

planning culturally

RESEARCH REPORT 2:

Cultural Competency & Urban Planning

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Contents

1. Introduction	page 3
2. Cultural Literacy	page 4
2.1 Knowledge & Awareness	
2.2 Cultural Literacy in Education & Relevance to Urban Planning	
3. A Review of Relevant Models	page 8
3.1 Awareness & Sensitivity Models	
3.1.1 The Cultural Proficiency Continuum (CPC)	
3.1.2 Development Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)	
3.1.3 Intercultural Readiness Check (IRC)	
3.1.4 Global competencies (OECD)	
3.2 Model Analysis	
4. Urban Planning & Design Context	page 14
5. References	page 16

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Richard Brecknock MPIA, is a Cultural Planner with over thirty years of experience working with communities and cities across Australia, New Zealand and England. Since the early 2000's his consulting and research has focused on the notion of Cultural Literacy being essential for Planning Culturally.

This Research Report is focused on the various existing models that have been developed to address the notions of cultural awareness, cultural sensitivity and cultural competence. The review aims to establish the relevance of the models discussed to urban planning and design.

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1. Introduction

Because culture seems to have such a significant impact on spatial planning, it is necessary to identify and understand its scope and nature clearly.

(Othengrafen and Reimer, 2013: p 1272)

Writers such as Othengrafen and Reimer (2013), Sandercock (1998), Burayidi (2003), Young (2013) and Agyeman (2017) have all argued for the importance of planning culturally and having the awareness to work with culturally diverse communities, although they do not address the specific practical skills required to achieve these goals.

This report aims to build on this theoretical base and identify the specific skills and competencies required for what I have referred to as Cultural Literacy. This involves developing an awareness of one's own cultural frames of reference and the values that every planner brings to their professional practice. This report includes a review and evaluation of potential models and / or toolkits of skill sets that urban planners could draw upon to engage in a meaningful way with a diversity of values, behaviours and lived experiences found in Australian communities.

In Australia, developing cultural competence is not limited to gaining an awareness of the needs of multicultural communities. Gaining an awareness of First Nations culture is absolutely essential for urban planners if we are to have a meaningful acknowledgement of First Nations People's connection to country and culturally sensitive design outcomes. Libby Porter has been highly critical of the lack of recognition and understanding of First Nations culture and highlights the failure of Australian planning education which, she argues, has 'a very poor scorecard on these matters' and it 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: p 563). 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 taken a positive step towards recognising the need for acknowledgement of prior ownership through the development of reconciliation plans.

Other fields of study such as health, education and business are also addressing the cross-cultural communication issues under terms such as Cultural Awareness, Cultural Intelligence, Cultural Competency and Cultural Sensitivity. Cultural sensitivity is the term primarily found in references to the health sector and the need to address the delivery of culturally 'sensitive' health services in intercultural communities.

Therefore, this report summarises my investigations and analysis of these approaches and a range of related models used to gain competencies across a range of sectors. The goal is to identify any transferable concepts and tools that would contribute to building Cultural Literacy competencies that could be applied to 'planning and designing culturally'.

2. Cultural Literacy

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 and Erickson, 2012, p359)

As previously stated, there are a number of different terms used to describe 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, P82). 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 they service and their diverse ways-of-life.

In his 2000 publication *The Creative City: a toolkit for urban innovators* Charles Landry made reference 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’ (Landry, C. 2000, P246). 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, P30). 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) and the concept was further explored in the *Intercultural City* project (Wood, P & Landry, C. 2008) and documented in *More Than Just a Bridge: planning & designing culturally* (Brecknock, R. 2006).

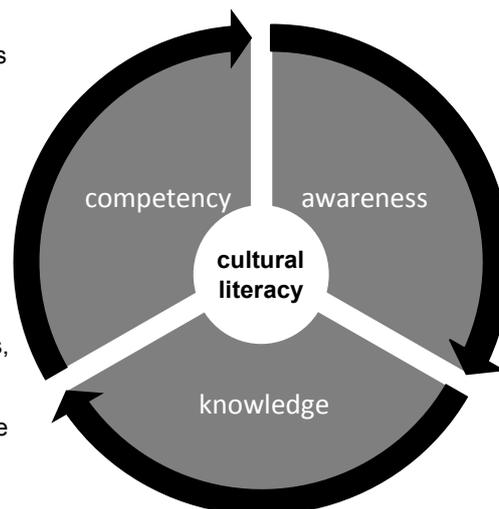
Essential to being culturally literate, in my opinion, is the skill to build a communicative and collaborative relationship with culturally diverse communities. Therefore, I believe that to plan culturally, planners need to take a communicative approach in order to ‘listen to people’s stories and assist in forging a consensus among differing viewpoints’ (Fainstein, 2014, P7) 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: p 61). The transformative agenda according to 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: P3).

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 and Low, 2000: P67) 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.

I propose 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.

To be cultural literate we need planners and designers to be, as illustrated in the diagram opposite, aware and knowledgeable regarding their personal and community cultural frames of reference.

Having gained the awareness and knowledge to become culturally literate they then need the competency to apply this cultural literacy to their professional decision-making processes, especially in terms of understanding the potential positive and negative impacts that their plans and designs might have on the community.



Brecknock 2019

a. Cultural Awareness

- A high level of awareness of their own cultural background and how their cultural values and behaviours influence their world-view and professional approach i.e. Planning Culture.
- A heightened awareness of difference within Australian communities, be it with regard to First Nation's culture or the diverse cultures of the long term and recent cultural groups that make up our intercultural population.

b. Cultural Knowledge

- Acquiring the skills to work with their intercultural communities in order 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.

c. 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.

2.1 Awareness & Knowledge

Building on this discussion regarding ways of gaining cultural knowledge, 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: P217).

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 Sandercock (1998), Burayidi (2003) does not use the term Cultural Literacy, but he does provide a useful discussion of the planning perspective in a multicultural 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: P260). 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: P277). 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: P277 & 290) who can navigate difference and are comfortable with applying qualitative research methodologies.

A further contribution to thinking about cultural competencies, comes from (Agyeman and Erickson, 2012) 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: p 362).

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.

2.2 Cultural Literacy in Education & Relevance to Urban Planning

An early proponent of the concept of Cultural Literacy in education was E.D.Hirsch. He discussed the idea in an article in 1983 and further developed it in his book *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* published in 1987. Hirsch, an American educator, proposed the need for Cultural Literacy from an educational perspective with its literary focus. However, Hirsch also saw the potential impacts that developing a culturally literate population might have, when he suggested that:

... if skill in writing and in reading comes about chiefly through what I have termed cultural literacy, then radical consequences follow. These consequences are not merely educational but social and political in their scope - and that scope is vast. (Hirsch 1983, P169)

From the educational perspective, in Australia the Australian Curriculum has been developed to include seven core capabilities, one of which is Intercultural Understanding. The curriculum is designed so that students develop intercultural understanding as they learn to value their own cultures, languages and beliefs, and those of others. It is proposed that:

Intercultural understanding encourages students to make connections between their own worlds and the worlds of others, to build on shared interests and commonalities, and to negotiate or mediate difference. It develops students' abilities to communicate and empathise with others and to analyse intercultural experiences critically. It offers opportunities for them to consider their own beliefs and attitudes in a new light, and so gain insight into themselves and others.

(Australian Curriculum Assessment & Reporting Authority, <https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/general-capabilities/intercultural-understanding/>)

Other examples of what can be classified as Cultural Literacy approaches to develop intercultural awareness in education and training of young people, while not directly focused on urban planning, include the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2018) proposed concept of *Global Competencies* and Monash University study module titled *Reading Across Cultures* which focuses on the development of Cultural Literacy to equip students with the skills to operate in a globalised world (Ochoa, 2016). Within each of these proposals are valuable contributions to the cross-cultural discourse as proposed by the concept of Cultural Literacy.

The Planning Institute of Australia (PIA) 2019 *Policy for 'The Accreditation of Australian Planning Qualifications'* outlines the capabilities and competencies that planning courses must meet in order 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
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 in order to develop the capacity to work with cultural competence when planning with First Nations and culturally diverse peoples. Cultural Literacy is therefore a pre-requisite to achieve positive planning outcomes that are sensitive to the ways-of-life and cultural values of the client community.

3. A Review of Relevant Models

The development of cultural awareness and sensitivity can only proceed from a keen sense of curiosity, an open mind, and a sustained, wide interest in social and cultural matters. (van Boeijen, A. & Zijlstra, Y. 2020 p17)

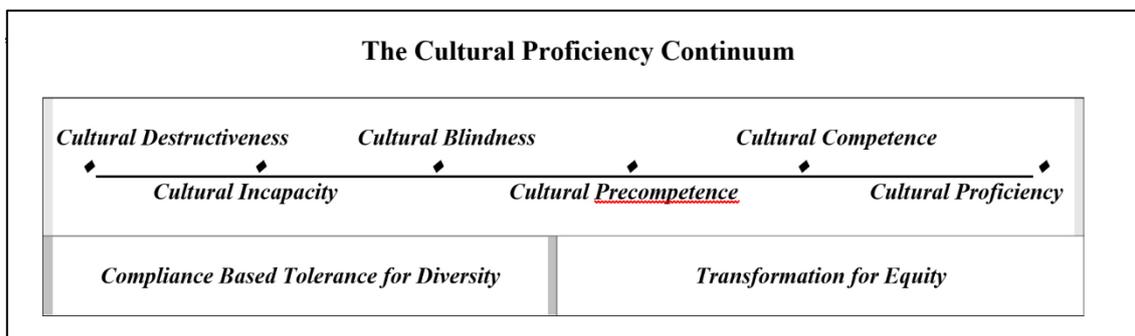
Exploring how these cultural proficiencies can be applied to the design process, Dutch industrial designer and academic, Annemiek van Boeijen and graphic designer Yvo Zijlstra, in their 2020 publication *Culture Sensitive Design: a guide to culture in practice*, state that ‘Culture sensitivity is the competence to be aware of and to experience differences and similarities between people – their values, and practices – and that are based on what they have learned as members of groups’. (2020, p 20). Boeijen and Zijlstra identify a range of relevant models for developing cultural competency/sensitivity by writers such as Milton Bennett, Oscar van Weerdenburg and Ursula Brinkmann.

There are a number of variations of relevant models available for consideration, for example here are a selection based on the ‘Cross Model of Cultural Competence’ proposed by Terry Cross (1988) which offer both institutional and individual frameworks to help gauge progress on various diversity initiatives. They describe cultural competency as movement along a continuum that is based on the premise of respect and appreciation of individuals and cultural differences.

3.1 Awareness & Sensitivity Models

3.1.1 The Cultural Proficiency Continuum (CPC)

The model reproduced below, titled *The Cultural Proficiency Continuum* is from the website of the Center for Culturally Proficient Educational Practice (CCPEP).



(<https://ccpep.org/home/what-is-cultural-proficiency/the-continuum/>)

The variations on the Cross Model generally present six stages, as per the CCPEP model above, which can be summarised as:

1. **Cultural Destructiveness**; Individuals in this phase:
 - a) view culture as a problem;
 - b) believe that if culture or population can be suppressed or destroyed, people will be better off;
 - c) believe that people should be more like the “mainstream”; and
 - d) assume that one culture is superior and should eradicate “lesser” cultures.

2. **Cultural Incapacity;** Individuals in this phase:
 - a) lack cultural awareness and skills;
 - b) may have been brought up in a homogeneous society, been taught to behave in certain ways, and never questioned what they were taught;
 - c) believe in the racial superiority of a dominant group and assume a paternalistic posture toward others; and
 - d) maintain stereotypes.

3. **Cultural Blindness;** Individuals in this phase:
 - a) see others in terms of their own culture and claim that all people are exactly alike;
 - b) believe that culture makes no difference (“we are all the same”); and
 - c) believe that all people should be treated in the same way regardless of race, etc.

4. **Cultural Precompetence;** Individuals in this phase:
 - a) recognize that there are cultural differences and start to educate themselves and others concerning these differences;
 - b) realize their shortcomings in interacting within a diverse environment; but
 - c) may become complacent in their efforts.

5. **Cultural Competence;** Individuals in this phase:
 - a) accept, appreciate, and accommodate cultural differences;
 - b) value diversity and accept and respect differences;
 - c) accept the influence of their own culture in relation to other cultures;
 - d) understand and manage the dynamics of difference when cultures intersect; and
 - e) are willing to examine components of cross-cultural interactions (communication, problem solving, etc.).

6. **Cultural Proficiency;** Individuals in this phase:
 - a) move beyond accepting, appreciating, and accommodating cultural difference and begin actively to educate less informed individuals about cultural differences;
 - b) seek out knowledge about diverse cultures, develop skills to interact in diverse environments, and
 - c) become allies with and feel comfortable interacting with others in multicultural settings.

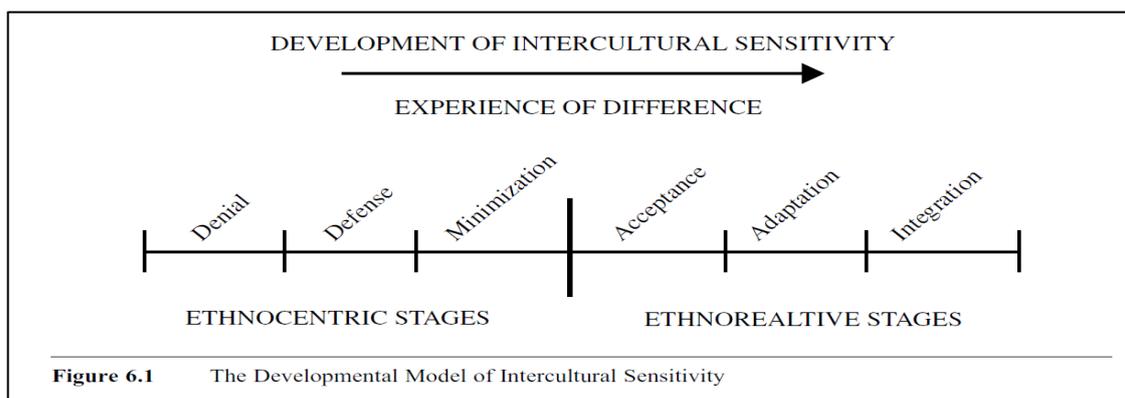
3.1.2 Development Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) – Milton Bennett

American sociologist Milton Bennett proposes a model that is not dissimilar to the CPC, however Bennett argues that to understand cultural sensitivity we need to consider the transition from what he terms ‘*ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism*’. He defines these terms as:

- “**ethnocentrism**” to refer to the experience of one’s own culture as “central to reality.” By this I mean that the beliefs and behaviors that people receive in their primary socialization are unquestioned; they are experienced as “just the way things are.”

Under this heading Bennet proposes three kinds of experiences, these are

- Denial of cultural difference,
 - Defence against difference, and
 - Minimisation of cultural difference.
- **“ethnorelativism”** to mean the opposite of ethnocentrism—the experience of one’s own beliefs and behaviors as just one organization of reality among many viable possibilities.
- Under this heading Bennet proposes three kinds of experiences, these are
- Acceptance of cultural difference,
 - Adaption to cultural difference, and
 - Integration of cultural difference into identity



Bennett states that:

It is important to note that the DMIS is not predominately a description of cognition, affect, or behavior. Rather, it is a model of how the assumed underlying worldview moves from an ethnocentric to a more ethnorelative condition, thus generating greater intercultural sensitivity and the potential for more intercultural competence. (Bennett, M 2004. P75)

And

The intercultural skillset includes the ability to analyze interaction, predict misunderstanding, and fashion adaptive behavior. The skillset can be thought of as the expanded repertoire of behavior—a repertoire that includes behavior appropriate to one’s own culture but that does not thereby exclude alternative behavior that might be more appropriate in another culture. (Bennett, M. & Bennett, J. 2020. P149)

As with the Cross model Bennett does not provide a practical skills development model, rather a ‘continuum’ across levels of personal and or professional awareness.

3.1.3 Intercultural Readiness Check (IRC)

Ursula Brinkmann and Oscar van Weerdenburg are experts in the field of intercultural management and have developed the Intercultural Readiness Check (IRC) process that aims to give individuals and organizations insight into their intercultural competences and how to develop them. IRC is promoted as an online self-evaluation checklist which can be supported by feedback sessions and personal development guidelines. Brinkmann and van Weerdenburg suggest that IRC competence profiles will reveal an individual’s developmental needs and that Intercultural learning interventions are much more effective if group experiences are combined with individual awareness.

The ICR format is structured around four evaluation criteria, which are:

1. **Intercultural Sensitivity** - *How actively you are interested in other people, their cultural backgrounds, needs and perspectives. How much you notice when interacting with people from other cultures.*
2. **Intercultural Communication** - *How mindful and self-reflective you are when communicating with other cultures. How effectively you adjust your style to meet the expectations and needs of people from different cultures.*
3. **Building Commitment** - *How much you invest into developing relationships and diverse networks. How creative you are in developing solutions that satisfy the interests of different stakeholders.*
4. **Managing Uncertainty** - *How well you deal with the complexities of greater cultural diversity—how comfortable you are in this complexity. How effectively you use cultural diversity as a source of learning and innovation—how diversity becomes your tool for creativity.*

<https://interculturalreadiness.com/>

3.1.4 OECD Global Competencies

The OECD has taken an approach to cultural competence that has a multi-national perspective in how to educate young people to interact and work across cultures in a globalised world. It has developed the notion of Global Competence, in the form of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which the OECD proposes is multidimensional and develops the skills and competencies that individuals need in order to:

... examine local, global and intercultural issues, understand and appreciate different perspectives and world views, interact successfully and respectfully with others, and take responsible action toward sustainability and collective well-being.

The OECD defines Global Competence as:

... the capacity to examine local, global and intercultural issues, to understand and appreciate the perspectives and world views of others, to engage in open, appropriate and effective interactions with people from different cultures, and to act for collective well-being and sustainable development.

This definition is clearly a version of Cultural Literacy and could well be applied to the education of built environment professionals. The OECD proposes four target dimensions of global competence that can be used for evaluation of how individuals are applying intercultural principles and practices in their everyday life, these dimensions are:

1: Examine issues of local, global and cultural significance

This dimension refers to globally competent people's practices of effectively combining knowledge about the world and critical reasoning whenever they form their own opinion about a global issue.

2: Understand and appreciate the perspectives and world views of others.

This dimension highlights that globally competent people are willing and capable of considering global problems and other people's perspectives and behaviours from multiple viewpoints.

3: Engage in open, appropriate and effective interactions across cultures.

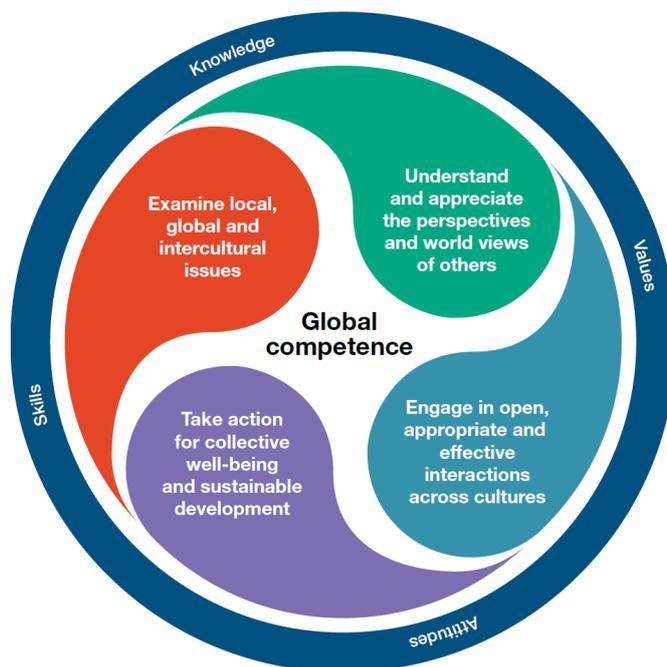
This dimension describes what globally competent individuals are able to do when they interact with people from different cultures.

4: Take action for collective well-being and sustainable development.

This dimension refers to individuals' readiness to respond to a given local, global or intercultural issue or situation.

(OECD 2018, p7)

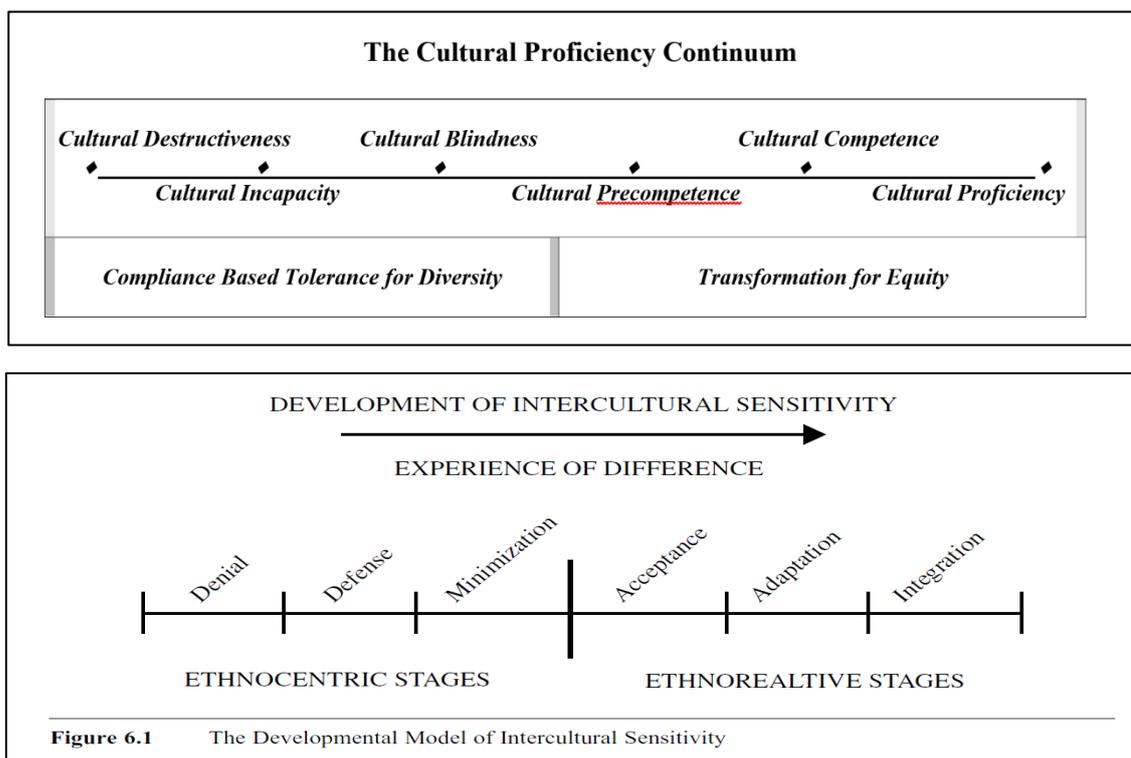
The figure below shows how the OECDs global competence illustrates the four dimensions (examining issues, understanding perspectives, interacting across cultural differences and taking action), and how each dimension builds on specific knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. I would suggest that the words Global Competence in the centre could just as easily be replaced by the term Cultural Literacy.



(The Dimensions of Global Competence - OECD 2018, P11)

<https://www.oecd.org/pisa/innovation/global-competence/>

3.2 Modal Analysis



In essence the two models set out a generally similar 'Continuum' from a very low level of cultural sensitivity through to achieving cultural competency. Both models have value in demonstrating to planners and designers that gaining Cultural / Intercultural Sensitivity is an awareness raising process and therefore the models provide a structure in which to self-identify one's own stage in the continuum. For example, training programs such as the Intercultural Readiness Check can be accessed by professionals to gain a deeper understanding of their cultural awareness / capability at stages along the continuum.

The final model provided by the OECD is perhaps the most relevant to those working in urban environments and the four dimensions could be changed slightly in wording (in italics) to make them more 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*

While it is clearly important to acknowledge the above intercultural competences or variations on the models developed by the various theorists, it is also important to recognise that they are only part of the equation. While these competences are needed in order 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.

4 Urban Planning & Design Context

Although many models and methods exist with regard to understanding people within their context, few are developed specifically to look at people through a culture-sensitive lens.

(van Boeijen, A. & Zijlstra, Y. 2020 p93)

The preceding sections have presented a range of models for understanding cultural competency, sensitivity and awareness. There are models to assess one's awareness of personal cultural frames of references, and the ability to gain the knowledge to understand individual and group values and behaviours.

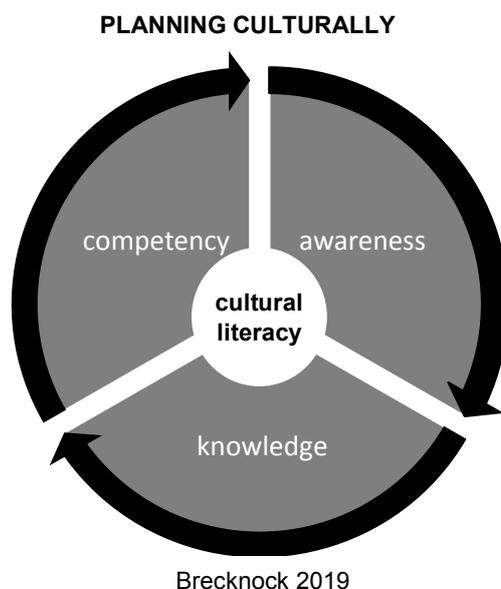
As van Boeijen and Zijlstra remind us in the above quote, there are limited examples of models that are specific to their focus on industrial design, let alone to urban planning and design.

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, 2005) (Friedmann, 2005), (Othengrafen and Reimer, 2013). Planning Culture is understood to be the planning profession not only gaining the knowledge and technical skills required to deliver planning within the relevant planning schemes, but also having the awareness of ones own cultural values and the cultural values that define the planning profession. It is also important to consider as Burayidi reminds us 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. (Burayidi 2003, P260)

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 Sandercock (1998), Burayidi (2003), Agyeman & Erickson (2012).

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. The expectation is that the knowledge gained provides the skills to work with diverse and First Nations communities to draw out the various cultural values and behaviours that are relevant to the urban environment. For example, when planning and designing residential buildings it would be important to establish the patterns of spatial use by the different groups, what are 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.



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, P271)

Van Boeijen and 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 in order to understand the diversity of values and behaviours found in a community and the ability to recognise the potential positive and / or negative impacts their planning and design decisions may have on a community’s cultural life.

Models such as those reviewed here, may help to achieve a Culturally Literate built environment profession 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 critical to delivering outcomes of relevance to our increasingly diverse communities, indeed back in 1976 T.J. Hall, in his book *Beyond Culture*, proposed that:

A massive cultural literacy movement that is not just imposed, but which springs from within is called for. We can all benefit from a deeper knowledge of what an incredible organism we are. We can grow, swell with pride, and breathe better for having so many remarkable talents. To do so, however, we must stop ranking both people and talents and accept the fact that there are many roads to truth and no culture has a corner on the path or is better equipped than others to search for it. (Hall 1969 p7)

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