

Practice Note: Cultural Landscapes

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1. Purpose

The shadow of climate and ecological crisis – evidenced in rising sea level, ocean acidification, deforestation, severe weather events, and species loss – is increasingly challenging heritage concepts of care, custodianship, and inheritance. Such dramatic changes are also impacting quality of human life and wellbeing. In order to respond to such events, there is a need for joined-up thinking and better connecting of people and their environment. The concept of 'cultural landscape' can contribute to this work because it supports a holistic approach across all values of social-environmental systems, as well as recognising the dynamic and continuing processes of heritage and landscape.

2. Scope

This Practice Note focuses on the care, safeguarding, and associated practices of cultural landscapes that are important to communities, to present and future generations, and to the sustainability of our planet. It is intended to be applicable to all Australian cultural landscapes, no matter their size, scale, location (landscape and/or waterscape), levels of significance (i.e., local, regional, national, and/or world heritage significance), or tenure designation. This Practice Note places particular emphasis on the recognition of the interconnections of cultural and natural heritage systems, or social-ecological systems, in the management of cultural landscapes. The Practice Note should be read and applied in conjunction with the Australia ICOMOS *Burra Charter* (2013) and the Australian Natural Heritage Charter (Australian Heritage Commission 2002).

3. Intended audience

The intended audiences for this Practice Note are broad, encompassing Australia ICOMOS members, practitioners, consultants, First Nations and local communities, government and non-government organisations, students, and researchers, both within the conservation field and beyond. We recognise that different stakeholders and rights-holders will have different roles and responsibilities in the safeguarding of important cultural landscapes. This will require collaboration based on respectful dialogue and mutual obligation.

4. The idea of cultural landscape

4.1. Background

The Australia ICOMOS *Burra Charter* recognises that place ('a geographically defined area') encompasses cultural landscapes (Australia ICOMOS 2013, Article 1.1: Explanatory Note). The meaning of cultural landscape in the UNESCO World Heritage definition is broader and emphasises properties that represent the interaction of nature and people, often reflecting sustainable land use practices and spiritual relationships with nature over a long period of time (UNESCO 2021, Article 47). Thus, in heritage management practice, the application of a cultural landscape approach is useful when the heritage values of a place demonstrate significant associations between natural and cultural heritage in both tangible and intangible ways. This approach is particularly helpful when identifying, documenting, assessing, and managing the place-based heritage of Australian Indigenous peoples, but is also relevant to a diversity of historic rural and urban landscapes.

Cultural landscape is a concept widely acknowledged and applied in heritage theory and practice. The concept of cultural landscape has changed over time, and evokes a range of diverse understandings in different regions of the world, reflecting different academic disciplines and regional contexts. For the purpose of this Practice Note, we have adopted a meaning of cultural landscape that encompasses four dimensions: cultural landscape as place; as practice; as process; and as management:

- **Cultural landscape as place.** The idea of a cultural landscape applies to distinctive landscapes that have been transformed by the dynamic interactions between humans and the natural environment over time. Cultural landscapes encompass tangible and intangible heritage attributes and values which reflect people's long-term relationship with the land in the context of the wider geographic, social, and economic setting. The concept of a cultural landscape can be applied at different scales, from parks and gardens to large urban, industrial, agricultural, and archaeological areas. The identification of a cultural landscape as a heritage place reinforces the attachment of people to place, and the importance of a landscape to the identity of a community. Delineating a cultural landscape requires the identification of a 'boundary' (for instance a water catchment boundary or a surveyed land parcel), however recent approaches reflecting human perceptions of a geographic area suggest that a more nuanced practice should be considered. Thus, 'landscape components', 'serial properties' and 'buffer zones' may be appropriate concepts to describe a cultural landscape.
- **Cultural landscape as practice.** 'Landscape practices' identify those local land techniques and intangible heritage that modify the natural landscape (geography, hydrography, land cover, etc.) over time. Landscape practices may include traditional and contemporary values and perspectives that represent people's long-term relationship with the land. In 'continuing' living/working cultural landscapes, traditional management practices are still in use, for instance, cultural burning, a particular way to prune trees, or to manage a vineyard. Local practices are connected to the distinctiveness of regions, related to local micro-climates, and represent their real essence. They also need to adapt over time, for example to new locations, new technologies, or a changing climate. To maintain landscape heritage, attributes, and landforms, the knowledge, cultural meanings, and traditional practices of local custodians should be actively safeguarded.
- **Cultural landscape as process** is a construct used to understand the unfolding of human-ecological systems over time. This includes changing perceptions, transformations in the landscape, as well as evolving spatial and physical attributes such as land use and settlement patterns. The approach acknowledges the profound interrelationships of social and natural systems, their complex dynamics, symbiotic interactions, and capacity to evolve and adapt to change. It also focuses on the cultural meaning of these landscape processes in the context of natural, social, and economic forces and events, both internal and external.

- **Cultural landscape as management.** Cultural landscape can incorporate a wide range of heritage management activities (including methods and tools). These can include customary approaches, landscape characterisation, overlaying methodologies, landscape archaeology, biographical approaches, literary representation, aesthetic analysis, participatory engagement, the World Heritage approach, approaches to protected areas, as well as approaches to the cultural landscapes of outer space. Given the range of possible approaches, it is common to use multiple methods and evidence-based methodologies in undertaking cultural landscape studies and assessment, although social science methods are particularly important when managing dynamic cultural landscapes. The Burra Charter provides an overview on a wide range of heritage management tools and approaches that can be applied in the adaptive management of cultural landscapes.

The diversity of cultural landscapes in natural, rural, peri-urban, and urban areas requires complex and integrated approaches able to capture their authenticity, distinctiveness, and values, relevant to the ways in which they might be managed, cared for, and safeguarded. Thus, the four meanings of cultural landscape as places, practices, processes, and management can be applied in a combined conceptual framework to support in-depth understanding and their effective description and designation. Thinking about cultural landscapes in the ways outlined here provides a practical way to link their different meanings and spatial diversity in their identification and management.

4.2. Application in Australia

In Australia, all parts of the continent can be considered a cultural landscape, because of the long and continuing meanings of Country to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It can be useful to recognise that history (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) has taken place across all parts of the landscape and the form of the present landscape is the expression of long-term and complex relationships between people and the environment. Some pasts have touched the landscape only lightly, while some places of activity are marked by imposing structures or are commemorated for their association with important events or communities.

- **Background.** Australia ICOMOS has engaged with the concept of cultural landscapes since the 1980s. In 1988, the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter expanded the notion of 'place' to include 'landscapes modified by human activity' and, in the same year, Australia ICOMOS hosted a conference on the topic of cultural landscapes (see Historic Environment 1989). The then Australian Heritage Commission's approach to listing cultural landscapes involved describing processes related to criteria, assessment of significance, boundaries, and integrity. In 1992, archaeologist Isabel McBryde, drawing on her knowledge and research into Australian Aboriginal exchange networks, was instrumental in advocating for the 'Associative Cultural Landscape' category to be included in World Heritage guidance and for criterion (iii) to be revised so that living cultures were recognised.
- **World Heritage categories in Australian practice.** In Australian cultural landscape management, it can be useful to think about the way certain categories (derived from UNESCO World Heritage meanings) can be used to frame the different attributes, character, and values of a cultural landscape. The categories that are most useful are 'designed landscape', 'continuing or living landscape' and 'associative landscape'. See illustrations below. In this Practice Note, the World Heritage subcategory of 'relict (or fossil) landscape' is not recommended since all Australian landscapes have continuing connection to Country for Traditional Owners / Custodians. Describing Indigenous Country as 'relict' (or 'fossil') perpetuates a denial of Aboriginal rights, responsibilities, and continuing culture. The landscape continues to live even if material evidence, such as from past forestry, mining or transport, are present.

Figure 1. Designed Landscape: those that are created intentionally such as gardens, parks, garden suburbs, city landscapes, ornamental lakes, water storages, or campuses.

Image: Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne. (Source: Royal Botanic Gardens)



Figure 2. Continuing or Living Landscape: those that display an evolved system of past and ongoing land use, forms, and features. They can include modern active farms, vineyards, plantations, or mines.

Image: Barossa Valley cultural landscape (Source: Barossa Grape and Wine)



Figure 3. Associative Landscape: landscapes or landscape features that represent religious, artistic, sacred, or other cultural associations to individuals or communities.

Image: Uluru is recognised on the UNESCO World Heritage list as an Associative Landscape for its connections with the Anangu Traditional Owners / Custodians. (Photo: S. Johnston)



5. Principles

Place

1. The Australia ICOMOS *Burra Charter* recognises that cultural landscapes are geographically defined places, and encompass flora, fauna, geology, hydrology, cultural features, and their wider geographic, social, economic, and political dimensions.
2. The importance of a cultural landscape is determined by identifying and assessing its significant attributes (or features) and values.
3. The *Burra Charter* process can be applied and adapted to recognising, managing, and safeguarding cultural landscapes as heritage places.

Practice

1. Cultural landscapes are the result of the combination of cultural practices, on-going biological and land use processes, and history.
2. The meanings of cultural landscapes derive from the ordinary interactions of people and nature in the landscape and the ecological knowledge expressed by Indigenous and local communities

Process

1. Cultural landscapes are socially constructed living entities, and are the product of change, dynamic processes, and diverse interactions between people and nature through time.
2. The connection between people and nature in the landscape is complex, multifaceted, and cumulative. Thus, human–nature connections are distinctive to each place and time.
3. Australia's cultural landscapes (inclusive of waterscapes) are continuing living landscapes that retain connections, associations, and meanings with communities of people.

Management

1. People's rights, values, and ownership of traditional knowledge systems and intellectual property are recognised, respected, and central to understanding and managing cultural landscapes in Australia.
2. Contextual, integrated, and participatory frameworks, including transparent decision-making and community engagement, are critical for the effective and sustainable management of cultural landscapes.
3. The thorough analysis and mapping of the strengths, opportunities, threats, and vulnerabilities of cultural landscapes identifies challenges and benefits to present and future generations of local stakeholders.

4. Recognition of and respect for local cultural heritage, ecological knowledge, innovations and practices that contribute to the resilience and adaptability of cultural landscapes supports the effective management and governance of their biocultural diversity.
5. The dynamic nature of cultural landscapes requires the application of adaptive management approaches with continuous monitoring and learning that support effective stewardship.
6. Cultural landscapes are socio-ecological systems that require management to be integrated into the wider bio-regional context.

6. Cultural Landscapes and the Burra Charter Process

The Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter Process outlines the steps in planning and managing a place of cultural significance. This process is represented in the Burra Charter flow chart (Burra Charter 2013. p.10). While the Charter recognises that place is inclusive of cultural landscapes, cultural landscape planning and management nevertheless require additional considerations than those set out by the Burra Charter Process. The table below displays the applications of the Burra Charter Process to cultural landscapes and their relationships with the Charter’s steps. The list is not exhaustive, and different landscapes will require specific tailored analysis.

The Burra Charter process can be represented as a cyclical adaptive management process engaging the local communities in all its steps. Adaptive management involves implementing a management strategy, closely monitoring its effects, and then adapting future actions based on the observed results.



Figure 4. The Burra Charter as an Adaptive Management Cycle

Source: Elisa Palazzo and Stephanie Johnston 2022, adapted from Australia ICOMOS 2013.

Table 1. Applying The Burra Charter process to cultural landscapes

Burra Charter Process	Burra Charter Steps	Additional Considerations	Tools and Techniques
Understand significance	1. Understand the place Define the place and its extent Investigate the place: its history, use, associations, fabric <i>Articles 5-7, 12, 26</i>	- Identify character, important cultural and natural attributes (tangible and intangible components), and values - Understand the connections between landscape attributes and values, including associations - Understand the ways cultural and natural attributes and values interconnect - Understand quality of life and other benefits (e.g., socio-economic) - Understand the wider setting and social, environmental, economic, and political context of the landscape	- Community engagement - Online engagement - Background studies - Field survey - Overlay mapping - Cultural mapping - GIS tools
	2. Assess Cultural Significance Assess all values using relevant criteria Develop a statement of significance <i>Article 26</i>	- Assess cultural and natural values in an integrated way - Incorporate Indigenous & local community perspectives - Where values are contested, incorporate multiple viewpoints - Incorporate landscape integrity and authenticity - Reach a reasonable degree of consensus through participatory planning and stakeholder consultations regarding what values to conserve and which attributes carry values	- GIS mapping - Landscape capability analysis - McHargian analysis - Viewshed analysis
Develop policy	3. Identify all Factors and Issues Identify obligations arising from significance Identify future needs, resources, opportunities & constraints & condition <i>Articles 6, 12</i>	- Consider wider landscape factors which can positively and negatively impact on significance - Determine boundaries - Analyse limits of acceptable change - Assess the vulnerability of attributes to socio-economic pressures and impacts of climate change	SWOT analysis
	4. Develop Policy <i>Articles 6-13, 26</i>	Integrate values and their vulnerability status into a wider framework of urban and regional development, including indicating what requires careful attention to planning, design, and implementation of development projects	

Manage in accordance with policy		- Decide limits of acceptable change - Conservation policy should address the whole landscape as well as significant components, connections, associations	
	5. Prepare a Management Plan Define priorities, resources, responsibilities & timing Develop implementation actions <i>Articles 14-28</i>	- Develop a plan which incorporates long-term (>30 years) aspirations, including conflict resolution methods and management of change - Prioritise policies and actions for conservation and development	
	6. Implement the Management Plan <i>Articles 26-34</i>	Establish the appropriate partnerships and local management frameworks to deliver actions and develop mechanisms for the coordination and funding of the various activities between different actors, public, private, and civic	- PPGIS - EoH 2.0 (international management effectiveness tool)
	7. Monitor the Results & Review the Plan <i>Article 26</i>	- Take baseline measurements from which to monitor and assess change at specified intervals - Respond to change with adaptive management - Analyse results in relation to UN SDGs	UN SDGs

7. Common issues in understanding and conserving cultural landscapes

Issue 1: Can the concept of cultural landscape be applied in urban and peri-urban areas?

The concept of cultural landscapes has broad applications and can be used to identify and manage heritage places within natural, rural, peri-urban, and urban areas. The latter may also include, for instance, industrial complexes, Indigenous places, and even maritime sites within urban environments.

Guidance

UNESCO's *Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape* (or 'HUL approach') addresses the challenge of managing heritage in dynamic urban environments by drawing on the broader conceptual frameworks of cultural landscape (UNESCO 2021) and Sustainable Development Goals (UN 2015), as well as the *Burra Charter's* concept of 'places of cultural significance'. The approach has been developed for implementation in all cities, not just those on the World Heritage List, and was recognised by the Australian Government in 2011.

The objective of the HUL approach is to align socio-economic goals (the drivers of change) with the goals of conservation in urban and peri-urban areas. The approach shifts the perception of heritage from constraint to asset, requiring full integration in the city's development. This requires, at a minimum: 1) the development of community engagement, planning and knowledge, and regulatory and financial tools, and 2) undertaking comprehensive landscape scale surveys and participatory engagement to reach consensus on which values to conserve, assessing their vulnerability to socio-economic and climate change factors, integrating all this into a wider city development framework, and establishing partnerships and frameworks to coordinate activities with public and private actors.

In practice

CASE STUDY 1: Applying the cultural landscape framework to a dynamic urban environment

Issue: The historic City of Ballarat in Victoria is one of Australia's fastest growing regional cities.

Solution: Ballarat joined UNESCO's HUL pilot in 2013 to better integrate heritage in the social and economic future of the city. The city undertook whole-of-city participatory community engagement to identify diverse social/cultural values and evolved ways of seeing and managing the city as a cultural landscape.

Action: This has led to the elevation of heritage and culture in the city's strategic vision, economic, tourism, and cultural plans, while new contextual assessments beyond narrower understandings and boundaries of heritage and planning have become possible, such as skyline and sightlines, landscape characterisation, and social values. New localised interpretative frameworks to tell Ballarat's many layered stories have also been introduced.

Reference: Historic Urban Landscape Ballarat (<http://www.hulballarat.org.au/>)

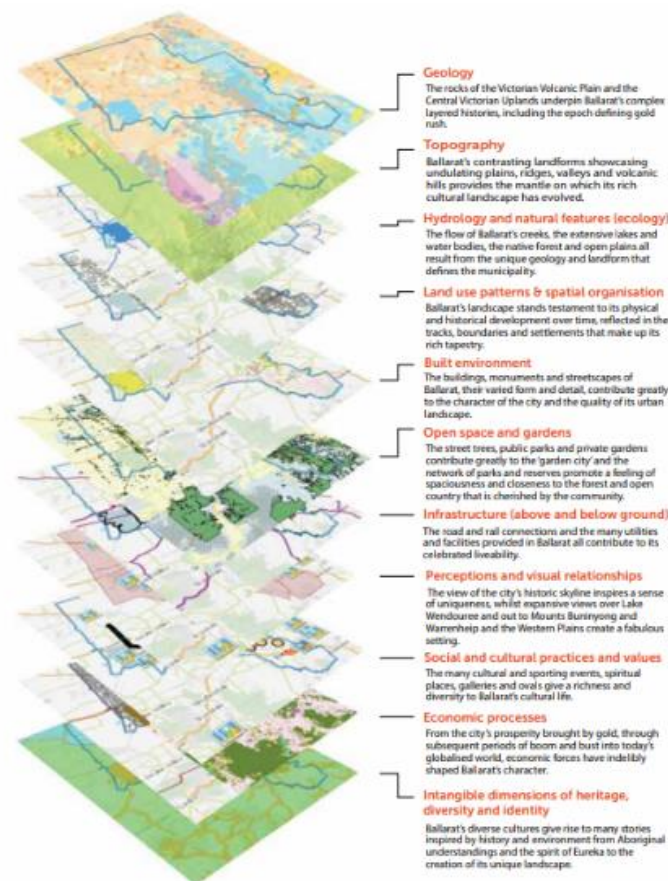


Figure 5. Ballarat's Geographic Information Systems (GIS) tools combined with a range of methods, such as landscape characterisation and participatory engagement, have been effective for understanding the city's layered cultural landscape (Source: [City of Ballarat](#)).

CASE STUDY 2: Impact on cultural landscape values at Warrigal farm, Runcorn, outer Brisbane, Queensland

Issue: There is competition for urban fringe land for housing which completely destroys tangible heritage of patterns of market gardens (fences and structures) and intangible cultural heritage expressed, for example, in street names of original farmers, and their family memories.

Solution: Identifying the cultural landscape of these farms in heritage overlays would trigger better designs of greenfield developments and incorporate productive landscapes. Other options for subsidising urban farms may be available to encourage local farm gate enterprise.

Action: Apply zoning to protect this living landscape as a productive farm.

Reference: J Lennon, in L Scazzosi and P. Branduini (2020).



Figure 6. Urban farmland surrounded by suburbia, Runcorn, Brisbane, 2017. *Source:* Google Earth.



Figure 7. Warrigal Farm, Runcorn, salad vegetable crops, November 2018. *Source:* J. Lennon.

Issue 2: What approaches are applicable to understanding and assessing cultural landscapes?

Understanding and assessing cultural landscapes is a context-dependent practice. The selection of the most appropriate approach will depend on the form of each cultural landscape, the specific socio-ecological context, and the long-term management objectives. In Australia there are several guidelines concerning heritage management. However, relatively few specifically address cultural landscapes, such as *Landscapes of Cultural Heritage Significance: Assessment Guidelines* (Heritage Council of Victoria 2015), and *Cultural Landscapes: A Practical Guide to Park Management* (NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service 2010) (see case studies 3 and 4). As presented above, The Australia ICOMOS *Burra Charter* process can be applied and adapted to cultural landscapes.

Several First Nations communities are applying innovative cultural landscape approaches in ways that are specific to their situations and needs. For example, a ‘generative listening’ approach is based on a need for an open mind, open heart, and open will to connect with others and for mutual understanding.

Guidance

The application of approaches to understand and assess cultural landscapes must conform with the principles of established international protocols. For instance, rights-based approaches, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), heritage impact assessment, and the ICPP climate change adaptation principles. Moreover, the other international conventions adopted by Australia should always be considered, for example the Convention on Biodiversity.

Further recommendations in applying cultural landscape assessment approaches include: the promotion of co-design approaches in collaboration with relevant rights-holders and stakeholders; the inclusion of a plurality of knowledges, experiences, values, and multiple approaches; the recognition of intellectual property and moral rights of Traditional Owners and local communities; and the inclusion of cultural sensitivity protocols, with particular attention to data management and information.

In practice

CASE STUDY 3: Integrating the management of natural and cultural heritage within protected areas

Issue: Traditionally, the management of natural and cultural heritage within Australia’s protected areas has been undertaken separately and with little crossover.

Solution: The publication *Cultural Landscapes: A Practical Guide for Park Management* (2010) was prepared by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service to address this issue. It is based on the application of a cultural landscape approach.

Action: Once clear management objectives are established, then the following steps can be implemented:

1. Engage community
2. Gather information
3. Identify places, landscapes, and values
4. Map heritage
5. Plan for managing cultural landscape values
6. Integrate into the existing management framework
7. Monitor and review.

Reference: Cultural Landscapes: A Practical Guide for Park Management (NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service 2010)

(<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/cultureheritage/20100052CulturalLandscapes.pdf>)

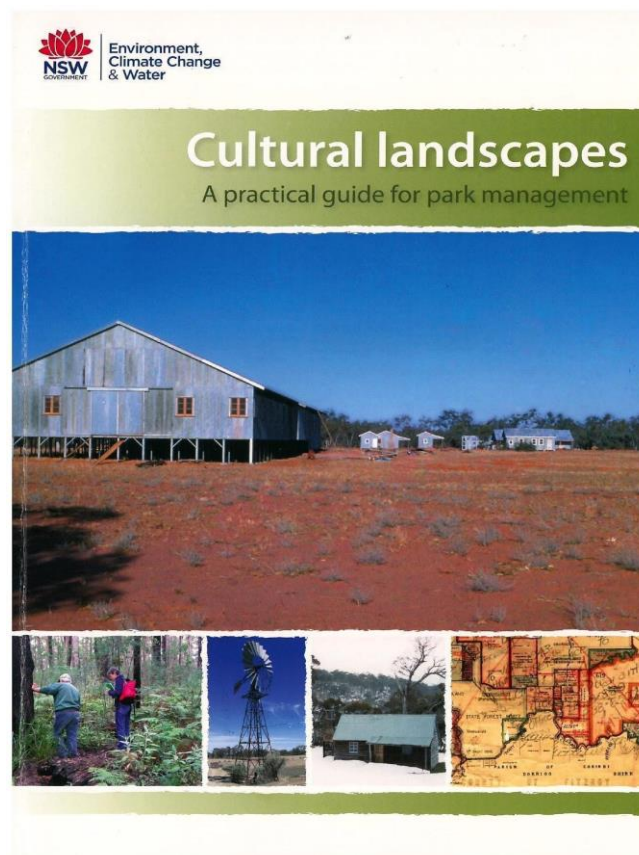


Figure 8. Practical guidance document for applying cultural landscapes to protected areas in NSW.
Source: NSW NPWS, 2010

Issue 3: What legal and customary systems can be used to conserve and safeguard the attributes and values of cultural landscapes?

Australia is a federation organised in three tiers of government – at federal, state/territory, and local levels. Thus, the administrative system that enables heritage management is complex and fragmented.

Legal mechanisms available for stewardship and protection of cultural landscapes relate to the three tiers of government and across several national and state departments focusing on specific aspects of the landscape, such as their natural, First Nations and colonial/historic heritage. Navigating the tiers of policy and administration is complex.

Guidance

At national and state/territory levels, cultural landscape specific legislation and policies are underrepresented, while the term 'cultural landscape' is seldomly used in heritage management. Nevertheless, many landscapes – both cultural and natural – have been recognised in the National Heritage List and State/Territory registers. Corresponding Conservation Management Plans or Plans of Management have therefore varying degrees of statutory authority.

There are a range of mechanisms available to Local Governments to protect and safeguard cultural landscapes, although these may vary considerably between councils. Such mechanisms can include statutory heritage inventories; planning schemes that recognise heritage/significant landscape areas and related planning controls; development control policies; and the employment of appropriately skilled heritage officers to ensure these mechanisms are effectively applied. Key issues within local government systems can include: a lack of take-up of the heritage roles and responsibilities; inconsistent compliance provisions and common standards; inadequate processes for public participation; and segregation of First Nations, colonial/historic, and natural heritage schemes.

Cultural landscapes are associated with local traditional and customary systems of laws, practices, and customs that are intrinsic to the life of First Nations people and local communities. They can include conventions accepted as legal requirements or rules of conduct, as well as established patterns of behaviour. A customary system can only be understood through the participation of the relevant communities, which can include the participation of First Nations people, ethnic communities, and religious groups.

In practice

CASE STUDY 4: Legal systems applied to the Adelaide Park Lands and City Layout

Issue: Despite establishment of the Adelaide Park Lands Act 2005 and National Heritage Listing in 2007 the Adelaide Park Lands and City Layout faces ongoing conservation and management challenges:

- A lack of coherence between National, State, and local legislative frameworks
- A lack of shared policy for multiple land managers
- The planning system is dictating changes to cultural landscape management policy
- A lack of public scrutiny of heritage impact assessments including impacts on Kaurna Country; and
- Special state legislation can override the Adelaide Park Lands Act (eg New Women's and Children's Hospital Bill 2022, Adelaide Oval Redevelopment and Management Act 2011 and South Australian Motor Sport Act 1984).

Solutions:

- Establish the carrying capacity for the Adelaide Park Lands consistent with the protection of National Heritage values
- Undertake a strategic assessment under the EPBC Act 1999 to investigate how City, State and Commonwealth systems can achieve greater coherence in the protection and management of the cultural landscape
- Make heritage impact assessments prepared by relevant heritage experts publicly available.

Action: A conservation management plan consistent with National Heritage management principles is currently being prepared by the City of Adelaide.

Reference: <https://indaily.com.au/inreview/design/2021/11/03/where-is-our-garden-city-going/>

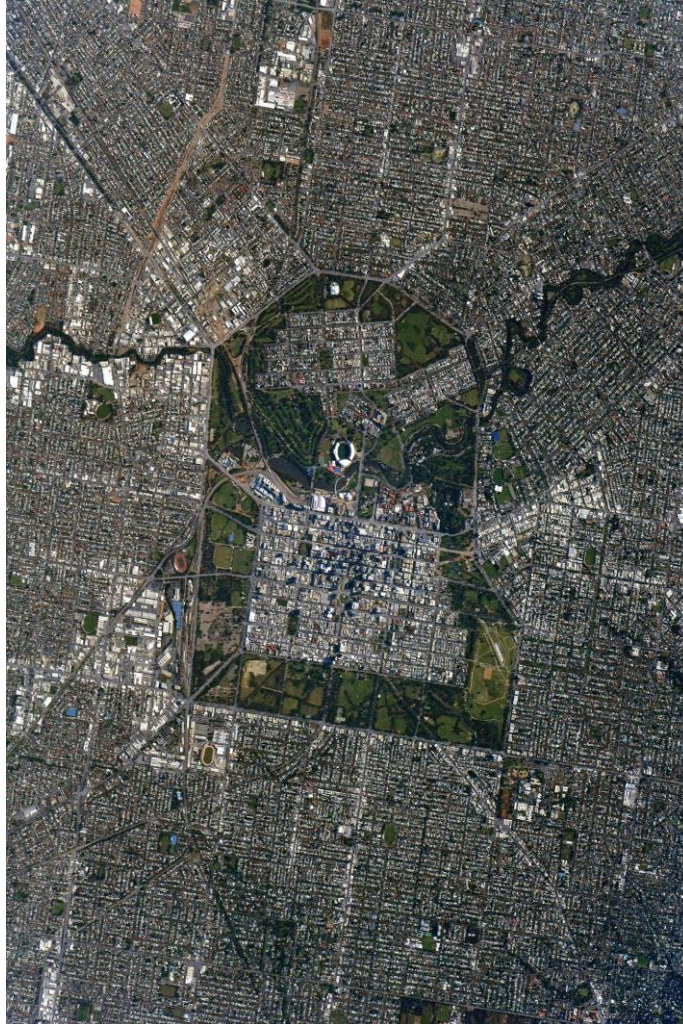


Figure 9. Adelaide Park Lands and city layout viewed from space (Source: NASA)

Issue 4: What are serial cultural landscapes?

A serial cultural landscape comprises two or more places that are not contiguous and which collectively work to illustrate an important heritage theme or narrative. For example, the World Heritage listed *Budj Bim Cultural Landscape* comprises three separate places, which together contain one of the world's most extensive, oldest, and significant aquaculture systems (case study 7).

Guidance

It is notable that many Australian heritage inventories, including Australia's National Heritage List, do not recognise serial listings. This can be an issue when the combined heritage attributes and significance of a serial cultural landscape are recognised to have greater values than the sum of its parts. That is, the heritage significance of any one component in the landscape will not be able to convey the significance of the group of components as a whole. The identification and recognition of all heritage places in a serial cultural landscape (e.g., rock art sites, agricultural and industrial heritage sites; and convict sites)

enable a comprehensive understanding of their combined values and the protection of the entire heritage system, rather than single heritage items.

In practice

CASE STUDY 5: Applying serial listing in managing and protecting cultural landscapes

Issue: The application of serial listing to the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape.

Solution: Budj Bim Cultural Landscape comprises three components: Budj Bim National Park and Lake Condah Mission, Kurtonitj, and Tyrendarra. The components contain a diversity of attributes of the aquaculture system, (i.e., Gunditjmara knowledge and practices; and the features themselves – channels, weirs, ponds) that collectively convey the outstanding values of the place (i.e., exceptional testimony of cultural traditions, knowledge, and practices; and one of the world's most extensive and oldest aquaculture systems). Thus, heritage significance was the basis of the serial listing.

Action: Budj Bim Cultural Landscape was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2019.

Reference: Budj Bim Cultural Landscape (UNESCO 2019) (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1577/>)

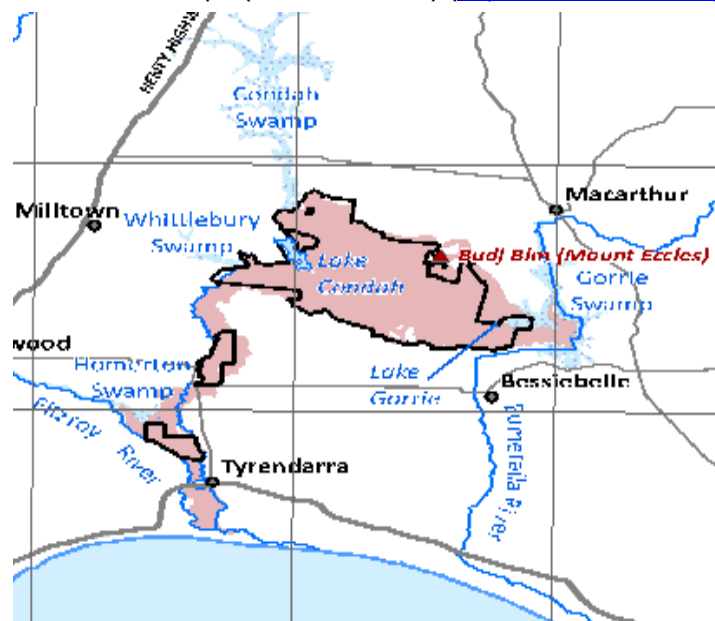


Figure 10. Map showing the three serial components of the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape World Heritage property (Source: WH Nomination Dossier)

Issue 5: Are the World Heritage categories for cultural landscapes applicable in Australia?

The 1992 UNESCO World Heritage Convention (article 1) defines 'cultural landscapes' as a 'cultural properties' that are the combined works of nature and people. Three categories of cultural landscape are defined in the Operational Guidelines: 'landscape designed and created intentionally by man (sic)' (such as parks, gardens, and parklands), 'organically evolved landscape' (including the two subcategories, 'relict (or fossil) landscape', and 'continuing or living landscape'), and 'associative landscape' (a landscape predominantly valued for its intangible heritage).

Guidance

Initially these categories were strictly applied to cultural landscapes – that is, each cultural landscape was identified as predominantly belonging to one of the categories or subcategories. However, in more recent heritage practice, these categories are used to understand the diverse attributes and values of a heritage place, recognising that most cultural landscapes may include designed, living, and associative elements.

In practice

CASE STUDY 6: Applying the designed, continuing, and associative categories to Strawberry Hill at Barmup, Western Australia

Issue: Are the UNESCO World Heritage cultural landscape categories applicable to all cultural landscapes?

Solution: Strawberry Hill farm sits on Menang Noongar Country above King George Sound at a place called Barmup, meaning 'place of tall trees'. Its soils are influenced by the granite and gneiss rocks, Aboriginal land management, and cultivation since early settlement. It has a mild climate.

- The landscape includes farm buildings, gardens, and fields (**Designed landscape**)
- It has a history of Aboriginal use and colonial settlement, including a garden with an extant orchard dating from the 1830s, and it is a tourism destination (**Continuing landscape**)
- It is part of Aboriginal Country with complex Indigenous meanings (**Associative landscape**)
- The recent restoration of a creek has involved planting of native species to create a riparian 'wild garden', undertaken for biodiversity conservation reasons (**Designed landscape**).

Action: A Cultural Landscape Management Plan has been prepared by the National Trust.

Reference: Strawberry Hill at Barmup (National Trust WA)

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/places/strawberry-hill/>



Figure 11. Strawberry Hill homestead situated within a designed, continuing, and associative landscape. The signature tall redgum trees (Marri, *Corymbia calophylla*) frame the buildings (Source: Caroline Grant).

Issue 6: How can we understand and protect the interactions between culture and nature within landscapes?

Cultural landscapes are complex social-ecological systems where anthropogenic and natural aspects of the environment are intertwined in long-lasting dynamics. To understand these bio-cultural interrelationships, systems-thinking is required. In Australia, cultural heritage management and natural heritage management are often situated within different administrative and legislative silos. However, many First Nations and local communities do not make this distinction, and have a holistic view of landscape heritage. Thus, the protection of cultural landscapes in Australia can be linked to the local ecological knowledge and wisdom held by local communities, and the shared values and perspectives associated with each place. First Nations people's views, as well as those of all local communities, can make beneficial contributions to understandings of cultural landscapes where they do not emphasise the nature and culture divide.

Guidance

This approach has significant practical applications in identifying bio-cultural landscape values. For instance, local perspectives on water management can reveal other ecological aspects of the landscape, such as the intrinsic sustainability of traditional pastoralism and settlement systems, or the impact of climate change on the hydrological system, as well as other spiritual and cultural values. Moreover, interactions and engagement with the local communities of traditional landscape custodians can reveal the role of cultural rights and responsibilities, as well as the rights of nature.

Understanding bio-cultural landscapes also requires trans-disciplinary expertise. That is, the integration of different academic disciplines across the natural and social sciences (ecology, geology, hydrology, geography, history, architecture, archaeology, etc.) with local traditional knowledge systems of First Nations and other communities.

In practice

CASE STUDY 7: Biological and cultural interactions and long-term adaptation in the continuing landscape of the McLaren Vale, South Australia

Issue: The ecosystem services generated by long-lasting interactions of culture and nature in the landscape are not recognised at the planning level.

Solution: The identification and mapping of landscape practices that sustain the biocultural landscape can inform the definition of sustainable landscape management strategies. Understanding the role of farmers and traditional owners in generating long-term adaptive capacity provides opportunities to increase systemic resilience in facing climate and economic change.

Action: Broader investment into biocultural assets at the scale of the farms can be recognised by supporting experimental forms of land management, e.g., novel governance approaches on the model of bio-districts and agricultural parks experimented in Europe able to bridge the gap between planning governance and landscape practices (Palazzo and Bardsley 2021; Bardsley, Palazzo, and Stringer 2018).

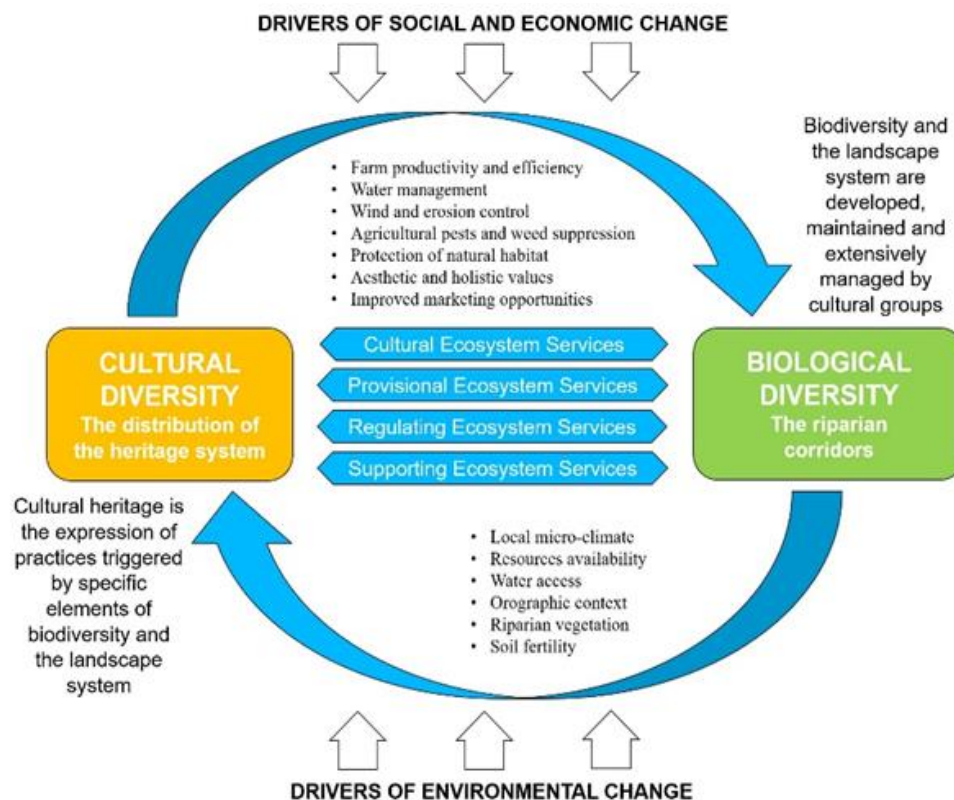


Figure 12. Drivers of social and economic change (Source: Elisa Palazzo in Palazzo and Bardsley 2021)

Issue 7: What are the issues associated with managing cultural landscapes in their wider settings and broader social ecological systems?

Cultural landscapes are not isolated or discrete heritage places. They sit within wider settings and broader social-ecological systems (e.g., related to geography, hydrology, land-use patterns, scenery, transport networks, and communities). Whilst wider settings can refer to the patterns and character that extend beyond the physical boundaries of a designated cultural landscape, it can also mean the wider social, economic, and political contexts. In the UNESCO World Heritage terminology, the phrase 'factors affecting the property' is used to refer to such matters.

Guidance

Wider contexts and factors affecting the property are important considerations in the governance and management of each heritage place. An obvious example relates to water, which can be both a natural and cultural attribute of a heritage place. Water is a significant part of many industrial, urban, and agricultural landscapes – protecting the values of such places requires an understanding of the broader hydrological system within which each such landscape is situated. Thus, for example, a dam constructed upstream of a designated agricultural landscape can have both positive and negative impacts on the attributes and values of that particular cultural landscape.

Wider contexts are an important consideration in assessing the impact of development on the heritage values of a cultural landscape. There can be a tendency to treat developments outside of a cultural landscape as irrelevant to the heritage values of that place. However, such developments can have significant impacts (both positive and negative) on the place and its values.

Finally, the management of the wider settings of a cultural landscape typically require collaboration between public and private landowners, and between different tiers of and areas of responsibility in government.

In practice

CASE STUDY 8: Recognising and managing all values on the Tasman Peninsula / Turrakana, south-east Tasmania

Issue: In 1830, Port Arthur penal settlement was established to use excellent timber resources for shipbuilding and general construction. Convict outstations were developed at Cascades, the Coal Mines and Murdunna, the latter connected to Port Arthur by a timber tramway.

The main issue is that only the convict 'sites' have been protected in conservation plans, not the whole landscape in multiple ownerships, despite the Australian Heritage Commission first using the term 'cultural landscape' in 1988 when promoting Tasman Peninsula so as 'to link all the historic convict sites and their surrounding landscapes'.

Solution: An overarching district plan is needed to protect the whole cultural landscape.

Action: Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service and the local municipality work together to produce a district plan that clearly identifies the historic links between places on the Peninsula which require protection

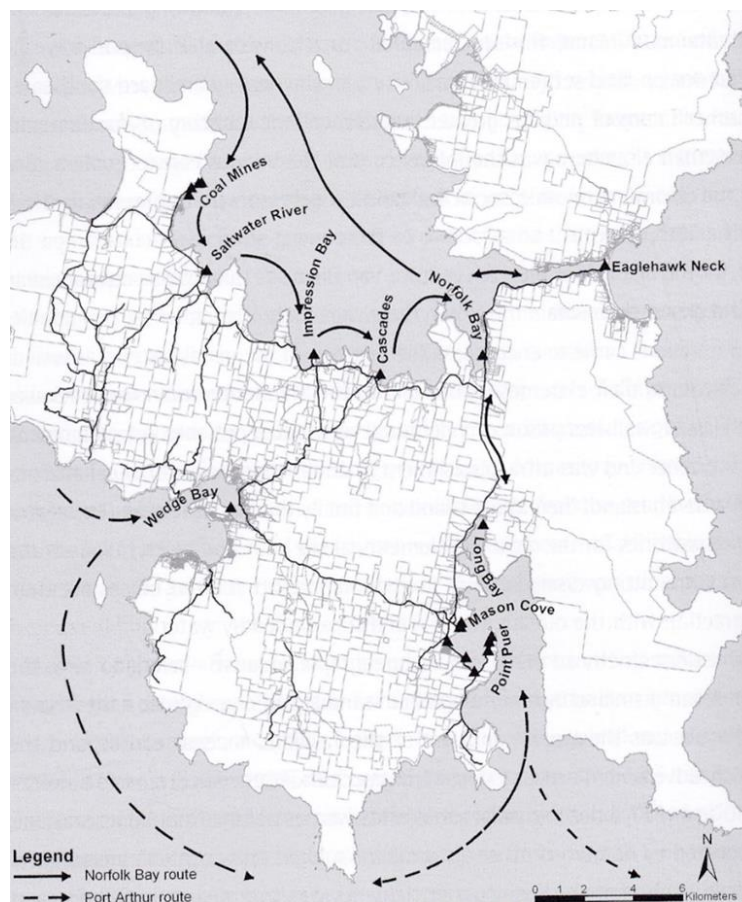


Figure 13. Tasman Peninsula, a prison island (Source: Jackman, 2004:14)

8. Glossary

- **Adaptive management cycle.** A 'learning-by-doing' process which recognises the need for a structured method to support strong decision making, while also allowing for flexibility to adjust management direction to improve progress towards desired outcomes.
- **Associative Cultural Landscape.** A landscape with '*powerful religious, artistic or cultural associations of the natural element rather than material cultural evidence, which may be insignificant or even absent*' (UNESCO 2021, paragraph 47).
- **Attribute.** The elements of a heritage place which convey its heritage values and enable an understanding of those values. They can be physical qualities, material fabric, and other tangible features, but can also be processes, social arrangements or cultural practices as well as intangible aspects such as associations and relationships.
- **Bio-cultural diversity.** Found when a positive relationship of biological and cultural diversity in the landscape exists. It is based on the recognition of the relevance of cultural services provided by ecosystems. Biocultural Landscapes are those managed by small-scale innovations and practices driven by traditional knowledge of local landscape keepers. (UNESCO SCBD 2014)
- **Continuing Cultural Landscape.** A landscape which '*retains an active social role in contemporary society closely associated with the traditional way of life, and in which the evolutionary process is still in progress. At the same time it exhibits significant material evidence of its evolution over time*' (UNESCO 2021, paragraph 47).
- **Designed Cultural Landscape.** '*A landscape designed and created intentionally by people. The category embraces garden and parkland landscapes. This embraces garden and parkland landscapes constructed for aesthetic reasons which are often (but not always) associated with religious or other monumental buildings and ensembles*' (UNESCO 2021, paragraph 47).
- **Factors affecting the property.** Everything that can affect, positively and negatively, the values and attributes of the heritage place and its state of conservation. Negative factors are usually called threats.
- **GIS.** A Geographical Information System is a computer-based system that allows the identification, collection, storage, analysis, and management of large quantities of spatial data.
- **McHargian analysis.** The forerunner to GIS analysis, a graphic overlay method used to (i) analyse the ecology and existing conditions of a site or location, (ii) test alternative planning or design options, and (iii) determine the best possible solutions (McHarg 1969).
- **Rights-holders.** Individuals and communities that hold legal and/or customary rights with respect to heritage places and include Traditional Owners/Custodians.
- **Social-ecological systems.** Complex integrated systems of people and nature. The term emphasises that humans are part of nature and that the distinction between social and ecological systems is an artificial construct (Berkes and Folke 1998).
- **Stakeholders.** People, communities, organisations, and institutions (actors) associated with a place. They may possess direct or indirect interests and concerns about the heritage place, but do not necessarily enjoy a legally or socially recognised entitlement to them.

- **Systems-thinking.** A holistic approach to analysis that focuses on the way that a system's constituent parts interrelate and how systems work over time and within the context of larger systems

9. Resources

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<https://culturallandscapesandroutesnsc.wordpress.com/>

9.1. Guidance – Australia

AIATSIS Engaging with Traditional Owners (FPIC) <https://aiatsis.gov.au/publication/94688>

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<https://www.cbd.int/portals/culturaldiversity/docs/21040410-declaration-florence-en.pdf>

9.3. Doctrinal Texts

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9.7. Useful Links

- Tasmanian Cultural Landscapes.
https://www.utas.edu.au/library/companion_to_tasmanian_history/C/Cultural%20Landscapes.htm
- UNESCO World Heritage Centre Cultural Landscapes. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/culturallandscape/>
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<https://whc.unesco.org/en/hul/>
- HUL, Ballarat. <http://www.hulballarat.org.au/>

Join the Australia ICOMOS Cultural Landscape group

Become a member of the National Scientific Committee on Cultural landscapes and Cultural Routes. It's easy and free. Go to our webpage via the Australia ICOMOS website for information about us, about membership, and to get a membership form. Email the completed form and a copy of your CV to the membership secretary. See <https://culturallandscapesandroutesnsc.wordpress.com/become-a-member/>

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Comments and feedback

The NSC welcomes comments on this version of the Practice Note. It is the intention of the NSC to revise the Practice Note after 12 months.

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