to country towns in Victoria in the 1920s and some of their farm became Wyperfeld National Park. During my childhood I lived on farms, one of which later became amalgamated into a large orchard. Over the last decade I have replanted abandoned dairy and grazing farm land in the Clarence River catchment of New South Wales as a native hardwood forest plantation and restored the streamside vegetation by fencing out grazing animals. The cycle of transformation following abandonment continues.

In the twentieth century the process of abandonment of rural landscapes has accelerated all over the world. Nearly 2,500 rural villages in Italy are depopulated, some semi-abandoned as the primary history of Italy in the twentieth century has been what followed the collision of poverty, urbanisation, mass emigration and natural disasters. These places were intrinsically linked to the surrounding countryside and ‘what is now at risk is Italy’s rural soul, source of the country’s identity’ (Needleman 2017, p. 15). Other abandoned landscapes just experience the
seasonal return of descendants for holidays, as in Kythera in Greece where there is a population of 3,000, but over 60,000 descendants in Australia following three waves of emigration in the twentieth century leaving an empty landscape (van Weerde 2016). It is predicted that 896 towns and villages across Japan will no longer be viable by 2040 causing what is referred to as ‘local extinction’ (Barrett 2018). In China in 2017, permanent urban residents accounted for 58 percent of the nation’s population, and the rate is expected to hit 60 percent by 2020 by which time it is predicted that more than 100 million farmers will have moved to cities (Lennon 2012). This migration process from rural areas is happening on all continents, and the loss of rural workers with their skills and knowledge of working the land is a major issue for maintenance of rural landscapes, leading to abandonment especially of marginal lands.

Disasters, both man-made like the failure of the Chernobyl nuclear reactor, and natural like volcanic eruptions or earthquakes also lead to abandonment and forced emigration. Drought and flood cause abandonment and relocation in many areas. Invasion and war cause rural populations to flee as in central Africa, Syria and Myanmar currently. Changes in government policies for subsidies for fuel, fertilisers and marketing also force farmers off the land leading to abandonment of often marginal land.

**Australian context of abandonment**

In Australia today, 90 percent of people are living in just 0.22 percent of the country’s land area. The vast empty land has 37 percent used for conservation and natural environments and 54 percent for livestock grazing on natural vegetation and modified pastures, mostly in the arid and semi-arid regions, while intensive agriculture of cropping and horticulture occupies only 4 percent (ABARES 2017). The sequence of exploration, settlement, retreat and abandonment, new uses/purposes can be observed in many parts of the continent.

Within Australia the maximum extent of population was in the late nineteenth century as migrants to the goldfields and inland towns established farms, but many of these in turn were abandoned due to droughts. The wheat belt of South Australia is a good example of this. Settlement in good years from 1875 to 1880 expanded as far north as Farina, the terminus for the Port Augusta railway 200 miles north of Port Pirie in saltbush country but then drought hit hard on the margins of the good earth and retreat followed, ebbing, dying and leaving at great social and economic loss a landscape of abandonment, ‘the scars of its momentary presence’ (Meinig 1970, p. 92). These landscapes are dotted with ruins – buildings, stone walls, fence posts, yards, and old plantings of shrubs and trees (often peppercorns).

![Figure 2: Abandoned wheat farm, south of Hawker, South Australia 2013 (photo by the author)](image-url)
Abandoned structures and their links to the wider landscape vanish, the tangible heritage, along with loss of knowledge about that place and its natural and cultural characteristics and idiosyncrasies, its intangible heritage.

The number of small towns has fallen by 1,000 throughout the twentieth century with a systematic shift in population towards larger centres (BITRE 2014, pp. 58-62). The 2016 census showed that only 8 percent of Australians live in farmlands, bush and deserts. Over the last five years the number of beef cattle farmers decreased 11 percent to 28,300, and dairy cattle farmers 14 percent to 11,200. The result is a demographic reorganisation of the rural landscape; away from the coastal zone fewer farmers are operating bigger landholdings and population is moving to bigger towns, while farmland areas near towns are dominated by urban overspill and rural lifestyle areas (Salt 2018).

Australians valued their natural landscapes above cultural ones and established the first national park, Royal National Park south of Sydney, New South Wales in 1879 only five years after Yellowstone was set aside in the USA. In the late nineteenth century scenic reserves, pleasure parks in cities and ‘beauty spots’ were reserved from sales of public land and many of these became the nuclei of modern national parks (Lennon 2014, p. 275). Heritage protection is only afforded to a small percentage of colonial estates and mostly building complexes rather than the whole cultural landscape where historic evidence of use and occupation of the natural features give a distinctive character which also provides memories and associations. In the past Australians had ‘country cousins’ but with the declining number of traditional family-based mixed produce farms, aggregations and the massive scale of agribusinesses, this connection to and sense of place is lost for the city populations (Lennon 2015, pp. 14-15). Is this increase in scale of farms less authentic in terms of form and design, materials and substance, use and function, new techniques and management systems? Is this physical change to the farming fabric acceptable to the wider society and does it include the intangible aspects of meanings and cultural values which have changed through time?

Since the Mabo decision of the High Court of Australia in 1992 on Native Title, there has been a rising understanding of Aboriginal connection to country and the deep intangible heritage of the continent’s landscapes. What seemed abandoned country to the invading settlers was a living landscape full of law and life for the Aboriginal inhabitants. ‘Country’ in Aboriginal English means the place where a person belongs and for Indigenous people their country is the sentient landscape in which the ancestral and living beings have a spiritual and physical presence and they have obligations to look after the landscape, its resources and sacred sites, birthing places, rock art and rock holes, by ‘keeping Country straight’ especially by use of small fires (Lennon 2018, p. 205). Too often the Aboriginal landscape without visible colonial presence usually from the pastoral grazing era is highlighted as the ‘natural’ world driven by ‘natural’ forces rendering invisible the colonial impact on Aboriginal communities, and the cultural authenticity of their landscapes. Despite depopulation, Aboriginal lands are not abandoned. The imprinting of colonial occupation on many Aboriginal lands has created a shared heritage.

**Heritage standards and conservation**

There are difficulties in translating standard or authorised heritage conservation practices, focused on the concepts of authenticity and integrity and their consequent management, to dynamic landscape contexts that involve processes such as abandonment, active farming aggregations or protected reserves.

Protected areas that have been resumed for conservation from leased pastoral lands sometimes contain farm buildings and associated structures. Some are restored to a previous appearance from a static past; some allowed to become archaeological sites and the associated yards and structures fall into ruin while the open areas revegetate. Where fire breaks are cut around buildings to stop wild fire, ephemeral tracks, yards and links to the wider landscape are demolished or forgotten. The people associated with these working landscapes are displaced or leave along with their knowledge and techniques. These landscapes become places of memory, cultural spaces associated with the intangible cultural heritage where the intangible
can acquire greater significance than fixed or semifixed elements (Lennon & Taylor 2012). This heritage of absence becomes relevant to those seeking connection with the landscape and its intangible aspects of meanings and values, such as decay, sadness, emptiness and loss of attachment, which change through time (Benjamin et al. 2007).

The landscape with its stories is a speaking land, a multi-vocal place, and there are now moral implications of recognising the depth of attachment felt by settler Australians to this invaded land (Read 1996) but traditional conservation mechanisms only protect certain aspects and are unable to assess the complexities. Seddon’s use of ‘sense of place’ for his local Swan River landscapes near Perth in 1970 was emulated in much landscape description across Australia, but it also invited the question ‘whose place?’ (Lennon 2017, p. 277). Displacement, as well as belonging, is among the answers. Displaced Aboriginal populations, displaced farm labourers, displaced forest workers, and their local villages. The commodification of rurality in some of Australia’s more scenic and accessible rural areas through both hobby farms or rural residential developments and aggregation of cropping lands has also resulted in the destruction of those authentic aspects which consumers find attractive, including traditional or historic farming landscapes, picturesque country towns, scenic rural environments, and perceptions of congenial and cohesive local communities (Tonts & Grieve 2002). It is often the intangible connections of authenticity that are lost and abandoned in this transformation. Another generation of new corners on hobby farms will bring new stories to the landscape masking or eliminating evidence of the former.

Authenticity is defined in the UNESCO Operational Guidelines as the ability of a place to meet conditions of cultural values ‘truthfully and credibly expressed through a variety of attributes including form and design, materials and substance, use and function, traditions, techniques and management systems, location and setting, language and other forms of intangible heritage, spirit and feeling, and other internal and external factors’ (UNESCO 2016, para. 82). While acknowledging that ‘spirit and feeling’ are difficult to apply to assessments, they are important indicators in communities maintaining traditions and cultural continuity. The Nara Document on Authenticity 1994, Article 11 stated that: ‘All judgements about values attributed to cultural properties as well as the credibility of related information sources may differ from culture to culture.’ The traditional focus on the conservation of material fabric was modified by the ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Vernacular Heritage, which advised that effective protection of the vernacular heritage was dependent on protecting the inter-generational transmission of the traditional knowledge that enables its endurance (Lennon 2012). These definitions of authenticity could be applied in assessments of abandonment in landscapes.

Abandoned farm or pastoral lands lose their integrity as cultural landscapes as they evolve into another category, that of protected areas or conservation reserves. For heritage assessments:

...integrity is a measure of the wholeness and intactness of the natural and/or cultural heritage and its attributes… Significant features should be in good condition, and the impact of deterioration processes controlled. A significant proportion of the elements necessary to convey the totality of the value conveyed by the property should be included… Relationships and dynamic functions present in cultural landscapes essential to their distinctive character should also be maintained. (UNESCO 2016, para. 88-90)

The integrity of the relationship between people and their landscape is what matters and that it is intact, not the landscape itself per se. By this definition, abandonment means that integrity is lost. For abandoned landscapes, the integrity of the previous relationships with the place must be able to be understood and interpreted. This integrity in the landscape remains as an historical imprint for a time, especially if memories of previous inhabitants are maintained but it is soon obliterated by regrowth of weeds, then shrubs and finally woodland or forest, or in some cases by fire and flood.

It is recognised that no area is totally pristine and that natural areas are in a dynamic state, and to some extent involved contact with traditional societies and local communities undertaking rural activities. But in Australia these activities have caused conflict with conservation managers of protected areas who regard cultural heritage as despoilation of natural heritage.
Management plans show that no grazing, logging, firewood gathering, mining or hunting is usually permitted. Aboriginal people reconnecting to culture or country are regarded as inhabiting landscapes of integrity often with intangible heritage, whereas the integrity of the heritage of the battling farmer with his genuine response to rural life, inherited vernacular architecture, or the contemporary architecture even if it is not aesthetic, is disregarded. The material evidence of the farming enterprise is ‘cleaned up’ by demolition on transfer of the land to conservation reserve status and the farmer moves away and the intangible heritage values of the place are lost. Some histories of this use have been recorded (Harrison 2004).

Abandoned farms in steep, wetter land along the Eastern Highlands, for example in the Otway and Strzelecki Ranges of Victoria, Australia, were repurchased by government and in the 1950s planted to hardwoods and managed as State Forest which have matured into valuable forests and become National Parks (Noble 1978). The evolution of these landscape shows the changing values from static farmland, abandoned tangible heritage, to replanted forest which in turn is revalued for nature conservation severing again the integrity of the intangible relationships between forest workers and their places. The multi-scaled often contradictory images of rural landscapes have ‘discursive power’ but what this means for people living on the land or displaced from it by the interconnections of production economics, government policies, climate change and natural resources in diversified landscapes is little known (Gorman-Murray et al. 2008, p. 48). This imagery affects heritage assessments of authenticity and integrity.

Definitions of integrity and authenticity require further amplification. Herb Stovel (2007, p. 23) summed up: ‘…authenticity may be understood as the ability of a property to convey its significance over time, and integrity understood as the ability of a property to secure or sustain its significance over time.’ The apparently static concept of integrity as intactness seems to contradict the need for cultural landscapes to maintain ‘dynamic functions… essential to their distinctive character’ (UNESCO 2016, para. 88). Change is dynamic with farms transforming into agribusinesses, trying new land uses and crops seasonally or being abandoned or incorporated into conservation reserves. Change itself is actually a part of landscape (Fairclough 2012), but if it is abandoned landscape in which the subtle traces of previous land use activities are retained, this evidence may be enough to maintain its authenticity. What we conserve depends on whether the observer is looking for the cultural process of landscape, which is dynamic, or for the visual experience, which takes place in a spatially static landscape amid the romance of ruins or ‘wilderness’. A cultural decision to abandon active management of a landscape may be based on economics, demography or government policies but the cessation of traditional methods is often a threat to biodiversity as invasive species takeover and spread or fuels build up causing wild fires. This process has been happening over the last thirty years in both Western countries and emerging economies at an accelerating rate as globalisation driven processes overturn and replace traditional often sustainable practices (Rotherham 2013).

**Changing approaches to heritage assessments**

Landscapes share the temporal dimension of heritage in their constant change and reassessment over time reflecting both individual and community values, with shared constructs forming the basis of community identity. People and landscape are intertwined as it is the social and creative activities that convert land into landscape. However, landscape that may be considered as abandoned and unproductive to the farmer may be for the naturalist or artist a regenerating place regaining its natural heritage values.

Landescape conservation in Australia has been influenced by changing perceptions of the relationship between nature and culture and has placed a higher value on natural heritage. In 1974 Australia joined The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage and ever since World Heritage has had an impact on Australians – in their legislation, in their tourism and in their concepts about nature and culture. The World Heritage listing of natural sites of global significance, such as the Great Barrier Reef, Uluru, Kakadu and the Tasmanian Wilderness reinforced the view that big landscapes had international value, even though the cultural values exhibited in such wild landscapes might have national heritage value (Lennon 2006). Conversely, the 1992 amendments to the World Heritage criteria, which
introduced cultural landscape categories, played a significant role in Australia in drawing attention to cultural values in the landscape. The concept of ‘place’ linking natural heritage and cultural values was applied in Australia through the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter. This enabled the conservation of an extensive place, a landscape with cultural significance resulting from aesthetic, historic, social, scientific and associative values through symbolic meanings given to it and natural heritage values. Article 6.2 of the Burra Charter requires that the policy for managing a place must be based on an understanding of its cultural significance. The purpose of the conservation policy is to state how the conservation of the place may best be achieved in the long and short term. Its aim is to retain the significance of the place. Article 13 states that co-existence of cultural values should be recognised, respected and encouraged, especially in cases where they conflict. Article 24 covers retaining associations and meanings, while Article 25 deals with interpretation which should explain the cultural significance of the place which may not be obvious (Australia ICOMOS 2013). These principles could easily be applied to assessments of abandoned landscapes.

The heritage assessment process with its methods steeped in historical evidence, narratives and memory and contemporary social value and perception counters ‘presentism’ and dominant political expediency. Moreover, thirty years on from officially recognising World Heritage, the Australian national legislation – Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, as amended in 2003 – has provision for assessing all the heritage values of a place. However, the fundamental dichotomy of views expressed by the World Heritage Committee expert bodies – IUCN for natural heritage and ICOMOS for cultural heritage – flows down to the local landscape level and enshrines the actual separation of nature and culture despite the intention of the Convention to protect cultural landscapes as the ‘combined works of nature and of man’ (Lennon 2014).

Ways of rural life and farm operations are evolving as is their material evidence. Martin and Patti (2009, p. 21) suggest that these landscapes should be regarded as habitat rather than settings in accordance with the heritage definition of authenticity. This would accommodate dynamic changes where uses and activities are still being transformed or adapted. The habitat approach to abandoned cultural landscapes gives pre-eminence to the reconfiguration of the cultural process allowing abandonment, decay and reconstruction to be valued as an intrinsic part of the cultural process. For aggregations of individual farms into large scale agribusinesses, some local communities retain their relationship to the land as their agricultural habitat, their living working landscape, and welcome changes. This process of continuous adaptation for those who still inhabit the landscape requires a different application of the attributes of authenticity and integrity to be dynamic, but these dynamics are often perceived as threats. Rather than assessing the farming landscape as one needing to be overcome, battled, tamed, brought into submission, it is a dynamic system of interrelated parts, where every action has cascading, often unintended consequences and complex repercussions and assessments need to capture this complexity.

Due to the biodiversity values of abandoned cultural landscapes such as species richness or range of habitats, they may be transferred to protected area reserves, which is a cultural decision to emphasise natural dynamics and even introduce rewilding techniques (Navarro & Pereira 2012). A more holistic evaluation and management of biodiversity-centered protected areas, where until recently cultural landscapes were rarely appreciated, is required. In Greece, cultural landscape features are outstanding constituents of protected areas, covering approximately 67 percent of Greece’s Natura 2000 network and Greek scholars have recently defined ‘culturalness’ for protected areas setting an arbitrary but practical threshold where protected areas having just over 50 percent cover of cultural landscape features and/or culturally modified habitat type cover are identified as ‘high culturalness sites’ (Vlami et al. 2017, p. 233). Analysis revealed that a remarkable proportion of cultural land cover and attributes co-exist with outstanding elements of biodiversity often located in traditional ‘open’ landscapes. The domestication of the landscapes in the Mediterranean region has led to varied, complex and dynamic multi-functional landscapes and modern changes have caused environmental degradation and alteration of human-nature relations at the local scale.
Protected areas must be managed for ‘culturalness’ if this landscape character and constituent attributes are to be conserved, and to highlight and practically promote a more holistic conservation approach (Agnoletti 2014). These cultural attributes of the landscape exhibit its authenticity. They may also act as a baseline from which to measure landscape change. An excellent case study is provided by Long Creek Mill, settlement site and tramway which are significant because they contain historical evidence of the last operating timber tramway (1928-47) in the NSW timber extraction industry. The site also has social values for the former residents and aesthetic values as part of the Border Ranges landscape. This is part of the Gondwana Rainforests of Australia World Heritage Area and in the western Border Ranges National Park, the catchment of Long Creek on the Levers Plateau is an identified NSW wilderness area. Such areas must be managed according to legislation to maintain their unmodified state, to evolve in the absence of human interference. Their cultural heritage values have been identified and assessed as of regional significance but this ‘culturalness’ conflicts with the natural area management objectives. Besides their intrinsic cultural value, these relics of forest management are also useful as benchmark sites from which to monitor rates and type of change of the surrounding forest cover. Plots could be established in which to measure annually the type, distribution and extent of regrowth of native vegetation on the former village site. The forest history records give some indication of the selective cutting of rainforest timber species for over 50 years. Using historical records is a necessary tool for forest managers to understand the dynamic processes of regeneration and regrowth of the forest, and the obliteration of relics of industrial occupation could be monitored as part of the condition reporting for the health of the World Heritage property. For the former residents of Long Creek and district the cultural values – social history and associations with the place – are paramount (Lennon 2002).

Today’s forests, even those with old-growth and wilderness values, are landscapes with evidence of Aboriginal occupation, early timber-getting, pastoral and agricultural occupation, mining, supervised logging and silvicultural practices. These activities have in turn shaped the distribution and density of timber species in the forests. The tangible heritage of the abandoned settlement and tramway are vanishing into dense regrowth, but the intangible heritage of records and memories has been kept. A more holistic approach to management would integrate natural and cultural values into a single continuum. Notwithstanding the recognition of cultural landscapes as a bridge between culture and nature, there is still official separation of nature and culture in legal assessments of significance with historic heritage regarded as cultural and natural heritage as ecological science (Taylor & Lennon 2011). A new exemplar
would emphasise human integration and embeddedness within a continuing co-adaptive ecological reality – an entanglement approach rather than maintaining the hyper-separated paradigm of ‘altered’ versus ‘pristine’.

In Australia there will be more abandoned land as the climate warms and rainfall decreases and marginal farmland is not productive. In 2005-06, the largest 30 percent of farms generated 82 percent of the value of agricultural operations, whereas the smallest 50 percent generated 7 percent, and of these the bottom 25 percent of broadacre farms has not recorded a profit in any year from 1988-89 to 2007-08 (Productivity Commission 2009, p. xii). In October 2018 the national government announced a major drought proofing package but in reality, farmers in marginal lands should exit and the land be left in the first phase of regeneration. Some of these lands will have heritage attributes and the conservation process should apply to their future management.

**Conclusion**

Australian landscapes are layered over ancient bedrock leaving evidence of previous eras and vegetation types; they have been occupied for millennia, are sentient and the result of entanglements rather than linear progressions to climax communities or binary associations of nature versus culture in dynamic systems. Indigenous Australians are connected to ‘country’, which is regarded as a ‘nourishing terrain …a place that gives and receives life …Not just imagined or representative, it is lived in and lived with’ (Rose 1996, p. 7). This knowledge-based local scale should be the basis of landscape management.

An abandoned landscape of today might have experienced many cycles over time – from long Aboriginal occupation to European explorers, colonial conquests and settler land uses, abandonment of these, reforestation, rewilding and heritage appreciation, tourism, Aboriginal repatriation and some limited new uses, even passive ones. For abandoned landscapes, the integrity of the previous relationships with the place must be able to be understood and interpreted. This authentic dynamism must be part of the cultural process of the conservation designation which should not have absolute or binary claims. Authenticity and integrity have been narrowly assessed based on historical narratives of change whereas an entangled, looped, evolutionary framework across temporal and spatial scales offer a means of understanding not only change, but also continuity in the rural landscape as habitat.

**Figure 4:** Native hardwood plantation on abandoned farmland in Tarra Valley, Strzelecki Ranges, Victoria 2018 (photo by the author)
Abandoned and productive rural lands provide valid attributes of landscapes and offer baselines from which to measure change. Human interventions on the land have been so powerful and widespread, but we cannot go back to an imagined state of harmony with ‘nature’. There is no alternative but to accept modified landscapes of entanglement, often with rich cultural associations (Lennon 2017, p. 284). Connectivity, entanglement of layered evidence in the landscape of varying scales and time periods, uncertainty and unpredictability are key issues to be considered in a wider approach to heritage assessment.

References

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Figure 5: Landscape of entanglement: wind farms over rich farm land with World Heritage Wet Tropics forest in background 2009 (photo by the author)


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