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An Aboriginal Obligation to *Country*: Challenging The Status Quo

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Abstract: Australian Aboriginal Traditional Owner ancestral responsibilities to *Country* involves listening and exercising vested responsibilities and duties of care, passed down from generation to generation through clan and familial connections. Traditional Owners is a term used to describe today's descendants of the original Aboriginal inhabitants and have ongoing cultural and spiritual connections to land and water where their ancestors lived. The incorporation of Traditional Owner relationships to *Country* and the need to engage with Traditional Owners in Western planning regimes are often expressed positively; that Aboriginal needs and aspirations need to be recognized in the urban landscape. However in practice, decisions involving the address of Aboriginal aspirations are usually made in a generic context rather than a *Country* and knowledge specific context. This can have adverse effects on obligations to *Country* stewardship, and Custodial perceptions are being ignored and negated. Improving our understanding of how Traditional ancestral obligations to *Country* are expressed and embodied within the context of generic Western planning instruments, is critical as cities expand and increase the pressures and threats on Traditional Owners *Country*, their resources, their cultural heritage, their knowledge and their histories. This paper contributes to this understanding by focusing upon Traditional Owner communities in the Brisbane metropolitan region who are attempting to address their responsibility to *Country* through Western State and local planning instruments. This paper draws on empirical data collected through interviews and observations between 2013-2015 with the Quandamooka communities and a content analysis of current planning instruments. The paper reports on their obligations of and to *Country* and the consequences that engagement within Western planning instruments has had upon their Traditional Ownership well-being and landscape health. Lessons learned from this case study are discussed to offer future planning policy initiatives that could better meet the needs of Traditional Owners in Australian cities.

Key words: Aboriginal *Country*, Traditional Owners, planning, peri-urban landscapes Australia

Terminology

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People. According to s51 (25) of the High Court of Australia (1983):

'An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person, is a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community in which he or she lives.'

Queensland Health (2011), 'Guidelines for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Terminology' has expressed a preference that the word 'Aboriginal', within the context of Australia, is always capitalised. Within this research, the use of 'Aboriginal' and 'First People' predominately refers to 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People'

Country means far more than just the physical landscape. Rather it:

'...incorporates people, animals, plants, water and land. But Country is more than just people and things; it is also what connects them to each other and the multiple spiritual and symbolic realms. It relates to laws, custom, movement, song, knowledges ... histories, presents and futures ... Country can be talked to, it can be known, it can itself communicate, feel and take action' (Wright et al, 2012, p.54)

Indigenous refers to an Indigenous person from any part of the world, and does not necessarily refer to an Aboriginal Australian

Traditional Owner is understood using Queensland's Health *Guidelines* (2011) as:

'an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person or group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people directly descended from the original Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inhabitants of a culturally defined area of land or Country, and has a cultural association with this Country that derives from the traditions, observances, customs, beliefs or history of the original Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inhabitants of the area'.

1. Introduction

'The effective protection of the heritage of the indigenous peoples of the world benefits all humanity. Cultural diversity is essential to the adaptability and creativity of the human species as a whole' (Daes, 1995, p.1).

In Australia over 70% of Indigenous and Aboriginal peoples live in urban and peri-urban regions (Biddle, 2012), most external to their ancestral *Country*. In Queensland, 29% of its Aboriginal population lives in the Brisbane metropolitan region and this figure is rapidly increasing. Accordingly, it is a concern for Traditional Owners whose *Country* comprises Australian capital cities, across Australian regions, to adequately protect their customary responsibilities to their *Country* when they find themselves unfairly competing with Western values, that commonly dominate land-use management and planning (Yiftachel & Huxley, 2000). Failure to respect this concern can result in widespread damage and disruption to their cultural connections and customary knowledge and networks. However, there are also opportunities for Aboriginal peoples to draw from Western land-use planning knowledge and practices that can help aid their practices and knowledge of land-management. Porter (2004, 106) has observed that 'Indigenous peoples have been very effectively using modern non-indigenous legal structures to achieve recognition of their rights and the material benefits that flow from those'. This also includes opportunities for planning to 'reconnect' to sustainable practices of management and organizational systems thus improving the ways of managing the landscape for all; for example, climate change (Low Choy *et al*, 2013).

To these Traditional Owners, Western practices of land-use management also should involve an effective integral and respect of Aboriginal values and the concept of *Country* so that the latter can participate in guiding and influencing Western colonial values of land use planning; thereby minimize the long-term effects of Western colonial planning and mismanagement (Porter, 2006). But, this aspiration is little being heeded and incorporated.

Achieving an incorporation of these Aboriginal values and moral structures in Western land use planning mechanisms is challenging particularly for Aboriginal communities and Traditional Owners. This is particularly so for Aboriginal communities who are attempting to reconnect to their customary responsibilities for *Country* post-colonialism whilst simultaneously learning and negotiating through the morass of Western land use and management practices and regimes. For example, Aboriginal peoples in peri-urban landscapes are often confronted with the issue of how to address their customary obligations to adequately care for *Country* whilst simultaneously aligning to Western obligations and legal remits which are commonly ignorant to their needs (Yiftachel, 1995, 1998). Further, it is being increasingly recognized by Aboriginal communities in peri-urban and urban landscapes, that land use planning itself is an active tool that, through land-use planning and management mechanisms and strategies, can also scaffold improvements for Indigenous self-determination (Lane & Hibbard, 2005; Zaferatos, 2004).

There is however little literature that provides guidance for Aboriginal communities working in and through these complex issues (Barry & Porter, 2011), nor for Western land use planners. This leaves Aboriginal communities with little understanding or precedent of how to best address their values, rights and connections within and for Western land-use planning and management. Improving Aboriginal capacity to incorporate their values for land use planning purposes is critical as there are increasing national, state and local governance policy expectations and requirements for Aboriginal communities to be involved and engaged in planning processes. This is particularly relevant for Aboriginal organizations such as, for example, Cultural Heritage Bodies or Prescribed Body Corporates as defined in Queensland, or Recognised Aboriginal parties (RAP) as defined in Victoria. These entities are increasingly deemed the primary spokespersons and representatives voices responsible for representing their communities' values and desires.

This paper aims to contribute to the understanding of how Western-derived land use planning and policy are being applied by Aboriginal communities to address *Country* within the South East Queensland Region, focusing on the communities of the Quandamooka Peoples.

Quandamooka *Country* includes Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island) lands and the surrounding bay and waters. Minjerribah has been impacted by multiple mismanagement issues including the ongoing issue of sand mining with little Traditional Owner consultation as well as conflicts from being a popular tourist area. A native title determination in July 2011 and the formation of Quandamooka Yollooburrabee Corporation

(QYAC), a Prescribed Body Corporate, however has meant that the Quandamooka community are now particularly active in land use planning negotiations and decision-making. This includes the development of a *QYAC Strategic Plan 2014-2016* (QYAC 2014) and co-management of the Naree Budjong Djara National Park on Minjerribah with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Services.

The objectives of this paper are fourfold. First, we present key challenges for Aboriginal communities related to protecting *Country* through Western-derived land-use planning processes and the key features of how institutional land-use planning arrangements is structured in Queensland. Second, we describe the research approach and methodology of a project examining this topic, including the case study context and key findings informed by empirical data. Drawing on the findings, we then discuss the key issues associated with protecting *Country* under Western and generic practices as well as the effectiveness and limitations of current institutional arrangements guiding the management of *Country* in Queensland, and contextually in Australia. We conclude the paper by extracting insights that can inform the address of *Country* in land use planning.

2. *Country* in urban and regional planning

Protecting *Country* within rapidly changing landscapes characterized by rapid growth and development transformation; involves multiple considerations for Aboriginal communities (Groenfeldt, 2003). This includes social and cultural obligations and the needs of *Country* as well as the development of adequate land use planning tools and instruments necessary for application to protect and conserve these cultural considerations. It is well documented that for Aboriginal peoples, the impact of not being able to care, or exercise their specific obligations to *Country* can exacerbate existing colonial and Western damage to their customary systems (Rose, 1999), and directly impact upon the socio-economic health of Aboriginal peoples. Further, financial resources and accessibility to *Country* is directly linked to enhancing Aboriginal self-determination, capacity and health (Altman *et al* 2007; Hunt, 2010), and these capacity building resources are thus essential for *Country* to be successfully and adequately addressed in land use planning. These resources can include job training and educational advancement to support the restoration of their knowledge to *Country*. Literature on this topic predominately rotates around topics of Indigenous Protected Areas and Natural Resource Management, and not broader land use planning and management of their *Country*. Within urbanizing landscapes, an Aboriginal obligation to care for *Country* may be considered by land use planners alongside other values, beliefs, decisions, actions and policies. This procedural approach suggests that to adequately protect *Country* in urban regions is even more contentious as it does not possess an authoritative position to contribute to these discourses but is subsumed in the wider interest of community engagement and representation. Thus understanding how this is occurring, and how Aboriginal communities are attempting to protect *Country*, is a key element to better understand and improve planning for *Country* in rapidly changing landscapes.

Historically there have been multiple suggestions for ways to include Aboriginal values in planning processes (Brown 2006; Stephenson 2008; Low Choy *et al* 2010a, 2010b). However, as highlighted by Kliger and Cosgrove (1999) from Aboriginal engagement observations and supported by multicultural planning theorists such as Sandercock (1998), there is no room for 'general solutions' to securing Aboriginal values, needs and their connections to *Country*. Additionally, these scholars have pointed out that as a consequence conflicts arise between Aboriginal communities and State land use planners when decisions are sought because these are not aligned to improving the protection of *Country* as interpreted through the eyes and values of the relevant Traditional Owners. Hence, understanding how these decisions and activities have occurred in these contentious urban settings can shed light on how to improve land use planning itself to address its own cultural sensitivities.

Planning for Aboriginal peoples values and needs in Australia has evolved significantly since the mid 2000's. Shifting from a strong focus upon 'response' to development, as enshrined in Environmental Impact Assessment processes, it has been shifting towards a greater recognition of the importance of social capacity and Aboriginal self-empowerment aided by both Australian High Court precedents and United Nations policy-changes. The current Australian planning approach is based on an integrative and a 'whole of government approach', and operationally planning for the Australian urban and peri-urban landscape is structured by the three levels of governance: local, state and national. However, the primary responsibility for addressing Aboriginal *Country* under the *Australian Constitution* (1901) falls to State governments, because the Commonwealth does not have specific constitutional powers in respect of land-use planning. Consequently the main role of the Commonwealth is to support states and Aboriginal communities to protect *Country* by providing financial resources and infrastructure for state and local governments, and Aboriginal

communities, through shared partnerships or similar. As result, addressing Aboriginal values in land use planning differs greatly across the various Australian states.

In Queensland, the land use planning arrangements to address Aboriginal values as outlined under the current *Sustainable Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Act (No.2) 2012* (SPOLAA), is considered under the *Queensland Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act* (2003) for local planning instruments. In addition, the current statutory *South East Queensland Regional Plan 2009-2031*, included two Desired Regional Outcomes (DRO's) relevant to Aboriginal values: Aboriginal Cultural Landscape (Policy 3.6.1) and Engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (Policy 7.4.1). Significantly these DRO's guide the desired outcomes for local land use planning instruments and a number of Aboriginal social engagement policies were included in some local land use planning schemes including the current Redlands and Ipswich Local Planning Schemes. However these DRO's were never implemented and there is no specific policy guidance on how to address or plan for Aboriginal-environment connections. Under the former Bligh Labor state government, a number of Aboriginal community plans were developed with Aboriginal organizations under the *Local Government Act* (2009). However, under the Campbell premiership, and the newly-elected Palaszczuk Labor state government that inherited the Campbell land-use planning institutional regime, there is no specific strategic plan or policy to address an Aboriginal worldview from their understanding to *Country*.

Another key feature of addressing Aboriginal values in urban and regional land-use planning in Queensland is the creation of Aboriginal Prescribed Body Corporations to negotiate land-use agreements over Native Title lands. For instance, the Quandamooka Yolloburabee Aboriginal Corporation (QYAC) successfully negotiated, under the Bligh Premiership, with the state and local government to agree on an Indigenous Land-Use Agreement, following a Native Title determination for the Quandamooka community in July 2011. The newly formed Aboriginal organization is now responsible for managing and negotiating land-use and has consulted with the Quandamooka community to produce the *Quandamooka Yolloburabee Corporation Strategic Plan 2014-2016* (2014). This *Plan* (2014) outlines the Quandamooka peoples' desires and needs to care for *Country*, in conjunction with the *Quandamooka Yolloburabee Aboriginal Corporation Operational Plan 2014-2016*, seeks to implement the *Plan* (2014). This expanded portfolio recognizes the key role that land use planning has become for Aboriginal organizations to articulate their needs and customary obligations as a Western plan. In addition to the traditional role of exercising an obligation for *Country*, these organizations are more frequently bringing together local and state governments to negotiate the management of *Country*.

3. Research Approach and Methodology

This research has focused upon the Aboriginal communities of the Quandamooka community. The Quandamooka *Country* of the Nughi, Nunukul and Gorenpul peoples encompasses Moorgumpin (Moreton Island) and Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island) as well as the surrounding waters and islands of central and southern Moreton Bay including water channels and streams between Brisbane to Logan local municipalities. The South East Queensland (SEQ) is vulnerable to rapid change and population growth that has been causing the destruction and damage of various places containing Aboriginal heritage and culture. In response, Aboriginal Traditional Owners across SEQ have been increasingly active in articulating avenues and needs to protect their ancestral lands through Cultural Heritage Bodies, Native Title claims, Indigenous Land-Use Agreements (ILUAs) and regional land-use planning processes through the South East Queensland Traditional Owner Alliance Group.

For this research project, qualitative methods were employed to gather data between March 2013 and March 2015. This strategy included long stays on *Country*, semi-structured interviews, participant observations and listening to *Country* (Bawaka *Country et al* 2014). In total, 17 interviews were held but ongoing meetings, discussions and extended stays on Quandamooka *Country* helped to provide more information and strengthen relationships to realise quality research data. Notes taken were also compiled through participant observation reports. Empirical data was analyzed using Yanow's critical interpretive policy analysis (2007), aided by coding using NVivo software.

Key findings below are based on empirical data collected with the Quandamooka Traditional Owners who are active within land use planning processes including Elders and those working within the community representative organizations. Although this data presented does not represent the views of the non-Aboriginal community, it was discovered that throughout the interviews, planning for *Country* was understood by the Aboriginal communities as land use planning for the needs of both the Quandamooka Peoples as well as the broader non-Aboriginal community.

4. Key empirical findings

Planning for Aboriginal values includes multiple dimensions that are the expression of Aboriginal peoples relationships to *Country*, their *Country*. This section outlines key issues that emerged from the data collated through interviews and participant observations with members of the Quandamooka community. While issues are interdependent, for the purpose of this paper, we have grouped them under two broad categories: their obligation to *Country*, and the exercise of their responsibility for *Country*.

4.1 An obligation to Country

Remembering that we are specifically discussing the Quandamooka *Country* and community, key issues related to an obligation for *Country* in land use planning includes the context of *Country* itself, and the institutional and political context of *Country*. Issues raised, included their desire for their *Country* care to be specific to the needs of the terrestrial and aquatic landscape, and the re-establishment of their own obligations to *Country*. In particular it was highlighted, by one interviewee, that there is a need to re-establish traditional decision-making processes within the maturation of the QYAC governance;

'Well there is a group, a registered group, that's known as the Minjerribah Moorgumpin Elders in Council Aboriginal corporation ... So between the two organisations, the progression of activities and cultural obligations [are] carried out through the two organizations ...' (TO, 1)

This conclusion was thought essential to enable land use planning to be better integrated with their own customary obligations that the Quandamooka have to their Elders and traditional decision-making processes. Additionally, the interviewee stressed that to provide recognition of these obligations in land use planning, including as the demand for their decisions and input increases,

'... Elders need to be consulted and make the final decisions for Country. Planners need to realize that for us to make decisions, it goes beyond those representative or sitting in a meeting. We have our own obligations to meet too' (TO,2)

It was also articulated by interviewees that there is a need to better realize Aboriginal community obligations to *Country* care, as well as accepting and enabling the career advancement of Aboriginal communities with their own Aboriginal land use planners. Historically, Quandamooka *Country* has been repeatedly under stress from previous land use mismanagement decisions resulting in a strong representation from the Quandamooka that there needs to be better care of their *Country*; not only for the benefit of Traditional Owners but for all.

'Without Country we've got nothing, none of us have got anything. Like Council, the State, whatever you've got, if the place is destroyed who is going to want to pay to come and look at it? Honestly, it's our biggest asset' (TO, 3)

Other issues related to land use planning for *Country* identified in the qualitative research included issues related to the institutional and political context. These included the recognition that some State government departments and agencies were limited in both their ability and understanding of what and how they could deliver policy:

'There is a revolving door ... you've changed Government ... so you've got all these new managers that come ... they might come in there for five or six months and then bang they're gone again. There's no genuine commitment to deliver.' (TO, 4)

This consistent interviewee response reiterated the conclusion that Aboriginal personnel, and those actively employed to care for *Country*, are stretched to the limit in time, human resources, financial resources, support to actually exercise these responsibilities.

'I've got so much to - I've got a mountain of report-writing that I need to do. I'm also trying to do stuff out in the field, doing my Cultural Heritage monitoring work, and survey work and things like that. But there's also a lot of report-writing, even the other day ...' (TO, 5)

Another key conclusion raised by the qualitative data related to the poor engagement of Aboriginal communities in decision-making involving land use planning and management implementation and final deliberations. This issue was particularly negatively expressed by the interviewees towards state and local

government representative actions, attitudes and values. An example referred to by the interviewees, for example, was the decision to extend sand mining on North Stradbroke Island despite an agreement with the previous Bligh Labor state government not to do so; thus, a clear demonstration of the state Premier's ignorance of Aboriginal need to care.

4.2 Exercising an obligation to Country

Key issues synthesized from the research relating to obligations, such as implementation of exercising their obligations to *Country*, can be divided into four categories:

- the personal context,
- the Aboriginal community organization context,
- the business context, and
- the political context.

Within the individual category, the main issues included increased financial support for educating and providing jobs, and securing future economic opportunities for Aboriginal people. Additional aspects were, the limited knowledge and human resources to meet the demands of Western legal obligations that continues to affect the community resulting in additional burdens being added to their customary obligations and responsibilities, and the reliance on non-Aboriginal expertise and assistance, such as land use planners, scientific consultants and legal advisors.

Under the Aboriginal community organization context, a pattern was the need to improve Quandamooka economic capacity to adequately manage *Country*, particularly through their own initiatives and business initiatives, all centered on sustainable and eco-friendly practices such as sustainable tourism.

From the local government context, a greater cultural awareness and knowledge of Quandamooka *Country* ensures a better quality future for *Country*, and that land use planners and state and local government officials from the 'city' were not understanding of ways to care for Quandamooka *Country*, as expressed eloquently by one interviewee:

'Our relationship that we have with the Redland City Council is far greater, it's a better relationship, working relationship, than we have with the State, absolutely ... yeah day-to-day, and just because they are so close to us. Like people in the city they've jumped, they don't know about it. Redland City Council - I suppose the State's got assets all over the State'. (TO, 6)

These findings confirm trends in the existing literature that demonstrates that there is an increasing awareness and application of land use planning to help meet the Quandamooka Peoples obligations in exercising their care for *Country*. This conclusion, interestingly, prompts Western land use planning to realize its own limitations and shortfalls to protect Aboriginal community's needs and aspirations in the landscape.

5. Discussion

The first conclusion that emerges from the research clearly illustrates that land use planning processes, particularly strategic planning, needs to facilitate for the customary responsibility Aboriginal communities are obligated to exercise. As highlighted by Groenfeldt (2003), one of the key challenges for Aboriginal communities in urban and peri-urban landscapes in Australia is the need to exercise their obligation for *Country* whilst negotiating within rapidly changing landscapes. Aboriginal communities are thus under pressure not only to articulate their unique values to place but also seek their inclusion in negotiating their environmental responsibility in land use regimes, as well as working with multiple departments and agencies who might not have this obligation or commitment to care.

In particular the challenges are to create strategies that will facilitate the re-establishment of Quandamooka's customary obligations that could influence an Aboriginal-informed generic approach to land use planning and management. Thus there is greater role for urban and regional planning to engage with *Country*. This could include strategies that target the well-being of *Country* itself as well as its local distinctiveness to facilitate the creation of committed and ongoing partnerships between Aboriginal communities and state and local government agencies to improve and create a broader environmental responsibility ethos.

Further, the institutional and political context within which land use planning decisions are made can greatly influence the ability for Aboriginal communities to protect *Country*. For example, given the unbalanced focus on negotiations and meetings without any clear commitment to implement change or address the concerns

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of Aboriginal communities, there is a clear need to improve the political standing and collaboration of Aboriginal organizations whom are becoming more aware of what needs to change in land use planning to adequately address *Country*. In particular, this is evident because Aboriginal organizations are increasingly becoming a central 'hub' that covers multiple facets of land use planning including Cultural Heritage, Natural Resource Management and Native Title. It is thus imperative that land use planning provides the resources and capacity for these Aboriginal organizations so that they are well equipped to enable and express *Country*-relevant improvements to holistic and strategic land use planning.

The second conclusion is the need to improve the quality implementation phase for land use planning to address Aboriginal values. On paper, Aboriginal values are not approached in a comprehensive way in Queensland. For example, the Queensland *Sustainable Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Act (No.2) 2012* (SPOLAA) addresses Aboriginal values under the *Cultural Heritage Act 2003* for local planning schemes. This results in a very different understanding of values compared to the *South East Queensland Regional Plan 2009-2031 (SEQRP)* that outlines the desired outcomes needed to be addressed for the same local planning instruments. Additionally, the State government guidelines, such as current Single State Planning Policy, give no priority or mention for Aboriginal values, let alone the importance of understanding *Country*, or of using community-led-approaches and effective collaboration that is clearly articulated in the *SEQRP*. The *SEQRP* however, expressing aspirational values and a preliminary structure towards addressing Aboriginal values for land use regional planning processes, was unable to implement and allow for Aboriginal people to guide land use planning and effective co-ordination.

Thirdly, there is little mention of how to approach a moral obligation to care for landscapes more broadly in land-use planning. The inclusion in local and regional planning instruments of recognizing Aboriginal Peoples need to exercise their responsibilities to *Country*, and the distinctiveness of the landscape that they are intrinsically connected to, has placed greater emphasis on the notion of moral responsibility. That is, the need to re-connect to their obligations to care through using the tool of land use planning to build a stronger and more resilient *Country*. However for this to adequately occur, there must be an increased emphasis on community-led pro-active approaches to ensure effective implementation. For it is, at the end of the day, the communities themselves who are driving this implementation and not the land use planning process. This poses a very clear challenge to Aboriginal organizations: 'how can Aboriginal organizations effectively manage *Country* and the reconnection of their communities to customary law within a planning process which is currently not even entertaining what their needs are'. To avoid land use planning becoming a victim to its own circumstances, there needs to be a clearly defined strategy for a responsibility to both *Country*, the environment and its people.

This means that Aboriginal communities, need to be more pro-active land use planners and managers themselves. Although the importance of recognizing the connection between Aboriginal peoples and *Country* are mentioned in several regional and local land use planning instruments, these clauses are substantively not implemented. Successful care may well require communities to plan and implement strategies themselves, which is exactly what the Quandamooka peoples are doing through the *QYAC Strategic Plan 2014-2016*. This also brings us to the next point that although the establishment of QYAC has been positive and enabled the Quandamooka people to improve their negotiations for Quandamooka *Country* for land-use planning, it is a process that was formed because they have Native Title and a territorial right to negotiate these decisions as well their ecological responsibilities that they have to *Country*. Communities lacking these capacities more often lack the ability to be pro-active in the land use planning process.

Integrated and holistic urban planning has long been an aspiration for strategic planning (Selman, 2006). Yet it appears that these desired qualities of planning are being better addressed by an emergent planning process, derived from Native Title and not the land use planning framework. In particular, it shows that Aboriginal communities can play a greater and more pro-active role in improving and implementing the urban planning agenda itself, and not only an Aboriginal agenda. Finally, the resources provided to Aboriginal organizations needs to be improved so that Aboriginal communities can implement their needs and to enable a greater emphasis for better land use planning that is specific through shared negotiations between land use planners, communities and State and local governments. Despite calls for better planning articulated by governments and land use planners, and the increasing emphasis upon integrated and 'whole of government' approaches, there appears to be a reluctance to reach for more sustainable and better land use planning that embraces Aboriginal values. This is illustrated by the lack of acceptance of the broader environmental, social and cultural benefits that Aboriginal communities can offer in providing and guiding

better integrated and holistic planning. Rather, land use planning in Queensland still applies a top-down approach, rather than a bottom-up approach that engenders a co-sharing of knowledge and expertise.

6. Conclusion

Country and the needs of the landscape are not being met under the current land use planning regimes in Australia. Lack of acceptance is causing widespread damage to all; people, plants, animals and quality of life arising from the disruption of these systems through the lack of actual land use planning of Aboriginal *Country*. A key conclusion from this research is that Aboriginal communities and their organizations can play a critical role in both guiding and influencing the protection of *Country* and minimizing fragmented land use planning and decision-making. Drawing on the experiences of the Quandamooka community, this paper has discussed some of the key issues that require further consideration for land use planning; in particular, the use by Aboriginal communities of their own knowledge and qualified land use planners to engaged with their values and cultural obligations.

In this post-colonial agenda, the current top-down approach to address Aboriginal connections to place is severely constraining actual 'planning' for the broader cultural landscape. The notion of people's responsibilities for place is at the core of sustainable planning and it needs to allow for *Country* to be addressed, to the betterment of integrated planning regime. The conceptualization of quality land use planning needs to emerge from an emphasis upon what the landscape actually shows, it's connectivity to people and place,

In this context, we argue that there is a greater role for *Country* to play in urban and regional land use planning that will better prepare planning for integrated, multicultural and inclusive planning. Moreover, the Quandamooka example clearly demonstrates the need for better capacity amongst Aboriginal community organizations responsible for protecting landscapes, as well as an overall quality of life of that landscape's inhabitants. Lastly, to have a better and improved landscape, momentum needs to emerge from people themselves for a better integration and knowledge of land use planning that involves genuine bottom up approaches, so that land use planning, can continue to address and connect to the landscape that people have a responsibility to care.

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