The Effects of Cultural Background and Past Usage on Iranian-Australians' Appreciation of Urban Parks and Aesthetic Preferences

Abstract

To understand how newcomers and established immigrants perceive cultural landscapes that have been imbued with a nationality's cultural meanings and heritage, exploring the cultural background and landscape myths and values of that immigrants' community can be a starting point. Examining whether immigrants perceive or prefer those values in a new landscape setting requires a wider understanding of immigrants' activities, preferences, and expectations.

The present paper aims to investigate how Australian urban park landscape settings may be perceived by Iranian immigrants in terms of having aesthetic attributes, and how they use these spaces. It approaches the issue of immigration and park experiences through seeking the links between park settings and the way immigrants see and interpret them based on their cultural, social, and geographical backgrounds. It particularly focuses on Iranian immigrants and Iran's cultural landscape to explore different views of constructed natural landscapes and their effects on park usage and aesthetic preferences.

This study explores how the icons of Iranian cultural landscape (Persian garden), urban park design, and past park use patterns of these immigrants may mediate interactions with new park environments, and how they may contribute to evoke a 'sense of aesthetic'. It applies survey questionnaire, semi-structured in-depth individual interview, and Q methodology with photographs as research methods, and employs theories of 'place' and 'landscape visual characters' to explore park usage and aesthetic preferences in both contexts: Iran and Australia.

Findings of this study highlight the preference of undertaking 'passive activities' in urban park landscapes by Iranian research participants and demonstrate that they highly admire the aesthetic and picturesque aspects of Australian park landscapes. However, they miss the characteristics of Iran's parks as well as the recreational, social, and sporting activities they used to carry out there.

Nasim Yazdani*

Faculty of Science Engineering & Built Environment Deakin University, Geelong, Australia

*Corresponding author: Nasim Yazdani, Faculty of Science Engineering & Built Environment, School of Architecture and Built Environment, Deakin University, Geelong, Australia. Email: n.yazdani@deakin.edu.au; nasim.yazdani.researchnet@gmail.com

1 Introduction

A manifestation of Australian multiculturalism can be seen in the use of public parks and gardens by non-Anglo-Celtic immigrants, which has been illustrated in different ways by various studies. Research shows distinctive patterns of use by non-English-speaking immigrants in the visitation of parks. For example, a preference for 'garden' parks and water features in parks has been observed among Vietnamese and Arab Australians (Byrne et al. 2013). For Arabic immigrants, water is considered to be a scarce and precious resource, with connotations of 'paradise'; on the other hand, for Vietnamese people, it evokes memories of their homeland with its paddy fields, high rainfall, and rivers. Vietnam's high population and agricultural base cause people to understand landscape as a place for social relations, personal experiences, and human engagement, full of smells and sounds. Vietnamese Australians also have been found to view parks as places for contemplation, remembering the past, and fishing. However, Arab Australians' pattern of use includes activities such as praying in parks and breaking meals during Ramadan (Byrne et al. 2013, Thomas 2002). These studies found that for both groups, observing the 'bush' elements of park environments is pleasurable; however, few expressed a desire to walk in it. Non-English-speaking immigrants' perception or expectations of Australian park landscapes may not be in accordance with the design and management purposes of these places. The reviewed studies draw attention to the fact that many immigrants do not visit Australian parks in the same ways as other citizens. Instead, they engage in a process of place-making and undertake regular and passive activities such as group picnicking in park spaces. Indeed, the same park space can have a different meaning to various groups of people. It has been found that park visitation can increase a sense of belonging and insideness, and develops a feeling of being home among immigrants to the extent that this feeling of belonging brings forth a sense of responsibility for the environment (Byrne et al. 2013).

Understanding the way places and localities are given meaning by immigrants and their practices and imagination requires greater consideration through cross-cultural studies. As much of the landscape and place research considers social rather than physical components of ethnicity, less is known about the effect of characteristics of the physical environment and form on users' perception (Main 2007). How are urban park spaces given meaning by ethnic minority users? And what role do park design and settings play in this regard? The present study seeks to examine these questions by focusing on the Iranian community in Melbourne. The Iranian diaspora in Australia is growing - 58,112 persons in 2016 (The State of Victoria Department of Premier and Cabinet 2018), and while parks and gardens are important recreational destinations for tourists, immigrants, and local people in Melbourne, little is known about immigrants and newcomers' appreciation and entanglements with these spaces.

The Iranian community in Melbourne is a diverse community that includes people with different religions, languages and ethnic identities. However, this community shares an identity based on cultural heritage and a sense of ethnic honour. This study focuses on Ruffey Lake Park - an urban park in Melbourne's eastern suburbs which include a considerable population of Iranian residents - as a case study. It is also one of the most popular parks in Manningham municipality.

Ruffey Lake Park, with an area of 68 hectares, includes Ruffey Creek, large expanses of grasses, and a mixture of native and exotic trees, as well as four picnic areas, two large playgrounds, a lake, a jogging track, and a disc golf course (Manningham City Council). Ruffey Lake Park is one of the most significant areas of open space within the City of Manningham, which is comprised of the suburbs of Doncaster and Templestowe. It provides a range of important recreation and social opportunities for people in the City of Manningham and from other municipalities. The park is a place for major events such as Australia Day Festival, Park Fest, Cinema Under the Stars, and the annual community organised Passion Play (Manningham City Council, July 2005). Ruffey Park has been selected as a case study for this research due to its location in one of the Melbourne eastern suburbs where a large

number of Iranian immigrants live. Moreover, it is close to the Iranian Cultural School and was the place where Iranian cultural ceremonies and festivals such as the 13th day of Norouz celebration and Iranian fire festival are held for years. The park is used constantly by many Iranian people as users nearby, and occasionally by the rest of the Iranian community in festivals and cultural celebrations. It is also a meeting place for parents whose children go to the Iranian Cultural School on Saturdays, especially those who live far from the school.

The Iranian research participants were familiar with certain parks in Tehran, therefore six urban parks in Tehran have also been selected; these are Niavaran, Qeytarieh, Sayee, Laleh, Jamshidieh, and Mellat Parks. Six was chosen to ensure that at least one of them has been visited by all the research participants.

2 Research Methods

Data was collected, organised and analysed for the case studies, and collected in the form of:

1- Observation and photographic documentation of parks at different times such as weekdays, weekends, special ceremonies, and festivities, to record the condition of space regarding activities that are carried out there.

2- Survey questionnaires used to collect information in association with the participants and their use and preferences of park spaces before and after migration.

3- Q methodology with photographs was also applied in order to providea wide range of different park settings to be investigated. In this method, respondents sort images, according to a specific instruction.

4- Semi-structured in-depth individual interviews of ten participants in order to gather detailed information in relation to the participants' park culture and the ways in which they engage with park environments before and after migration.

The survey questionnaire was written in two languages: Farsi and English. The participants include fifty Iranian immigrants- twenty-nine females and twenty-one males. Due to the purpose of this research which was to investigate a range of different activities undertaken by the immigrant families, the participants were all married with an age range of thirty-one to sixty-two. Twenty-seven(fifty-four percent)were between thirty and forty, twenty-two (forty-four percent) between forty and sixty, and one person (two percent) over sixty. Furthermore, eighty-six percent of the participants had children (three or less) and they were all educated-fourteen percent Diploma; fifty-eight per cent Bachelor Degree; twenty-two percent Master Degree; and six percent Ph.D.

In order to investigate if there is any connection with Iran and to what extent the participants are associated with their previous physical environment, they were asked 'how often do they travel to Iran?' eighty per cent answered they frequently visit Iran i.e. once a year or once in two-three years. In answering the question 'Is Ruffey Park close to where you live?'fifty-four percent said 'Yes'. The next question was 'how often do you visit Ruffey park and why?' followed by 'which park did you usually visit in Iran before migration and how often? a) did you go there with your family, friends, or individually? b) did you visit there on weekends or weekdays? c) what time in a day did you go there: morning, afternoon, or evening?' The answers were assessed and are summarised in the tables below.

Table 1: The visiting frequency of Ruffey Park by the participants

How often do you visit Ruffey Park?	
1-3 times per week	16%
1-3 times per month	20%
1-3 times per year	64%

Table 2: Activities undertaken in Ruffey Park mentioned by the respondents

Activities undertaken in Ruffey Park	
Festivals and Celebrations	68%
Picnicking, BBQ	48%
Being with family and friends(e.g. photographing, meetings, tea gatherings)	40%
Walking, kids playing	38%
Doing sport and exercise	4%

The participants stated that they used to visit local parks in their area in Iran, while they also visited famous urban parks in Tehran as well, such as Mellat, Jamshidieh, Sayee, Qeytarieh, Laleh, Shafagh, Chitgar, Niavarn, Velenjak, and Pardisan Parks, both on weekdays and weekends. They asserted that they used to go to the park at any time of the day, especially early mornings and late afternoons for socialising, walking, doing exercise, or having dinner.

[We went to] Jahan nama, Cahitgar, Sayee, and Laleh Parks, at weekends from morning to afternoon, or to parks nearby at weekdays evenings with family and friends.

I visited Niavaran, Mellat, andLaleh Parks, 2-3 times per month, in weekday's mornings alone, and in weekend's afternoons and evenings with family and friends.

Subsequently, they were asked what did they do in the park and are there any differences in the way they use and interact with parks in Melbourne compared to Iran?

For doing exercise, playing, walking, skating, … but here [Melbourne] we usually go to the park for festivals, walking or having BBQ.

For relaxation, having picnic and taking children to playgrounds, but I prefer Melbourne's parks because they are quieter and have more facilities for having picnic.

In Iran we did walking and group sporting activities, or having dinner with family. Here we do BBQ, celebrating birthdays and Iranian festivals.

Additionally, in answering the question 'does the weather play a barrier or incentive role for you in using urban parks in Melbourne?' Twenty-eight percent of the respondents said that 'it is a motivation for us to go to the park', twenty-six percent answered, 'the weather does not matter', and forty-six per cent believed 'in some conditions plays a barrier role'.

Table 3: Activities undertaken in Iran's parks mentioned by the respondents

Activities undertaken in Iran's parks	
Socialising and catching up with friends (e.g. tea gatherings)	76%
Walking, and getting fresh air	54%
Doing sport and exercise	40%
Picnicking	40%
Taking kids to playgrounds	24%

3 Q Methodology

Q methodology provides a systematic means by which to examine and reach understandings about the experience of expressing an opinion (Shuib, 2008). Q methodology also allows the subjective information collected from the respondents to be quantified using statistical analysis. This analysis can then be described and interpreted in ways that reflect individual or group viewpoints in association with such experience (McKeown & Thomas 1988; Shuib 2008; Van Exel & de Graaf 2005).

Q methodology has been applied to environmental research (Addams & Proops 2000; Barry & Proops 2000), and landscape research with photographs as a technique to assess scenic values (Zube et al. 1974; Palmer 1997; Palmer 1983). It has also been used in assessing residents' classifications of landscape character (Palmer 1983; Amedeo et al. 1989) and cross-cultural comparisons of perceptions of scenic and heritage landscapes (Zube & Pitt 1981).

Q methodology has been evaluated as having many advantages, such as the ability to encompass a wide variety of landscape settings, to focus on respondents (Amedeo et al. 1989; Fairweather & Swaffield 2002) and to allow sensitivity to each response (Fairweather & Swaffield 2002; Palmer 1997).

The present study focuses on the aesthetic meaning of urban park landscapes. 'Aesthetic' in this study refers to a set of visual attributes underlying park design which are considered pleasant and desirable. The approach adopts the use of images of park landscapes to present to the respondents, which is evaluated within the Q method. In this method, respondents sort images, according to a specific instruction. These individuals' Q sorts are factor analysed to identify common patterns and the subjects' point of view (Fairweather & Swaffield 2002).

Q method involves the sorting of photographs and analysing what respondents interpret about them to understand their thoughts, attitudes, and values behind the selected array (Fairweather & Swaffield 2002). Selections of photographs both from targeted parks in Tehran (Iran) and Ruffey Park in Melbourne have been taken. Moreover, simultaneous interviews elicit explanations of the choices that were made. The whole process provides a diverse set of information in association with various types of urban park interactions by Iranian immigrants both in Iran and Australia.

The Q process is designed for a systematic arrangement where a respondent usually responds in a linear fashion from a numeric value of the lowest value to the highest value. The respondents are asked to place the photograph beginning from the left or the right side of the chart and follow through until they finish. The respondents will have to evaluate their choices and make decisions relative to all photographs under the conditions of the instruction that are provided by the researcher (Shuib 2008). In the present study, there are seven piles of photographs. Starting from the left side, there is one photograph in pile number one, two photographs in pile number two, and so on till they reach the middle pie. The score to be given for each pile is the highest at each ends which have the negative or positive values and decreases towards the middle pile which has the lowest score. In Q terms, the placement of answers will result in a statistical distribution in which the mean and frequency will be equal for all respondents (Shuib 2008; Brown 1980; McKeown & Thomas 1988). Based on this designed structure the researcher created a model in the computer and used PQ method programme. Considering the particular use of the Q method in the primary research project, which was three stages for each case study, and the number of participants in Q methodology part (forty participants, twenty males and twenty females), two factors were selected to rotate. Each resulting final factor represents a group of people's viewpoints that are highly correlated with each other and uncorrelated with others. This article is part of the primary research project and includes one of the Q methodology stages. Another stage which mainly concentrated on 'personal and cultural meanings of place in urban park landscapes' has been recently published as a journal article (see Yazdani 2018).

Eighteen photos were selected of Niavaran (62,000 sqm), Qeytarieh (122,206 sqm), Sayee (120,000 sqm), Laleh (28 hectares), Jamshidieh (69,000 sqm), and Mellat (340,000 sqm), Parks in Tehran and eighteen photos of Ruffey Park (68 hectares) in Melbourne, see Appendix Table 1 and Appendix Table 2. Photos were taken by the researcher in the same season-summer-apart from Photo No.1 in Iran's parks' cluster that shows picnicking on the thirteenth day of Norouz in Iran which is a traditional ceremony celebrated in March on the thirteenth day of spring. This photo was obtained through 'Tabnak' website - a professional Iranian news site. Photo

No.5 in Iran's parks' cluster was gained from 'Design in Nature' book by Gholam Reza Pasebanhazrat. Photos illustrated peoples' activities in the park, park features and recreational facilities, as well as built and natural environments of the parks.

4 Results

According to the observation and survey data analysis, Iranian immigrants prefer 'being with family and friends', 'walking and getting fresh air', and 'doing sport and exercise' and 'picnicking' as their most favourite activities in Iranian parks. However, 'festivals and celebrations' are the most undertaken activities in Ruffey Park, followed by 'picnicking, BBQ', and 'being with family and friends'.

It is evident that activities such as sport and exercise are less undertaken in Melbourne urban parks by the Iranian respondents. According to the responses, this is due to the availability of the fresh air and green spaces in almost all parts of the suburban areas, which facilitate these activities. Nevertheless, the existence of favourite sporting facilities and fitness equipment in Iran's parks is an important factor in making these spaces an appropriate place for doing sport and exercise, and the lack of them in another context may decrease active engagements with park spaces.

> In Iran we visited parks for having picnic, walking, using sport facilities and equipment, which there are not any in Melbourne's parks, but in Melbourne everywhere is like a park so we do not need to go to the park for getting fresh air or walking or doing exercise.

Nonetheless, picnicking, and being together are the favourite activities in urban parks which continue to be preferred after migration as well. Moreover, festivities and cultural celebrations in Australian parks can also be seen in association with the interest Iranians have in conducting community cultural gatherings and celebrations in natural settings. The interweaving of social and cultural dimensions of such events is highly significant as a source of collective affirmation and identity in conditions of migration, and can also foster a sense of familiarity and belonging to the physical environment.

Furthermore, Australian park characteristics are perceived as untouched nature with a highly restorative and peaceful atmosphere. Iranian participants in this study mostly spoke of how the Australian parks seemed natural compared to the park landscapes of their homelands, and how they have fewer facilities such as illuminations at night.

> 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.

Survey data and observation also demonstrate how the growth of population and living in apartments have increased the need for open spaces in Iran. This is evident through the kind of activities that Iranians undertake in urban park spaces which is similar to those that they used to do in their backyards. Lack of constructed natural/open spaces in their residential places has resulted in using urban parks as places for resting, getting fresh air and vitality, having dinner, or drinking tea, and having a chat with each other. Numerous Iranian scholars have also highlighted the passive use of parks by Iranian citizens (Abkar et al. 2010, Dinarvandi et al. 2014; Khosravaninezhad et al. 2011).

On the other hand, changing in lifestyle after migration and living in houses with large open spaces enables Iranian immigrants to undertake small group gatherings and family chats in their backyards. However, Iranian broader conception of what a park is has caused an understanding of parks as public places that require facilities that these immigrants expect of them, such as night use,

illumination, cultural/educational activities, active recreation facilities, the existence of exhibitions, cafés, restaurants, and more settings for socialising.

Drawing on theories of 'place' and 'landscape visual characters', the Q methodology data analysis focuses on addressing the question of 'how do experiences of favourite aesthetic places of Iranian users in urban park landscapes result in place identity?' And subsequently, what are the spatial aesthetic values of urban park landscapes in Persian culture? And are these values being attributed to Australian urban park spaces after migration?

Data analysis of the first group of the participants-twenty people, eleven females and nine males-demonstrates that traditional water features and paths in natural, cultural, and spacious landscape settings are the main landscape visual characters in inspiring scenery and aesthetic value for them. The second group of the responses chose their top-three photographs as those that defined landscape scenery and aesthetic values in the existence of plantations, a new–modern-form of water features, and depth in pathways (see Table 4). Seven respondents-three females and four males-have loaded on this factor,

while experience with Q-studies has suggested that there should be at least ten respondents to be loaded on any theme to warrant further discussion. However, this landscape analysis shows that the different forms of water features and paths that reflect depth with a focal point, in different shapes and with various forms of vegetation are the significant values of landscape settings in association with the scenery and aesthetic values.

Results from the data analysis of two groups of respondents show that naturalness, spaciousness[1], orderliness, and topography -as design principles demonstrated in the forms of water features, paths, places of enclosure, different levels, flowers, and ordered and green plantations –have been considered as favourite 'aesthetic' places/views in Iran's urban park landscapes. Naturalness is an important aspect of restorative environments which were considered favourable both as a pattern in the landscape and vegetation. Spaciousness as a visual scale is observable in the forms of depth in paths and enclosures in the settings with water features(see Ode et al. 2008).

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1 Spaciousness in this paper refers to both enclosure and depth as 'spatial definition through distinct edges or landmarks', see Kaplan & Kaplan, S. 1989.

Table 4: Favourite aesthetic places in Iran's urban park landscapes, identified by two groups of the respondents

Group 1	Group 2
Fountains and water feature in Sayee Park- No. 7	*Cypress trees along a pathway in Laleh Park- No. 4*
A paved path in trees Jamshidieh Park- No. 5 *A path ways with shady in Sayee Park- No. 11*	*Bridge on the creek of trees Laleh Park – No.3* *A path ways with shady in Sayee Park- No. 11*

However, in the case of Ruffey Park, the first group of the respondents characterised aesthetic landscapes by their strong liking or values of different views of the lake. All twenty respondents-nine females and eleven males-aligned with this theme chose the top-three photographs that showed different views of the lake as their most valued landscapes. The – second group of the respondents-sixteen people, ten females and six males-is likewise interested in photos of the lake (see Table 5).

Accordingly, in Ruffey Park case, lake, view, and open space, which represent naturalness and legibility, were referred to as favourite aesthetic places. The existence of water indicates coherence in the landscape (Kuiper, 2000; Ode et al. 2008; van Mansvelt & Kuiper, 1999), which refers to a more immediate understanding and readability of our environment (Kaplan & Kaplan 1989). Water, likewise, in the landscape is often used as an indication of naturalness (Ode et al. 2008) and as an important aspect of restorative environments (Ode et al. 2008; Hartig et al. 2003; Kaplan & Kaplan 1989). Respondents' emphases on the 'open space', 'view', 'naturalness', and 'peacefulness' support the legibility, coherence, and naturalness landscape characters in Ruffey Park. However, the general terms of 'open space', 'natural' and 'peaceful' might mean different things in Iranian culture due to various reasons, such as specific characteristics of green spaces, climate, and ecology in Iran, as well as the Iranian cultural landscape and socio-cultural aspects. Therefore, the naturalness and open space which are seen in Ruffey Park and Iran's parks, and the sense of restoration which is perceived in these two contexts may be different.

Table 5: Favourite aesthetic places in Ruffey Park landscapes, identified by two groups of the respondents

Group 1	Group 2
Top view of the lake - No.13	*Top view of the lake - No.13*
Lake with deck - No.14	*Lake with deck - No.14*
Lake view – No.1	A top view of the park - No.17

Table 6 below summarises most and least valued landscape photos in both case studies.

Concepts such as 'harmony', 'tidiness' and 'orderliness' have been considered as associated with aesthetics in cultural landscape planning. Principles of landscape composition have been also noted as important in the planning of cultural landscapes, such as 'unity', 'variety', 'intensity' and 'historical depth' as key concepts (Jones & Daugstad 1997). Favourite places have been found to afford restorative experiences that lead to emotion and self-regulation processes which are basic to the development of place identity (Korpela & Hartig 1996).

5 Discussions

Place identity refers to the special character of place which distinguishes it while reflecting its cultural origins and heritage (Butina-Watson & Bentley 2007). Place identity in Iran's urban park landscapes embodies design characteristics which mostly include the icons of the Iranian cultural landscape and Persian paradise gardens such as water features, paths, places of enclosure, topography and different levels, flowers, and ordered and green plantations. Persian garden design as an ancient Iranian landscape design concept has influenced most of Iranian contemporary park characters and the way these spaces are used. Persian garden is a cultural and historical landscape where water, plantations, and

buildings are incorporated in a specific geometrical pattern. Centrality, symmetry, rhythm, and square or rectangle geometry are the most prominent features of the Persian garden layout. Most of the contemporary parks in Iran, including the selected case study parks, comprise some Persian garden elements such as specific geometry, pavilions, and other cultural/functional buildings, water features, fountains, ponds, and special order in planting trees and placing paths.

Here, the water feature is considered an iconic cultural and historical element that makes the scene distinguishable and memorable (Jessel 2006). This symbolic role of water is a common language between the community to express their beliefs, culture, traditions, and selves. It is also more significant in countries with a dry climate. In addition, water in the landscape is often used as an indication of naturalness that describes the perceived closeness to a preconceived natural state (Ode et al. 2008). Environmental psychologists believe that naturalness is an important aspect of restorative environments that enhance recovery of mental energies and effectiveness (Ode et al. 2008; Hartig et al. 2003; Kaplan & Kaplan 1989). Furthermore, the water feature illustrated in photo No.3, which mostly represents English picturesque design, demonstrates that some of the Iranian participants were interested in the new form of water features and settings in Iran compared to those traditional ones, and found them very scenic.

These characters of the landscape create favourite places in Iran's urban park landscapes which inspire

Table 6: Most and least valued landscape photos in both case studies

		Ruffey Park	Iran's Parks
Landscape scenery and aesthetic values	**Most valued**	Picturesque sceneries, view, lake, and open space	Traditional water features and pathways, picturesque sceneries
	Least valued	Disordered, crowd, unnatural visual elements, dry scenes	Disordered, crowd, dark and dirty water, unnatural visual elements, dry scenes

aesthetic values for the respondents. They also afford restorative experiences that lead to emotion and self-regulation processes and develop place identity (see Figure 1). However, crowded spaces and lack of 'tidiness', 'orderliness', and 'natural elements' are aspects that create the least valued landscape scenes in terms of aesthetic and make them unfavourable.

Figure 1: Favourite aesthetic places in park landscapes

Place identity has also been conceptualised as 'the cognitive connection between the self and the physical environment'(Kyle et al. 2005). It is evident that Iranian respondents have made connections between their selves and the place physical identity. According to Proshansky, place identity is defined as 'those dimensions of self that define the individual's personal identity in relation to the physical environment by means of a complex pattern of conscious and unconscious ideals, beliefs, preferences, feelings, values, goals, and behavioural tendencies and skills relevant to this environment'(Proshansky 1978). From this perspective, physical settings provide an opportunity for individuals to express and affirm their identity (Kyle et al. 2005). This can be observable in electing icons of Iranian cultural landscape as favourite places in association with aesthetic values, which likewise demonstrates that aesthetic values are profoundly cultural(see Yazdani & Lozanovksa 2016).

It is significant to know which parameters affect immigrants' sense of place and how. In the case

of Iranian immigrants and Ruffey Park, analysis shows that the configuration of 'view', 'lake', and 'open space' derived from cultural notions (see Yazdani & Lozanovksa 2017) and English picturesque design concepts, affect Iranian immigrants' sense of aesthetic places. Although these concepts are not perceived consciously by the participants, the overall setting is considered pleasant and scenic. These characteristics play an important role in developing person-environment interactions and subsequently place identity.

The respondents see RuffeyPark landscape as unmodified natural landscape, despite the existence of numerous built facilities such as roads, walking tracks, and shelters, as well as its long history of human modification. These elements of the park have been under-perceived; and aesthetic aspects of the park are referred to the understanding of naturalness, pristine conditions, topography, and legibility (see Figure 1). Therefore, to answer the question 'are those spatial aesthetic values being attributed to Australian urban park spaces after migration?' It has been found that peacefulness and restoration are greatly felt in Ruffey Park landscape. These sentiments are evoked from the spatial aesthetic values of Ruffey Park. Spatial aesthetic values are strongly related to the existence of water and the perception of unmodified broad natural landscapes for most of the respondents, while the picturesque design purposes are rarely perceived. This can be due to the different climatology and a desire for wide natural spaces, or the design of urban parks in Iran which includes more man-made structures, buildings, and facilities which in some cases may reduce the sense of naturalness in parks. One of the respondents who migrated to Australia with his family in 2010 describes his feelings about Australian urban parks as follow:

> 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.

The surroundings of humans consist of physical, social, and cultural components that affect the lives of people and their attitudes towards the built environment, as well as their expectations of the designers. What landscape architects create is a 'potential environment' for human behaviour, and what people perceive and use is their 'effective environment'. Predicting what the effective environment of people will be is a crucial role for design professions when the built environment is configured in a particular pattern (Lang 1987). 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?

Research on physical attributes of the landscape demonstrated that preferences for wilderness and designed landscapes may differ significantly among various social groups (Kaplan & Kaplan 1989). In addition, research has shown that managed and designed landscapes are more often preferred by people who have anthropocentric values, while people with a more ecocentric value prefer wild landscapes (Dearden 1984; Buijs et al. 2009; Kaltenborn & Bjerke 2002).

The present study demonstrates that although Iranian immigrants may prefer using managed landscapes and utilitarian provisions of urban parks, they greatly acknowledge apparent natural characteristics of the park landscape which create favourite aesthetic scenes full of a sense of peacefulness and restoration. They also highly valued water as an important aspect in inspiring sense of aesthetic, which refers to the significant role of water in Iranian cultural landscape.

6 Conclusion

This study was an examination of behaviours, attitudes and preferences of Iranian immigrants with regards to the characteristics of urban parks in multi-ethnic settings. It took the research on urban parks as public spaces and highlighted cultural background as an important issue in both park design and use. It also examined how different characteristics of park landscapes embodied various landscape narratives and how these narratives might be seen through the eyes of newcomers. However, considering the fact that landscape is a multi-sensory field applying the Q technique and the use of photographs as a method in this research reduced understanding landscape to the visual and pictorial.

Water, paths, Persian garden icons and social activities have been found to be the prominent ideals of landscape in Iran's parks as they have aesthetic attributes and cultural and personal values. Water has a more symbolic than practical role in Iran urban parks, inherited from the Persian garden design. Persian garden layouts with significant and symbolic use of water, demonstrates both rationality and human intervention in nature, and the potential productivity of nature in producing plants, fruits, and flowers, especially in dry climates. Accordingly, Persian gardens tend to be highly 'formal' in a geometric design sense called *char-bagh* – gardens divided into four quadrants separated by two channels of water, and with a pool or a pavilion in the centre. This geometric design, which has influenced landscape design in Iran, contrasts strikingly with the naturalistic ideal of Australian park landscapes.

The western ecological movement to preserve untouched nature or to restore nature back to a golden age, when people had a more natural relationship with the earth (Petruccioli 2003), is almost impossible to detect in the design of Persian gardens. This is not because Iranians are not attracted by the proposals of the western ecological movement, but it is due to the dry climatology in Iran, apart from the northern provinces. The act of garden and park making in Iran is indeed recreating nature which, in most cases, is not untouched, but geometric and planned.

Analysis has demonstrated that the characteristics of Iran's parks inherited from the Persian garden design in the forms of water features, paths, and places of enclosure, are perceived as ordered modified landscapes, which result in a sense of restoration and pleasure. While, picturesque characteristics of Australian landscape have impacted upon landscape design which resulted in considering greater natural landscape than man-made structures, and more open space in Australian parks. Analysis has shown that this characteristic of park landscapes manifested in the forms of lake, view, and open space in Ruffey Park, perceived as unmodified natural landscape, highly peaceful and restored, and inspire aesthetic scenes. However, lack of past experience, relationship, and connection with the space have resulted in a sense of 'outsideness', which is also due to unfamiliarity with design references. Although aspects of the picturesque seem present in some contemporary Iranian park design, the scale and type of landscape elements are different in Australian parks.

Observations and data analysis also revealed that passive activities including 'festivities', 'being together', 'picnicking' and 'socialising' are the most preferred activities carried out by Iranian immigrants - which had been found to have cultural and historical roots (see Yazdani 2015). However, it is important to note that various forms of recreation are also undertaken by several groups of non-English immigrants, i.e. Iranian bushwalkers and nature explorers, in different kinds of Australian parks. Findings of this study demonstrate that Iranian immigrants highly admire the aesthetic aspects of Australian park landscapes and found them peaceful and restorative. However, they miss those recreational, social, and sporting activities they used to undertake when they were in Iran. This study draws attention to the different expectations of Australian urban park spaces in terms of usage, and the lack of familiarity with the landscape heritage and design references in these spaces by non-Anglo immigrants.

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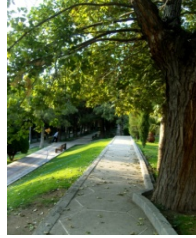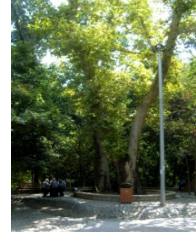
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Appendix Table 1: Factor Q-Sort Values for Each Statement, Iran Parks Case Study

Photograph	Statement		
	No.	Factor 1	Factor 2
	13th day of Norouz, in Mellat Park		
	1	-3	-1
	Open space in Laleh Park		
	2	0	1
	Bridge on the creek of Laleh Park		
	3	1	2
	Cypress trees along a pathway in Laleh Park		
	4	0	3
	A paved path in Jamshidieh Park		
	5	2	-2
	Gathering space with artificial lights in Sayee Park		
	6	0	1
	Fountains and water feature in Sayee Park		
	7	3	0
	Playground in Niavaran Park		
	8	-1	-1
	Top view of Sayee Park from the stairs		
	9	-1	-2
	An entrance in Niavaran Park		
	10	-1	-3
	A pathway with shady trees in Sayee Park		
	11	2	2
	Gathering space in Qeytarieh Park		
	12	-1	1

Photograph	Statement		

Stairs with running water in Niavaran Park		
13	0	0

Sport equipment in Niavaran Park		
16	-2	-1

A path crossed by the main axis in Niavaran Park		
14	1	0

Flowers in Qeytarieh Park		
17	1	-1

Pool in Niavaran Park		
15	-2	1

Flowerbeds and seats in Qeytarieh Park		
18	1	0

Appendix Table 2: Factor Q-Sort Values for Each Statement, Ruffey Park Case Study

Photograph	Statement		
	No.	Factor 1	Factor 2

Lake view		
1	2	1

Stairs		
4	-1	-2

Sunny track		
2	0	-1

Iranian cultural festival		
5	-2	-2

Shelter and picnic area		
3	-3	-1

Playground		
6	0	0

	Open space with a map sign		
	7	-1	0

	Curved path		
	8	1	-1

	Shelter and trees		
	9	-1	0

	Pathway with cypress trees		
	10	0	1

	Bicycle riding and walking in pathways		
	11	0	0

	Play area with tall trees		
	12	-1	-1

	Top view of the lake		
	13	3	3

	Lake with deck		
	14	2	2

	Curved path by the lake		
	15	1	1

	13th day of Norouz festival		
	16	-2	-3

	A top view of the park		
	17	1	2

	Old trees and a bench		
	18	1	1