The City of Melbourne is developing a series of strategies to address the serious impacts of climate change and to provide tactics for adaptation and the fashioning of a resilient urban environment. In particular, the City has advanced three key actions or design initiatives that focus on: Vegetation (Melbourne Urban Forest Strategy), Greening Buildings (Green Roofs Program and Canopy Forum), and Water Security: (Melbourne as Catchment, MCC WSUD Guidelines, and amendment C142).

Immersing ourselves in the living city and adopting a landscape architectural lens, this Design Studio Workshop intensive engages directly with these plans to investigate the agency of design strategies and tactics. Through interrogating policies, procedures, and local and global precedents and generating design propositions, the workshop aims to develop landscape driven methods for engaging with vulnerable cities impacted by global warming.

The ecology and economy of the city are inextricably linked — landscape is the connector. Consequently, sites for investigation infer intersections between program, space, and ecologies and reveal the layers, the material and immaterial forces that constitute the city, while also establishing an understanding of an interconnected sequence of movement and spatial and temporal relation throughout the City of Melbourne.

In this Design Studio workshop, teams will investigate, develop, and test the intersection of these initiatives. Responding to or indeed challenging the stated policies, the focus of the Studio Workshop is to develop through intensive design explorations, a range of visions and indeed design templates for potential emergent topographies for the City.

Perhaps as a consequence, the studio asks: Is this business as usual or the chance to change paradigm? That is, instead of an approach based on notions of ‘future proofing’ the developed city, does it suggest entirely new methods for adaptation and change?