

Australian Mythical Landscape and the Desire of Non-English-speaking Immigrants

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Through their frequent visits to public green spaces in cities with white majority cultures, non-English-speaking immigrants draw attention to the way people from different cultural backgrounds perceive and use these spaces. By building on theories of landscape as a cultural phenomenon, this paper investigates new ways in which recent generations of immigrants to Australia are using urban park spaces. It focuses on cultural and mythical notions of Australian park landscapes and questions to what extent they contribute to the sense of inclusivity, or alienation, that non-English-speaking immigrants experience in using these spaces.

This paper examines the mythology surrounding the 'bush' and 'Arcadia' and how these are intrinsic to Anglo-Australian consideration of natural landscapes, landscape design and, therefore, urban park character in Australia. These characteristics, along with the influence of English picturesque design, have resulted in landscapes that illustrate the aesthetic of nature and facilitate sporting activities. However, how are these landscapes, which are culturally meaningful for insiders, perceived by newcomers? Non-English-speaking immigrants in Australian urban park spaces reconnect to their memories of place and cultural identities. They also show stronger preferences for passive activities and socialising, and express their selves and culture in relation to nature in urban parks.

Mythical notions of park landscapes that have evolved in Australian culture, coupled with the desire of recent non-English-speaking immigrants to use urban park spaces in ways counter to these notions, have given rise to dialectical attitudes towards Australian landscapes and their meanings. This paper suggests ways that these insights can be used to improve the design and management of urban parks so that they promote inclusivity and a sense of belonging for all park users in multicultural Australian cities.

Migration studies identify migration to and resettlement in a new cultural community as stressful (Hage, 2008; Lobo, 2013; Lu, 2010). The changes required adapting to the destination, when displaced from family and friends, familiar customs and surroundings, can lead to mental health problems and risk behaviours. The stress is exacerbated if migrants experience a gap between effort and achievement (Lu, 2010). Difficulties in establishing new social networks, and the loss of social support, result in feelings of loss and loneliness and may also exacerbate the negative impact of the stress process (Bhugra, 2004). Hage (2008) explains that the never-ending process of assimilation and the risk of being misrecognised and judged negatively are likely to result in fatigue among permanent migrants in white settler societies such as Australia.

Globalisation allows migrants to carry their 'imagined communities' with them, and to actively use the new communication opportunities to make and maintain their identities. The relational understanding of home as imagined

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and lived focuses on how, for immigrants, places contain dominant meanings of identities because of their socially constructed nature (Lobo, 2013).

The evolving social structures and narratives of difference, identity, displacement and loss assist in reshaping and understanding local culture and place (Chambers, 2008; Murland, 2009). In her study on the problem of defining the migrant house in Australia, Lozanovska (2011) asserts that scholars believe migrants develop a mix of cultural practices from two cultures. This blending of cultural practices proposes the more contemporary theory of different identities and transcultural belonging (ibid). This binary condition is also multivalent according to factors such as age, generational differences and gender. Anderson and Gale (1992) argue that ethnicity is a concept that describes our belonging to a group and separates us from other groups of people, whereas culture defines people's perception of the world, behavioural patterns and preferences.

Rather than being a fixed concept or entity, culture is a dynamic mixture of symbols, beliefs, languages and practices created by people (Anderson and Gale, 1992, p 3). Daily life, which tends to be seen as natural, can be understood as a product of culture. Head et al (2005) suggest three notions of culture in their study. The first is the broad notion that links culture to mythical and irrational parts of human life. Second is the opinion that culture is separable from other dimensions of life, rather than being understood in all its dimensions. The third notion relates culture to a high level of difference, specifically linking it to indigenous or ethnic minorities rather than the majority culture(s). In this view all humans have some beliefs about the world and their relationship to it (ibid).

Drawing on theories of landscape as a cultural phenomenon, this paper investigates new ways that recent generations of immigrants to Australia have used urban park spaces. It argues that cultural identity affects the understanding and use of these spaces and investigates the sense of inclusivity or alienation that non-English-speaking immigrants experience in using these spaces. As the next section outlines, Australian landscape myths of 'bush' and 'Arcadia', along with the influence of English picturesque design, have resulted in landscapes that illustrate the aesthetic of nature and facilitate sporting activities, such as golf and cricket. In contrast, non-English-speaking immigrants in Australian public parks prefer passive activities, including relaxation, social gatherings and cultural celebrations, and reconnect to their memories of place and cultural identities.

Urban park landscapes are significant features of contemporary urban environments and are perceived as designed landscapes. Although they constitute a significant budget commitment on the part of local councils and some state governments, research on how they are used is limited (Veal, 2006). It is estimated that Australia has over 50,000 urban parks covering 3.4 million hectares (ABS, 1998). The Sydney survey data from Veal's (2006) study confirmed that urban parks have a higher rate of use among the population than any other type of out-of-home leisure facility in the study area. The growth in the non-English-speaking immigrant population in Australian cities draws attention to the ways they use and perceive urban park spaces. The question that then follows is, what are the implications of their experience for the design and management of urban parks in multicultural Australian cities?

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2012), recent arrivals in Australia include an increasing number of people born in Asian countries: 47 per cent were India-born and 35 per cent China-born, compared with only 11 per cent born in the United Kingdom. Census data also show 193,633 people born in the Middle East were resident in Australia in 2006, accounting for 4.4 per cent of the overseas-born population in the country. Almost 40 per cent of those from the Middle East were born in Lebanon, 16.8 per cent in Iraq, 15.7 per cent in Turkey, 11.6 per cent in Iran, 4.0 per cent in Israel and 3.6 per cent in Syria (ABS, 2008).

Research shows that immigrants' perceptions of Australian urban park environments, the focus of this paper, differ from those of the majority culture. These differences may relate to many immigrants' limited use of non-urban green areas in a new country. For example, Buijs et al (2009), in a study on cultural differences in landscape perception, found that Muslim immigrants in the Netherlands are less interested in non-urban, wild and unmanaged landscapes than in functional aspects of natural environments, including utilitarian values and intensive arrangement. It may be that this perspective arises because Islamic cultures lack a tradition of viewing landscape as scenery and because a divine task in Islam is to manage nature and to bring culture into wild areas (ibid). Such diverse 'cultures of nature' often result in conflict over land management decisions in multicultural countries, and several scholars have debated the implications of such differences for environmental management. Cultural analyses in association with perceptions and expectations of landscapes play a vital role in clarifying the sources of these conflicts (Head et al, 2005).

To understand how newcomers and established immigrants perceive cultural landscapes that have been imbued with a nationality's cultural and mythical meanings, it is crucial to begin by exploring the landscape myths and natural values of that nationality and their roots. Examining whether immigrants perceive or prefer those values requires a wider understanding of immigrants' culture, values, nature activities and preferences. This paper draws attention to the question: Is a multicultural society able to address its dominant culture of nature in planning urban parks and at the same time satisfy the ethnic minority communities with their settings?

Landscape, as Coates (1998) defines it, refers to places that are a combined product of human and bio-geological forces. Landscape is a way of seeing that has been primarily introduced into geography through the work of Cosgrove and Daniels (Cosgrove, 1984; Cosgrove and Daniels, 1988; Daniels, 1993). Specifically, landscape is a painterly way of seeing, due to the dialectical relationship between the rural landscape and painting, as well as the desire of wealthy classes of Europe to commission paintings and to make their properties look like landscape paintings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Duncan, 1995). The other major definition of landscape as a portion of a natural and cultural environment originated in the nineteenth century as the 'folk' landscape, which sought to encode rural peasants' cultural values on the land. Duncan (1995) also argues that the landscape not only reflects the culture but also has a crucial role in constituting it.

A broad range of academic disciplines has addressed attitudes towards nature and landscape. In landscape studies, trying to understand people's attitudes to

nature is a fundamental principle. One of the essential ways that people shape and make sense of experience and landscape is by using 'narrative'. Narratives and stories connect the tangible aspects of a place to the intangible aspects, including sense of time, event, experience and memory. Narratives offer ways of shaping landscapes and contribute to the formal concerns of design (Potteiger and Purinton, 1998).

Nonetheless, myths are messages passed through time and over the generations, which are used and reused. They embody people's values that influence their way of perceiving reality and subsequently their behaviour (Short, 1991). In this sense, myths have varying degrees of fiction or reality. A myth refers to events that are claimed to have taken place in time.

But what gives the myth an operative value is that the specific pattern described is everlasting; it explains the present and the past as well as the future. This can be made clear through a comparison between myth and what appears to have largely replaced it in modern societies, namely, politics. (Lévi-Strauss, 1955, p 430)

National myths usually define the events that have taken place in a specific land and among a particular community.

As Rappaport (1995) defines it, *community narrative* is a story that is common among a group of people, and may be shared by them through social interactions and rituals. He also believes that settings have a story that is preserved and transmitted. On the other hand, *spatial narrative*, in the context of place-related studies and research, is a conceptual framework that links environmental patterns and science with the cultural knowledge of place (Silbernagel, 2005). Environmental patterns of landscape elements naturally form a language that plays a fundamental role in creating spatial narratives (Thayer, 2003).

To define the relationship between landscape myths, spatial qualities and the potential for non-English-speaking park users, the next section explores Anglo-Australian landscape myths of 'bush' and 'Arcadia' and their influences on urban park characteristics. Following this is an explorative study of non-English-speaking immigrants' use and perceptions of Australian public parks, and their preferences in these spaces.

Anglo-Australian landscape myths of 'bush' and 'Arcadia'

In Australia, the first Anglo-Australian settlers were more interested in reshaping the land than in understanding it, and sought to make Australia a 'new England' in the South Seas throughout the nineteenth century (Dunlap, 1993). Dunlap (1993) also identifies efforts to define a national myth and justify the new independent nation after Federation in 1901. In his view, it was from this time that Anglo-Australians found the mythical material in the bush, and Australian nature became a matter of national pride. The continuing cultural ties to Great Britain have been manifested in nature essays and stories, which were the start of an attempt at an emotional relationship with the Australian landscape as a 'home'.

According to Seddon (2006), the Arcadian setting has been romanticised endlessly in Australian culture and literature, along with the values and behaviours that it is perceived to legitimise. Associated with it is a set of myths and attitudes, including the golden age Edenic view and the pastoral imagery projected by the church, which have played a crucial role in dictating a particular

form of land use in Australia. Some of the early colonists brought Arcadian imagery to Australia, identifying Arcadia in eastern Australia where the indigenous people had preserved the land (ibid). Indigenous people's relationships with the land form an 'ontological belonging' (Dudgeon et al, 2010, p 33). Their spiritual beliefs connect them into the land and to all things of nature, which means they preserve nature intact and unimpaired. Indigenous people experience the land as a symbolic and spiritual landscape rather than only a physical environment (Dudgeon et al, 2010).

The English settlers overlooked the indigenous history and mythology of the natural landscapes, and even in the present time Australians have only a limited understanding of the intricate comprehension of the landscape possessed by their country's first inhabitants. Misconceptions about the environment at the time of British colonisation led to an understanding that the land of 'droughts and flooding rains' had always been an untamed wilderness. While the country's traditional owners were predominantly hunters and gatherers, in fact, they had been modifying the landscape for their own purposes for tens of thousands of years. Based on these misconceptions and their prior appreciation of landscape aesthetics, early colonial painters distorted their view of the Australian landscape with a veneer of romantic and nostalgic images of English landscapes (Murphy, 2015).

From the mid-nineteenth century, the view of Australia as a Garden of Eden was developed both in Australia and in Britain. Carol Lansbury (1970) demonstrates how writers such as Charles Dickens and Charles Reade transferred the myth of a happy rural life in England to Australia. For many Britons and Americans, Australia became the lost Arcadia (Short, 1991). According to Short (1991), the approximately 150,000 migrants who went to Australia from Britain between 1830 and 1850 were not only recipients of the myth but also effective propagators. In the 1860s this rural model was replaced by the symbol of the yeoman farmer in public debates, and individual farming families rather than rural society became the focus.

Painters and artists have depicted a range of Australian attitudes to their country: 'landscape painting has encompassed weird melancholy, romantic wilderness, pastoral idyll, bush legend, rural mythology, the confidence of a young nation and since the Second World War, new symbols of national identity' (Launitz-Schurer, nd, p 4; Taylor, 1992, p 133). The art historian Bernard Smith (1959) summarises the significance of landscape painting in the Australian landscape:

For Europeans this country has always been a primordial and curious land. To the ancients the antipodes was a kind of nether world; to the people of the Middle Ages its forms of life were monstrous; and for us, European by heritage (but not by birth) much of this strangeness lingers. It is natural therefore that we should see and experience nature differently in some degree from the artists of the northern hemisphere. We live in a young society still making its myths. The emergence of myth is a continuous social activity. In the growth and transformation of its myths a society achieves its own sense of identity. In this process the artist may play a creative and liberating role. (p 166)

In the nineteenth century, artistic impressions reflected the European pastoral visions and increasingly the colonial pastoral visions from the 1830s. This view

became a national vision in the latter half of the century. Australian towns, cities and suburbs were not experienced as a personal environment before 1945, and often illustrated general ideas and attitudes. Most of the early colonial townscapes were constructed to provide evidence of civil progress and good government, and later in the second half of the nineteenth century, social life was given more prominence than the building fabric of the towns. Australian artists became more emotionally involved with their subject matter by the end of the century, while landscape painting was the dominant artistic genre from the 1860s to the 1960s. Landscape artists in Australia prospered by imposing an aesthetic order on the wilderness, which has been as influential as the pastoral and agricultural orders, and their deep love of natural landscape has assisted the movement for nature and urban environment conservation (Smith, 1976).

Both Glover and von Guérard have painted profound imagery of the Australian pastoral landscape.¹ Glover, however, emphasises general pastoral qualities as he was a conservative painter of romantic mountains and of pastoral Arcadias in London. Arcadia is a timeless theme in art as an agricultural paradise of nymphs and shepherds, in the pre-classical golden age. Von Guérard in the 1850s and 1860s painted even more interesting pastoral landscapes of white settlers and indigenous people. By 1865, the romantic era was passing and realism had arrived with Louis Buvelot, who settled in Melbourne. Although some of his paintings portray sheep in the pastoral landscape of the western district, he preferred to paint the intimate suburban farms near Melbourne (Thomas, 1976).

Evolving in parallel in the same era was 'Australian' painting. Tom Roberts (1856–1931) and Arthur Streeton (1867–1943) were two particularly important painters who concentrated on Australian themes in their landscape paintings. In *Sunny South*, a pastoral image of a hot Australian summer in Melbourne, Streeton attempts to show Australia as a hedonistic landscape (Short, 1991). This work likewise demonstrates a familiarity with and a sense of being inside the Australian landscape.

According to Daniel Thomas (1976), 'landscape art is deeply concerned with additions and adjustments to the landscape, not only physical but also emotional' (p 164). He believes artists adjusted their representations of the Australian landscape by overemphasising and exaggerating exotic palm-trees and jungles to fit nineteenth-century romanticism, so the crucial pastoral image that Europeans promoted in the 1880s became the dominant patriotic image for nationalistic Australians. An important turning point came with Tom Roberts' small painting, titled *The Sunny South*, in 1887. Showing a young man standing relaxed in a grove of tea-trees after bathing in Port Phillip Bay, it is one of the first paintings of European nudes in the Australian landscape, clearly conveying the idea that 'Australians did not feel alienated from their environment' (ibid, p 165).

The 'bush' served as inspiration for many Australian poets, novelists and short story writers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Notions of nostalgic willing, including the English writers mourning for the loss of the English Arcadia and nostalgia for a vanished frontier, were very popular in rural Australia in the late nineteenth century. Writers also started to claim that people were far happier in the bush than in urban spaces and to value the rural life above life in the city, which they saw as robbing people of their usefulness and sense of equality. The

incorporation of the bush into the Australian outlook not only reflected the introduction of new forms of industrialisation but also indicated that country folk were more exposed to city culture (Waterhouse, 2000).

By the nineteenth century, the new colony attempted to establish cultural ownership over the landscape and effectively removed indigenous people from it. In making landscapes, the settlers used European artistic conventions and western scientific terms; they did not consider what indigenous people saw in their country and ignored the meanings that the indigenous owners had given to the land (Fox and Phipps, 1994; Verrocchio, 2001). This meaning of the land or, as Dovey (1985) describes it, the 'authentic environment', is not a condition of the physical world but a situation of connectedness with the world. 'Authentic meaning cannot be created through the manipulation of form, since authenticity is the very source from which form gains meaning' (ibid, pp 33, 34).

Landscape painting was the dominant artistic genre from the 1860s to the 1960s; however, Australian artists gradually became more emotionally involved with their subject matter. Australian landscape artists imposed an aesthetic order upon the wilderness, which has been as influential as the pastoral and agricultural orders in natural and urban environment conservation (Smith, 1976).

In the twentieth century, a simpler conception of the bush replaced the complex, nineteenth-century understandings. Nostalgic celebration of the bush emphasised the progress and prosperity that rural Australia had brought to the nation. Moreover, transformations in rural and urban Australia altered the representations of Aboriginal people and Europeans who lived and worked in the bush (Waterhouse, 2000).

Landscape myths influenced Australian culture and understanding of landscapes not only via interpretations in art, but also via landscape-making and park characteristics. Arcadian attitudes to the countryside and the concept of the bush beyond urban limits have both influenced the characteristic of Australian parks as idealised natural landscapes and refuges from the challenges of urban life. Therefore, it was preferable for parks to have few symbols of urbanised settings to create a stronger sense of 'bush' and to illustrate aesthetic order upon the wilderness to develop idealised 'Arcadian' scenes. These cultural desires of park characters have resulted in the creation of tamed, yet wide natural landscapes. Subsequently, the influence of bush and Arcadia myths, and attitudes towards constructed natural landscapes among Anglo-Saxon Australians and first landscape planners (Saniga, 2012) have caused an extensive trend towards English picturesque and broad, natural open spaces in the design of Australian urban parks.

In 1992 Ken Taylor of the University of Canberra examined the Australian traditions of the rural vernacular, the bush and attitudes towards landscape among Anglo-Saxon Australians. He found that such traditions result in a deep attachment to an Australian sense of place. Underlying much of the nostalgia for the past, particularly the white European past, is an Australian character that rejoices in the ordinary – an attitude that has its roots in the British settlement of Australia as a penal colony and then as a rural Arcadia for free immigrants (Taylor, 1992).

In his essay, Taylor (1992) defines 'bush', a term used in Australia from the nineteenth century and still in everyday use, as both 'everything beyond urban limits' and 'wilderness of natural eucalypt forest and woodland' (p 128). These

two interpretations have worked in parallel and, as Heathcote (1976) suggests, they led 'to an almost Arcadian attitude to the countryside or "bush"' (p 212; see also Taylor, 1992, p 128). Heathcote's study reveals that much of today's relationship between landscape and society reflects the nineteenth-century views that the bush represents hard-working life away from the city in a lost Eden, where workers could be free from the urban working conditions of industrial Britain. As part of the Australian landscape narrative in relation to the bush myth, it may still persist among many Australians.

After the middle of the nineteenth century the number of bush songs and ballads grew, which, along with the contributions of Australian poets, writers and painters, strengthened national identity (Powell, 1977). This was part of a movement to create an Australian culture that associated the term 'bush' with the pastoral landscape and that became and has remained, metaphorically, part of an Australian iconography (Taylor, 1992). The tradition of poetry has also continuously enriched the sense of Australianness in the twentieth century. Judith Wright was one who contributed to the poets' vision of Australia through works such as 'South of My Days', which conveys pure Australianness:

South of my days' circle, part of my blood's country,
rises that tableland, high delicate outline
of bony slopes wincing under the winter,
low trees, blue-leaved and olive, outcropping granite-
clean, lean, hungry country. The creek's leaf-silenced,
willow choked, the slope a tangle of medlar and crabapple
branching over and under, blotched with a green lichen;
and the old cottage lurches in for shelter.
(In Sadler et al, 1992, p 51).

Here, Wright is describing the pastoral landscape of New England, north of Sydney, where her forebears settled (Taylor, 1992). Taylor (1992) asks 'whether the myths will crumble with the effects of non-English-speaking immigrants over the past twenty-five years, the development of Indigenous history awareness, and the new urban attitudes towards rural Australia' (p 133). Given the existing widespread attitudes towards cultural landscapes and their meanings, and the great number of visits to historic places in Australia, Taylor concludes, such changes will not replace the cultural myths but rather will enrich and reinforce them.

The present paper asks, does the consideration of wide natural spaces in the design of urban parks derived from Australian mythical landscapes fit with contemporary patterns of demand for recreation in Australia?

In Veal's (2013) view, Australia's open space standards have never been based on any publicly documented rationale. Instead, they are largely drawn from British and American open space standards and were apparently established without any reference to contemporary patterns of demand for recreation in Australia. Nonetheless, Veal (2013) points out, 'while national standards for open space planning have long been subject to criticism, their use is still advocated in a number of Australian state planning guidelines' (p 224).

In his study of Australian urban open spaces or parks, using Melbourne as an example, Max Nankervis (1998) questions whether the open space developments are appropriate and in the best interests of social equity. Connecting urban open

space with outdoor sport as two concepts that arguably are integral to Australian identity, he claims that the 'politics of sport' has become part of the 'politics of open space', although nineteenth-century urban planners did not necessarily recognise the role of this sporting ideal. Thus parks, especially in the more distant suburbs, were less well landscaped and gradually became home to different kinds of sporting teams, mainly cricket and football. At the same time these open spaces were also being alienated as sites for public use and the problem of the parks' functions became obvious. Over time, certain notions about the use of these spaces developed (ibid). It is also important to note that prioritisation of sporting facilities in parks that have been influenced by the dominant English culture may not be in accordance with sport provisions desired by other cultures.

Although the urban park in landscape planning and urban literature is categorised as an urban 'open space' (Lynch, 1981; Woolley, 2003) or urban 'green space' (DTLR, 2002), designing such a park as a large, open space may discourage visitors from remaining there for long or engaging in social activities. Accordingly, park planners have a crucial role in defining ways of using park spaces more effectively. It is suggested that more user-led design of the parks both in their entirety and in their detail is needed (Tisma and Jókövi, 2007) to create spaces that foster inclusion among various ethnic groups in multi-cultural societies.

Non-English-speaking immigrants in Australian park environments

Parks and gardens play an important role in the life of immigrants, and different views of nature can be discovered by understanding different perceptions of these spaces. 'These spaces as public places provide opportunities for recreation, social gatherings, and the celebration of collective cultural values and events such as festivals for many communities' (Yazdani and Lozanovska, 2014, p 851). Much of the recent research on belonging and boundaries examines cultural geography, migration and identity. How can ethnic communities transfer their culture and adapt it to a new form of life? Or, conversely, how can they change the Australian way of life as their practices eventually influence other people, including previous immigrants?

Non-English-speaking migrants' perceptions or expectations of Australian urban landscapes may not fit with the design and management purposes of these places in various ways. In her chronological study on Latvian immigrants and their expressions of Australian landscape, Daukste-Silasproģe (2013) asserts that for Latvians who came to Australia from Germany or Italy, Australian landscape serves as a background against which their vision of the world and feelings are revealed in this distant land. Latvians' expressions of Australian landscape in literary texts clearly show that they distance themselves from the new environment and are not able to make a connection to the new place. The nature of Australia creates the sense of alienation because it offers no similarities to Latvian natural spaces. Latvian philosopher Pauls Jurevičs describes the experience in this way:

... the neighbourhood here is so dull, so blank, so poor that my heart wrings with pity. Indeed, about 5/6 of Australia is flat land, most of it is outback but in some places it is slightly covered with grass or shrubbery ... such nature is strange for us especially ... for its drought ... watching the nature, we start to realise that people

here lack the tenderness and the spirituality and definitely the lyricism which are aroused in us by emanation from our sweet, inspiring nature. (Cited in Daukste-Silasproge, 2013, p 63)

Some important ethnographic studies of Macedonians and Vietnamese in Australia have demonstrated that the cultural beliefs and practices in these two groups grow out of the understanding of nature in both Australia and their own country. Because of Vietnam's high population and agricultural base, its inhabitants come to understand that landscape is a place for social relations and human engagement, full of smells and sounds. For the Macedonians too, the landscape is a place for socialising, but distinct from any notion of a 'wilderness'. In both immigrant groups, understanding the park depends on a cultural history, which is involved daily in integrating people with the environment (Head et al, 2005). The majority of Macedonians insisted that the Australian bush is bereft of smell to them. It is argued that, for ethnic communities, social gatherings are a priority value (Thomas and Wales, 2002).

In their study, Thomas and Wales (2002) also reveal how we might better address the cultural complexity of contemporary Australia, and how parklands and other open spaces play an important role in consolidating the feeling of being Macedonian in Australia. One of the significant issues with parklands is that they can be a place where people can be together, speak their language, drink their grappa, sing and dance. The Macedonian landscape continues to influence the younger people's perception of the environment, and the sensory stimulus such as the sense of smell is mediated by cultural experiences (ibid).

A study of Arab immigrants and the urban environment along Sydney's Georges River compares environmental knowledge and practices that immigrants bring from their homelands with their experiences in Australia. Arab immigrants have come to Australia from countries such as Lebanon, Palestine, Syria and Iraq, and many have settled in the industrial, working-class suburbs along the northern bank of the Georges River in Sydney. They are frequent users of a series of parklands along the river, and use the river itself for relaxation, fishing, jet skiing and other recreational activities. Arab Australians have brought their environmental cultural knowledge of their homeland to build attachment to their new homes in the local conditions and the sociopolitical tensions of contemporary life. They also use park spaces in various religious ceremonies such as Eid-ul-Fitar in Ramadan (Goodall, 2012).

People who migrate grieve for their losses for many years, including for losses of family, friends, rituals, culture and even the physical environments they knew. Such memories can affect their lives and also the lives of their children (Goodall, 2012). Accordingly, it is clear that parks and public green spaces are important places where immigrants across different ethnic groups can engage in passive activities such as gatherings of family and friends, cultural celebrations and festivals. Goodall (2012) likewise reports how cultural difference shapes environmental relationships in the Georges River area in urban Sydney. It demonstrates that people bring with them, and also pass on to their children, memories of the place and environment that they experienced in the past.

As these studies highlight, many migrants use Australian parks in a different way from the domestic visitors. They engage in a process of placemaking and

undertake regular, passive activities like picnicking in park spaces. The same park space can have different meanings to various groups of people (Byrne et al, 2013). These findings demonstrate distinctive patterns of park visitation by non-English-speaking immigrants. Such patterns include: an attraction to 'garden' parks; a high value of water in parks; different meanings of landscape elements; bonding with the past; cultural, religious and social activities; cultural festivals; and large-group picnicking.

Returning to Taylor's (1992) question of 'whether the myths will crumble with the effects of non-English-speaking immigrants', it seems that it cannot be easily answered. It is evident that as a result of their distinct attitudes to natural spaces and their meanings, non-English-speaking immigrants understand, perceive and use Australian parks in particular ways based on their own background, past experience, ideals and culture.

Etymologically, the words *garden*, *orchard* and *park* refer to a space enclosed by a fence, hedge, wall or embankment (Van, 2002), and parks have been considered enclosures since they first appeared. Therefore, parks have a special function in urban environments as places for peace and rest, where nature meets culture, and as social places, where people come to meet each other (Tisma and Jókövi, 2007). Many older parks have fences and gates to provide a sense of security and enclosure. This concept of enclosure describes parks as places that are self-sufficient and introspective, and places that interrupt the continuity of ordinary, everyday spaces (Foucault and Miskowiec, 1986; Tisma and Jókövi, 2007).

The concept of a 'walled garden' – enclosed to provide a place for relaxation, spirituality and love – dates back to Persian paradise gardens in the sixth century BC. These gardens were places to connect individuals with divinity and heavenly glories (Anderson, 2011; Hunt, 2011; Khansari et al, 1998; Rogers, 2001). The Persian garden is an environment for being away from routine life, experiencing life among others, considering aesthetic pleasure and abilities, and experimenting with ideals drawn from the paradise myth. Based on the characteristics of the Persian garden, similar spaces have since been created in various countries around the world, particularly in Iran and elsewhere in the Middle East (Faghieh and Sadeghy, 2012; Hunt, 2011; Sardar, 2009; Yazdani and Lozanovska, 2016). This kind of garden is a place with a magnificent perspective, in which natural elements such as water and plants are used intelligently to affect all human senses and feelings, as well as a place for many public activities such as playing games and music and even holding philosophical debates (Ramyar, 2012). A number of contemporary urban parks in Iran represent some of the Persian garden's icons and layout. Narratives that are embedded in these landscape patterns can affect the community's perception of natural spaces in society.

The present study suggests that the concept of 'enclosure' derived from 'paradise myth' – a powerful landscape myth in Eastern culture – may affect non-English-speaking immigrants' perception and use of urban parks, particularly in relation to the tendency towards passive activities (Yazdani, 2015). Migration provides a context for culture to meet nature in a relationship that is shaped by Arcadia and bush myths, and based on open space. In investigating these ideas, the discussion now turns to Iranian immigrants in Melbourne, drawing on focus group interview data.

Before 1979, service workers, particularly in the oil industry, made up the majority of migrants from Iran to Australia. Migration then diversified and increased over the following decades. In 1981 Australia began a special humanitarian assistance programme for those Iranians seeking to escape religious persecution in Iran. By the end of the decade, which also saw a major war between Iran and Iraq, around 2,500 people had arrived under this and other refugee programmes. During the late 1980s and 1990s economic and political circumstances prompted many professionals to leave Iran for Australia. In the latter half of the 1990s, many Iranians also came under the Skilled and Family streams of the Migration Program. According to the 2011 Census, 34,453 Iran-born people now live in Australia (DIAC, 2014).

Participants in the focus group interview were recent Iranian immigrants living in Melbourne, who were asked to describe how they feel about Melbourne's parks and the activities they undertake there. Ali, who migrated to Australia with his family in 2010, responded in this way:

I have a good feeling in parks, because they are very natural. It feels like you are not in the city; you are in a virgin nature far from the urban area ... they are very different from Iran's parks, which are designed for special recreational purposes, but I think here parks have been just separated from other urban areas and left undisturbed ... we just go there for picnicking and having BBQ with our friends usually at weekends. Although, there are not enough places for such purposes but if you are lucky you can find some shelters or benches to get together.

Physical, social and cultural components make up the surroundings of humans, and each component affects people's lives, their attitudes towards the built environment and their expectations of designers. What architects create is a 'potential environment' for human behaviour, and what people use is their 'effective environment'. Predicting the effective environment of people is a crucial role for design professionals when configuring the built environment in a particular pattern (Lang, 1987, p 75). Yet how is it possible to predict the effective environment of a particular group of users in a multicultural society such as Australia if the environment is configured based on a culture and patterns that are inexplicable to them? Mina, who is from Isfahan, Iran and has been in Australia for five years, asserts that:

Melbourne's parks, unlike Iran's ones, look like forest to me with lots of ups and downs. I think parks in Iran require much more maintenance due to the harsh weather, but here the fauna and flora in parks are different. For example you can rarely see colourful flowers, flower beds, shrubs, or tracks with rows of cultivated trees on sides in Melbourne's parks.

Lang (1987) argues the physical environment consists of the 'geographical setting, the social of the interpersonal and intergroup organisations that exist, the psychological of the images that people have in their heads, and the behavioural of those elements to which a person responds' (p 77). In this view, individuals' surroundings consist of the real world, while the phenomenological world, which people perceive consciously or unconsciously, affects their behavioural patterns and emotional responses. In the quote above, Mina explains the real world of Australian parks as 'forest', meaning she sees park spaces as very wide, natural

and undisturbed. At the same time, her phenomenological world contains 'colourful flowers, flower beds, shrubs, or tracks with rows of cultivated trees on sides', bringing to mind the pleasure of being enclosed in a beautiful place with colourful flowers or in a fabulous track with shady trees (figure 1). For her a park landscape without flowerbeds and rows of cultivated trees seems unmanaged, and the intended effect of designers of picturesque landscapes cannot be perceived.

Shirin from Tehran observes that:

Melbourne's parks are beautiful and natural. There are less man-made and designed structures in the park spaces; no gardens, flowers, water features or planned entertainments or recreational facilities ... it would be good if there was a chance of using parks at night. It would have been used more often and [for] longer hours ... I miss the social activities and being with friends and family in Iran's parks as well as the flowers, trees, and some entertainments like 3D cinemas and markets.

Two female participants express similar feelings:

I think all of the Melbourne's parks are the same, natural, clean, quiet, and no changing happened during these four years that I have been here ... dogs must be on lead while most of the time their owners don't care about this issue which makes the park environments unsafe for me. I think it should be a restrict rule for this matter.

They [Melbourne's parks] are so natural and wide. They are like a beautiful heaven during the day, nice and quiet, but they are scary at nights ... Iran's parks can be used at night. Lots of people bring their dinner to the park and have dinner there with their friends and family. There are lots of sport facilities as well.

It is observable that, in order to convey a more rural landscape, park designers have preferred to create spaces that exclude the axes, circles, squares and other geometric patterns that visibly represent the city. Artificial lights may have been excluded from the majority of urban parks for the same reason, although political or security issues may have also influenced planning decisions. Creating open spaces with a relatively undisturbed 'natural' appearance, despite the presence of some constructed necessities, illustrates a picturesque ideal in landscape design and is well suited to sporting activities (see figure 2). Conversely, passive recreation and particularly social activities in urban parks demand enclosed spaces and specific constructed settings.

Enclosure in landscape design not only helps the performance of lines, forms, textures and colours, but also has a specific psychological effect on the person in that confined space (Dahl and Molnar, 2003). Dahl and Molnar (2003) identify volume as one of the basic aspects of enclosure that plays on the subconscious of people who are enclosed. That is, the degree of comfort that we feel in a space is directly related to the 'volume' or the amount of emptiness around us. Maximum volume inspires an initial sensation of awe but will soon degenerate into discomfort as we recognise the vast volume that surrounds us.

In their study on placemaking in parks around Sydney's Georges River, Byrne et al (2013) found that the phenomena of praying in parks and using parks as venues for fast-breaking meals during Ramadan are patterns evident in Arab-Muslims' visits to the parks. These immigrants prefer a 'garden park' to a 'bush park' and identify the river as a key attribute that attracts them to the park (ibid,



Figure 1: Qeytariyeh Park, Tehran, Iran. (Photo: Nasim Yazdani.)

p v). However, a number of non-English-speaking immigrants are also motivated by opportunities to experience wild nature, participate in bush walking and explore nature, particularly in national parks – a finding that needs more research.

Recent immigrants' expectations of parks in New South Wales are very similar to those they had of parks in their countries of origin, which were designed for recreational purposes. Some of their priorities are for parks to have sport facilities, evening opening hours (at least in summer), cafés, stalls and restaurants. This study suggests that to both preserve the Australian policy of park planning and make recent immigrants' use of parks satisfactory, it is necessary to explain the 'nature-conservation' function of national parks in Australia, while at the same time acknowledge the heritage of park use and nature appreciation (Byrne et al, 2013). However, can the same function be attributed to urban parks as well? And can the same policy be applied to urban parks? If so, then what is the role of landscape architects and designers in creating equal recreational spaces in multicultural cities? In view of such questions, a significant issue for landscape-making decisions in Australian urban areas appears to be to investigate ways of putting these recommendations together and then to present a solution.

Conclusion

Around 1888, when the celebrations of a hundred years of European settlement in Australia reasserted a search for national identity, pastoral landscape became a principal visual image of Australia for its mainly urban population and a central concern of the leading artists (Thomas, 1976). A vast number of Australian artists' large-scale canvases at that time showed images of pastoral life and landscape: 'blazing sun', 'heat', 'blonde pastures' and 'heroic workers' (ibid, p 159). Furthermore, most paintings of the Australian landscape depicted open spaces and natural elements of rural Australia. This viewpoint gradually affected the formation of urban green landscapes and became the main basis of landscape planning and park design in Australia, which represents Australian landscape myths such as 'bush' and 'Arcadia'.



Figure 2: Ruffey Lake Park, Melbourne, Australia. (Photo: Nasim Yazdani.)

As a result of increasing migration and a long tradition of development in Australian cities, many of those living in Australia feel alienated by open spaces (Nankervis, 1998). Considering the multicultural nature of Australia, this study is a response to Nankervis' (1998) question as to whether the mythical nature and identity of Australian urban parks should be considered as fixed and constant.

Because of their desire to make places out of natural spaces, immigrants in Australian cities have not merely visited parks but have engaged in processes of placemaking. Through sociocultural activities and events the parks are transformed into familiar, comfortable and meaningful places. Research shows non-English immigrants bring their already-formed habits, preferences and traditions in regard to visiting parks or relating to nature, and see natural environments through the lens of their cultural background. They show greater preferences for passive activities and enclosed spaces, and express their selves and culture in relation to nature in public parks. However, the broader conception of what a park is has caused an understanding of parks as public places that require facilities that non-English immigrants expect of them, such as night use, illumination, cultural/educational activities, exhibitions, cafés, restaurants, and settings for socialising. Therefore, it is suggested that landscape architects include more stillness spaces and settings that facilitate socialising in the design of urban park landscapes. Another significant issue concerns how to make the setting of parks more enjoyable for users from non-English ethnic minorities; for example, by including colourful flowers, benches or facilities in public park environments such as lighting, kiosks and cafés. In addressing the issue of expanding the use of parks and urban green spaces, and avoiding alienation in these spaces, it is significant to ask which activities should be allowed in parks. The short answer is that there is no need to limit the activities to those 'traditional' ones, nor to allow any single activity to dominate the park (Nankervis, 1998).

Landscape myths exhibit cultural values that are central in landscape settings and influence people's involvement in park spaces. This paper has drawn attention to the way non-English-speaking immigrants see the Australian mythical landscape, and to their understanding of and preferences for urban

parks. It has argued that these spaces are important in facilitating contexts for immigrants to get involved in social activities and experience the joy of belonging in a new environment. It is recommended that future studies focus on the characteristics of urban parks and green spaces in multicultural cities, ethnic minorities' park visitation patterns, their preferences in relation to urban parks, and their cultural backgrounds.

NOTE

- 1 John Glover 1767–1849 is one of Australia's most celebrated colonial landscape painters. Arriving in Australia from England in 1831, Glover adapted his picturesque style and luminous technique to his new surroundings (see www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/artists/glover-john). Eugene von Guérard 1811–1901 is best known for his large-scale paintings of dramatic views of the Australian bush, painted in the romantic tradition of the sublime. He immigrated to Australia in 1852 from Germany and, by 1854, had settled in Melbourne and resumed his career as a painter (see www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/artists/von-guerard-eugene).

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