Roland Fletcher is Professor of Theoretical and World Archaeology at the University of Sydney. He attended St. John’s College at Cambridge University, completing his PhD in 1975. He has worked at the University of Sydney since 1976 where he has implemented a global, multi-scalar, interdisciplinary approach to Archaeology.

In 1995, he published The Limits of Settlement Growth with Cambridge University Press, a study of the constraints on settlement growth over the past 15,000 years which demonstrated the role of the material component of human behaviour in the transformation of social life. Since then he has published papers on the outcomes of relationships between materiality and sociality, the associated trajectories of settlement growth and demise, and the triadic code of cultural replication. The analyses have implications for the broad evolution of hominin behaviour and the overall trajectories of settlement resilience. From his theoretical work and to test predictions about the interaction between urban life, massive infrastructure and environmental change he has developed the international Greater Angkor Project and is the Director of the Angkor Research Program of the University of Sydney.

He has been a Distinguished Fellow of Durham University’s Institute of Advanced Study, an invited speaker at the Falling Walls Conference in Berlin, a keynote speaker at the University of Minneapolis, Institute of Advanced Study, at the Para Limes complexity centre in Singapore and at Leiden University’s, Institute of S.E. Asian Studies. He was keynote speaker in 2015 at the Chinese Institute of Urban Planners symposium in Nanjing and at the Shanghai World Archaeological Forum and in early 2017 he gave the keynote address on redefining urbanism at the national research centre on Urban Networks in Aarhus, Denmark.
Hominin Cultural Evolution: Pattern and Process over 4 Million Years

Human cultural evolution has been occurring for more than 3.5 million years. Culturally-modern, human brains only evolved from about 70,000 years ago. The material component of the preceding cultural behaviour such as camping sites, stone tools, fire, colour and burial combined with motor action was the milieu in which modern human behaviour evolved. Therefore, a theory of cultural evolution predominantly concerns behaviour other than modern human cognition and speech – and must also encompass those recent characteristics. The fundamental dynamic of cultural evolution is the role of durable material as a set of signals enduring far longer than either sounds or the signals derived from actions. Materiality, once introduced into hominin behaviour, became a milieu acting as a selective agent with long term impact. Out of that selective milieu evolved the triadic signalling suite - fundamental to modern human behaviour - of materiality, active behaviour and sound transmission with inherent non-correspondence between rates of signal replication.