



Dr Julie Nichols

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Dr Julie Nichols is a registered architect and Senior Lecturer at the University of South Australia. Her research bridges cultural heritage, sustainability, and collaborative design with First Nations communities in Australia and Indonesia. As Director of the Vernacular Knowledge Research Group (VKRG) and Community Engagement Lead at the Australian Research Centre for Interactive and Virtual Environments (IVE), she integrates architectural ethnography with both digital and manual documentation methods into conceptual as well as applied research projects.

Julie's work offers a distinctive contribution to vernacular studies, revitalising local knowledge systems as critical frameworks for addressing the climate emergency. She co-directs the national digital humanities platform Time Layered Culture Map (TLCMap), which embeds community knowledge within spatial, temporal, and cultural contexts.

Her emerging field of pyro-vernacular studies investigates how observing and participating in traditional land management practices, such as, First Nations cultural burning, can inform non-Aboriginal designers around the siting and design of future built environments under changing climate conditions, with more holistic appreciation of designing with and for Country.

Through participatory and field-based approaches, Julie's research reshapes disaster recovery and adaptive reuse, positioning cultural heritage as a driver of regenerative, community-led design. Her development of the Aceh Method and expansion of VERNADOC across Australia and Indonesia have gained international recognition for pioneering new models of data curation, as well as research into culturally responsive, environmentally attuned built environments by non-architects.

Languages of Connection: A Design Life Across Cultures and Communities

Dr Julie Nichols

Where I Stand: Philosophy and Place I have lived across cultures my whole life — the 'sub-cultures' of Australia in Darwin, Brisbane, regional South Australia, Berri in the Riverland, Adelaide, and overseas in Malaysia, Edinburgh, and Liverpool UK — inhabiting houses [pole houses, terrace houses, tenement flats, stand-alone bungalows, high-rise apartments as well as friends couches] tents, and swags. These experiences have shaped my fascination with how humans sustain life — not just in buildings, but through stories, rituals, relationships, and practices that connect people to each other and to Country.

I always wanted to be an architect, but in Year 10, a high-achieving Adelaide architect visiting my school warned that architecture was a career of long hours, little money, and “sweat and tears.” This made me hesitate. It was not until my second year at university that I embraced architecture fully (after unenthusiastic beginnings of an arts/law double degree). This decision guided a lifelong curiosity about the interplay between dwelling, movement, and enduring fascination with people, culture, and relational knowledge. My work is grounded in the question: *How do communities embed wisdom in the ways they dwell, care for their environments, and move deliberately in response to changing conditions?*

Keywords: *Interrelational, First-Nation Communities, Pyro-Vernacular Methods, Architecture, design language.*

Designing Relationships, Not Just Spaces

My design philosophy is *interrelational*. I approach architecture as a medium for fostering relationships between people, land, materials, stories, and more-than-human worlds. Through architectural ethnography and co-design with First Nations communities in Australia and Indonesia, I investigate how built environments can carry knowledge, memory, and care across generations.

I explore *languages of connection* — the ways communities express and sustain relational knowledge through environment modification of fire practices, material culture, seasonal cycles, journeys, and rituals. These are not abstract concepts; they are lived, embodied, and actionable. Design is a method of translation: transforming cultural and ecological wisdom into spaces, forms, and practices that respond to context, climate, and community priorities. It comes from embodied knowledge in the ways we experience and feel the effects of our surroundings – the people, the climate, as well as that of the intangible in stories and memories.

Grounded and Moving: A Life in Architecture

My vocational trajectory reflects both groundedness and movement. After embracing architecture at university, I sought experiences that would expand my understanding of culture, environment, and the role of design in sustaining life.

My work led me to live in numerous places, both temporarily and with greater degrees of settling. I travelled for six months in Southeast and South Asia; in South America for nine months and then through Europe and the UK on the weekends based in Edinburgh, Scotland for two years. Inhabiting diverse dwellings, cultural contexts, and environments has given me a practical and empathetic lens on how people inhabit and care for spaces. This mobility informs my research on what I call 'discursive settling,' exploring how stories, narrative, and memory inform how movement and grounding interact, both in human life and in the design of socially-cohesive communities.

Projects in Practice: Stories, Spaces, and People

- Pyro-Vernacular Studies with First Nations Communities**
Working with Nukunu community, I investigate the relationships between cultural burning, material reuse, and ecological cycles in the siting of buildings. This work informs design interventions, such as wall cladding and furniture making, translating fire and debris practices into built and programmatic forms that sustain knowledge and care for Country.
- Aceh Method and Architectural Ethnography**
I have applied architectural ethnography in Indonesia through the Aceh Method, documenting vernacular and trial-and-error building practices. This work highlights adaptive, relational, and culturally embedded design principles, and has informed collaborative projects with Australian communities.

- **Time Layered Culture Map (TLCMap)** TLCMap is a digital humanities infrastructure platform where my contributions include co-leadership for advocacy of Indigenisation projects. This focus is to capture relational, intergenerational knowledge, connecting story, place, and practice across First Nations communities in Australia. It allows communities to visualise dynamic, living networks of cultural knowledge, rather than static data, supporting cross-cultural and interdisciplinary collaborations.

Mentoring, Making, and Mapping Connections

I lead studio and project-based courses such as Mnemonic Nodes, where students design architectural interventions that articulate a place's significance on Country. The studio emphasises designing on Country, food security, and cultural protocols, integrating precedent studies, site visits, and guest lectures. Through these pedagogical methods, students develop skills in relational, community-driven design and cross-disciplinary thinking.

I also mentor students and early-career researchers, emphasising reflective practice, ethical engagement, and the importance of relational knowledge systems. Workshops with First Nations collaborators introduce students to pyro-vernacular methods, co-design principles, and hands-on making, bridging theory and practice.

Shaping Change: Advocacy Through Design

My work advocates for community-led, culturally responsive design, particularly in the context of climate change, heritage preservation,

and First Nations engagement. Through collaborations with ICOMOS, Shelter SA, and cross-cultural partners, I promote the recognition of vernacular knowledge and relational design principles in policy, education, and practice.

I also champion digital and hybrid tools, such as TLCMap, to make intangible knowledge accessible while respecting cultural protocols. These platforms amplify voices often excluded from mainstream design discourse and support future-making grounded in community priorities and ecological care.

Settling, Moving, and Designing in Between

At its heart, my design journey is about balancing grounding and movement, both literally, in my lived experiences across houses, tents, and swags, and figuratively, in my research practice. Design, for me, is not only about creating structures but observing, learning from, and translating the relational practices of communities into tangible, adaptable, and resilient forms.

My vocational trajectory, from initial hesitation to committed practice, reflects a continuous negotiation of staying in a place to mobility, stability and adaptation, personal and collective care. These lived experiences directly inform how I approach architectural research, teaching, and engagement.

Continuing the Journey: Design as Lifelong Practice

My work asks fundamental questions about how people sustain life, knowledge, and relationships across time and place, how design can embody and support these interconnections, and how we can

balance grounding and movement in both human life and community practice. Through architecture, ethnography, co-design, and teaching, I continue to learn from, respect and share the wisdom embedded in lived, relational ways of dwelling. This perspective shapes every project, workshop, and collaborative endeavour I undertake, guiding me to ensure that design contributes meaningfully to people, place, and future resilience.



Professor Dr. Cláudia de Souza Libânio

Federal University of Health Sciences of Porto Alegre (UFCSPA)

I am a professor at the Federal University of Health Sciences of Porto Alegre, in Brazil, where I conduct research, teach and supervise both undergraduate and graduate students. I serve as a member of national and international committees engaged in initiatives related to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. I am also the convenor of the Global Health Special Interest Group at the Design Research Society, a Fellow of Loughborough University, and a Harvard Alumni. My research areas include inclusive design, architecture, and social innovation, with a research focus on people with disabilities, vulnerable communities, women, and populations in low- and middle-income countries.

Designing Global Health Education for All

Prof. Dr. Cláudia de Souza Libânio

Abstract

My career as a professor and researcher in Brazil has been shaped by experiences and moments that raise reflections on teaching and learning, on students' competencies as well as ways to foster an educational health environment that respects diversity and promoting inclusion, equity, and accessibility. Therefore, I present some reflections to design global health education for all, such as learning about people, their life contexts, and their realities; recognising that we must be agents of change as individuals within a society; preparing students to become future inclusive health professionals; promoting inclusion, equity, accessibility, and diversity in health higher education; encouraging higher education for all; reinforcing with governments inclusion as a value for higher education in low- and middle-income countries. I hope these reflections resonate and that, together, we can promote a behavioural change toward a world that respects and values diversity.

Keywords: career path, inclusive design, global health education, participatory design.

Introduction

My career as a professor and researcher has been shaped by experiences that help me grow as a person, professionally, and as a global citizen. I began teaching driven by an enthusiasm to learn

more and constantly challenge myself in pursuit of a better world. Fortunately, those genuine motivations remain with me today and emerge whenever I witness or experience social inequalities and injustices in everyday life.

I have a multidisciplinary background, in architecture, business, and design, which often puzzles people. Why does a professor working in health sciences study inclusive design in health, striving to respect diversity and promote inclusion, equity, and accessibility in our society? However, this multidisciplinary education has given me a broad understanding of the many worlds we live in. This search for technical knowledge also sparked in me a curiosity to understand other realities, other people, other contexts, other worlds, and other kinds of knowledge. It broadened my critical thinking and empowered me with the knowledge to advocate for the issues I believe in. It also motivated me to work for a better world, defending ethics, inclusion, respect, and social justice. I mention this because Brazil, the country where I was born and live, is a “continental” country. Brazil is a vast territory and a culturally, socially, and economically diverse population, marked by resource disparities and vast differences. I grew up seeing and experiencing these disparities, and my education was shaped by these lived experiences.

Today, I am part of the faculty at a federal university of health sciences in Brazil. I teach, advise undergraduate and graduate students, and conduct national and international research. I interact with people from diverse cultural, social, and economic backgrounds, navigating a variety of academic environments in

education and research, both in Brazil and globally. Moreover, I working practical settings with my students, facing the realities of the Brazilian public health system.

My professional achievements come with challenges. I carry the experiences of prejudice and discrimination as a woman, Latina, born and raised in a middle-income country. I see others with similar stories of exclusion and injustice. Today, I am respected for who I am and what I have built. As an educator, I have the privilege to engage in dialogue with my community of students and colleagues. It is a privilege to learn from them and contribute to the formation of future professionals in the health field. These moments raise reflections on teaching and learning, on the competencies we should develop in these students and in my colleagues to foster an educational health environment that respects diversity and promotes inclusion, equity, and accessibility. Inclusive, respectful, ethical, and fair education are integral to my beliefs and attitudes. Consequently, I bring here some reflections I consider valuable to be addressed in designing global health education.

Reflections in designing global health education for all

I start by emphasising the importance of learning about people, their life contexts, and their realities; recognising and respecting differences; and having empathy for others by putting ourselves in others' shoes. Throughout my academic career, I have recognised the richness of our community's vast diversity. Diversity is a strength, and it is vital to live with, to engage in dialogue with, and value people from various backgrounds, educations, ethnicities, and unique characteristics.

Another important point is recognising that we live in a world with deep inequalities. As individuals within society, we must be agents of change, striving to promote social justice and acting inclusively, empathetically, ethically, and responsibly. Individualistic thinking does not contribute to our community life. Let empathy guide our words and actions, extending beyond self-focused thinking. When we realise we live in a community and that our actions make a difference, we can recognise ourselves as agents of change, seeking to promote a more inclusive world and a fairer society for all.

Preparing students to become future health professionals in a low- and middle-income countries is essential. In health education, where we work with care, we must understand our communities' realities and the effective resources management (human, material, financial, environmental). By developing co-participatory design practices and learning about our population, we can identify the real needs, contexts, limitations, and unique characteristics of individuals. In this way, we could design more assertive, quality services with a duty of care and respect expected in human relationships.

Another aspect to be developed in education environments is the promotion of inclusion, equity, and accessibility, and the respect for diversity. It is essential to foster competencies in both faculty and students, which includes knowledge, abilities, and attitudes that respect differences, thereby promoting inclusion, equity, and accessibility in higher education.

Encouraging education for all is another crucial goal to develop, aiming to remove barriers to higher education in low- and middle-income countries. When people with disabilities and vulnerable groups have access to university education, they can express themselves and become voices of change in these environments, with their needs acknowledged, heard, and respected. By fostering participatory practices and discussions on these topics, we promote reflection within the university community and across society. We can build and strengthen groups that diffuse discussions on these topics, giving a voice to minorities in our community, to gain confidence, respect, and strength, to enable them to gain access to more opportunities to study and work, nationally and internationally. It is also essential to encourage students to face the challenges of low- and middle-income countries and recognise themselves as global citizens.

Finally, may the governments reinforce inclusion as a core value for higher education in low- and middle-income countries. Government support and partnerships with public and private organisations are fundamental to promoting and encouraging an inclusive culture in university education environments.

Final Considerations

I hope to continue developing my work within communities and to be an agent of change toward a more respectful and just society for all. I also hope these reflections resonate and that, together, we can promote this behavioural change toward a more inclusive world that respects and values diversity.