

Planning for Rural Land Use and the Stages of Productivism in Australia's Emerging Multi-Functional Rural Regions

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In Australia, rural land use planning as the concern of spatial planning strategy and local regulation has largely emerged during an era of contrasting decline in state-directed agricultural policies and futures. Despite a long history of attempts at land use regulation as a nation-building process, success has been muted with a contest between the vision and purpose of agricultural land management extending back into early nineteenth century land use and land release policy. More recently, an era of neoliberalism has resulted in extreme forms of agricultural productivism co-existing with emerging post-agricultural rural landscapes. Consequently, land use planning regulations that have long sought to protect farmland and to maintain viable, commercial farming systems struggle in a context of divided visions for farming futures and for the broader role of the state in directing these. The success of the orthodox rural planning approaches to retaining farmland and ideated farming systems remains muted, even as new versions of rurality are realised.

Keywords — *planning history; multi-functional landscapes; farmland protection.*

INTRODUCTION

The protection of farmland and farming systems from land use competition has emerged as the central objective of Australian rural spatial planning over the last half-century. While this has been most acutely practiced, and contested, in peri-urban areas it is by no means limited to them. Yet this emergent priority has been countered by a broader retreat of the state from previously interventionist farming, land and rural industry policies. This suggests tension and contradiction for planning and planners. It reveals a troubled capacity for contemporary rural planning to succeed in the face of the competitive productivism and exposure to competitive global markets that have become the Australian agricultural policy consensus. Nonetheless, concerns of rural land use conflict remain central to planning, whether expressed through urban encroachment, the dilution and fragmentation of farm holdings, or the intrusion of gas extraction, wind farms or other more contemporary concerns.

Consequently rural planning, or more specifically planning in peri-urban and ostensibly *multi-functional* landscapes, remains at odds with broader agricultural industry trends and policy-settings. However contemporary planning objectives do offer continuity to long-standing experiments and practices in shaping and maintaining Australian farming as a viable, productive and commercial pursuit. These objectives themselves reflect strategic positions of agricultural expansion and community development that can be traced to early colonial experiences and consequent policy imperatives.

This paper traces twin genealogies of contemporary Australian rural planning; firstly, through the projects of nation-building colonial and post-colonial farming, and then through more recent development of a rural planning process emanating from urban planning traditions and methods of zoning, sprawl prevention and development control. It then focuses on more recent Victorian rural land use planning to consider an eventual planning orthodoxy for farmland protection as it has emerged in Australia. This reveals the unsettled contemporary situation where the aims of spatial planning represent vestiges of the previously paternalistic model of agricultural support, while revealing conflict in policy and practice between both the 'hyper-productivist' and 'post-productivist' agricultural realities of these complex landscapes.

AN AUSTRALIAN AGRICULTURAL COMPLEX

Post-invasion Australian farming was born modern. The logics and approaches to agricultural Australia have, since the early nineteenth century, been firmly linked to rationalities of global trade and the national role as an 'imperial farm' (Alomes, 1981), with modernizing qualities foregoing European agricultural tradition (McMichael, 1984: 36). Australian agricultural policy included forms of muscular, entrepreneurial colonialism and the ordered, rational expansion into a dry continent, and these logics continues to compete in public policy.

For over a century from the 1820s, Australian agricultural policy was focussed on expansion and insertion into global commodity systems, tempered by a desire to provide and create stable, small-scale farming systems and the national life these were considered to support. Both acted as efforts of nation-building, yet at times they were actively in conflict.

Brett (2007) considers the support for agricultural expansion and rural policy exceptionalism in this period as one of the key pillars of the *Australian Settlement* (Kelly, 1992) alongside wage arbitration, industry protection and state paternalism. Since the late-1970s an alternative neo-liberal political consensus has emerged, progressively dismantling each of these pillars. Australian agriculture is now a globally competitive industry, valorised for its limited recourse to subsidies and industry protection. This represents a change from the previous, long-standing models of interventionist public policy and infrastructure provision including land release schemes, tariff controls, farmer extension and transport subsidies.

Contemporary Australian agriculture operates within complex processes of concurrent growth and decline, of intensification and extensification, of urbanisation and counter-urbanisation. In the increasing peri-urban and multi-functional landscapes around larger cities this is a particularly acute concern for policy-makers as these are typically highly valuable agricultural landscapes in an otherwise arid continent and they are intense sites of land use conflict.

NASCENT AGRICULTURAL SYSTEMS TO EXPANSIONIST VISION: THE AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCE

Despite farming policy seeking self-sufficiency, not export, in the initial penal settlements of NSW, (Jeans, 1975), by the 1820s undercapitalised smallholdings were being bought and combined into fewer, larger landholdings with an export focus; the first failure of the ideal of small-scale farming (Perry, 1955). The emergence of the wool industry first demonstrated this export potential, forcing changes in policy to support inland pastoral expansion (Roberts, 1968) and an export-orientation (McMichael, 1984).

After the full land survey of the colony of New South Wales in 1825, a rudimentary rural land use planning model emerged that encouraged the expansion of farming regions within defined limits of official land release. Concerns for unhindered colonial settlement and the risks of underutilisation and undercapitalisation of farming remained (Jeans, 1975), as did political tension between 'systematic colonisation' and realities of disordered, low-intensity expansion of pastoral activities beyond the limits of direct colonial control. Despite this reality, a theoretical and practical interest in 'systematic colonisation' and community-focussed (often utopian) agrarianism emerged (Clark, 1973; Roberts, 1968) supported by the *Ripon Regulations* of 1831. These regulations intended to prevent ad hoc, expansionary land grants, instead purchasers to

demonstrate their capital and capacity, "...to obtain the greatest possible produce from a given space' (Wakefield, 1829: 128), most famously in Adelaide's hinterland.

Gradually however *real* regulation emerged to support viable, commercial *pastoral* expansion. By the 1840s the NSW Commissioner for Crown Lands required satisfaction that squatters had sufficient stock to fully and productively utilise their claim (Dingle, 1984: 25) – legitimising squatting and also the effective and productive use of land. This era was evidence of success in export-oriented farming expansion *despite* policy intervention (Fitzpatrick, 1947; Jeans, 1975; Davidson, 1981).

By the 1840s it was clear that a model of agrarian settlement into well-formed communities could not be realised, and the *Australian Land Sales Act* of 1847 instead provided a solution through the identification (as a form of nascent rural land zoning) of all land as being *Settled, Intermediate or Unsettled*, determined by proximity to ports and existing urban areas. Land could only be fully purchased in *Settled* areas, elsewhere leaseholds were available, providing future flexibility for government, but insufficient certainty for pastoralists.

AGRARIANISM, CLOSER SETTLEMENT AND THE ERAS OF PRODUCTIVISM

By the 1850s the social transition caused by gold rushes formed the basis of the Australian *agrarian question* whose solutions challenged the hitherto pastoral dominance of politics (McMichael, 1984). Consequently, by 1914 a long era of national investment in agricultural infrastructure had seen an expansion of railways and irrigation and, in many regions, the zenith of population and settlement formation in more remote rural areas and the formation of a "national" agriculture. These projects were emblematic of the often-criticised *state (or colonial)* socialism of the era (Eggleston, 1932; Garland, 1938; Frost, 1982) yet they set the framework for most current agricultural systems.

A rural development agenda was deeply embedded in late nineteenth century Australian politics, reflecting objectives of nation building, land occupation and the ongoing invasion imperatives by colonial governments which included ongoing agricultural expansion, the development of irrigation farming and the emergence of tropical and sub-tropical farming (Roberts, 1968). These were strategies for an Australia considered to have 'vast and under-populated regions in obvious need of development' (Auster, 1987: 29), and also to support 'a spatial ordering that tied the pre-eminence of the town or city to European notions of culture, civilisation and social organisation' (Jackson, 2017: 83).

Schemes supporting 'closer-settlement' were formalised from the 1880s, including soldier-settlement schemes from 1919 (see Lake, 1987) through land grants, rail infrastructure and agricultural extension. The pact between these farmers and government, while often fraught, was sustained, and as Hancock (1930: 71) observed 'The settlers, remembering that the Government had put them there, not infrequently imagined that it has in some way or other accepted an obligation to keep them there.'

However, the limits of such expansionary policy became evident through the environmental limits of agrarian development on a dry continent (Taylor, 1926; Hancock, 1930). These became politically germane once returned servicemen were the primary recipients of marginal lands after 1919 (Fry, 1985; Lake, 1987; Vincent, 1973), and again by the 1960s with the emergence of a public environmental consciousness (Robin, 1998).

POLICY 'FAILURE' AND THE DE-CONSTRUCTION OF A RURAL VISION

From the early 1970s global economic and political change had direct impacts on Australian farmland policy. The declining terms of trade, increased costs and declining farm incomes within global markets for large-scale commodities, particularly wool, wheat and dairy couple with changing local and global political perspectives on trade protectionism (Vines, 1978; Vanclay, 2003; Miller, 1996) emerged as critical.

The consequences of the changing relationships between farming, land use and policy were manifest in rural population and community decline in many regions (Tonts, 2000), as well as in the removal of institutions that had supported farming communities and economies. Dibden et al (2009) refer to an emergence of new 'competitive productivism' expressed politically through Australian leadership in the anti-tariff bloc in WTO negotiations from the 1980s onwards. Unsubsidised, restructured and highly competitive agriculture is now Australia's settled policy with general support across mainstream Australian politics. Consequently, a form of 'hyper-productivism' (Dibden et al, 2009) has emerged in Australia, and this is most evident in the decoupling of community development and agricultural policy areas and Australian agriculture and farming is now predicated on unsubsidised, competitive industry models.

It is within this context that the significant concern of land use as spatial planning for rural land emerged in Australia. These were increasingly coupled with an agenda of environmental management and the emergent *transactional* or *consumption* value of rural place. Despite these changes, cultural significance remains in relation to agriculture. Productivist imperatives continue, and this results in 'winning' and 'losing' regions and industries.

The idea that farming could be more than a commodity-scale commercial activity is still often met with the same resistance (including by planners) as when Callaghan (1955: 12) identified that a 'psychological resistance to smaller types of production has been built up in Australia'. He also suggested little thought was given to community life and employment possibilities in this expansive view of farming, a perspective that has persisted. The restructure of agriculture has resulted in spaces of restructure and locations of contested rural identity.

HERE COME THE PLANNERS: RESPONSES TO A 'MIDDLE LANDSCAPE'

The emergence of *peri-urban* place and attendant land use conflict have become central to rural planning practice. In Australia the formation of a complex multi-functional 'middle landscape' (Rowe, 1991) between urban and rural environments became evident to policy-makers by the 1960s. This counter-urbanisation trend has become popularly known in Australia as the 'seachange' or 'treechange' phenomenon (Osbaldiston, 2010; Salt, 2004; Gurrans, 2008), and increasingly extends well into notionally rural landscapes. Policy concern has, since then, increasingly focussed on the new and emerging land markets for non-farm rural housing and the impacts of sprawl on urban form and landscapes.

Consequent rural land use planning regulations in Australia only emerged as a comprehensive system of regulation in the 1970s, and most prominently in the past 30 years. These traditions and logics emanated from specific understandings of the nature of urban development and land use change and from the mechanisms and techniques of *urban* planning, although they also encompass the ideas and traditions of the long thread of rural land and agricultural industry planning policy described above. At their heart they attempt to both prevent urban incursion, and to 'save' farmland in peri-urban regions – a task made difficult in the absence of complementary macro-scale social and economic policy.

Nascent Australian rural planning approaches now typically assumed the continuity of farming, focussing instead on peri-urban recreation and conservation. Contemporary perspectives rarely differ from this outlook, despite an obvious awareness of markets preferences for non-farm land uses within amenity landscapes and commuting regions.

The practical consequences of this emergent re-conception of rural planning action, with its competing objectives and powerful underlying assumptions, are challenging for planners and communities. They operate within global trends in agricultural economics and social trends of counter-urbanisation. There is also an *internationalism* or universality to these logics, arising as they do from the historical concerns of spatial (town) planning as a modern and intentionally *Universalist* project for the twentieth century.

Consequently, Australian planning practitioners and the planning systems that inform their practice operate within a culture shaped by traditions of rural planning that are both local and international, and that both compete with and complement

past and current policy concerns of agricultural development and the broader community understandings of rural land, landscapes and agricultural systems. They memorialise the agrarian ethic of the past, but operate with an awareness of the hyper-productivism of contemporary agriculture, and the competition of values and practices that are not essentially agricultural in their foundation.

PLANNING AND THE AUSTRALIAN AGRICULTURAL 'COUNTRYSIDE': A FRAUGHT HISTORY

Australian *town and country* planning as vision and practice originally emerged within the context of the very urban concerns of the nineteenth-century industrial city: health, housing and livelihoods within the English experience. Although the role and function of non-urban spaces was considered secondary, the engagement of planning with a real and idealised countryside is evident from the earliest discussions of the planning where '...society and the beauty of nature are meant to be enjoyed together' (Howard, 1902: 48). Garden Cities, in turn, echoed the earlier 'Parkland Town' approaches, such as Light's Adelaide Plan (1837), and the emergence of a suburbia that, in Australia, pre-dated the proliferation of private cars. Such developments attracted contemporary local critique as offering residents the '...advantages neither of solitude nor of society' (Edwards, 1913: 155).

Elsewhere, influential international examples such as Patrick Abercrombie's (1926) account of the role of planning in rural landscapes, considered the problem of 'weekend-shanties' for 'the owner of a car' and the concerns at 'ribbon' development and 'excessive' urbanisation within a rural England which was '*an industrial zone* given over entirely to farming' (1926:17). Abercrombie suggests that planners should 'drop the clumsy word 'town planning' as applied to the country' (1926: 34) calling for 'Rural Planning' and "...always remembering that farming is our basic industry and that folk bred in our villages are the backbone of our nation". (1926: 43)

For Australian planners of this era, despite adopting the English moniker 'town and country' planning, early discourse reveals scant commentary on rural issues. Reade (1921), for example, recognises the definite urban focus of the initial South Australian planning legislation. Likewise, Taylor (1913) is purely focused on resolving slum conditions in cities and towns. Barwell (1919) briefly mentions the need for urban open space and gardens as a component of his vision, but without mention of farmland. Australian rural land use was apparently a settled idea, decided through industry interests and land release policy.

Only Sulman (1921: 78) at least suggests that maintaining local agriculture is necessary for good planning, yet this is within the context of addressing issues of green access and preventing speculation. Freestone (1989) argues that much of the early twentieth-century Australian application of *Garden City* ideas was simply a form of suburban aesthetic neglecting issues such as 'town-country' linkages.

By the 1950s an apparent orthodoxy emerged regarding approaches to planning for agricultural production at the urban fringe, with approaches typically including limits to rural subdivision and non-farm development, such as in the first Sydney Metropolitan Plan (Winston, 1957:45-49). Nevertheless, Clarke (1960) suggests the Sydney greenbelt is focussed on ordered development and reduced infrastructure costs, not farmland protection. Bunker and Houston (2003: 310) suggest that Sydney's 1950s greenbelt, while seeking to maintain a desired urban form 'gave short shrift to agriculture' which was largely indistinguishable from conservation objectives.

The Victorian Town and Country Planning Board (1950:17) began to express concern at the 'premature development' of farms and orchards 'far in advance of the need for additional residential lots', yet this was typically expressed in relation to disorderly urban expansion, not farmland protection. While the Board's annual report for 1959-1960 (TCPB, 1960:24) exhibits a more substantial concern at 'promiscuous urban expansion', this is still framed within the 'probable requirements' for future urban growth.

Gifford (1956: 133), in his first edition of *The Victorian Town Planning Handbook*, rarely mentions rural land, except to suggest, 'high-class farmlands should be preserved from industrial invasion and lands of less farming utility used for new factories'. By his 1962 edition he mentions multiple issues in relation to rural land protection, including (without any evident enthusiasm) that 'the English planning authorities have consistently placed great importance on the preservation of rural land for rural purposes' (Gifford, 1962:121). In the 1978 (fifth) edition of this handbook (Gifford, 1978) a more detailed account is offered in relation to the use of rural zoning for preservation purposes (rather than acting as a means to create orderly outward expansion of urban uses), and for the quality and protection of soils.

Some reservation had been explicitly expressed as to the need for rural land planning in an Australian context, with Brown and Sherrard (1951: 355-356)¹ for example suggesting '...our [Australia's] rural areas do not lend themselves, except in the environs of town and cities and in the more closely settled rural area, to the detailed procedure followed in statutory town planning'. They considered Australia's rural problems not caused by the mis-use of good agricultural land, but rather 'by the need to see that rural lands are put to their best use and to improve the economic and social conditions of rural life' (1951:356), yet mention no role for land use planning in this regard. The unquestioned status of Australian rural land as farmland and the contemporary developmentalist agenda of the state at this stage supported such an interpretation.

Even as a farmland 'problem' became recognised, the politics of the development from the early 1950s allowed rampant speculation on fringes of Australian cities. For example, the 1954 plan for metropolitan Melbourne (MMBW, 1954:25) discusses the need for a greenbelt and a '*rural zone*' (original emphasis) where agriculture is the 'principal use', yet where larger housing lots are also permitted at local discretion. Bunker (2002) contends that not even the possibility of intensive farming activity on the fringe was able to compete with the politics of urban growth in Australian metropolitan masterplans of this era. Bunker and Houston (2003: 310) contend that during the long economic boom of the 1950s and 1960s there was little interest in agricultural on the fringes of Australian cities, and that this was demonstrated through the use of planning terms such as 'non-urban' zones – effectively seeing the agricultural regions as simply future urban space.

Planning's interest in rural land use issues and recognition of the potential land use conflict was becoming more evident by the 1960s and 1970s along with new markets for lifestyle development. This resulted in a set of specific approaches to peri-urban planning that sought to protect farming systems rather than simply prevent urbanisation. The key driver of the new concern for rural housing was the commencement of a period of 'counter-urbanisation', typically through 'lifestyle' development and hobby farming. Rutherford (1966) offers an early example of discussion on the problem of farming on the Sydney fringe, referring to 'lifestyle' housing development and to 'part-time farming' and its land markets (Rutherford, 1966: 253). Likewise, Pryor (1968) describes a variety of Australian and North American studies that identify the shortcomings of planning and policy on the fringe, including in relation to the inadequate control of subdivision, the emergence of land use conflict and the disorderly nature of development.

Authors such as Hayes (1978), Arnot (1978) and Archer (1977) provide Australian context to the emergence of non-farming rural land use, each explicitly referring to the recent and novel characteristics of this. Hutchings (2005) identifies these developments, coupled with the emergent environmental consciousness of the 1960s, as having been central to the development of South Australian rural planning in this period. Hutchings had previously (1971) presented this as a contemporary process in which 'new conservation' ethics required a new model of planning treating *nature* as a land use (Hutchings, 1971: 12).

This was also framed by debates on the appropriate labels and typologies of this 'new' process. Paterson et al. (1978) suggest definitional dilemmas regarding urban-generated uses of rural land suggests a descriptive taxonomy (counter-urban, part time farming, lifestyle-only and second homes) while identifying that planning and subdivision controls were needed.

¹ These views are identically reproduced almost 20 years later in the second edition of Brown, Sherrard and Shaw (1969), suggesting little need or effort in revising approaches to rural land use planning, despite the significant changes made in many other parts of their volume.

Yet it is of note that in this period few planning controls existed outside of urban and urban-fringe regions anywhere in Australia. Simpson (1980) identifies the role played by subdivision alone, without housing, in disrupting agricultural land markets and farm adjustment, suggesting that not only land development, but simply its potential, had already changed many peri-urban or multi-functional rural regions by this period.

By the 1970s various terms were used for these phenomena: *rural retreats* (Wagner, 1975; Boynton, 1979), *rural living*, part-time farming (Rutherford, 1966; Shilton, 1973), the 'greenspace' (Pullen 1977), *semi-urban subdivisions* (Davis, 1981), *ranchettes* (Lassey, 1977) and *hobby farming* (Williams, 1976; Arnot, 1978), among others. Each appears to reflect similar phenomena, yet subtle differences are apparent as an emerging typology of peri-urban forms, some retaining forms of agriculture, others as extended suburbia. Spragg (1976) expresses concern for the availability of 'inappropriate' land parcels in the face of these trends, a theme of planning concern that was to develop into a clear policy and practice orthodoxy in coming years.

Even by the late 1970s the need for rural planning in Australia still required justification as an appropriate approach to land management beyond the city (Williams, 1976) and Bunker and Houston (2003) note the shift in the purpose and language in planning policies at this time. Hayes (1978:11) describes the 'inevitability' of rural planning and a belief that the 'maintenance of technically sound agriculture must be the planning objective in our rural areas'. Later, Smith (1986) suggests that retaining land for 'future generations' is critical, heralding the beginnings of a policy position applied generally in Australia.

Importantly, systems and models of articulating land quality and landscape values were being introduced, in addition to the logics of sprawl management. Austin and Cocks (1978) describes the emergence of a landscape-based assessment model for NSW in 1972, and systematised approaches to landscape assessments were conducted in Victoria from 1968 (Moir, 1980). Concurrently, preliminary work for the 1977 Melbourne Metropolitan Strategy suggests maintaining large farms to preserve rural landscapes and to avoid land use conversion and conflict.

These and similar changes signalled the commencement of structured Australian rural land use planning, at least in peri-urban areas. In the 1980s, for example, authors such as Thorpe (1988) expressed the need to plan for a reality of part-time farming in rural landscapes. McDonald and Nuemann (1994) suggest that Australian farmers were typically ambivalent (at best) about the impacts of farmland loss, consistent with contemporary North American experiences (Bultena et al 1981; Gale & Yamplosky, 1975; Lassey, 1977).

REGULATING WITH AN 'AMAZING CONSISTENCY AND LACK OF IMAGINATION'

By the 1980s, rural planning regulation typically included a broad application of minimum rural land subdivision sizes with the aim of preventing land fragmentation; movements towards spatially differentiating and segregating rural land uses and values, including separating conservation areas from intensive farming; and the application of techniques in soil science to identify important land resources for protection. Houston's (1994) Australia-wide survey of the state-based planning regulation found a typical approach to rural planning that included rural zoning with a minimum area for subdivisions and farm zones. He identified only limited use of differentiated zones (for conservation, intensive farming and the like) or other policy (differential land rates/taxes and right-to-farm legislation).

This is consistent with what Lapping (2006: 118) describes as an '...amazing consistency and lack of imagination...' in relation to modes and approaches to agricultural protection in Europe and North America. Like in Australia, he suggests an orthodoxy in responses to what are really locally contextualised problems.

The introduction of catchment management, native vegetation and habitat imperatives for rural planning added to the breadth and complexity of rural planning policy and practice (Sinclair and Bunker, 2012). Nonetheless, as more recently

noted (Budge et al, 2012; Budge and Butt, 2017), planning for agricultural protection in rural areas through zoning and subdivision limits, generally to prevent increased rural housing, remains the typical and central feature of the planning project in rural Australia.

Whether these approaches 'preserve' productive farmland remains ambiguous, as does the utility of that initial goal. It appears that farming, and more particularly farmland, became 'visible' as a spatial planning issue in this era, yet concurrently the competing agenda of landscape, habitat and amenity protection, subsumed this process. The issues of farmland loss and land use competition persist in public policy, and has in some respects seen a re-emergence, often as a narrative of urgency, in relation to urbanisation and new land uses such as coal-seam gas extraction (fracking), however innovative and effective regulatory application is less evident. The distance between rhetoric and regulation is apparent nationally, with the Commonwealth (national) government (DAFF, 2013) providing a recent account of food security with little commentary on the implications for land use and its regulation.

SUCCESS AND FAILURE IN PERI-URBAN PLANNING

In the peri-urban regions of Australia rural planning has developed an orthodox narrative focussing on the risks of farmland loss and the intrusion of problematic activities; sub-commercial farming amongst them. Alternative visions consider these places as post-farming. The practical realities of change are more complex. The agricultural economy in these locations is dynamic, but not necessarily in decline (Houston, 2005; Low Choy et al. 2007). However, it is increasingly variegated between large and intensifying industries and small, prolific sub-commercial farms (Buxton et al. 2011). Consequently it is potentially vulnerable (Butt, 2013).

The transitions occurring in these specific regions most readily indicate the emergence of post-productivist concerns, revealing the confluence of non-farming land markets, emerging environmental imperatives and the retreat of interventionist policy. Yet the prominence of productivist logics, and the super/hyper-productivist imperatives of many industries remain apparent in peri-urban regions, most evidently through examples of intensive agriculture.

Roche and Argent (2015) caution against the loose use of terms such as 'productivism' and its variants when describing the settings, practices and transitions of rural place. Evidently, such categorisations are insufficient to address dynamic and variegated realities of rural policy and place. However, these descriptors remain significant as ways to consider the motives and responses of industry, governments and communities. In peri-urban Australia planners position themselves as, at once, protectors of the paternalistic productivism that during previous governance regimes provided the framework for agricultural exceptionalism in public policy, while also operating as managers of an increasingly differentiated countryside (and rural community). The expansion and increasing scale of industries such as intensive poultry suggest a central example of the dilemmas of this stance. In these examples, supporting agricultural systems has become increasingly at odds with the objectives of multi-functional, or apparently post-productivist rurality (Butt and Taylor, 2017).

Discussions of a productivist, post-productivist or hyper-productivist landscape are perhaps then less important than the gesture and stance taken in policy, and the intransigent conflicts between version of rural place. For Australian rural planners, this has appeared to require a stance that unflinchingly supports commercial, at-scale agriculture and its historical imagination, yet is faced with realities of the retreat of broader state-support and the emergence of complex and dynamic farming landscapes farming landscapes.

CONCLUSIONS: COMPETITIVE PRODUCTIVISM AND THE LIMITS TO PLANNING

The process of rural planning in Australia retain historical links to earlier models of colonial land release and nation building. Attempts to vigorously support agricultural expansion persisted into the mid-twentieth century through industry

assistance and preferential rural public policy and the interests of agricultural policy provided for a continuity of farming systems and farming lifestyles.

From the 1970s the direction of broader policy changed in the face of Australian competitive neo-liberalism. Concurrently, the emergence of an environmental ethic and of the peri-urban housing led to an increased interest in rural land use planning. This disjuncture in rural policy has not resulted in the total removal of narratives, logics and imaginaries of ordered, productive agricultural land use – it has instead found form in land use planning's systems and practices alongside, and often competing with, those global and market-directed realities of agricultural land utilisation, industry change and farm restructuring.

This tension between a reality of managing multi-functional rural spaces with its practical recognition of markets and landholder expectations, and the rationality of both agricultural land protection and urban sprawl management ideals in planning regulation, is ongoing and highly controversial. Crucially, throughout these various phases of policy, the on-ground realities of farming practice and land use markets reveal a practical defiance, which appears to continue. Despite policy, rural land use follows pathways set by global and local markets, and by tastes and aspirations for both a real and an ideated rurality.

These historical threads also reveal a set of issues that relate to the symbolic and imagined identity of rural land in Australia, and particularly those areas on the fringes of Australian cities. The roles these locations play and the values placed on these locations as productive land, spaces of consumption and the urgency and importance of protecting these resources are each critical issues in understanding how rural planning is undertaken in Australia.

The interplay between an historical narrative of 'using the unused' (Williams, 1975), the emergent hyper-productivism (Dibden et al, 2009) in Australian agriculture and the formation of new taste markets for rural lifestyles suggests a difficult pathway for contemporary rural planning. That farmland protection perseveres as a problem for rural planning is a reflection on this interplay.

A 'split' genealogy of planning and agriculture has come together in contemporary rural planning. As the previously dominant forms of productivist agricultural regimes have been replaced, planning has emerged as a flag-bearer of (perhaps anachronistic) agrarian logics, specifically in peri-urban and multi-functional rural regions. The received rural planning logics of farmland protection remain as a form of *foundational* or *nomological* planning knowledge, despite the variegated forms of rural place and the realities of rural change.

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