Towards a New Planning History and Practice
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Introduction

Australian planning is always occurring on Indigenous lands and in policy spaces in which Indigenous peoples will have a distinct set of inter-ests. Planning actions and their consequences invariably unfold in social, political and environmental contexts in which Indigenous peoples' rela-tionships to place, and social relatedness, have not been accorded the recognition and respect that they deserve. Once this social and political context is accepted as a reality for any planning activity undertaken here, it is clear that planners and the planning system have a number of unam-biguous responsibilities when making decisions that affect Indigenous lands and peoples.

The most obvious responsibility is to reflect on planning's history and leg-acy, and accept that spatial systems, practices and technologies have been cen-tral to the dispossession and marginalisation of Aboriginal peoples for more than two centuries. Understanding how to respect cultural differences and redress the power imbalances between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people demands that practitioners pay attention to and have regard for characteris-tics of Indigenous life. These have been comprehensively overlooked, if not misunderstood and debased, by planning in the past. A more engaged and just postcolonial planning needs partnership with Indigenous peoples, and should strive to meet Indigenous peoples' aspirations. It will involve doing things very differently.

It is now long past the time for planning texts and practices that are silent on the profession's complicity with these practices to admit their consequences for Indigenous societies. We propose a new historical periodisation for plan-ning, one based on its impact on and interactions with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The result is a substantially different framework for telling the Australian planning story, one that takes a step towards what might become a "postcolonial planning" text.

A New Periodisation of Australian Planning

If planners are to build more just relationships with Indigenous peoples, they must transform the story that planning tells about itself, where it has come from, its impact and what it now does. It is a necessary and urgent task to revisit and reappraise the conventional story established in planning texts (see Chapter 2, Table 2.1) and forge a new timeline, to rework the Australian planning story.

Table 12.1 presents a new timeline that reflects the account of Australia's urban and planning history given in this book and contrasts this with the version established in the planning canon. Our new timeline reveals the centrality of the agency and actions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia's planning story.

In the whitewashed orthodox version of the planning story critiqued in Chapter 2, planning does have *colonial foundations*, but the discipline and practice emerge only in the early twentieth century, with *urban reform* around a sanitarian impulse and a commitment to *organised planning*. According to that version, such aims are joined later in the twentieth century by statutory planning systems and zonings in the first metropolitan plans. *Modern planning* is equated with growing professionalism and plan-making. In the *post-war reconstruction* period this expertise is directed at addressing poverty through slum clearance. By the 1970s confidence in the expert planner is shaken by the demands of those previously marginalised: the young, women, the poor and "minorities". It is at this point, during the *rethinking planning* period, that the canon, the standard history, of Australian planning explicitly intersects with the concerns of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Once again, this is not foremost in the conventional planning story, which defines the contemporary period as the *neoliberal* one – a glaring omission given the significant developments in Indigenous policy and Australian land law since the 1970s.

There *are* points at which the canon intersects with the historical interpretations brought to light here. Themes such as "colonial foundations", "sanitarianism", "slum clearing" and "rethinking planning" are critical moments. Yet, as the previous chapters have detailed, a more accurate account of planning requires the reconfiguration of these periods, and the addition of new ones. To adequately render an alternative postcolonial planning history will require the inclusion of moments defined as significant in the field of Aboriginal policy too (Altman 2014; Sanders 2009).

In fleshing out our revised timeline, necessarily a coarse representation of more than 200 years, we need to note the variability in the timing and location of events across the nation. The experience of south-eastern Australia differed from that of the tropical north, for example, though primarily in timing rather than form. In establishing key periods for this analysis there were

Table 12.1 A new planning history of settler and Indigenous Australia

Chronology	Planning in Australia – the canon	Planning in Indigenous Australia – an alternative
1770s to 1850s	*Colonial foundations* Discovery, first city plan	*Possession and dispossession* Processes of mapping, naming, surveying, titling Aboriginal resistance, Port Phillip Protectorates
1850s to Federation	*Urban reform* Sanitation and water supply, building and fire regulations	*Protection and containment* Processes of institutionalising Aboriginal people in reserves, native institutions and missions Formation of fringe camps
1900s to 1940s	*Formalisation of planning* Nation-building, City Beautiful, garden cities, first planning courses and more city plans	*Protection and segregation* The state as guardian, comprehensive policy of racial separation using reserves, town boundaries and zoning Original reserves reduced in size Aboriginal activism for citizenship
1945 to 1970s	*Post-war reconstruction* Suburban expansion, slum removal and first metropolitan planning schemes	*Assimilation* Reserve closures, growth of unserviced town camps, new assimilationist housing policies, continuation of racial curfews in towns Aboriginal activism wins constitutional reform but campaigns for wider civil rights continue
1970s to 1980s	*Rethinking planning* Environmentalism, feminism, social movements, green bans	*Self-determination and land restitution* Land rights and cultural heritage legislation, dedicated services and planning within a growing Indigenous sector, outlawing of racial discrimination Aboriginal nationalism and internationalism
1990s to today	*Neoliberal planning* Privatisation, public–private partnerships, sustainability, deliberative turn	*Native title and political recognition* Native title jurisprudence, urban visibility and new models of Indigenous planning and land management, reconciliation Resistance to "mainstreaming" and re-emergence of assimilation and the neoliberal impact on Indigenous policy (abolition of ATSIC, NT intervention, remote community closures) Renewed treaty demands

rarely clean or precisely defined breaks in policy orientation. The transition of the periods known in Aboriginal history as protectionism and assimilation, for example, was gradual, and the guardianship principle that underpins assimilation policy (Sanders 2009) has been a persistent one in Indigenous affairs for over a century. Within any of the periods we have constructed here multiple principles may have competed for dominance. In the contemporary period there is a tense coexistence between restitution mechanisms, such as native title, and neo-colonial state actions, such as the Northern Territory intervention of 2007 (see Sanders 2009). We look forward to further research that draws on insights from Aboriginal history, policy studies and planning investigations to refine the timeline, give closer attention to these trends and to other tensions and identify contradictions and regional differences.

With these caveats in mind, and on the basis of our research, we can nonetheless begin the process of reworking the history of Australian planning. Thus, within the period known in the planning literature as *colonial foundations*, we have demonstrated that this time was indeed profoundly foundational: the shadow it cast on Australia's system of land administration and management reaches into the present, for the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries saw the development and imposition of the land tenure and planning systems of the colonies and the nation. Integral to this exercise were the processes of *possession and dispossession*, enacted through the mechanisms of mapping, surveying, naming and titling land. The same discourse that, as "sanitarianism", underpinned the introduction of water and sewerage systems in cities played its part in rationalising the containment of Aboriginal populations on missions and reserves and in compounds, schools and native institutions during a period we call *protection and containment*.

By the early twentieth century the focus of what we argue were planning authorities – reserve and mission managers and Aboriginal Protection Boards – shifted to new strategies of containment and regulation. The period of *protection and segregation* saw a continuation of protectionism as the state assumed guardianship over Indigenous people, many of whom were forced to live on reserves. Zoning space and marking town boundaries restricted their mobility and curtailed their freedoms. These containments were all made on the basis of racialised systems of classification. They sometimes produced appalling living conditions, through neglect and the deeply racist assumption that Aboriginal settlements required lesser servicing. Planning tools and techniques were used both in the production of such spaces and in their regulation. This removed the right of Aboriginal people to have any legitimate presence in towns and cities, lowered their quality of life and foreclosed the availability of opportunities for personal, political and community development.

In the period after World War II, and especially since the 1970s, urbanisation of much of the Indigenous population began (Taylor 2006), at around

the same time as a newly professionalised and systematised planning system was emerging. These trends powerfully intersected with much broader shifts in social values that culminated in post-1945 *assimilation* policies. Protection eventually came up against calls for a more positive policy framed around citizenship and equal rights (Sanders 2009, p. 9). As a consequence, reserves were dismantled and slums demolished by state housing commissions, once more removing Aboriginal people from central areas, in an attempt to integrate them into the wider society. The policy often deployed an explicitly racist approach as it scattered people in a "salt and pepper" pattern across suburban housing estates in some areas. Once again, spatial relocation and regulation were the means used by governments to maintain a policy of "improving" Indigenous people, and planning was seen as a key means to effect a transition to "civilised" life.

Aboriginal people have always questioned these planning technologies: through frontier resistance to the violent occupation of their lands; by challenging the rule of reserve and mission administrators; in campaigning to secure their own lands and the safety of their communities and cultures; and by striving to improve service provision and access. More recently such campaigns have demanded *self-determination* and *land restitution*. As Chapters 8, 9 and 10 detail, a fundamental element of the post-1970s *rethinking of planning* period involved Indigenous challenges to the land tenure and cultural value systems on which planning has been built. Throughout this time, itself marked by wider social changes brought about by movements such as feminism and environmentalism, the principles of diversity and difference ascended in Indigenous affairs. This period saw calls for Indigenous-specific rights for self-determination in areas such as land and community organisation (Sanders 2009). The subsequent native title and cultural heritage regimes have since formed the foundation of a series of effective planning initiatives, some profiled in Chapter 11.

The recent *neoliberal* turn in planning has impacted on Indigenous Australia in very particular ways. The clearest such moves have been to integrate Indigenous peoples into the market economy and apply economic rationalism to the provision of services to remote communities (Altman 2014). Achieving socio-economic equality has become a dominant theme in the current period, one cast as more important than legal equality and social autonomy, which were such influential principles in the previous one. Moves to achieve greater "responsibility" in Indigenous affairs policy, to defund ATSIC and to "Close the Gap" in socio-economic indicators are all part of a recent trend towards "mainstreaming" Indigenous policy that has been contentious and, in some places, strongly resisted.

Reframing the interactions between planning and Indigenous Australia in this way demonstrates the need for a new planning history. This history

must acknowledge the deeper and more thoroughgoing nature of its imperial foundations; admit that colonialising spatial technologies were early forms of planning, just as their agents were early planners; and acknowledge the racialised underpinnings and impacts of planning discourses and actions. It should also admit the ongoing challenges to planning mounted by Aboriginal people, and adjust to their claims for self-determination and autonomy.

Implications for Planning Practice

We have dwelt on planning's history and practice, in its ways of knowing or thinking. But what of our contribution to ways of *doing*? What are the implications of the analysis for the professional conduct of planning? How can changing our ways of thinking foster approaches to land use planning processes that are more fully aware of, and responsive to, Indigenous experience, identity, rights, responsibilities and authority than those of the past?

Without presenting a how-to manual, the following offers some guidance for approaches that are more open to the possibilities of taking a postcolonial perspective.

The Planning Institute of Australia tells us planning matters because of its underpinning goal to "create better communities". Planning is the tool that "creates places we love and that nurture us now and into the future" (Planning Institute of Australia 2017). These core objectives of planning, focused as they are on place and community, give planning a special role to play in supporting the core objectives of Indigenous community development and self-determination. Three elements of planning – its future-orientation; its role in governance; and its aim of improving the quality of life through services and place-making – need to be done differently.

In Part III we outlined some of the foundations for considering more progressive ways of doing planning, and, in Chapter 11 in particular, we presented examples of Indigenous-led endeavour and innovation within the land management system. These examples point the way towards promising opportunities for collaboration, self-determination, redistribution and resurgence.

However, simply appreciating the legal frameworks that govern interactions between land and environmental protection laws, including native title, is insufficient for transforming planning. Ways of thinking and ways of doing intersect and shape each other. We have shown how the objectives of planning thought and action are not innocent but are imbued with colonial power relations and contestations about visibility and representation, and riven by conflicts over property and other economic resources, with profound effects on Indigenous peoples. It is therefore necessary for planners to problematise

planning, in order to expose how its foundations persistently shape its thought and practice.

A first necessary change concerns the politics of recognition and the question of how to approach communities. The current models of recognition and Indigenous authenticity embedded in public discourse, policy (including some laws) and practice open vital opportunities for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Yet, at the same time, they entrench expectations about authenticity and ongoing connection, sometimes even stable residence. The dynamic relationships that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities hold to country and kin exist regardless of whether they are recognisable in Australian law, or to non-Indigenous societal norms. The implications of seriously admitting Indigenous concerns and ways of being into planning may seem radical, but moving towards a focus on their social relations of place is likely to be a promising direction.

A second is a shift in planning's focus on place-making. Aboriginal concepts of place are realised in varied ways, including through social action. Consequently, there is important work for planners here, to support, facilitate and enable the continuation of the social relations that generate cultural heritage or connections to country. Initially the implications might appear to fall within the realm of heritage management and land claims, but they also affect, for example, housing, transport and social services. In light of the contemporary geographies of Indigenous life-ways, it will be necessary for planners to acknowledge that the place-based contexts in which they will have to work will not necessarily display stable, fixed notions of individual identity and settled, immobile, historically continuous relationships with land. It follows, then, that a key step will involve valuing the generative capacity of contemporary Indigenous socio-cultural practices and relationships through which meanings are assigned to any given place or feature (Jackson 2006). Grappling with these complexities will make it essential for planners to spend time learning about the particular community with whom they need to work.

Third, planning has a concern for service provision. Planning can play a part in redressing the historical neglect, structural disadvantages and maldistribution of resources and services to which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have been persistently subjected. Since at least the 1960s planning has been actively committed to redistributive and socially just outcomes (Sandercock 1998). Yet far too many gaps remain in the provision of appropriate and adequate physical and social services to Aboriginal communities, the basic task of any planning system. Native title and cultural heritage legislation cannot address all these demands. This constitutes a much bigger distributive issue, which lies at the heart of many measures of social and economic disadvantage. It is therefore part of contemporary demands for justice and

needs to be addressed if Australian planning is to realise the socially respon-sible goal of delivering vital spaces and services to all.

Fourth, and finally, planning must move in a new direction by looking far more radically at matters of governance. Current tools and practices already exist within planning with regard to participation and consultation. Yet attention to matters of governance, institutional design and process must also recognise that Indigenous communities are not merely another stakeholder. Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander commu-nities demands that planners recognise that distinct Indigenous structures of governance exist. Conventional planning consultation processes, even when they attempt to act inclusively and hear other perspectives, embody an implicit imperialist presumption that the state planning system is the only legitimate system of governance. This, as many scholars have shown, greatly constrains and limits the efforts of Indigenous peoples to shape and regulate their country and communities (Jackson 1998; Porter & Barry 2015; 2016). Greater consideration and creative effort must go towards establish-ing collaborative, meaningful partnerships, in which authority and decision-making powers are shared. Deeper dialogue, sustained engagement (Walsh & Mitchell 2002) and grappling with questions of community and recogni-tion are vital. By devolving authority in making land use decisions, planners can help create a sense of certainty for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as to where the power will lie in future decisions about their country and their place in the wider social fabric.

Working in genuine partnership with communities is likely to be difficult and may be demanding at times. Appropriate methods of negotiation will need to be co-designed to ensure that they are locally grounded and respon-sive to those communities. This requires allocating time to learn and build relationships and support aspirations. It is often difficult to know whom to contact and how best to make the approach, but getting to know people, in an informal way with no specific agenda perhaps, is crucial. It builds trust and enables everyone to understand different perspectives. Relationship-building can help everyone understand the full range of issues, what is of value to the different parties based on their own perspectives and where there might be common ground to work together.

We have described the colonial urge to "fix" problems defined by and on the terms of the dominant society. Planning, too, has a strong tendency to want to create technical or policy fixes of various kinds to the phenomena it frames or identifies as problems. Advancing a genuine relationship with Indigenous peoples means *sharing* the right to define what the problems are and the values that matter and to shape the course of any intervention. Planning thinking, methods, approach and practice must shift in order to support this aspiration.

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