Assemblage 2 Case Study 3: ROYAL PARK

‘the task is to find the ordinary in the extraordinary’ Gilles Deleuze

A study of Royal Park in Melbourne to attempt to understand and communicate something it ‘does’ (landscape affect) and the processes involved in the production of this doing (landscape assemblage).

The case studies in this research function with the chapter on Deleuze’s Aesthetics of Affect to allow me to construct the first relatively full account of landscape affect and how to engage with it. This case study focuses on an affect or affectuality associated with Royal Park, in particular, associated most closely with what is called the ‘circle area’ of Royal Park and a certain range of ‘uses’ of this area. It attempts to construct in some detail the affect or affectuality produced by Royal Park and the assemblage that produces it. Even though it is not part of a design investigation this case study intends to directly influence design practice through providing an example of a landscape assemblage and what it does - paying attention to the concrete workings of open systems as expressed through one landscape. It will, in doing so, communicate something of the techniques, conceptions, principles and practices that have been developed by myself (with the help of many others) for engaging in landscapes as open systems. This case study should be read/viewed after the Federation Square case study. It should be read in the page order encountered (This is stated as design drawings are not always presented or read in this manner.) The text assumes that the reader-viewer has little or no knowledge of Australia, Melbourne and Royal Park, the subject matter. Concepts employed here have either been explained elsewhere in the thesis or their explanation can be found here. So, this case study is examining and ‘trying to do justice to’ a doing of the world at or associated with Royal Park. How this case study was produced evolved over a considerable time and was always focused on accounting for what was being discovered and feeding this into further discovery and clarification. It usually either relied on ‘telling’ starting points and events that seemed to say something or more or less asking what seemed relevant and then attempting to work out if it was and how.

This case study is large

Ideally it would be one page long. However, it is trying to bring together a number of things. It attempts to include or involve:

• discovering and communicating the relevant bodily interactions – in the ‘middle’ - in time and space involved in the production of affect.
• communicating the extensive dimensions of such interactions. Just bringing the relevant dimensions of the world of the landscape to the reader is a very demanding task. It is not like looking at a painting or even a building. A photograph or even many, for instance, do not ‘give’ you most landscapes in a form that allows you to engage with ‘what they do’. It is large therefore because it is attempting to do this for a landscape.
• communicating the intensive dimension of such relations as experienced through sensation. A transition in a landscape is the easiest form of intensive relation to grasp. To communicate what makes a transition a transition – how it functions requires describing its part in a system. For Deleuze, sensations have to be dramatized and this requires being able to connect the singular situation of the case study – extensively and intensively - to the worldly experience of the reader. A transition is only a transition through sensation, and only a sensation because it is a significant shift of relations in the landscape – how to communicate the shift of relations and the significance of them (how they function) is, again, a challenge?
• communicating the interactions of such sets of relations – extensively and intensively. The extensive and intensive unfold in space over time.
• discovering and communicating the relevant relations and forces and factors beyond the more immediate bodily-environment relations that would make sense of and determine (as part of) this assemblage. What might reductively be termed ‘context’ is
part of the assemblage and for a landscape such as Royal Park what it ‘does’ is more like a geographical spacetime inflexion in an order that needs to be discovered.

- communicating the **involuntary workings of affect**. Affects may be best understood as involuntary workings of the world and to be able to communicate this requires engaging in a realm that has barely been touched on in the discussion of landscape. To communicate affects requires the production of parallel sensations to what is being experienced – sensations of the involuntary. Most of the text attempts to communicate the involuntary part of the landscape (or experience, if you like).
- relating this to **what is consciously experienced**. The conscious is part of the landscape and feeds back onto the involuntary. The text veers into the consciousness when this is needed to highlight the involuntary.
- communicating the **relation between the extensive, intensive, sense and affect**. How it all works together.
- communicating all of this is a way that can be engaged with by someone who has not (or has) experienced Royal Park.

**Words and images**

This case study employs lots of words. This researcher has found that ‘drawings’ (graphic representations) have their own abilities to connect to the extensive, intensive, sense and affect – and words have theirs. Graphic representations are central to communicating body-space relations and space-space and space-time relations extensively – and to a certain degree intensively. Graphic representations are much better at the extensive end of a sort of ability spectrum and words tend to be much better at the intensive-sense-affect end of this fictional spectrum. Each on their own is, however, very weak at landscape assemblages. Together they can very productively connect to the power and process of a landscape assemblage. Such an importance given to words (and language and thought) as in this example will certainly be seen as improper by many. It is important to affirm the potential power of language and thought in this case study and thesis – and in doing so the power of graphic representations is also affirmed. They have separate and conjoined powers. Design has its own powers as well.

All of this is experimental. This case study was developed over six years and a great deal of trial and error. Trying to work out what was involved and how and trying to work out what it was doing and communicate it were slow and involved. How to bring it all together required a great deal of trailing techniques and formats etc. Landscape intensity, sense, affect and making extensive representations ‘come to life’ intensively, affectually and in terms of sense is a very unexplored area, with very little precedent, especially in the environmental realms.

**Dimensions**

This case study, like Federation Square (and others) tends to work by identifying particular ‘dimensions’ of the assemblage (or what seem relevant to the assemblage) and then attempting to determine how they are relevant. A ‘dimension’ might be: the relationship between tipping points in walking effort and transitions along paths; the relationship between the size a space and when you feel separated from the edges of the space etc. Dimensions are variabilities that have an intensive dimension that connects to the affectuality of the landscape and extensive dimension that can be represented extensively and intensively (usually with more than one representation and often requiring multiple.).

**Vector-singularity**

This case study like many I have produced has employed a strategy of focusing on one ‘vector’ (first discussed in the Federation Square example) and using singular events that would relate to such a vector. The particular vector will be referred to as an ‘experiencing vector’, and just as with Federation Square this vector cannot be simply defined up front, though it can be posited to some degree, like program. How it functions unfolds, and has to be discovered, at Royal Park. A very important finding of this research is that assemblages
can probably only be connected to through the singular. Through the singular you are able to connect to the singularity of the assemblage. It is what makes connection. There seems no general connection. No general and singular. No general assemblage. No general affect. You only get connection through the singular, Stronger and stronger connection. More and more adequate. More and more singular. There is no summary, though there can be more-or-less singular.

Walk-through as a structuring device

The two case studies employed in this thesis use walk-throughs as structuring devices. This has seemed valuable for many examples simply because landscape assemblages function through bodily integration which happens through time. What spaces ‘do’ is produced through such integration.

Parallel dynamism

Before reading Deleuze’s book on Spinoza I had developed a notion that representations relevant to landscape function best through a parallel dynamism. Representations aimed at engaging with a landscape assemblage do not each represent anything but function in parallel and communicate through resonance. Affirmation tells you when you are onto something, tells you what to do. The repertoire of representations produces an expressive material that parallels the relation between the extensive, intensive, sense and affect. Deleuze/Spinoza’s notion of ‘epistemological parallelism’ really affirmed why. In a sense this is how this and other of these case studies are structured.

Cross-referential representations / spatially and affectually referential

The walk-through part of the case study is preceded by a series of maps and text which attempt to connect together, intensively, the factors beyond the immediate site of Royal Park itself that are relevant to it. The walk-through employs a series of sheets, each of which corresponds to a noticeable shift in the landscape. Within each sheet are a repertoire of representations (images and text) that each attempt to capture the relevant relations involved in a particular dimension for that shift or location. Each of these sheets then relates to those prior to it and those after it as a series of befores and afters.

Pragmatics

This case study was approached pragmatically. If an available representation (map etc.) could itself communicate what was needed to be communicated it would be employed or altered. If such available forms of representation were not able to do what was required we would custom construct forms of representation that would be able to engage in the relevant relations.

Why Royal Park?

The landscape that is the subject of this case study is like any other landscape, and any other landscape that open-system-oriented landscape design might be engaging in, in that it is part of the same open system, the same Nature. As I have said elsewhere, Nature does not discriminate. Two things might be said about this particular landscape, which make it a different proposition from most landscapes that recent landscape oriented open systems designing engages with.

First, that would be regarded by landscape architects as a highly ‘experiential’ landscape. Experience tends to be outside of the purview of recent open-systems landscape design assemblages, generally being seen as ‘too subjective’. This particular landscape is considered a challenge for any landscape architect to understand. In this regard, it is
therefore something of a test case for recent open systems oriented design assemblages – and something of a test of the ability of the techniques I have developed to engage with human-involved open systems of the landscape – landscape assemblages.

Second, relatedly, Sebastien Marot said that landscape architecture’s urbanism should be an urbanism of site and not architectural program. Claramunt and Mosbach assert the centrality of the body and the inseparability of the body and its occupation. James Corner said that landscape is a series of ‘befores’ and ‘afters’. In openness it seems that this is or tends to be the main game. How does a landscape function through the integration by a (human) organism? How does it function in openness?

This case study is different from the Federation Square case study in the commitment given in this landscape to producing a set of extensive (spatially and temporally) representations. This commitment takes this case study closer to being designerly and in being more extensively referential the abilities of concrete spatial and temporal relations are foregrounded. The Federation Square case study relied on a series of walk-through photographs as the main spine of the representations, which is one ‘remove’ from he sorts of extensive-relations that designers employ.

Format
This case study was initially constructed as an A1 sized hardcover portfolio. Most of the drawings were A1 size. They were this size to allow larger aspects of this relatively large landscape to be able to be referenced to the human body. Each sheet is designed so as to be able to read or view the various dimensions on the sheet in relation to other parts of the sheet, and then relate these to the various dimensions on the preceding sheet and the following sheet and so on, cross-referentially. On most computer screens the viewing size of these pdfs will be considerably smaller and hopefully still somewhat effective.

The aim of the way that the portfolio was that each sheet was to be constructed to allow the images to cross-reference to each other – both within a sheet and between sheets. This allows the reader the ability to see the relevant changes in bodily-landscape spatial and temporal relations and these to the intensity and affectuality of the landscape. The portfolio was also laid out so that many of the drawings were preceded by framing text and the viewer/reader could read the text and be able to, at least partly and simultaneously cross-reference to the image behind the text.

The format of this case study is different from this. It is a linear sequence of images and text, with a more clumsy cross-referentiality. Being a linear pdf document, however, allows some of the files to cross-reference more freely than in a hardcopy portfolio.

For many the representations used here would be considered ‘traditional’. Maps, plans, sections, text, photography etc. They are not ‘new media’ and do not fit into what might be expected that progressive uses of representations might look like. How they are employed is very different from ‘traditional’ and progressive uses of representation, however. For instance, any single representation is nothing in itself and ‘represents’ nothing. It is ‘something’ only in how if functions, and if it functions well it will contribute to the greater system of representations and their ability to parallel the functioning of the open system of the landscape, both extensively (spatially and temporally) and intensively-affectually. This makes it very different from previous representations – and for the fact that this system of representations is attempting to engage with the intensity and affectuality of the landscape.

Sense-production-machine

Assemblages are affect and sense-production-machines. Affect always comes with sense or significance. To get at the particular realm of things that Royal Park does has required (as all landscapes require) a sense-making exercise, which in this case study is particularly

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3 Corner, James, “Representation and Landscape: Drawing and Making in the Landscape Medium,” Word & Image 8, no. 3 (1992).
involved. In trying to make sense of what was being discovered there was a going back and forward between what it seemed to be doing and how to account for it and this involved opening up the various dimensions of the assemblage some of which were close at hand within the park and others might normally be thought of as more ‘contextual’. The way that the case study is structured involves a sizeable component attempting to discover and communicate what is involved beyond what happens bodily ‘in’ the park itself. On reflection this part could be distilled down somewhat, as it is only in drawing it all together that other ways to communicate it suggest themselves

The original ambition was to communicate the process of production and the affectuality in a way that the process was part of the product, to communicate what was involved and how in an efficient manner. As Spinoza says an effect is “immanent” in the cause. ‘The effect remains in its cause no less than the cause remains in itself’.\(^4\) However, our ability to integrate the world and make sense of it involuntarily is infinitely fast and complex and the final result is much less efficient than I had hoped for.

On reflection, despite such limitations, I persisted with this example as it seemed to do much of what I was hoping for and it was a very valuable vehicle of learning. I have degrees of confidence with what it communicates. I am confident that most dimensions discussed in this case study are concretely relevant, even if they might be argued to work differently than I have portrayed. I feel I have touched on something of the singularity, affectuality and sense-production of the example.

In summary (and review) this case study involved a commitment to:

- Capture in some detail the processes of how the landscape works and what it does.
- To reference these to extensive spatial and temporal representations.
- Reference these extensive (and more designerly / transformable) representations to the intensive and affectual.
- Make evident some of the interpretative representational decision-making and experimentation. Make relevant asides and discuss technique.
- Fill out how affectuality functions more then the previous case studies.
- Account for what produces the particular singular affectuality and expression being investigated. Considerable attention was given to the sense-production of this example (which still requires work beyond this thesis to get it to function as efficiently as it could).

The value of attempting these tasks has no doubt reduced the case study’s ability to efficiently communicate affect. It probably requires the reader/viewer to ‘relax into’ what is being investigated to gain the most from this case study. The other case studies attempt to be more efficient.

Areas of Royal Park referred to in the following text

The (grass) “circle”
The “circle area”
The “western native area”

The “native island”
The “native half of Royal Park”
“Royal Park” (as a whole)
Aerial photograph with contours of the circle area
(This is a loose sheet that is intended to be taken out of the 'book' for more effective cross-referencing)
Aerial photograph of Royal Park (as a whole) and immediate surrounds
(This is a loose sheet that is intended to be taken out of the ‘book’ for more effective cross-referencing)
This case study focuses on a particular ‘use’ of Royal Park associated with the circle area, and in particular the ‘grass circle’.

**Photographs off the internet**

*(refer to sheet titled: ‘Photographs of the view to the City...’)*

*(refer to sheet titled: ‘Photographs of the view to the mound...’)*

If you search for photographs of Royal Park online two types of photos are common: views from the native circle area to the city skyline and views of the grassy ‘domed’ circle area. For someone who has been to or knows the circle area of Royal Park such photos tend to give some expression to what is being viewed, what is beyond the photograph and to the experience of Royal Park that involves such views. The photos might express something, or something less determined, about the experiencing of Royal Park to others as well. Such photos might evoke something about this place.

The two photographs of views to the mound or dome are taken at a location not long after entering the park and contrast the more traditional image of the seat and tree with the grass and tree horizon and the sky which you look up to as you approach the grassed circle from this location.

Of the two photographs taken of the view to the city from the ‘grass circle’, the top one emphasizes the view over the trees to city on the horizon and a feeling that the middle ground is lower down. It may not be apparent in these photographs but there is distinct feeling of the land you are standing on falling toward the city. The lower photograph, taken during the (non-crop) ‘harvesting’ of the native grasses, gives more attention to the ground surface and the unusual contrast between, especially in this photograph, the agricultural feel of the foreground with the city, which appears strangely close to the viewer (and not just in the photograph).

**Rapture from a young male at Royal Park**

This researcher talked to many people about Royal Park and probably should have more often referred directly to what others had to say, as such words often usefully gave expression to the experiencing of Royal Park. A middle eastern student who had been in Australia for six months and had been to Royal Park a couple of times previous to me meeting him there, rapturously summed up his impression of Royal Park – or rather the grass circle part of Royal Park: *“its amazing! ...lots of cities in Australia are so crowded...”* He said that he explored Melbourne on his bike. *“I like exploring”. “I explored on Google Earth and found this park. When I came here I got shocked, because most of the parks in the city are green. This is Nature. That’s why I love it. I think it is the best park in Melbourne. This place does not look like what it appears on Google earth. My friend who lives close by did not know about it. I show it to my friends and they are shocked by it, because they didn’t expect this view and with this kind of large open area.”*

It might be tempting to consider such rapture was simply cause and effect because of ‘the great view’ or ‘how open it is’, for instance.
Photographs of the view to the City from the ‘grass circle’ (found on the internet)

To someone who knows Royal Park these images express something important about this view and/or Royal Park
Photographs of the view to the ‘mound’ or ‘grass circle’
(found on the internet)
To someone who knows Royal Park these images would express something important about the particular view being photographed and/or Royal Park
To begin to ‘key the reader in’, some sense of the normative understanding of Royal Park can be found in the following three web-based summaries:

**Wikipedia:**

Royal Park is the largest of Melbourne's inner city parks (181 hectares). It is located 4 kilometres (2.5 mi) north of the Melbourne Central Business District, Victoria, Australia, in the suburb of Parkville.

Many sporting facilities are provided including the North Park Tennis Club, Royal Park Golf Course, football and soccer ovals, baseball and cricket pitches, State Netball and Hockey Centre, and cycling and walking paths. On the corner of Gatehouse Street and Royal Parade there is a native garden. There are wide vistas of grassland and lightly timbered areas with eucalypts, Casuarina and acacias. The Melbourne City Council administers the park and instituted in 1984 a park management plan. A wetlands area is being developed in 2005.

The grassy hill (NB: where this Case study is focused) between the Royal Children's Hospital and the Native Garden is ideal for kite flying during the day. Over the summer months members of the Astronomical Society of Victoria set up telescopes and conduct evening talks and tours of the night sky from this vantage point.


**‘White-Hat’ (personalized guide-book information about Australian cities)**

“Royal Park is the largest park within short walking (or tramming) distance from the Melbourne CBD, and on most days it is easy to find large expanses of park where you cannot see another living soul - quite remarkable for a city of 3 million people. In recent years, the council has been managing the area as a native bushland park. Near the corner of Gatehouse Street and Royal Parade is the Australian Native Garden which is planted with many indigenous species.”


**‘World66’ (‘The Travel Guide you Write’)**

“Located on the edge of the Melbourne CBD, Royal Park is a wonderful inner city respite, frequented by locals walking their dogs, or who cut across the park on the way to and from work, runners, bike riders, rollerbladers....you get the idea.”

http://www.world66.com/australiaandpacific/australia/victoria/melbourne/sights/royal_park
From the designer’s statement

Not unlike many designer’s statements:

“The design should … express Royal Park’s essential individual qualities.”

They link the physical with some sense of freedom and maybe rights.

“The design should express the particular character of this place and be a living landscape; a landscape which includes earth and sky, distant views and indistinct boundaries, living and dying plants and freely thinking people.”

What is pre-existing is considered already strong and the designer is to respond to this:

“The design should be principally an editing or clarification of the landscape, rather than obvious development or the addition of new things.”

With obvious relations to what was expressed in the photographs discussed:

“Unlike other Melbourne parks, Royal Park looks upward and outwards. It is a large landscape revealing a vast sky; this spacious quality, which is so important to this place, should be enhanced.”

In terms very similar to this researcher (who chose not to read the designer’s writings till recently):

“The Park gives release from the workaday world. This is not by substituting one structure for another. It is an absence of things; a setting for spontaneous recreation in games and in wandering; an opportunity not to think, but to imagine.”

Much of what the designer’s say in this statement seems general. However, in relation to the finished design and many of the obvious design decisions it is obvious that the designer’s decision-making processes and conception of what they were trying to achieve and how to do it were anything but general.

-Quoted by the designers: ‘Sweeping like waves of light and shade over the whole breadth of (the) land ... a sea of grass, which yields and undulates under the wind like water ...’ (Henry David Thoreau)

(refer to extracts from the designer’s statement following the next page)
To gain some idea of what the designer’s were trying to achieve key parts of the following designer’s summary of the Laceworks Landscape Collaborative entry for the 1984 ROYAL PARK MASTERPLAN COMPETITION have been selected by this researcher and highlighted yellow for the reader’s reference. Other formatting mirrors the original formatting.

This case study has not set out to discuss the way that Royal Park functions in relation to the designer’s aims or intentions. However, it is obvious that the designer’s share much with the findings of this case study, even if the way that they discuss it is often very different. The highlighted parts of the text, in particular, have at the very least each a general relation to what the case study finds. It is obvious also that a summary text like this can only generalise about the decision-making process of the designers and about concrete design actions.

This summary was published in *Landscape Australia 2/1985*

In 1984 a competition was conducted by the Melbourne City Council, in conjunction with the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects, for the drawing up of a Master Plan for the redevelopment of Royal Park, Melbourne; a park of some 180 hectares situated only three kilometres from the heart of the Melbourne Central Business District. From the 45 entries received … and the eventual winners of the competition, (were) Laceworks Landscape Collaborative (Brian Stafford and Ronones, both Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology lecturers in landscape architecture.

**The Winning Concept for Royal Park**

The following is an abbreviated version of the final report by Laceworks Landscape Collaborative.

**Principles**

A landscape grows and changes. The Park, as part of the environment supporting a changing community, should provide an enduring framework for gradually evolving activities and elements of the landscape.

The Park can never be finished - it should be an established structure, but it cannot become a design which is completed and fixed in detail.

The vitality of the design is dependent on the relationship of the principles of the design to the management and maintenance of the Park.

**Significance**

The Park should evoke a previous, regional character of land and space, using important existing qualities of the landscape.

Fragments of Royal Park remain which express the essential qualities of a particular Australian landscape that confronted the first European settlers in what was then known as the District of Port Phillip.

The design should express the particular character of this place and be a living landscape: a landscape which includes earth and sky, distant views and indistinct boundaries, living and dying plants and freely thinking people. Such a relationship should not be limited to a particular time, but should be as significant today as in the time of Burke and Wills, who set out from this place in 1861.
Context

The metropolitan area should be united by re-creating a continuity of landscape through the City of Melbourne and inner suburbs.

The City of Melbourne is now dominated by streets. The linkage relies on automotive transport, which achieves this at great cost. To extend each person's reach through the city without dependence on machines and to provide sustaining and enriching environments which are accessible to all the city's population - these aims must be deliberately provided for in the development of each part of the city, not left to chance as a hoped-for by-product of other ambitions.

With these ends in view there should be park extensions, even if only narrow corridors, linking all Melbourne's parks and gardens. The interior structure of Royal Park should be part of this system.

Design

The design should be principally an editing or clarification of the landscape, rather than obvious development or the addition of new things.

Royal Park's expanses, though they are not the bush, contrast with the stylised planting of urban gardens. It is a bold expression of the earth itself within the built fabric of the city.

The aim of the design is to preserve and to enhance the existing valued character of Royal Park and not to impose alien styles or objects. The designer's hand will not be apparent in the form of the Park, which should seem spontaneous and casual.

This does not mean that no design is required. 'Nature' will not suddenly revive in the city to create a beautiful park.

Expression

The design should symbolically link the park to the other parks and gardens of the city and should express Royal Park's essential individual qualities.

Consistency in basic form of expression of landscape character should exist in Melbourne's parks and gardens. Differing details should be used only to reinforce the differences in character of each place, and should be applied with restraint.

Parks and gardens in a city are engineered, built and cultivated out of necessity, in a manner which cannot leave them natural or transform them into natural landscapes. A park may provide some senses of natural or pastoral character, but not all. Essential characteristics - of space, uncontrived vegetation and unobtrusive building - must be stressed. Inessential elements must not be faked to create a Disneyland version of nature.

Earthworks, paths and pavements, furnishings and facilities should appear simple and light, inconspicuous on the land and among the spaces and vegetation, to avoid compromising the open unstructured appearance of the Park.

Purpose

A park is for persons rather than machinery, for individual public activity rather than restricted private institutions, and for psychological recreation as well as physical exercise.
The Park gives release from the workaday world. This is not by substituting one structure for another. It is an absence of things; a setting for spontaneous recreation in games and in wandering; an opportunity not to think, but to imagine.

Subtlety and a lack of florid attractions in the environment provide the most effective imaginative stimulus. To supply too much is to restrict. Subtle variations in spaces, and freedom from offending interruption, are all that should be provided.

Royal Park should be a place where exertion can be a delight, where exercise can contribute to refreshment of mind, whether in sport or an unhurried walk to work.

Activities

*Royal Park provides a specific setting for activities which are of enduring importance to the community, and satisfactory provision for these is its primary purpose.*

The Park’s uses include basic social activities of local neighbourhoods, the city and the metropolis. Principally, these are:

- play
- passive recreation
- organised amateur sports
- the Zoological Gardens

The specific requirements of each should be fully provided for.

Other activities exist which are a diversion from the purpose of the Park, and some of these can be located elsewhere without a decrease in the service to the community. Some of these activities interfere with more valued park use. They should be suppressed.

Affirmation

*The landscape should be expressive of the community’s activities and attitudes in the Park.*

Within the context of a culture, specific landscapes have specific associations with activities and ideas. The form of Royal Park should reflect the community’s landscape associations, giving the Park greater meaning, so that it is not only used by people, but becomes part of their lives.

Site and Design

**Spaces:** Unlike other Melbourne parks, Royal Park looks upward and outwards. It is a large landscape revealing a vast sky; this spacious quality, which is so important to this place, should be enhanced. Simple massed plantings in the lower perimeter areas, leaving the hilltops clear, would screen the nearby buildings and clutter to create a clear foreground for the distant views. This landscape’s weakness is that the simple open spaces cannot absorb many objects without appearing cluttered. Because of this, the MacArthur pavilion and other objects including trees on the hills and ridge crests should be removed, and the sites carefully repaired. The perimeter areas of the Park, loosely enclosed by trees, provide a foil for the ranks of street trees. Some of these partial enclosures are an enlivening contrast to the open landscape of the Park. However, most of these spaces are rudely defined. Unattractive things dominate, particularly around the north entrance of the Zoo. Earthworks, screens and plantings should be used to balance and simplify the spaces, framing pleasant enclosures.

**Planting:** Planting patterns also affect the landscape space, the two most conspicuous patterns being:
1. Avenues along streets
2. Planting around sports ovals.

Although both are formed from rows of trees, the effect is different in each. Avenues define dividing lines and direct attention along those lines, through the Park into the nearby city. This is a city pattern, and continuing it into the Park conflicts with the desirable sense of remoteness from the city that the Park provides.

Sports oval plantings mark areas within the Park. If graded as a level surface, the planting fits a ground form which defines a separate area. Such areas are identified with recreation, as a major feature of Melbourne's urban landscape. Avenue plantings within the open areas of the Park should be removed, as a pattern incompatible with the Park's spacious character, excepting where near structures.

Oval plantings should remain and in some places be improved, as they are complementary to the expanse of the Park and a symbol of recreation places.

Irregular plantings, not seen as simple or geometric patterns, frame a general area rather than defining direction or enclosure. This effect suits the Park, emphasising its major quality of space, in an apparently natural manner.

In many places small isolated clumps of a single species may become spots of unwanted attention, such as artificial arrangements of garden beds and shrubberies. Particularly in exposed areas, plants should not be conspicuously cultivated. Small enclosed spaces tolerate more specific patterns.

Where there are to be defined spaces, as at Zoo entrances, plantings should form a deliberate point of emphasis, but this effect should be used rarely.

The vegetation of Royal Park should express the ephemeral qualities of atmosphere, time, the land and the character of the historic landscapes of the area - open grassland, woodlands and pockets of wetlands.

The popular identification of plants as exotic or native is important in a park which is to evoke images of a natural landscape. Even Australian plants which are exotic in appearance should be avoided as being out of character with the Park. 'Apparent native vegetation supports the intention of the Park, apparently foreign plants deny it'.

More flexibility in plant selection, beyond the limited range of the indigenous flora of the site, is appropriate. The plantings should seem natural to the place, but do not need to be limited to indigenous species.

The indigenous species which are used should be re-established from local seed sources, as some, particularly Eucalyptus camaldulensis, vary considerably from place to place.

The plantings are now a jumble. There is as much noise in the appearance of the vegetation as in the traffic through the Park. Plants with strong, regular forms obtrude on the open hilltops. These include deciduous trees, conifers, palms and some broadleaved evergreens. The eucalypts, however, with their irregular branching patterns blend together and their open crowns echo the openness of the Park.

The horticultural clutter should be culled, selectively removing deciduous trees, pines, palms, cypress, tristanias, figs and some other species from the open and higher ground. This should be a gradual process as new plantings of appropriate species are established. The aim is to create a coherent, informal pattern of dominant eucalypts in a naturalistic woodland, crowned with the hill covered in native grasses.

Sweeping like waves of light and shade over the whole breadth of (the) land ... a sea of grass, which yields and undulates under the wind like water ... (Henry David Thoreau)
Native grasslands uncontaminated by exotic weeds are stable, and require less maintenance and water than introduced grasses.

Although the use of native grasses is still experimental, there is reason for optimism about their use, because of work being done at the National Botanic Gardens at Canberra, by ecologists at Latrobe University, Victoria, and by other groups and individuals.

**Areas suitable should be large enough to maintain integrity as a self-regenerating community of plants; free of cast shadows from trees, free of intrusive roots, and isolated from water-borne weed seeds. The latter requirement can be met by choosing an elevated site, maintaining a buffer of native vegetation around the site, or with peripheral drains. Another requirement is a location away from excessive foot traffic, although access should be permitted.**

The proposal is to establish such an area of grassland on the large hilltop in Royal Park south, within an encircling footpath.

An irrigation system would help establish new plantings and reduce flammability in high fire risk weather, using small amounts of water. Species of grasses would include: *Iba australis, Themeda, Danthonia, Stipa*.

This grassland area would be encircled by a woodland buffer zone some 50m wide. Suitable trees would be:

- *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* moister drainage channels
- *Acacia melanoxylon* moister drainage channels
- *Eucalyptus melliodora* drier areas
- *E. leucoxylon* drier areas
- *E. polyanthemos* drier areas
- *Acacia mearnsi* decorative fillers in main tree structure
- *A. pycnantha* decorative fillers in main tree structure
- *Bursaria spinosa* prickly deterrents to short-cuts
- *Acacia verticillata* prickly deterrents to short-cuts
- *A. armata* prickly deterrents to short-cuts
- *Casuarina stricta* light contrast in higher areas
- *Banksia marginata* light contrast in higher areas.

**The Wetlands**

The original gullies and streams of the area have been replaced by storm drains, leading to a decrease in quality, and a rich environment and vegetation have been lost.

Storm water drainage below the Zoo is near the ground surface. This could supply water by gravity flow to ponds on the slightly lower areas to the west. Native wetland plantings would provide an attractive and low-maintenance landscape. Regrading could form shallow depressions on shelves cut into the slopes, creating freshwater pools within enclosed areas.

**Traffic Considerations**

Royal Park, within 3 km of the Melbourne CBD, is surrounded by major traffic routes, defined as primary and secondary arterial roads. Elliott/MacArthur Road, which bisects the Park, is a primary arterial road. Other smaller roads traverse the Park, and while providing access to park facilities also facilitate through-movement.

Residents in roads bordering the Park prefer to see their roads used less, in favour of Park roads. The writers of this report prefer to see Park activities having absolute
priority over vehicular traffic activity. However, constraints on arterial road networks will not allow total elimination of through traffic. It is proposed that the busy Elliott/MacArthur Road route be depressed for a portion of its length by a cut and cover method. Other means of reducing through traffic in the Park on minor roads are proposed.

**Car parking facilities within the Park will be designed to minimise vehicle penetration and pedestrian/vehicle conflict, and to be sympathetic with the landscape.**

Attention should be given to the improvement of public transport to the Park at weekends, as well as to the appearance of transport routes and facilities.

Pedestrian and bicycle access and circulation systems will be delineated within the Park, to facilitate movement and to protect the landscape.

**Design Development**
The design proposals in the foregoing condensed version of the report specify landscape planning and design principles, rather than offer a completed master plan. The report concludes with a proposed development process, including:
1. Publication of master planning principles
2. Establishment of Steering Committee
3. Identification of principles for design development
4. Master plan - preliminary design
5. Public consultation on the basis of the preliminary design
6. Modification of preliminary master plan and publication of amended master plan
7. Detailed design development
8. Start of implementation
Images from the original Competition drawings.

**GRASSLANDS**

City and outer areas of Park with active recreation facilities separated from grasslands by woodland buffer-zone used for passive recreation and play. *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* et al. dominant. Taller dense plantings located downhill to reduce shading and root competition with grasses and herbs, and to preserve distant views.

Encircling path defining area of grassland for maintenance and as barrier to invasive exotic grasses.

Grassland on high exposed ground protected from run-off carrying weed seed. Plantings primarily *Poa australis* with *Themeda*, *Danthonia*, *Stipa* and indigenous herbs as available.

**WOODLANDS**

Drainage channels with dominant *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, and *Acacia melanoxylon*. *Eucalyptus leucoxylon*, *E. melliodora*, and *E. polyanthemos* on drier areas.

Infill of *Acacia implexa*, *A. mearnsii* and *A. pycnantha* among main tree structure.

*Casuarina stricta* on higher areas with some *Banksia marginata*.

**WETLANDS**

Slopes graded to form hollows containing level areas and ponds. Woodland plantings including *Bursaria spinosa*, *Hakea sericea* and *Hymenachne dentata* as nesting shelter for birds and as deterrent to short-cuts across vulnerable slopes.

Open, deepest water nearest embankment, not visible from distances. Free-floating water plants eg. *Acorus*.

Indigenous species of *Scirpus*, *Juncus*, *Typha*, *Phragmites* et al. in shallows.

*Melaleuca ericifolia*, *Leptospermum lanigerum*, *L. obovatum* and *Eucalyptus scabra* in moist soils near water edge.
KEY

1. Trams
2. Trains
3. Automobiles
4. Foot and bike paths
5. Parking

1. Zoo main entrance
2. Railway station and Zoo entrance
3. Zoo — new western entrance and car park
4. Sports facilities car park
5. Water garden

ROYAL PARK

--- 200m ---
These four images are greatly reduced and pixellated versions of the original Maggie May pencil drawings from the winning competition entry: which, apparently, had a great deal to do with convincing the judges of the merits of the design. With their attention to the relationships between: the grasslands, sky, grass movement in the wind, domed hilltop and tree masses, these drawings are strongly expressive of Royal Park as it is experienced today.
From an on-site discussion with a landscape architect who admires Royal Park

(In comparison to Federation Square that we were discussing:) ‘Federation Square is too demanding of attention’.

‘Royal Park is about moving’

In a certain part of Royal Park: ‘all of a sudden the city feels big’. And elsewhere… ‘the city moves further away the closer you get to it’

‘I couldn’t come here without sitting down’ (In the context of if someone sits down it is only in a couple of very small locations of Royal Park)

‘It is overwhelming…too big…you lose orientation, but you don’t need to know’

...(unlike now) ‘I never come here with my analytical hat on…I want to just experience it.’

A horticulturalist / garden designer / landscape architect

‘I hate Royal Park. There is nothing there.’

In discussions with a number of designers, on site, it was noted:

...that at a certain part of the landscape, if you found yourself here (and not everyone would) in what we termed the ‘sweet spot’, you tend to find yourself wanting to stop and you tend to also find yourself thinking of important personal things and being reflective about ‘greater issues’ or things at stake in an invigorating positive forward looking way. Somehow the landscape seemed to facilitate this, and this was understood to be much more than just because of the view, and that the view was also much more because of this.

If it is not obvious already this case study is interested in something that what would normally be considered as ‘experiential’ about Royal Park. A certain sort of experiencing machine. Saying this now will allow more focus in the following discussion.

In discussion with a landscape architectural academic / professional (who I discovered after finishing the research for this case study had carried out 3 design studio classes looking at the circle area of Royal Park).

We taught three studios on Royal Park. We wanted to teach students about topography and experience, using virtual reality to represent landform and only designing with landform. So, we chose Royal Park because we knew there were no objects in it. We wanted to get students to design topography and experience or spatiality and landform without objects.

You come to realise that Royal Park is devoid of all of the normal features and attractions.

We get the students to walk around on their own, no-one is allowed to talk, up and down the site, even getting them to close their eyes (the sense get overloaded).

They recognised the same things as in your work. There is a point when you are no longer on the plateau but the hillside. There is a certain point, the slope is a certain height and grade when you suddenly realise you are no longer on the plateau. It is not a line, it is a zone, it is as you say, affectual. You know when you are affected. It reminds me of when I go through the desert. It is only after a few minutes, after the ecology changes that you remember.
One of the students was interested in the grasses...the fact you could see the city and the grasses simultaneously...what happens then.

Reading through your work made me reflect on what my students were doing and thinking its true, its true, its true...

The students were looking at a range of things... for instance the trees and when you start to notice the texture versus the outline

We got them to focus on certain things...the circle, for instance...

It is an unadulterated landscape...it is not about football or other functional things....it is about the experience. There is no classic viewpoint...you keep moving...some of the students hated that. Some of the students wanted to objectify (make an object of) the hill. We tried to choose a site that is so hard to objectify, but they still do. They see it as empty.

One guy got into Chinese painting as a way of understanding it...fore-ground, middle-ground, back-ground...and how they interact.

They certainly got that texture-abstract relationship... if you pointed it out they would acknowledge that they unconsciously already knew it. They felt uncomfortable on the hill. It is exposure and there is never any permanency on the hill. Constantly moving. Some love it. Half the class would try to find a tree and the others would revel in this wild space. You do search for a feature (like the fenceline).

fenceline within the (grass) circle that until recently separated the native grassland area from the exotic grassed area.

There are other senses and potentials to Royal Park.

During the development of this field study ecologically-oriented cultural critic Leslie Instone
(2010) published an essay about Royal Park. Her interest was sparked at the fenceline that (till more recently) separated the native grassland part of the grass circle from the rest of the grass circle. She says:

‘when I first stumbled across the fence and enclosed natives I was perplexed and intrigued. Here was a plant species – native grasses – that, in ecological and historical terms, belongs in this place, yet in the urban setting and enclosed behind a fence, it looked utterly out-of-place. The fence not only halted my walk across the dome, but captured my interest, intersected my movement and my train of thought. I was provoked to slow down and pay attention and to query the parkscape norm. The field of native grasses is a disconcerting scene as most inner Melbourne parks especially long established and inner urban ones such as Royal Park, are carpeted in a sea of green (exotic) turf.” … “The lawn is the traditional setting for picnics, healthy exercise, and the many activities and bodily stances that have historically been fostered as ‘proper’ in urban park spaces’. This ‘awkward encounter’ suggested the possibility of ‘another kind of urban park, another landscape, different relations, other bodily stances, and other natures.’ … ‘…it’s captivating to walk among the beautiful kangaroo grasses and taller, now in mid-summer, yellow wallaby grass. You can immerse yourself in the novelty and pleasure of such an experience, but it’s one tinged with a visceral anxiety engendered by the possibility of snakes and lurking danger. The fence and grasses trigger a bodily and conceptual sense of unease, a dissonance, a provocation to re-think and to walk differently.’ ‘The fence is an arresting delineation of native/non-native, introduced/indigenous, colonial/post-colonial. The contrast between inside and outside is stark—green/yellow, mown/unmown, neat/messy, familiar/unfamiliar, accessible/inaccessible, alien/native. The green lawn side references the expected urban park landscape. The other side looks more like a country paddock (although even in the countryside it would be rare to find such a stand of native grasses.’

Snakes make you tread very carefully, all senses, especially visual and aural on high alert, body poised, very closely-oriented...very aware of your own sounds ...creates a relation between your bubble and when it moves outwards the rest of the world...a very small and bodily world... why would you go into the grass? You find the heightening of experience... you are able to sit down... you come upon snakes...that is the issue... they don't tend to sneak up on you.

The focus of Instone’s essay, which is not the focus here, is on what she refers to as the ‘socio-technical assemblage of scientific inquiry, horticultural practices, commercial nursery industry, multinational chemical industry and state power, that intermingles with the belief that native grasses are better adapted, more natural and require little maintenance.’

However, she exclaims that, ‘we encounter the native grasslands as a proposition’; ‘a new entity’, a ‘novel nonhuman/human assemblage of native grasses, involving park managers, city council, local residents, dogs, ravens and others.’

For Instone, following Bruno Latour, ‘perplexity exposes “the conditions, forces and potential that might be activated within a proposition”’. She highlights ‘the agency of non-human others’, and the value of such ‘affective moments of pleasure and confusion’.

Royal Park as outside the parkscape norm

The quotes from Instone suggest that Royal Park is, amongst other things, somewhat improper, and that it questions the ‘parkscape norm’. Cultural attitudes, of what were till recently the dominant Anglo-Saxon population, to landscape are strongly influenced by this European-British colonial history. Such attitudes were reflected and influential in the production of parks in Melbourne. Inner urban parks were modeled on English set-piece and formal parks and the plantings often attempted to follow the plantings from the home countries.
From Instone’s essay it would seem that the parkscape norm might include being:

• carpeted in a sea of green (exotic) turf
• the traditional setting for proper activities ...picnics, healthy exercise, etc.
• planted with non-native / introduced plants
• colonial
• mown
• neat
• familiar
• accessible

What might be improper for Instone about Royal Park, in contrast to the ‘parkscape norm’, might include being:

• native
• indigenous
• postcolonial
• yellow or brown
• unmown
• messy
• unfamiliar
• inaccessible
• like a country paddock (in the city)

Very few people live in the arid and semi-arid areas of Australia. They strongly tend to live in the non-tropical (south of the tropic of Capricorn) areas that have at least 400mm of rainfall per year and a temperate or sub-tropical climate. Overall, Australia has one of the lowest population densities in the world yet has one of the most urbanized populations in the world, and a small number of cities contain the bulk of the urban population.

(refer to sheet titled: ‘Australia: Climate, rainfall and landuse’)

‘Green’ ‘European’ style urban parks were an important means to construct a civilized urban world in this distant land. These were not just implantations of English parks they were also, at least, constructed in relation to what was perceived to be beyond the growing urban centres – which was popularly understood as harsh, barren and uncivilized, with the semi-arid and arid interior (epitomizing this uncivilized world). The hard, small and non-green ‘dry’ leaves of native plants, scrappy ground litter, bare ground, openness, dry grasslands with few trees, dryness in general, lack of maintenance or organization and unproductivity were some of the aspects commonly associated with what was beyond the (relatively) civilized urban centres. It seems that what she identifies as normally being considered somewhat improper and hence something of a limitation is in Royal Park somehow perplexingly central to the potential of Royal Park. It seems that the way that such improper aspects of Royal Park are provided is central to this potential.
Australia: Climate, rainfall and landuse
Aerial oblique photograph
Looking south over Royal Park to the Central Business District, Docklands and Port Phillip Bay
The ‘Circle Area’ is the main focus of attention of this case study
Some official historical background

Some of Royal Park’s history is inflected in the life of Royal Park. Two or three things might be worth extracting from the Melbourne City Council website history of Royal Park. They touch on the rich, complexly entwined and obscure ideas of bushland, indigeneity, Nature, openness, public parks and public access, which are very important for Royal Park.

“Royal Park was an important Aboriginal camping ground and fell within the territory of the Wurundjeri people, with whom John Batman made his infamous land deal in 1835. Described by Batman as being, ‘thiny timbered with gum and wattle and she-oak’, development and grazing on the site erased most of the original vegetation.

Royal Park is a remnant of a much larger reserve of 625 hectares (2,500 acres) set aside for recreation purposes by Governor Latrobe in 1854. On his last day in Melbourne he permanently reserved the area now known as Royal Park.

From its earliest years, Melbourne’s largest park developed in piecemeal fashion. Since 1984, when a Master Plan was prepared to unify the fragmented landscape, thousands of trees and shrubs have been planted to evoke a natural woodland, such as John Batman encountered in 1835."

http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/AboutMelbourne/History/Pages/Parkhistory.aspx#royal

(The winning entry, by Laceworks Landscape Collaborative, for the Melbourne City Council’s 1984 Royal Park Masterplan Design Competition, has largely determined what the Park is today and the nature of the particular use examined here.)

(refer to sheet titled: ‘Existing conditions, 1997’
(refer to sheet titled: ‘Tree plantings’)
(refer to sheet titled: ‘Ground surfaces’)

http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/AboutMelbourne/History/Pages/Parkhistory.aspx#royal
This drawing is from the 1997 Royal Park Master Plan. It shows Royal Park as existing represented in a 'traditional' graphic style.
Royal Park Interest Groups

...it is 'under the cover of aims and interests that desire invests the social body'
Eugene Holland

There is considerable local interest in Royal Park and this is expressed in a certain way through the relevant interest groups. Such notions as ‘the landscape character of Royal Park’ and ‘Royal Park as a unique, indigenous, central city park’ point to and obscure aspects of Royal Park that are less easy to characterize than biodiversity, provision of access, alienation of parklands etc – aspects that would to varying degrees be part of why there are formalized interest groups.

There are 2 friends groups that associate themselves with the protection or enhancement of Royal Park.

‘The Friends of Royal Park’ are a group of like-minded people formed for the purpose of protecting and enhancing Royal Park, and to undertake activities intended to aid that purpose, including, without limit:

1. To protect and enhance the landscape character of Royal Park and its predominantly indigenous vegetation associations of open woodland, grassland and pockets of wetland.
2. To protect and enhance biodiversity, habitat and indigenous flora and fauna in Royal Park.
3. To provide learning activities and experiences to participants that contributes to improving the natural environment of Royal Park. Etc.

The other, more political, group, the Royal Park Protection Group, was established ... to:

- “Protect, regenerate and conserve the Royal Park as a unique, indigenous, central city park for present and future generations. Oppose alienation of parkland by government, commercial, sporting and other bodies and to:
- Ensure development consistent with principles of the 1987 Royal Park Master Plan and provide Public access consistent with the terms of the establishment of the Royal Park.”

There is also the Royal Park Dogs Inc., (which may exist partly due to the other interest groups), which apart from supporting dog-related interests and activities seeks to: to encourage a high standard of conduct of members and respect for the wildlife, the environment and other users of Royal Park.

Royal Park would be considered by most who know it to be relatively disconnected or out of the way or more passively related to the rest of the world than other parks or things of the city, especially in comparison to the other case study from Melbourne, Federation Square. Determining how the wider world determines what Royal Park does in a way that is not just general is challenging. Some things can only remain speculative or general, some things can be precisely related and some things which start be seeming to be only generally relevant can be made more precisely relevant.

So, starting generally with relative size, population and density.
METROPOLITAN MELBOURNE: SIZE AND DENSITY

(refer to sheet titled: ‘Population density and distribution in Australia and Victoria’)

“Melbourne is the capital and most populous city in the state of Victoria, and the second most populous city in Australia. The Melbourne City Centre (also known as the "Central Business District" or "CBD") is the hub of the greater geographical area (or “metropolitan area”).” (From Wikipedia)

Greater Melbourne is 55-75km east-west wide north of Port Philip Bay and 100km from the northern-most to the southern most extents. Melbourne is the 25th largest city in the world, by area. It is a similar size to Pittsburgh, Moscow, Mexico City, Phoenix and San Diego. It is slightly smaller than Paris, Seattle, Johannesburg and Minneapolis/St. Paul and slightly larger than Baltimore, Cincinnati, Montreal, Sydney, Toronto and London.

As of June 2009, the greater geographical area had an approximate population of four million (Wikipedia). With a population density of 1500 people per square kilometer, Melbourne ranks 125th in the world in terms of the population density of large cities, close to Vancouver, Denver, Chicago, Salt Lake City, Sacramento and Lyon. Copenhagen, Montreal and Miami are slightly denser. Portland, San Diego and Washington are slightly less.

GREATER GEOGRAPHICAL RELATIONS

How do the geographical relations of greater Melbourne play a role in how Royal Park functions?

(refer to figure titled: ‘Royal Park is geographically central’)

Greater Melbourne wraps around Port Phillip Bay. The central city and Royal Park are just north of the bay and feel central in the greater Melbourne.

(refer to figure titled: ‘Melbourne Land use 2006’)

Outside of the central city area the vast bulk of greater Melbourne is residential. Royal Park is located in what is referred to as the ‘inner city’ where a range of functions share space with residential areas.

(refer to figure titled: The relationship of Royal Park to the inner areas…)

The size and location of Royal Park means it forms part of the boundary between what would generally be perceived to be the inner city and the middle suburbs. This size-location combination makes what is one side of Royal Park very different from on the other. North is very different to south. East is very different from west. The size of Royal Park means that the housing close to the circle area feels distinctly inner urban whereas the outer northwestern corner housing feels distinctly suburban. These experiences are felt in the park as well.

Transport mode use studies indicate that walking and bike riding form are a very important part of getting to work in the inner urban areas.

(refer to figure titled: ‘Google ‘view’ north over the CBD…’)
(refer to figure titled: ‘Capital City functions’)

All of inner Melbourne defers much more strongly to the city centre than the middle and outer suburbs, in many ways. To live in the inner city costs considerably more than ‘further out’ and for inner city dwellers the extra cost is worth it for access to the perceived type of life style and functions that are available to them there.

(refer to figure titled: ‘The Visitor Domain…’)

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Royal Park is geographically central in 'Greater Melbourne'
Melbourne land use 2006

(Source: ABS, 2006)
The relationship of Royal Park to the inner areas (Central City area and Docklands) and the middle suburbs (predominantly residential)

The northwestern part of Royal Park does not seem close to the city... the circle area seems much closer.
Google ‘view’
North over the Central Business District to Royal Park (and beyond)
An official conception of ‘Capital City Functions’ which shows the relationship between Royal Park, the Central Business District, ‘Inner Melbourne’, ‘Capital City Functions’ and residential areas.
This would commonly be perceived as a key division between the ‘inner city area’ and the middle suburbs’ to the north and west.

The ‘visitor domain’ of inner Melbourne

(Source: Inner Melbourne Action Plan, 2006)
THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE MOST RELEVANT NEARBY AREAS: The Suburbs of Carlton, North Melbourne And Parkville

(refer to figure titled: ‘Suburbs discussed in text’)
(refer to figure titled: ‘Population Density, Melbourne SD…’)

The relevant ‘users’ or ‘vectors’ of this case study, of the Native Island and the circle area live nearby. What is the nature of the immediate areas and population?

POPULATION DENSITY

As mentioned already, Greater Melbourne has a population density of 1500 people per square kilometer. The relevant suburbs associated with Royal Park are much more dense than this. Carlton has a density of 6700 people per square kilometer. Parkville would be similar and North Melbourne slightly less. The suburbs just north and west of Royal Park are not considered ‘inner suburbs’. The one directly north of Royal Park, Brunswick, has a density of 3800 people per square kilometer.

Most areas of Greater Melbourne have dwelling densities of 5-15 per hectare (2-6 per acre). Carlton, North Melbourne and Parkville are, with the other suburbs equally close to the central city – Prahran, St. Kilda, Richmond - the only suburbs with dwelling densities greater than 50 dwellings per hectare (20 dwellings per acre).

IN GENERAL

Being very locally oriented the surrounding population largely determines how Royal Park is used or functions.

In general:
These suburbs are known for inner city living and Victorian architecture. 80-90% of the dwellings in these suburbs are semi-detached terrace houses or flats (apartments). This is much higher than the Australian average.

Apart from a couple of areas of flats (apartments) in North Melbourne virtually all of the housing areas have a heritage status and restrictions. The other inner city housing areas also have high proportions of heritage status housing. Heritage status correlates with higher real estate prices and a sense of ‘preciousness’ about such areas.

These suburbs are all within walking distance or a quick trip on public transport to the central city. They are all well serviced by public transport.

These suburbs have high numbers of students. They are mostly tertiary level students. People living here are more highly educated than for the rest of Australia: Carlton has 51% who are tertiary educated compared to 5% for the rest of Australia

These suburbs have, relative to the Australian average:
- many more born overseas;
- many more who do not speak English at home;
- a low number of children;
- a high percentage of the population aged 15-24;
- ‘family’ as a less frequent household composition (especially Carlton);
- many more are single;
- families with less children;
- a far greater number of professionals;
- far less numbers of labourers, technicians, machine operators and drivers
- many students (who keep the average incomes relatively low);
- family incomes similar to the rest of Australia (except Parkville where it is much higher);
- much more renting (especially Carlton);
- higher rental prices;
- house values that are much greater (especially in Parkville);
These were traditional working-class suburbs (less so with Parkville), and hence, especially with the high student populations, have traditionally seen a high vote for the, less conservative, Australian Labor Party. However, like many other inner-city suburbs undergoing a process of gentrification, the Greens (and to some degree the conservatives) have been gaining an increasing share of the vote.

So, it might be presumed, somewhat generally, that the populations here might be: relatively cosmopolitan and urbane; have more time and/or money on their hands (less focused on families and children, students); be more invested in the local world around them and outside their house (be more likely to move around the inner city on foot or via public transport); and be more interested in their environment, both ecologically and experientially. That there are three formal interest groups, at least, associated with Royal Park might be an expression of the local demographics.

Each of the surrounding three suburbs has certain characteristics and a certain way that they related to the ‘native section’ of ‘Royal Park’. The combination of these produces a certain relation of the population to the park.

CARLTON

Carlton has traditionally had a strong Italian community and has been closely associated with the University. “Known for its Victorian architecture, European-style squares and parks.” (Wikipedia). Royal Park is somewhat separated from Carlton via distance and major road crossings. It has a large residential population and a traditional hub for inner urban cafes, eating, nightlife and shopping.

NORTH MELBOURNE

This is a large inner city suburb with only a handful of very small open spaces within its boundary. There are considerable numbers of residences in North Melbourne close to Royal Park, which for many is the closest large park. Though there are a range of land-uses across the whole of North Melbourne the area close to Royal Park is large and very predominantly residential. To get there requires crossing, safely only at a very limited number of places, the wide and busy Flemington road from Royal Park. There are few attractions to those from outside North Melbourne and these are to the south of this large inner city suburb, away from Royal Park.

PARKVILLE

‘Think Parkville, think leafy streets, beautiful heritage houses, the University of Melbourne’s bustling campus…’

Wikipedia says Parkville is a major education, research and healthcare precinct and home to the University of Melbourne, a campus of Monash University, the Royal Women's and Royal Children’s hospitals, and that a major feature is Royal Park. Parkville contains the main campus of the University of Melbourne, including most of the residences. It has more consistently ‘high quality’ heritage housing for one thing. The numbers of students possibly obscure that residents often have, even more so than in Carlton, relatively high incomes here.

There are three areas that are residential in Parkville. One on either side of the northern section of Royal Park, and a triangular section south-west of the ‘Native Island’. This latter area is the area that most think of when the name ‘Parkville’ is mentioned and for most this name would evoke particular connotations and images. The word ‘Parkville’ comes with very shared and distinct connotations of an exclusive and historically precious, neat and tidy, residential area.

This part of Parkville has a very distinct island-like and ordered housing area. This housing area, which is immediately south-west of the ‘circle area’, is much smaller than Carlton and especially North Melbourne and relatively very accessible to Royal Park. It is small, clearly bounded,
contained and separated off from other things. It is the closest housing to Royal Park. Most would probably feel that Royal Park, and especially the circle area, were effectively part of residential Parkville and the proximity of Royal Park might be an important reason for some to live here – and important in making it more exclusive – not only in socio-economic terms but in the sense of the park having an intimate relation to this housing area. Houses along The Avenue and near the west end of the park north of Flemington Road are also relatively accessible to the circle area of Royal Park.

WHAT THE ZONING MAPS AND HERITAGE MAPS SAY

(refer to sheet titled: ‘Zoning’)  
(refer to sheet titled: ‘Heritage zoning’)

The planning maps also draw attention to the predominance of relatively densely packed inner city housing surrounding the park. Other functions are located further from the park. The nearby residential population – on all sides of the park and especially to the southeast, is the most important group of people for the way that Royal Park functions.

The Heritage map shows the immediate neighboring land parcels to be almost exclusively ‘heritage’, predominantly ‘Victorian era’ housing. In other parts of Melbourne with high proportions of heritage housing the large parks are predominantly traditional English style set-piece parks. The relationship between Royal Park and the surrounding housing is therefore anomalous in this sense.
This ‘visitor domain’ map fairly accurately portrays the area of the inner city, being effectively one contiguous area that tends to be the focus of ‘visitors’ whilst in Melbourne.

There is a concentration, and hence proximity to each other, of a variety of different activities, services and attractions in this area. Beyond this area it would not normally be seen that there were ‘good reasons’, given all of the other options available to a visitor, to go there.

Obviously the zone is not definitive, however the areas that tourists choose to not go can be very precise. Tourists in Brunswick Street, Fitzroy and Smith Street, Collingwood, do not tend to go north over Alexandra Parade. The width of the road and the lack of enough ‘reasons’, relative to what is south of the street, to cross it, make it, like a tipping point or limit, just ‘not worth it’. On the ground such tipping points function concretely and variously: ‘there’s no reason to go across there’, ‘it is too steep’, ‘there seems more stuff this way’ etc.

The Zoo, being part of Royal Park, might account for the inclusion of Royal Park in this domain. Melbourne Zoo (including Healesville Sanctuary) is, for overseas visitors, the 7th most popularly visited attraction in Victoria (attracting 17% of all visitors). Most Melbournians would have visited the zoo, possibly multiple times, but are likely not to have visited the southern part of Royal Park. The ‘native half’ of Royal Park, which does not fit into how tourists and tourist information sources see attractions, would almost certainly not be on a visitor’s radar. All other inner urban large parks are at least presented as being relevant to tourists, even if the visitors to Princes Park and the non-Zoo areas of the northern part of Royal Park, would tend to be somewhat inner Melbourne based sports and recreation teams, players and participants of fields sports, jogging, cycling, golf etc. The relative attention of Zoo (average of 2700 per day), which is within view of the circle in the ‘native section’, makes the ‘native section’ seem of less interest to those from beyond Royal Park.

In general for those who live around Royal Park the city is important and accessible. From the perspective of someone in the city, Royal Park would, in contrast, seem largely irrelevant and out of the way (even though it is as easy to get to by public transport, bicycle and foot as Carlton).

Relatedly, Royal Park would be seen as, historically, one of the most important designed landscapes in Melbourne, yet most landscape architecture students, unless they have a class related to it, would not have been there either. This is partly due to Royal Park not fitting into what would be of interest to contemporary design discourse and partly due to its location and the way in which it relates to its location. Even for this specialist group, Royal Park seems too far ‘out of the way’ for what it probably has to offer. That most don’t go there certainly contributes to it staying somewhat invisible for the non-immediate population.
HOW THE TRANSPORT SYSTEMS EXPRESSES ITSELF LOCALLY

The road and rail system of the state of Victoria is strongly focused on Melbourne.

(refer to map titled: ‘Major Roads of Melbourne’)

As already mentioned, Greater Melbourne north of Port Philip Bay is 55-75km east-west wide and 100km from the northern-most to the southern most extents.

There are broadly three types of major roads in the greater Melbourne.
• The traditional grid that provided access to all parts of the city fairly evenly.
• The newer radial freeways focused toward and away from the city centre.
• The even newer and almost fully realized ring road which frees up relationships around the edge of the city, but is also used in combination with the other roads to go to and from the inner city.

Outer Melbourne freeway traffic has increased markedly in recent years, however, unlike many other spread-out suburban cities with ring roads the transport system still strongly relates, via radial public and private transport routes, to the central city. Cross-town traffic from any direction will tend to pass close to the city centre.

Because of this it can be said that to a significant degree the road system of the whole of Victoria strongly focuses on the central city – either moving to and from it or passing/bypassing it.

A good proportion of the automobile travel options to or from the city or passing the city would involve passing Royal Park. For many Melbournians and others this is their dominant and only experience of Royal Park.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT SYSTEM

(refer to map titled: ‘Melbourne Rail and Train Map’)

For a suburban city Melbourne is very well serviced by public transport. The public transport system, as mentioned, strongly relates to the city centre. Royal Park is an easy tram ride from the city. It is also an important part of the travel experience on a number of the tram routes to and from the northern and western suburbs, notably on Flemington Road. One tram line runs through Royal Park itself, providing a unique experience for tram travelers as trams almost universally are street bound in Melbourne. This tram route provides the only serious view into the circle area, from vehicular traffic. Viewing the circle area also includes glimpses to the city in the distance.
WAYS THAT ROAD MOVEMENT RELATES TO ROYAL PARK

(refer to figure titled: More immediate relationship…)
(refer to map titled: Street Directory (road user’s map)…’)
(refer to figure titled: The Relationship between the dominant transport routes, central city, topography, Royal Park)
(refer to plan titled: ‘Plan showing relationship between Royal Park…’)

TRANSITION ZONE FOR DRIVERS

Royal Park is located on major roads in the greater Melbourne in a place where a good proportion of the ways of passing through the central area of greater Melbourne pass by Royal Park. To approach this area is to come from roads and environments which are more suburban, with more suburban road speeds, into an area which overall can be the slowest part of the trip, often being a ‘bottleneck’ from a driver’s perspective. The location, hierarchy and arrangement of roads in the area make it something of a transition zone – part of the process of arriving at, leaving or passing the city.

The road conditions vary significantly around Royal Park. Flemington Road and Elliot Road / Macarthur Avenue are the main thoroughfares. Gatehouse Street can also be a significant thoroughfare at peak times.

Flemington Road is a wide boulevard with trams running down the middle. There are four sets of two lanes of traffic plus four road dividers, parked cars on the edges and the trams and tram stops. The combination of great width and narrowness of the actual automobile lanes means that drivers tend to pay less attention to their surrounds and more attention to lane-changing, road edges and other cars.

Two lanes of traffic sandwiched between trams and raised planters ‘out’ in the wide Flemington Road.

Macarthur/Elliot Roads change from fast and narrow and curvilinear to a wider and even faster road, both with few stopping or turning opportunities. Elliot Avenue in particular is structured more like a rural highway than an inner suburban street. When flowing freely these curvilinear roads focus attention forward. When in heavy traffic they do the same. Gatehouse Street is more local yet is narrow and has a series of chicanes that drivers have to attend to. In distinct contrast to the other roads, Gatehouse Street is more of a local road, only two
lanes wide with chicanes, and can become very busy and slow at peak times when it becomes a feeder road between two faster/higher volume roads.

In terms of driving, this transitioning zone involves shifts in road cross sections / types, alignments and signage combined with negotiating with all of the other vehicles also negotiating themselves through this zone or peeling off to a nearby destination or shift in route. Overall, this transitioning zone involves a shifting experience of road conditions in an area where many drivers are changing directions, preparing to arrive or leave the city, or trying to get through this part of the trip. This combination tends to focus the driver’s attentions on the traffic, navigation and the road ahead, especially as vegetation and topography tend to defer attention away from the interior of the park. Driving through here is about moving and not stopping and many people’s experience of these roads would be at busy times of the day, hence accentuating attention away from the park interior and to the road.

This passing-by experience facilitates more or less fleeting and mobile views or impressions of the ‘native island’. For most Melburnians the passing by experience would be their only experience of the ‘native island’. This passing vehicle experience would probably also provide the initial understanding of the ‘native island’ for the few who do actually visit it.

THE INFLUENCE OF ROADS AND TOPOGRAPHY ON THE ‘NATIVE ISLAND’

There is a strong relationship between the road alignment, topography and the understanding of the ‘native island’ from a vehicle. There is a very dynamic and shifting relationship between the road and the experience of moving past and viewing into the park and how these affect the experience of transitioning east or west or moving to or from the city.

The three roads surrounding Royal Park more or less negotiate themselves along the three depressions at the ‘base’ of the rounded promontory landmass that the ‘native island’ part of Royal Park is located on.

Topography is an important factor in the different ways that each of these roads passes the ‘Native Island’.

There is a 32 metre elevation difference on the Elliot Avenue / Macarthur Road drops between Royal Parade and Flemington Road over a distance of 1.8km on a relatively fast serpentine partly narrow almost rural-road type road.

There is a 15 metre elevation difference from a highpoint in front of the hospitals on Flemington Road to the intersection with Elliot Avenue over a distance of 1.0km on a very wide straight urban boulevard type road with trams.

Gatehouse Street drops 18m down to Flemington Road over 300m on an inner urban secondary road with chicanes.

In the schema of going to, from or past the city, the western end of two east-west roads (Elliot-Macarthur and Flemington, where they cross), would be experienced as something of a start of the entering or the bypassing of the city or when you have finally bypassed or have left the city.

Where Elliot-Macarthur crosses Royal Parade more or less corresponds to the high point in the east-west traverse. This point is just north of the city and this location gives this high point in the traverse a sense of being the place where you are passing the city. Conversely, if traveling in the reverse direction to reach the Elliot-Flemington intersection feels like you’ve left the city.

Each road has its own roller-coaster dynamism. Coming into the city along Flemington Road the Elliot Road intersection is, at the low point-start of the entering-the-city experience. Reaching the hospital high point is the first sense of arriving (and this repeated differently
again at the Royal Parade-Flemington roundabout and also again crossing into the ‘city grid’ at Victoria Street).
More immediate relationship between major relevant traffic arteries and Royal Park
Street Directory (road user’s view) map showing Royal Park is something of an island surrounded by busy traffic.
Street directory map showing radial major road and freeways in relation to the Central City.
The relationship between the dominant transport routes, central city, topography and Royal Park.
Plan showing relationship between Royal Park, the surrounding roads and the topography