Planning Culturally

the theory & practice for urban planners & designers

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Abstract: The following discussion acknowledges that globalisation and increased migration has led to greater cultural diversity in our cities, and that modernist architectural and urban planning practices have led to less diversity and more homogeny in the built form of our cities. Therefore, this paper explores the concepts of "Planning Culturally" and associated Cultural Literacy which requires urban Planners and Designers to gain greater cultural awareness and competency to address the needs of diverse populations.

If we accept that culture is that which gives meaning to our lives, then everything we do will have a cultural dimension. As Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO states *Culture lies at the heart of urban renewal and innovation*. Therefore, culture should be at the very centre of theorising and thinking about cities, not just about social or civic life but also about the environment, infrastructure and economics of the city. The discussion will outline the findings from my research into both the theory and practice of "Planning Culturally", and how it can be applied in the contemporary built environment context to address the needs of our increasingly diverse populations. I will argue that the concept of Planning Culturally should place culture at the centre of all thinking on urban development.

Key Words: Planning Culturally, Cultural Literacy, Cultural Diversity, Built Environment, Urban Planning, Urban Development, Urban Design, Architecture,

Biographical notes: Richard Brecknock is an independent cultural planning researcher and writer. He is a member of the Planning Institute of Australia (PIA), has a MA (Cultural and Media Policy) from Griffith University and was previously a Director of Brecknock Consulting P/L an Australian cultural policy and planning consultancy. As a cultural planning consultant Richard has provided services and advice to state and local governments and private sector developers in Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand and England. His current research focuses on the notion of "Planning Culturally", where built environment professionals have the awareness and competencies to address the cultural needs of their communities and potential impacts of planning and design decisions. This awareness requires Cultural Literacy, to support decisions that allow for diverse approaches to providing culturally appropriate housing stock, retail environments and public space to meet the needs of a culturally diverse community. Richard is the author of the 2007 book, *More than Just a Bridge: planning & designing culturally*. And in 2024 he launched a new website exploring the concept of planning culturally as a resource for urban planners and designers., (see www.planning-culturally.com)

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1. Introduction

Over the thirty years of my professional practice I have observed that cultural considerations are typically a low priority in many public and private urban planning projects. Most of the "cultural planning" policy and strategies in Australia have focused on the delivery of cultural services or programs for the arts or cultural activities such as festivals and / or public art rather than as an integrated element of urban planning and development. (Research Report: www.richardbrecknock.com/r-w)

I also suggest that in Australia, unfortunately many of our cities have developed an international rather than a local feel and moved beyond the traditional urban planning and design typographies that were informed by the local cultural frames of reference. These frames of reference include a people's way of life, patterns of behaviour, their institutions and artefacts that should have an important influence on the look and feel of their local built environment, especially in relation to our increasingly multi-cultural populations and deep Aboriginal heritage.

This article explores the theory and practice of "Planning Culturally", both from the perspective of the extensive writings by relevant industry practitioners and academics such as Professor Michael Burayidi. In his article *Urban Planning in a Multicultural Society (2000)* Burayidi wrote that:

> *For planners, the practical imperative is no longer whether planning ought to be culturally sensitive, but how? How do planners accommodate one group's view of the physical environment when it conflicts with that of another group? More importantly, the question remains whether it is possible for planning to be sensitive to diverse cultures and yet maintain a unified public realm? (*Burayidi, M. 2000)

In terms of the complications, raised by Burayidi, of Planning Culturally in our diverse contemporary and highly multi-cultural cities, Jeffrey Hou, in *Transcultural Cities Border-Crossing and Placemaking*, also highlights the challenges faced by the urban design profession in a world where there are increases in "border crossings, be it between countries or with countries bringing about every day encounters between a diverse mix of cultures, he reminds us that:

> *These border-crossing activities and experiences have unsettled prescribed notions of culture, identity, place, and placemaking. As challenges to the institutionalized practice of planning and design, the encounters and exchanges also offer opportunities for a richer understanding of culture and place in a diverse society, as well as making a more inclusive and dynamic cityscape.* (Hou, J. 2013:9)

I believe that these planning challenges call for our built environment professionals to not only be aware of their own cultural biases but also to gain the skills to engage sensitively with complex communities of difference and find planning and design solutions that address multiple needs. This is the challenge of "Planning Culturally".

This article and the 2024 Planning-Culturally.com website are provided as a resource for Urban Planners and Designers interested in creating culturally relevant built environment outcomes for our culturally diverse communities. See: www.planning-culturally.com

2 The Theory

2.1 Culturally Diverse City Populations

Across the world we can see the evidence of the evolution of urban cultures from the remote small-scale settlements to today's mega-cities. Traditionally, rural, and isolated settlements tended to have homogenous shared values and patterns of behaviours; therefore, a homogeneous societal culture is one in which the shared meanings are similar and minor variation in beliefs exist; that is, the culture has one dominant way of thinking and acting. Today varying degrees of diversity exists in all nations, but the critical factor is the degree of variation in the shared meanings within the society. Louis Mumford stated that cities have: "*complex entangled histories unfolding over time – they may have sudden beginnings from remote gestations; and they are capable of prolongations as physical organizations through the life-spans of more than one culture".* This is particularly the case around the Mediterranean, here the cities have for millennia experienced wave after wave of invading armies, foreign trading and peaceful migration, each wave bringing their own cultural values to stamp onto pre-existing city cultures. For example, the cities of Spain have over time developed their local cultural identities enriched by layer upon layer of cultural identity each with their architectural styles and artifacts.

By contrast, in Australia, western style urban settlements as we understand them have only existed on this ancient land for just over 200 years, with the first official building in Sydney dating from 1788. However, as Libby Porter proposes in her 2018 article, "*From an urban country to urban Country: confronting the cult of denial in Australian cities",* that in the Australian context:

> *All places in Australia, whether urban or otherwise, are Indigenous places. Every inch of glass, steel, concrete and tarmac is dug into and bolted onto Country. Every place that is the subject of analysis and urban intervention is knitted into the fabric of Indigenous law and sociality.* (Porter, L. 2018:239)

Unfortunately, in contemporary Australia this concept as proposed by Porter is for some a contested one! There are, however, advances in terms of recognition, acknowledgement, and cultural awareness of the First Nations perspective across the planning and design professions. For example, the 2024 Planning Institute of Australia's (PIA) National Awards for Excellence in Planning include a "Planning With Country" category. The award description states that: *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander planning may take many forms, but at its core is recognition and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples" connection to and responsibilities for managing and Caring for their Country.* This is a very positive initiative and should provide some valuable benchmarks and inspiration for members of PIA in the future.

Leonie Sandercock, planner and academic with a focus on the relationship between culture and urban planning and author of the highly influential books *Towards Cosmopolis: Planning for Multicultural Cities* (1998) and *Mongrel Cities of the 21st Century* (2003) suggests that there is no going back to a "static or homogeneous urban/regional culture", Sandercock argues that: "*Linked with the destabilizing effects of global economic restructuring and integration, these forces are literally changing the face of cities and regions that are becoming much more culturally diverse".* (1998:164). Sandercock also argues that "Modernist planners have become thieves of memory" erasing all traces of the past in the interests of forward momentum.

Michael Burayidi, among others recognise that the international modernist movement and the development of an international style that generally excludes local urban cultural norms. This has resulted in a loss of local identity and cultural richness that was found in more traditional built form. Other writers such as Tanja Glusac have reinforced Burayidi's point about architecture losing "cultural identity" when she states that: "*neither the issues of diversity caused by migration nor the threat of diminishing cultural and regional expression through architecture have been genuinely tackled by the architectural discipline and profession."* (Glusac, T. 2015: 228)

Therefore, a major challenge today is the need for urban planners and designers to not only be aware of the diverse cultural values and behaviours of local communities, but also to develop the skills and cultural literacy skills required to deliver culturally relevant built environment outcomes. This is especially the case in Australia where urban professionals must be sensitive to the First Nations People's relationship to Country.

2.2 Urban Planning & Design Context

Planning Culture is understood to be the planning profession not only gaining the professional knowledge and technical skills required to deliver planning within the relevant planning schemes, but also having the awareness of one's own cultural values and the cultural values that define the planning profession.

> *Planners have a culture. This culture influences the way they see the world, how they interpret their environment, and how they go about reshaping this environment through their practices*. (Burayidi, M. 2003:260)

As stated previously, I propose that the notion of Planning Culturally that requires the gaining of Cultural Literacy that brings together: firstly the awareness that has been referred to as "Planning Culture" by authors such as Sanyal, B. (2005), Friedmann, J. (2005), and Othengrafen, F. and Reimer, M. (2013). Secondly, Cultural Literacy requires the gaining of the knowledge to understand and respond to the built environment needs of culturally diverse communities as discussed by planners/writers such as Leonie Sandercock (1998), Michael Burayidi (2003), Julian Agyeman & Jennifer Erickson (2012).

There are a range of models from authors such as Cross, Bennett, and Brinkmann, to assist planning and design professional to understand cultural competency, sensitivity, and awareness. See Research Paper 2: A review of models for building cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, & cultural competency. available from www.planning-culturally.com/resources

There are also models to assess one's awareness of our personal cultural frames of references, and the ability to gain the knowledge to understand individual and group values and behaviours. Local knowledge and cultural frames can over time inform planning practices, as Stephen Hamnett and Robert Freestone remind us, Australian metropolitan planning has evolved a "hybrid" planning approach that addresses the global influences with "*distinctly Australian cultural and spatial elements"* resulting in changes to the relationship between international and local planning influences in urban development. (2018:9)

Given the hyper diversity of many cities, especially in Australia, it is important to state that when we talk about planners and designers gaining Cultural Literacy and therefore having cultural knowledge, it is not an expectation that the professional will have an intimate knowledge of other cultures across the great diversity that is to be found in Australian cities, especially as Martyn Barrett reminds us, "*all cultures are dynamic and constantly evolving*" (Barrett, M. 2013).

The expectation is that the knowledge gained provides the skills to work with ethnically diverse and First Nations communities to draw out the various cultural values and behaviours that are relevant to the urban environment and planning challenge being considered. For example, when planning and designing residential buildings it would be important to establish the patterns of spatial use by the different groups, such as understanding their cultural requirements of housing stock in terms of food preparation areas; living spaces to meet the needs of cultural practices, intergenerational and extended families; and importantly the building orientation etc. Writing for Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, (AHURI) in the 2011 report *Urban social housing for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders: respecting culture and adapting services*, Vivianne Milligan et al. reminds us that "*Indigenous housing is a complex, messy problem that is highly contextual: one where solutions will differ depending on local conditions and the cultural norms and lifestyles of Indigenous clients in specific local contexts".* (Milligan, V. et al 2011:33)

With the increase in construction of high-rise residential towers in our capital cities the data suggests that they are attracting culturally diverse residents. Across Australia, more than half of apartment residents (56%) are migrants, compared to Australian residents (33%). Of these, the biggest group (26 percent of apartment residents) are migrants born in Asia. Christina Ho, et al. in their article *Higher density and diversity: apartments are Australia at its most multicultural* (2018) state that: "*With growing numbers of urban residents living in apartment buildings that are also culturally diverse, more efforts to foster co-operation and understanding are vital for realising the potential of these urban spaces to become productive hubs of everyday multiculturalism in Australia".* With the increasing numbers of city dwellers living in apartments being Australian residents born overseas, recent migrants or overseas students it makes apartment buildings significant centres of cultural diversity. Therefore, increasing the need for culturally informed planning and design decision making.
Michael Burayidi suggests that:

> *When planners are culturally competent, they learn the principles that help them to discern the pertinent beliefs and customs of cultural groups and so are able to help provide plans that reflect the needs of these groups. When plans are culturally effective they blend the conventional planning techniques and strategies with the felt needs and world views of cultural groups to produce programs and policies that make positive changes in the well being of these groups.* (Burayidi, M. 2003:271)

In their 2020 book "*Cultural Sensitive Design: A guide to Culture in Practice"* Annemiek van Boeijen and Yvo Zijlstra remind us that "*culture sensitive design must not be seen as simply a hobby for designers who are curious about "otherness"*; it should, in particular, be seen as a "*requirement to identify the positive and negative role of design in cultural processes*". This is a critical point and highly relevant in urban development, as every planning and design decision will have either a positive or negative impact on the community's way-of-life. Therefore, I suggest built environment professionals need to be culturally literate to understand the diversity of values and behaviours found in a community and can recognise the potential positive and / or negative impacts their planning and design decisions may have on a community's cultural life.

2.3 Planning Culturally & Planning Theory

As has been demonstrated that the existing planning literature highlights the complexity of "Culture" and its diverse interrelationships with the built environment especially in the context of global migration and internationalisation. However, despite the range of theoretical discussion, in my opinion there is a lack of discussion regarding the implementation of the various theories.

Jeffrey Hou, in his 2013 book *Transcultural Cities Border-Crossing and Placemaking* raises the questions:

> *As cities continue to serve as the main destination of transnational and intranational migrations, what role can they play in supporting the growing diverse populations? How can urban places function as vehicles for cross-cultural learning and understanding rather than just battlegrounds and turfs? How can cross-cultural interactions be constructed, enabled, or "staged" through social and spatial practices in the contemporary urban environment? As migration, diasporas, and translocality have further destabilized existing meanings and identities of places, how can we re-envision placemaking in the context of shifting cultural terrains?* (Hou, J. 2013:1)

This I believe is a significant challenge and I hope to contribute to the practical application of culturally aware planning practices which are vitally important, as Frank Othengrafen and Mario Reimer (2013) remind us, "*culture seems to have such a significant impact on spatial planning, it is necessary to identify and understand*

its scope and nature clearly" (Othengrafen, F. & Reimer,M. 2013:1272). For example the importance of the cultural focus in urban planning, i.e. Planning Culturally, is also emphasised by Greg Young when he states that *"the integration of culture into practical planning is perhaps the most important challenge in existence for planning today, and into the foreseeable future"* (2008a:77).

Therefore, it is useful to initially review the academic discourse to established what the theorists have proposed. In this section I will provide a range of theoretical perspectives before discussing potential practice-based propositions.

Let us go back to Jeffrey Hou who proposes the need for a new framework approach to planning in culturally diverse cities, the framework he suggests is titled, *Transcultural Placemaking.* Hou suggests that:

> *… the concept of transcultural placemaking addresses transcultural processes and understanding as a building block for a more inclusive democracy and critical embrace of diversity. Most importantly, it highlights the instrumentality of placemaking as a vehicle for cross-cultural learning, individual agency, and collective actions. Taken together, transcultural placemaking is a framework that can guide the current practice of planning, design, and community development in the context of diverse cities and communities.* (Hou, J. 2013:7)

Jeffrey Hou argues that as transcultural or culturally diverse experiences are now part of our everyday experiences of living in contemporary cities we need to plan and design our urban places to ensure that communities have positive encounters and exchanges that *"offer opportunities for a richer understanding of culture and place in a diverse society, as well as making a more inclusive and dynamic cityscape".* (Hou, J. 2013:9) I would suggest that the notion of Transcultural Placemaking reinforces the need for urban planners and designers to be Culturally Literate and to Plan Culturally.

Several other planning approaches have been proposed to meet the challenges of growing diversity in our cities. For example, American planner and educator, Paul Davidoff reminds us that "*A city is its people, their practices, and their political, social, cultural and economic institutions as well as other things. The city planner must comprehend and deal with all these factors"* (1973:293). Davidoff proposes the *Pluralist Planning* model to address the differential impacts of planning on race, gender, and class. Davidoff, as an activist lawyer and planner, suggested that advocacy planning is a necessary method for representing the low-income and minority groups who are not always on equal footing with the rich and powerful. Davidoff stated that "*Pluralism and advocacy are means for stimulating consideration of future conditions by all groups in society"* (1973:285).

Other planning theorists such as Michael Burayidi, Stephen Ameyaw and Mohammad Qadeer have proposed alternative perspectives on planning for diversity. For example, Burayidi suggests *Holistic Planning* as *"a means of social actions based on diversity, tolerance, and cooperation."* (2000b:45). Ameyaw proposed the *Appreciative Planning* model for working with diverse ethnic and cultural groups, based on mutual respect, trust, and care-based action, and *"to create contexts in which planners and multicultural groups can continuously learn and experiment, think systematically, engage in meaningful dialogue, and create visions that energize action and inclusion in city planning."* (2000:101). Qadeer calls for more flexibility in planning norms and practices in recognition of ethnic and social diversity and suggests that *"the scope and procedure of citizen involvement in the planning process have to be modified to accommodate multicultural policies"* (1997:485) I would suggest that the approaches of Davidoff, Burayidi, Ameyaw and Qadeer have connections to the social constructivist philosophy that has influenced a range of planning approaches with its focus on advocacy, transformation, and collaboration. Of significance to this proposition is the thinking associated with the Communicative Planning model, (Healey, P. 1992) (Fainstein, J. 2014), with its principles of engagement and the need for planners to gain an understanding of local community values and needs.

My review of planning theory has identified communicative and collaborative planning theories (Patsy Healey, 1992) as appropriate to assist the planner to understand the competencies require when Planning Culturally through a Cultural Literacy lens. These competencies can lead to urban environments where diverse communities can be seen to be "living together, but differently" through Planning Culturally to find agreement on how to "act in the world to address our collective concerns" (1992:150). Healey (2003) further states that her collaborative planning theory was "*inspired first by the perception of planning as an interactive process"* (2002:104). That interactive process, Healey proposes, is "*motivated by a moral commitment to social justice, especially as realized in the fine grain of daily life experiences in the context of culturally diverse values about local environments and ways of life"* (2003:104).

Writers such as Leonie Sandercock (1998), Michael Burayidi (2003), and Greg Young (2013) have all argued for the importance of Planning Culturally and having the awareness to work with culturally diverse communities without addressing the specific practical skills required. Therefore, this publication will attempt to build on this theoretical base to identify the specific skills and competencies required to develop an awareness of one's own cultural frames of reference that every planner brings to the process, and to formulate a toolkit of skill-sets that urban planners can draw upon to engage in a meaningful way with a diversity of cultural frames of reference influencing the values, behaviours and lived experiences of Australian communities.

Key to the notion of Planning Culturally, is the literature relating to cultural diversity and the built environment, include contributions from, Michael Burayidi (2000; 2003;2015), Ted Cantle (2012), Joost Dessein et al. (2015), Leonie Sandercock (2003) and Ruth Fincher et al. (2014). For example, Fincher stated that the "*increasing ethnic and racial diversity of contemporary cities challenges urban planners who are charged with managing the built environment to promote social order and harmony"* (2014: 5) and Ted Cantle, who was the Chair of the 2001 UK Community Cohesion Review Team, reminds us that today with our globalised world and high rates of intranational and international migration, *"multiculturalism can simply describe the modern reality of most countries"* (2012:53). As has been discussed previously, over time Multi-Culturalism has become a contested term which led Leonie Sandercock, an early advocate, to re-evaluate her position and "*re-theorize multiculturalism, which I prefer to re-name as interculturalism, as a political and philosophical basis for thinking about how to deal with the challenge of difference in mongrel cities of the 21st century"* (2004:18). The strengths and weaknesses of Multi-Culturalism as opposed to Interculturalism has given rise to a debate that Grillo (2016) suggests "*might best be considered as labelling sets of tools for dealing with diversity; some distinctive and specific, others broadly similar, and with much overlap between them"* (2016:5).

Michael Crotty (1998) argued that from a social constructionism epistemological perspective, "*all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practises, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world"* (1998:51) which could be interpreted as the interaction between community values, planning systems and placemaking. Crotty (1998) also reminds us that our view of the world and lived experience is "*inevitably viewing it through lenses bestowed upon us by our culture*" (1998:52). This notion of the cultural lens is important as it unpins the importance of planners understanding their own planning "Culture". Literature on "Planning Culture" and its impacts on urban planning appear from the mid 1900"s and increasingly through the 2000"s. Frank Othengrafen and Mario Reimer (2013), propose that there is a "*Planning Culture" within the planning profession which "involves not only the learning of technical skills, but also the adoption of certain values and norms that define our occupation (Schein, 2004:10)"* (2013:1273). John Friedmann (2005) explores the impacts of globalisation on a diverse range of Planning Cultures from countries across the world. While seeing the negative impacts that global capital can bring, John Friedmann is generally positive about national cultures surviving globalisation.

Within the context of the Australian planning environment, these transformative planning paradigms are balanced by the impacts of globalisation, and rational neoliberal planning paradigms that have influenced most of the Australian capital city urban development approaches (Gleeson & Low. 2000). In Australia it is not just the need for planners to be more aware of Interculturalism in planning Australian cities, but the need for awareness of First Nations People's cultural perspectives and needs. This issue has been discussed in the literature from Australia (Jackson et al. 2017), Aotearoa New Zealand (Matunga. 2017), and Canada (Walker. 2017). The relationship between Aboriginality and urban planning in Australia has been explored by planners who argue for cultural awareness of the Aboriginal relationship to the land and specific cultural frames of reference that need to be considered when planning with and for Aboriginal communities.

Gaining an awareness of Aboriginal "Culture" is also essential for urban planners if we are to have a meaningful acknowledgement of the Aboriginal connection to country. In recent years the key built environment professional bodies, Planning Institute of Australia (PIA), Australian Institute of Architects (AIA) and the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) have recognised the need for acknowledgement of prior ownership through the development of reconciliation plans. In 2021 PIA established the *Planning with Country Knowledge Circle* which is an Indigenous-led group, formed to guide PIA on reconciliation and other culturally relevant planning issues. The PIA has also required the inclusion of Aboriginal "Culture" in the tertiary planning curriculum, as specified in the *Policy for the Accreditation of Australian Planning Qualifications* (PIA. 2019) although it currently does not refer to addressing cultural diversity in planning.

2.4 The Concept of Planning Culturally

Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO (2016) suggests that "culture lies at the heart of urban renewal and *innovation. Culture embodies the soul of a city, allowing it to progress and build a future of dignity for all*". This statement forms the basis of my premise that we need to plan culturally in our increasingly diverse communities. Therefore, key to this discussion is the impact of cultural diversity, specifically from an urban planning perspective. Literature relating to understanding cultural diversity and specifically the concept of "Interculturalism", include contributions from, Michael Burayidi (2000; 2003; 2015), Jude Bloomfield and Franco Bianchini (2004), Leonie Sandercock (2003, 2004), Richard Brecknock (2006), Charles Landry and Phil Wood (2004, 2006 & 2008). Interculturalism has become an important basis for community cohesion strategies in cities addressing increasing migrant populations. This is especially the case in Europe, where the Council of Europe (CoE) has initiated the Intercultural City Network (CoE, 2020). The network has expanded internationally in recent years to include at least four Australian cities, including the City of Ballarat in Victoria (Ballantyne et al., 2017). The CoE program has a focus on Intercultural dialogue in community development, however, there is little detail of how the Intercultural city could benefit from urban planning.

In Australia it is not just the need for planners to be more aware of Interculturalism in planning Australian cities, but the importance of gaining an awareness of First Nations People's cultural perspectives and needs. Milligan et al suggest "that it may be useful to adopt an intercultural analysis of interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians that emphasises interdependence." However, they go on to caution that planners would need to be aware of the dangers of how the "power imbalances and the highly disadvantaged situation of many Indigenous Australians" will impact on the intercultural engagement process. Milligan et al go on to "suggest the challenge is to move beyond approaches that are simplistic and rigid to find better pathways through what are complex and relational problems, especially through adaptive policies, and by privileging local capacity and influence to a greater extent within the constraints of policy and program rules." (2011:33)

In addition to the contribution to the First Nations people planning discussion the literature from Australian (Sue Jackson et al. 2017), Aotearoa New Zealand (Hirini Matunga. 2017), and Canadian (Ryan Walker. 2017)

provide valuable perspectives from their respective countries. The relationship between Aboriginality and urban planning in Australia has been explored by planners such as Libby Porter et al. (2017), Ed Wensing and Libby Porter (2016), and Sue Jackson et al. (2017) who argue for cultural awareness of the Aboriginal relationship to the land and specific cultural frames of reference that need to be considered when planning with and for Aboriginal communities. Therefore, gaining an awareness of Aboriginal culture is essential if we are to have a meaningful acknowledgement of the Aboriginal connection to country, Libby Porter suggests that by:

> *… re-thinking the urban as already Country offers new ways to consider the responsibility that we bear for coming into a sovereign relationship, to become more properly people that can share Country. When Country sits at the heart of our thinking then place, land, earth, water, sky and rock come to the story not as resources and inert matter to be struggled for but as vital place.* (Porter, L 2018:244)

2.5 The Concept of Cultural Literacy

This section builds on the cultural diversity discussions and theoretical literature to focus on the perceived impacts of cultural thinking on planning practice and the notion of planning Interculturally with cultural literacy skills, competencies, and tools.

Thinking and writing relating to the concept of cultural literacy and frames of reference have predominantly been within the educational sphere from writers such as Hirsch (1983), John Ogbu (1992), and Edward Hall (1977). Phil Wood and Charles Landry suggest that it is important to accept that in the context of Intercultural cities it is clearly impossible for practicing planners to be in a position to have an in depth understanding of all the cultures found in any one city, but it is important to encourage Intercultural dialogue to ensure that "*knowledge about and between cultures occurs more seamlessly on a day-to day basis*". (Wood, P. & Landry, C. 2008:246) These skills were explored in the 2006 Academy for Sustainable Communities (ASC) report *Planning and Engaging with Intercultural Communities: building the knowledge and skills* base which proposes that people's culture is based on "Values, Practices and Institutions" and therefore planners need to understand how to engage a community on all three of these foundational factors (ASC. 2006:13).

Building on this discussion regarding ways of gaining cultural knowledge, Leonie Sandercock (1998), proposed that there are "different ways of knowing" that should be essential competencies in the training of urban planners. They include: "knowing through dialogue", "experience" and "local knowledge"; through reading "symbolic, visual, and other forms of non-verbal evidence"; and through "action" and by "making mistakes" (1998:217). This highlights the importance of planners having both self-awareness and awareness of cultural difference as a precondition for developing cultural literacy skills, especially since as Michael Burayidi points out planning as a profession has been built on the notion that they are specialists in knowing "*what is good for people"* (2003:260). This raises questions about the planning profession's ability to deal with the "*landscape of difference"* found in culturally diverse cities (Thompson, 2003:277). Susan Thompson (2003) suggests that in "*the magnitude and significance of contemporary global socio-cultural processes of change, there is an urgency to place them firmly and centrally on the planners" agenda*" and proposes the need for "culturally inclusive practitioners" who can navigate difference and are comfortable with applying qualitative research methodologies (2003:277 & 290). A further contribution to thinking about cultural competencies, comes from Julian Agyeman and Jennifer Erickson (2012) who propose the need for "systemic elements" such as, relating to the importance of valuing diversity, self-awareness, understanding cultural knowledge and interaction, and adapting service deliver to address the needs of culturally diverse situations. While not directly related to urban planning there are contributions proposing cross cultural dialogue, cultural literacy and cultural awareness skill development including the business perspective from (OECD, 2018) and education applications from Garcia Ochoa et al. (2016).

Key to being able to plan culturally is to have people who are culturally literate and have the competencies, knowledge, and skills to engage more effectively in culturally diverse environments. As Katherine Pestieau and Marcia Wallace remind us:

> *Many planners continue to believe that they do not need to consider the ethno-cultural character of the population they serve or the existence of immigrants within this population. Some argue that to do so would bias the process of planning, which has been described as a neutral, technical activity. Good planning, from this perspective, must accommodate future users of a site or building, and not be wedded to the needs of any particular user group. This argument does have considerable merit—planning by definition is an exercise with a view to the long term. The problem, however, is when such an argument is used to avoid a serious examination of the assumptions already embedded in "neutral" planning processes.* (Pestieau, K. & Wallace, M. 2003:256)

I would suggest that the "neutral planning" argument must be considered in the context of specific urban typologies of form, function, and scale, whereby whole of city master planning for a 30-year time frame needs to be approached quite differently to evolving local civic infrastructure such as streetscapes and parklands. The reality is or course that urban planning is never "neutral" and even long-term planning will inevitably have to face changes due to the evolution of the demographic and political circumstances.

The following section focuses on the discourse associated with how we can plan culturally to address the needs of cultural diversity and the relationship between "Culture" in its many forms and the built environment.

3. The Practice

3.1 Gaining Cultural Literacy

The OECD Global Competencies model is relevant to those working in urban environments as it proposes four dimensions that could be changed slightly to make them relevant for application in the planning and design process, for example:

1. *Examine the urban development issues from a local and global cultural significance perspective,*
2. *Understand and appreciate the diverse cultural perspective and views of other professionals and community members,*
3. *Engage in open, appropriate, and effective intercultural interactions across diverse communities,*
4. *Take appropriate professional actions to deliver collective well-being and culturally sensitive built environment outcomes.*

The notion of Global Competencies and the internationalisation of Intercultural competences has been the focus of inter-institutional programs run by universities to provide opportunities for students to experience cultural exchange as a mechanism for building Intercultural awareness, for example Catherin Bull et al. inter-university project recorded in *Cross-Cultural Urban Design: global or local practice?* (2007). Andrew Butt and his colleagues undertook a review in 2013 of planning education from the perspective of "Inter-cultural Collaboration", they suggest that "*the need for a multi-cultural or cross-cultural understanding of planning is highly relevant to developing meaningful reflective planning practice in the local context, and also in preparing graduates with a global outlook"* (Butt, A. et al. 2013:2). They also highlight the importance of planning students gaining "Cultural Literacy" considering the professional environment in which they will be practicing with the need to address the needs of diversity and culturally sensitive approaches to planning practice.

In terms of planning education and cultural literacy competencies, Agyeman and Erickson argue that this is an urgent priority in order that professional practice can be based on planning for, in, and, with "multiple publics" (Agyeman, J. & Erickson, J. 2012:361).

Acknowledging this need, the Planning Institute of Australia (PIA) in its 2019 *Policy for "The Accreditation of Australian Planning Qualifications"* outlines the capabilities and competencies that planning courses must meet to gain PIA accreditation. The curriculum competencies section states that:

> *Planners need to be able to act competently and responsibly in complex situations and in a professional and ethical manner, while understanding, promoting and actively working in the public interest.*

The first 2 of 11 Performance Indicators referenced as required, are:

1. *Knowledge of unique and special position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and Indigenous peoples, their rights and interests, knowledge, culture and traditions, and the appropriate protocols of respect and recognition for engaging with them on matters affecting their rights and interests.*

2. *Knowledge of the diversity of populations served, including the cultures of ethnic groups in Australia, other groups with special needs, including children and older people, and a capacity to engage meaningfully with diverse groups.*

To meet the objectives of the PIA Accreditation Policy listed above, it clearly requires the gaining of Cultural Literacy capabilities to develop the capacity to work with cultural competence and sensitivity when planning with First Nations and culturally diverse peoples. To address the PIA criteria in performance indicator 1 relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's culture and traditions it is important to understand that this requires considerable cultural sensitivity on the part of the built environment professional. Firstly, sufficient time must be allocated to the engagement of community elders or other knowledge holders and a clear understanding by both parties of the protocols and expectations of the extent of potential cultural knowledge sharing. Secondly, we must recognise that the process involves accessing "Indigenous Culture and Intellectual Property" (ICIP). Looking at Cultural Literacy from a First Nations cultural perspective in the training of built environment students David Jones et.al. have prepared a 2019 report titled; *Indigenous Knowledge in the Built Environment: A Guide for Tertiary Educators.* The authors state that the Guide is "*purposely intended as a teaching and learning resource kit for built environment (architecture, landscape architecture, planning) academics, students and professional practitioners*". David Jones reminds us that:

> *Within the Australian built environment (architecture, planning and landscape architecture) literature, there is a clear lack of discourse about the nexus between built environment professionals and Indigenous protocols and knowledge systems. The literature expresses considerable desire to achieve this connection, but it has not generally been translated into tertiary-level execution other than in fragmented instances.* (Jones, D. et al. 2013).

In 2010 the PIA Indigenous Planning Working Group wrote in a Discussion Paper regarding *Reforming Planning Education Curricula for PIA Accreditation*, that:

> *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues are becoming increasingly important at the national, State/Territory and local levels (for example, in a very broad sense through the Closing the Gap agenda adopted by COAG and through various National Partnership Agreements, but also in the context of preparing cultural and natural resource management plans for particular areas that may be in Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander ownership or control). As a result of these activities, planners are increasingly working directly and indirectly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities in a*

range of planning contexts. In light of these developments, the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians should be embedded in all planning practice by planning professionals. The reality is that planning is not keeping up with current policy and practice and there is a shortage of trained educators, especially in this field.

Libby Porter has also been highly critical of the lack of recognition and understanding of Aboriginal "Culture" and highlights the failure of Australian planning education which she argues, has "*a very poor scorecard on these matters"* and has not taken seriously "*the obligation to change practises of education that have been so consistently found to produce poor outcomes for Indigenous peoples"* (2017:563). This poor scorecard is highlighted in the survey undertaken by Sarah Oberklaid in 2010, where she reviewed accredited planning programs in an analytical survey of Indigenous perspectives. She found that the courses reviewed varied in approach and content but generally they all addressed the Indigenous components in planning courses as "marginal" compared to "mainstream" planning subjects (Oberklaid 2010).

While there are curriculum standards set by the PIA in their accreditation requirements, it has been suggested that there is still a long way to go before planners in Australia have an appropriate level of sensitivity and knowledge of planning issues from a First Nations perspective (Oberklaid, S. 2010). The issue of Indigenous Cultural Competency training at Australian universities has been explored in the research and writing by David Jones, Darryl Low Choy, Grant Revell, Scott Heyes, and Sarah Oberklaid, among others. In their 2013 conference paper *Planning Education and Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Australia: Where Are We?* David Jones et. al. suggests that:

In academic and practitioner architectural discourses the debates about "Indigenous architecture" are about representation or symbolism and housing. These discourses cannot be appreciated in normal "cultural competency" appreciation curricula nor can they be realised in offering an "Indigenous perspective" as they are far more complex in place and design theory and practice, and such is a defined knowledge outcome that Australian Institute of Architects (AIA) professional accreditation policy expects a graduate to possess upon degree completion, as also PIA and Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) in their respective policies. (Jones, D. et.al. 2013)

Therefore, given the complexity of First Nations cultural perspectives it has been suggested that instead of trying to cover the subject as part of the general university curricula, for built environment students there is "*need for specific cultural awareness education*" (Jones, D. et al. 2013). The *Indigenous Knowledge in the Built Environment: A Guide for Tertiary Educators* seeks to provide a toolkit for educators and professional built environment practitioners. I can also report that I am aware of, and have personally attended, professional development workshops run by both the PIA and AILA that featured First Nations awareness training sessions designed for Australian planning and design practitioners. These workshops led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander presenters were well attended by practitioners and provided a valuable insight into a broad cross-section of cultural knowledge, however as suggested above First Nations culture is a complex subject and extremely specific to language groups and their individual relationships to Country.

While these competences are needed to be Interculturally effective in planning and designing with people from other cultures, built environment professionals also need to behave with empathy, openness, and sensitivity to difference, when working with diverse communities.

> *Cultural competency is as Agyeman and Erickson suggest, the range of awareness, beliefs, knowledge, skills, behaviors, and professional practice that will assist in planning "in, for, and with multiple publics" (Sandercock 1998).* (Agyeman, J. & Erickson, J. 2012:359)

As previously stated, there are several different terms used to describe phases of what I call Cultural Literacy, such as Cultural Awareness, Cultural Sensitivity, Cultural Intelligence and Cultural Competency. I describe Cultural Literacy, in the context of urban planning, as "*The ability to read, understand and decode the subtleties of local cultures in a city"* (Brecknock. 2006:82). I propose that Cultural Literacy provides planners and designers with the skills and competency to develop outcomes that are inclusive and culturally sensitive for the communities and address their diverse ways-of-life.

In his 2000 publication *The Creative City: a toolkit for urban innovators* Charles Landry referred to "Urban Literacy", which he described as having the "ability and skill to read the city and understand how cities work and is developed by learning about urbanism" (2000:246). Three years later, in the 2003 the *Creative City Strategy* for Brisbane City Council (BCC) included a reference to "Cultural Literacy" as a tool for building capacity in the city's workforce (Brecknock, R. & Landry, C. 2003:30). Building on the Creative City Strategy, BCC subsequently commissioned the development of a *Cultural Literacy Practice Framework* for its City Design unit (Brecknock, R. & Shaw, S. 2004). In developing the Practice Framework Sue Shaw and I worked collaboratively with the design team at City Design to co-create a workable framework with a series of Cultural Filters that could be applied throughout the planning, design, and delivery phases of their work. The resulting framework included 5 filters: Values; Experience; Memory: Look; and Legacy, with each a range of Strategic Questions to be analysed at each stage of a City Design project. The framework was adopted and applied by City Design and the concept was further explored and documented in my book *More Than Just a Bridge: planning & designing culturally* (Brecknock, R. 2006).

Essential to being Culturally Literate, in my opinion, is the skill to build a communicative and collaborative relationship with culturally diverse communities. Therefore, I believe that to plan culturally, planners need to take a communicative approach in order to "*listen to people's stories and assist in forging a consensus among differing viewpoints*" (Fainstein. 2014:7) and in gaining deep local knowledge to apply when Planning Culturally within diverse planning systems. Healey reminds us "*that for Fainstein (2000), the transformative dynamic is the search for ways of attaining a better quality of life. Such an enterprise presumes some institutional position from which to articulate and prosecute a transformative agenda"* (2007:61). The transformative agenda according to Louis Albrechts et al. (2020) "*involves communities in co-producing practices that can be transformative to the extent that they are able to enlarge the imagination of possible alternative futures"*" (2020:3).

Therefore, we need to acknowledge that for Culturally Literate urban planners to "*encompass a broad range of social values and ensure their reflection in the built environment*" (Gleeson & Low. 2000:67) one of the challenges is how to interpret and navigate a communicative path between rational free market liberalism on the one hand and a more transformative planning paradigm on the other.

Janet Bennett reminds us that, "*the first use of an intercultural positioning system is to locate ourselves, to develop our own cultural self-awareness through understanding our cultural patterns. Only then can we begin exploring the gap between our values, beliefs, and behaviors and those of others. Some cultural distances will be short and readily adjusted; others, of course, may defy negotiation. And, finally, it is a joint venture to build a third culture bridge between our intercultural positions, requiring two parties willing to take the risks inevitably involved in such worthy pursuits."* [2009:127]

I suggest that the key Phases of gaining Cultural Literacy are:

PHASE 1: Cultural Awareness

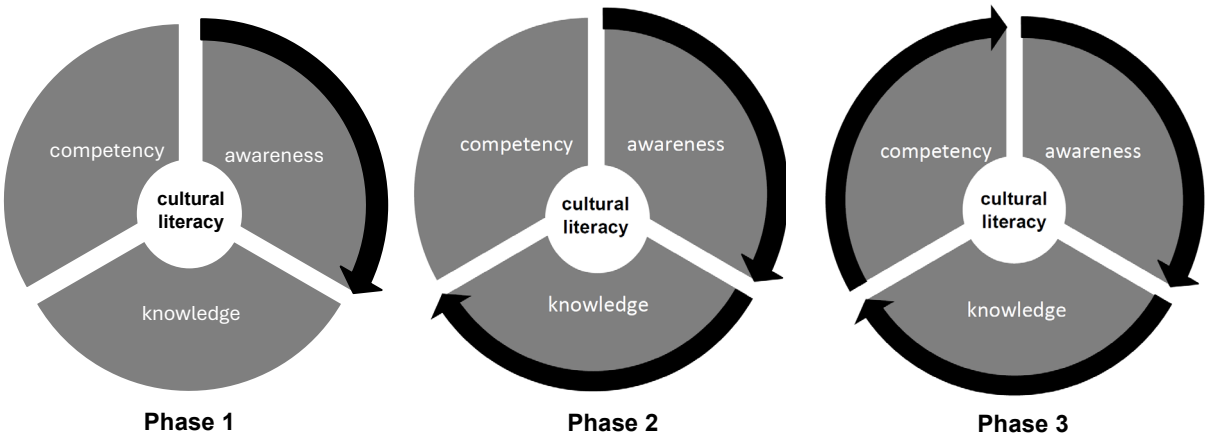
- An elevated level of awareness of their own cultural background and how their cultural values and behaviours influence their worldview and professional approach i.e. Planning Culture.
- A heightened awareness of difference within Australian communities, be it regarding First Nation's "Culture" or the diverse cultures of the long term and recent cultural groups that make up our Intercultural population.

PHASE 2: Cultural Knowledge

- Acquiring the skills to work with their Intercultural communities to gain relevant knowledge of how their cultural ways-of-life influence the way they interact with public and private places.
- Knowledge of how cultural values and behaviours are impacted on by the built environment will assist the planner or designer to assess the potential positive or negative impacts of planning and design decisions. This can be seen as a Cultural Impacts Assessment process.

PHASE 3: Cultural Competency

- Bringing together self-awareness/planning "Culture" and awareness of cultural influences found within culturally diverse communities.
- Gaining the confidence to apply these competencies in professional practice.



Cultural Awareness

As identified previously Phase 1 of gaining Cultural Literacy is to be aware of one's own cultural background and how our cultural values and behaviours influence our worldview and professional approach. This also includes an awareness of our professional culture, i.e. "Planning Culture" and how this culture impacts on our professional practices. Michael Burayidi (2003) although not using the term Planning Culture, does state that it is vital that we appreciate that "*planners have a culture. This culture influences the way they see the world, how they interpret their environment, and how they go about reshaping this environment through their practices"* (2003: 260). Crotty (1998) also reminds us that our view of the world and lived experience is "*inevitably viewing it through lenses bestowed upon us by our culture*" (1998: 52).

A 2011 PIA report posed the question "What is the Culture of Planning?". The report proposed that: *The "culture" of planning is an often referenced, yet little understood concept. Similar to the concept of planning as a profession, the culture of planning is difficult to define, has many different facets and can be subjectively interpreted.* It also argued that there is a need to recognise that planning today is made up of *"a combination of many different cultures." These cultures are created by planning professionals, the political process, the community and property industry* (PIA 2011: 3).

Literature on Planning Culture and its impacts on urban planning appear from the mid 1900"s and increasingly through the 2000"s with authors such as (Sanyal, 2005) (Friedmann, 2005). Joerg Knieling & Frank Othengrafen propose that Planning Culture can be considered as a specific sub-culture because the professionals involved in *planning processes are conditioned by the system of planning they act in, including the interpretation of planning tasks, the way of recognizing and addressing problems, the handling and use of certain rules, procedures and instruments, or ways and methods of public participation*. Therefore, the suggestion that Planning Culture stands for the *collective modes of thinking and acting of "built environment professionals", stemming in particular from a shared professional ethos but also from more general societal values (2015:2137).*

As with the architectural profession's culture and behaviours, Frank Othengrafen and Mario Reimer (2013), propose that there is a Planning Culture within the planning profession which "*involves not only the learning of technical skills, but also the adoption of certain values and norms that define our occupation*. In the 2011 PIA report, it was noted that *planning and planners had become increasingly focused on regulatory outcomes* and consequently*, the culture of planning has become reactive and can be readily and frequently undermined by plans that have lost their currency or do not have up to date visions* (PIA 2011).

Frank Othengrafen and Mario Reimer also suggest that: *As planning cultures stand for collective modes of thinking and acting of "built environment professionals", stemming in particular from a shared professional ethos but also from more general societal values.* They propose that these social values include*: "planning artifacts" (manifest culture), "planning environment" (both manifest and nonmanifest) and "societal environment" (nonmanifest culture).* Frank Othengrafen and Mario Reimer further suggest that these *three dimensions seems to be useful for making planning processes and outcomes more transparent and comparable, and for explaining how spatial planning is influenced by culture.* Therefore, it is important that planners and designers are aware of these professional influences when they address the built environment needs of culturally diverse communities.

Cultural Knowledge

Building on this discussion regarding ways of gaining cultural knowledge, Leonie Sandercock (1998), proposed that there are "six different ways of knowing" that should be essential competencies in the training of urban planners. They are:

1. *knowing through dialogue.*
2. *Knowing from experience.*
3. *Knowing through gaining local knowledge of the specific and concrete.*
4. *Knowing through learning to read symbolic, visual, and other forms of non-verbal evidence.*
5. *Knowing through contemplation; and*
6. *Knowing through action, an understanding that comes only through doing, by participating, by making mistakes in hands-on situations."* (1998:217).

This concept of knowing aligns with communicative planning theory (Healey. 2003) and the need to develop the skills to "improve life conditions for the diverse groups and communities of interest in cities and regions" which is the focus of my current research. Communicative and collaborative skills are the core notion of urban planners becoming culturally literate and having the competencies to "know" their diverse community's cultural frames of reference.

As with Leonie Sandercock (1998), Michael Burayidi (2003) does not use the term Cultural Literacy, but he does provide a useful discussion of the planning perspective in a Multi-Cultural urban context and sets out an argument consistent with the aims of developing Cultural Literacy in the planning profession. He makes a critical

point that it is vital that we appreciate that "planners have a "Culture". This "Culture" influences the way they see the world, how they interpret their environment, and how they go about reshaping this environment through their practises*"* (2003:260). This highlights the importance of planners having both self-awareness and awareness of cultural difference as a precondition to developing Cultural Literacy skills, especially since, as Burayidi (2003) points out, planning as a profession has been built on the notion that planners are specialists in knowing "*what is good for people"*. This raises questions about the planning profession's ability to deal with the "landscape of difference" found in culturally diverse cities (Thompson. 2003:277). Thompson (2003) suggests that in "*the magnitude and significance of contemporary global socio-cultural processes of change, there is an urgency to place them firmly and centrally on the planners" agenda*" and proposes the need for "*culturally inclusive practitioners*" (2003:277 & 290) who can navigate difference and are comfortable with applying qualitative research methodologies.

Cultural Competence

A contribution to thinking about cultural competencies, comes from Agyeman and Erickson who propose five "systemic elements", these are:

1. *valuing diversity,*
2. *the capacity for cultural self-assessment,*
3. *consciousness of the "dynamics" of cultural interaction,*
4. *the institutionalization of cultural knowledge, and*
5. *the development of adaptations to service delivery based on understanding diversity inter and intraculturally"* (2012:362).

Agyeman and Erickson also remind us that as planners.

> "*our cultural awareness, beliefs, knowledge, skills, behaviors, and professional practice can and do influence everything from the level and tone of outreach and representation at planning meetings to the interpretation of codes and the content of* reports" and greatly influence the physical outcomes in terms of *"the design of public spaces to the land use regulations within a region"*. Therefore, they suggest that: "*planning educators have a duty to both diversify the profession in terms of race, ethnicity, and other forms of difference, and to help student planners become more aware of (inter) cultural dynamics and how their own conscious and unconscious assumptions, beliefs, knowledge, and desires affect their ability to listen well and understand other cultures. Cultural competency should become an essential part of the professional planner's praxis"*. (Agyeman, J. & Erickson, J. 2012:359)

In a similar vein, Jeffrey Hou, Professor of Landscape Architecture at the University of Washington, in Seattle, in, *Transcultural Cities Border-Crossing and Placemaking* (2013) argues that:

> *… discourses of intercultural exchange and dialogue have begun to overtake multiculturalism as the preferred model for addressing the demographic complexity in today's cities. Sandercock (2004; with Brock 2009) argues for re-theorizing multiculturalism in twenty-first-century cities and suggests re-naming it as interculturalism to address the shortcomings of twentieth-century multiculturalism.* (2013:8)

In their 2014 article titled *Towards Hyper-Diversified European Cities A Critical Literature Review*, Tuna Tasan-Kok et al argue that:

> *Interculturalism underlines the importance of interaction between diverse groups, which is a great advantage for social cohesion. Also the perception of "identity as a dynamic concept" is an important aspect that contributes to the conceptualisation of hyper-diversity. However, the interculturalism approach is not clear about how the link between these diverse identities can be established and how cultural interchange can be motivated. Moreover, there is a lack of acknowledgement for the multi-layered characteristics of individuals.* (Tasan Kok, T. et al. 2014:18)

Indeed the "multi-layered" Intercultural person may no longer identifies solely with their birth culture but have gained the capacity to function between many cultures, due to having mastered Cultural Literacy and the skills to enabling them to constructively engage across the Multi-Cultural divides.

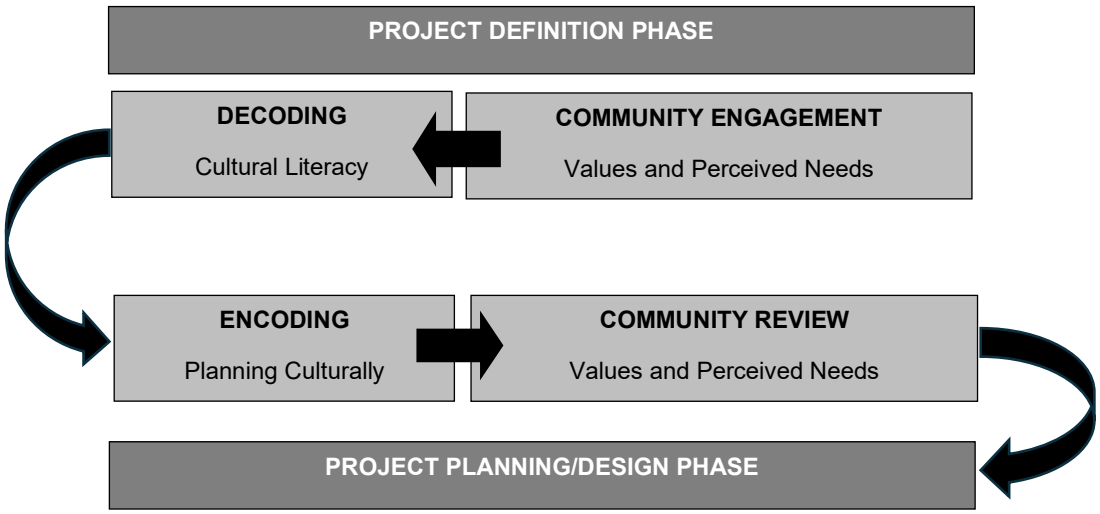
In this section the focus has been on a theoretical framework to underpin thinking regarding both the requiring of Cultural Literacy competencies and the application of these competencies in contemporary urban planning with culturally diverse communities.

3.2 Planning Culturally with Cultural Literacy

For planners, the practical imperative is no longer whether planning ought to be culturally sensitive, but how? (Burayidi, M. 2000)

A key factor in the Brisbane City Council Cultural Literacy Practice Framework, developed by Brecknock and Shaw in 2004 were the concepts that urban planners and designers need to gain the competencies involved in Decoding and Encoding tangible cultural artifacts and symbols; intangible beliefs and values; assumptions and behaviours, to inform urban planning decisions relating to community infrastructure in the Brisbane council area.

The first stage in defining the scope and requirements of a project includes "decoding" the communities" cultural values and perceived needs, this in real life needs to be an iterative circular process between the professionals and community utilising consultation techniques such as the "Listening & Learning Cycle". This is followed by the planning and design professionals and community working to "encode" the identified and relevant tangible and intangible cultural perspectives into the project brief to inform the planning and design phase.



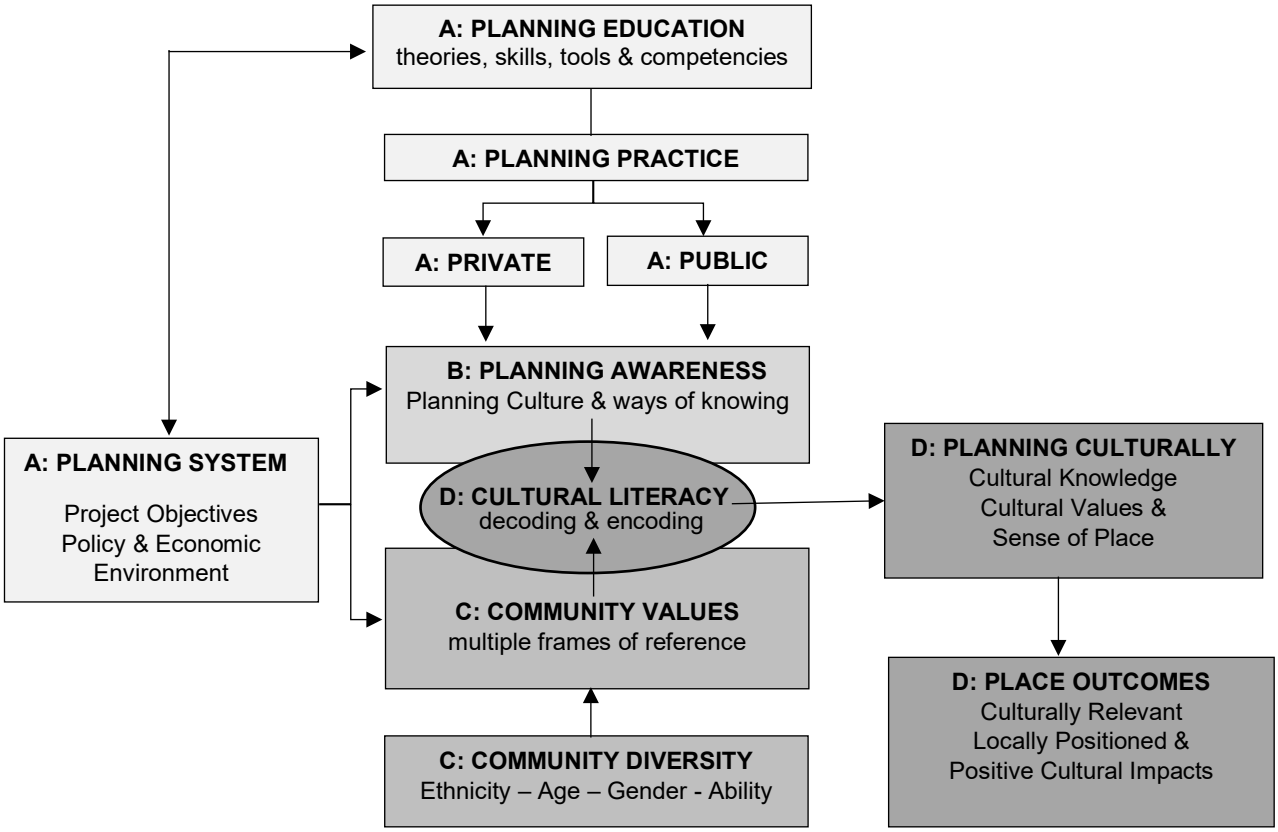
My proposition is that the essential competency required in the process of Planning Culturally is Cultural Literacy, otherwise referred to as "Cultural Competency" by others such as Agyeman and Erickson. My concept

of Cultural Literacy can be illustrated as in the diagram below, where the Cultural Literacy is ideally positioned at the intersection of the institutional and policy environment; planning education and planning practise; and the community/user groups.

Group A include the elements typical of an urban planning environment such as:

I. "**Planning System**" within which a project will be delivered which includes the relevant local Planning Scheme/Codes etc. and the factors that will impact on the project such as the policy, political and economic environment,
II. "**Planning Education**" environment within potential Urban Planners and Designers are educated,
III. "**Planning Practice**" which may be either public agencies or private sector consultancies. As a practitioner the planner and / or designer will be required to balance the needs of the Planning System while addressing the needs of the client/community.

Group B relates to "**Planning Awareness**" where the practitioner is expected to have an awareness of their own "Planning Culture" and personal cultural biases and possess the competencies to gain cultural knowledge and awareness of community values etc.



Group C brings together both the "**Community Diversity**" factors such as the demographics of the community and "**Community Values**" such as their ways of life that are relevant to the proposed project.

Group D is the "**Cultural Literacy**" overlay where the practitioner's skills in Decoding and Encoding are applied to achieve culturally relevant "**Place Outcomes"** through "**Planning Culturally**".

Therefore, as has been argued throughout, the proposition is that Cultural Literacy is an essential competency and filter through which to plan culturally and address issues regarding community values, behaviours, and association to local places, within the constraints of the existing planning policies and systems.

4. Conclusions:

Amos Rapoport has argued that *to become culturally responsive one needs to change the professional culture* and therefore, I argue that we need to achieve a Culturally Literate built environment profession. A profession of planners, architects and urban designers who are Culturally Literate, and where Planning Culturally can and should play a vital role in bringing about institutional and systematic change in the way cities are developed and managed.

It is important to state that the notion of Cultural Literacy is not new, but the need for built environment professional gaining cultural knowledge and competency is more critical than ever in order to deliver outcomes of relevance to our increasingly diverse communities, indeed as has previously been noted, back in 1976 by Edward Hall, in his book *Beyond Culture,* that a *"massive cultural literacy movement that is not just imposed, but which springs from within is called for".* (Hall, E. 1969:7)

Finally, we should acknowledge that every urban development intervention in the built environment will have an impact on the community's cultural life. It is also important to remember that cultural differences influence perception by creating lived experiences that teach certain beliefs, values, behaviours, and communication styles. These differences influence the way that people view the world around them and therefore perceive potential impacts.

These impacts, both positive and negative, may be small incremental effects or major life changing effects. Therefore, it is critical that the planning and design teams involved undertake some form of impact assessment both during the project inception stage and during the various planning and designing stages to ascertain potential impacts. These assessments might be, as the NSW technical supplement identified, not just potential '*Physically observable impacts'* but also '*Rational or justifiable fears'* on the part of the community (2023). See Research Report 3: Cultural Impact Assessment for Urban Planning & Design for download at www.planning-culturally.com/resources

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