



**IMMIGRANT
NETWORKS**

IMMIGRANT NETWORKS

MIGRANT CAMPS
SNOWY HYDRO
PORT KEMBLA STEELWORKS
WOOMERA
MELBOURNE SUBURBS

Exhibition Dates

Opening Discussant

Dr Michele Lobo, Deakin University, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Faculty of Arts.

Exhibition open

16th November 2022 to 10 February 2023

Venue

Museo Italiano CO.AS.IT
189 Faraday Street, Carlton VIC 3053



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COVER IMAGE

Construction of Snowy Mountains Hydro Electric Scheme - Head Office, Cooma North - snow scene, Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Authority, 1954. Image courtesy of the National Archives of Australia, NAA A11016, 5588.

BACK COVER IMAGE

Riste Andrievski, The Blood Veins (BHP Steelworks), Port Kembla 2021.

ISBN: 978-0-6456414-0-0

Foreword

My memories of Bathurst Migrant Camp in 1950 are hazy, as one would expect from a four-year-old. In relation to architecture I recall Nissan huts that were hot during the day and freezing at night and that blankets were rigged up to give an illusion of privacy for the refugee migrants gathered there awaiting processing. Bathurst Migrant Camp was a repurposed army camp and now, I believe not much remains of that particular built environment. My parents were lucky since due to family connections from earlier migrations their professional qualifications were recognised so that they could secure appropriate employment. We ended up in St. Albans on what was then the outskirts of Melbourne, an old working-class neighbourhood where the cheapness of the land rendered it a plausible site for these refugees who, in rebuilding their lives, erected houses as well as light industrial workshops and factories.

While the exhibition refers to Kaja Silverman's work of making history visible, what I would like to recall is the acoustic architecture of the camp—those many languages that formed a continuous background to our anxious dwelling. The exhibition comprises a number of significant sites of postwar migrant labour and the moving testimonies of those involved and this to some degree attests to the acoustic dimensions of other languages. For added impact I would recommend perusing the many examples of migrants writing about their experiences. While there are significant archives of oral history a further dimension of migrant experiences has been transmogrified into literature, film (e.g. Giorgio Mangiamele) and other artforms (e.g. Salvatore Zofrea). These precariously published writings comprised a constant stream from my own generation, who arrived young but began elsewhere in another language, and subsequent generations who were born in Australia.

In terms of a few examples relevant to the Exhibition, consider Rosa Cappiello's brilliant novel *Oh Lucky Country* (1984) with its devastating catalogue of the travails of female migrants or the challenging poetry and performances of the late great Ania Walwicz. Celebrating the conjunction of labour and industrialisation there is the unsettling photo-montage work of Peter Lyssiotis's *Industrial Woman* (1986 together with Jas Duke and Vivienne Mehes and others; a multilingual volume). There is also the epic work of Π. O. (Pi O) whose many volumes (*24 Hours*, 1996; *Fitzroy*, 2015) chronicling the life of inner-city migrant laborers are finally getting the recognition they deserve. In all these examples multilingual acoustics are an undercurrent but have not received the research attention they deserve in officially monolingual Australia. Paradoxically the recent and necessary attention given to the revival of Indigenous languages may finally bring attention to this acoustic industrial architecture. Migrant industry is at the heart of Australia's architecture in many forms, as this exhibition demonstrates.

Sneja Gunew
University of British Columbia, Canada

Introduction

Migration, industry and settlement were catalytic for modernisation in Australia after World War II, a period shaped by post-war reconstruction. Federal and corporate funding for major industries together with government policies for population growth enabled nation-building programs that shaped remote, rural and urban environments into modern industrial landscapes. Populations were drawn from war-destroyed nations, underdeveloped economies, and hostile political environments. Focussing on the architecture and landscapes of major but under-documented industrial sites and their complex social histories, this exhibition examines the intersection of the built environment and industrial growth, shifting attention to acknowledging the spatial and material dimensions of the immigrant legacy. It speaks directly to both anxieties and aspirations of new refugee and immigrant arrivals by uncovering the extent of the contribution made by war-displaced populations to national development in the past.

Immigration centres and industries that employed refugee and immigrant labour in the post war period can be thought of as nodes in an interdependent spatial and transnational labour network. The physical sites and projects featured in this exhibition convey this network, its nodal points and inter-cultural social interactions through a study of migrant camps (the examples of Benalla and Greta are explored), key industrial sites for hydro-electric power generation (Snowy), defence (Woomera) and raw-material production (BHP Steelworks, Port Kembla), independent small businesses and the associated industrial infrastructure and landscapes (trans-Asian suburbanisation in Melbourne). These are selected due to their significance in the history of immigration and Australian modernisation and capacity to convey their co-dependence, and the later dispersal of new immigrants into manufacturing and service industries at the metropolitan periphery.

This exhibition is founded on scholarly research, but involves processes of developing that work into creative and visual formats increasing its capacity to engage broader audiences, including immigrant and diaspora communities, the architecture and landscape professions, government and heritage authority representatives, multicultural program coordinators, and research interlocutors. This format of an exhibition, alternative to academic publication, reveals the primacy of the visual in architecture, and in our twenty-first century global flows of images. The visual is immediate and dominant, and therefore a powerful tool. There are major risks. Representation is at risk of omitting or romanticising transnational immigrant labour. Immigrant labour and industry has its own progressive modernising narratives that can marginalise complexities, dark histories, and leave many behind. And risks embedded in the social imaginary and contexts which make architectures and landscapes of migration visible but non-perceivable entities, deplete of discussion and access to larger symbolic narratives. Or in which such architectures are subjected to a hyper-visualisation exemplified as the 'very visible' mosque. The experience of exhibition is always inter-subjective and dependent on visitors' interests and ideological traditions. Each of us in the team has approached the task of exhibiting on – Immigration Camps, the Snowy Hydro, BHP Steelworks Port Kembla, Woomera, Suburban Immigrant industries - as an experimental (and modest) method that intertwines reason and the imagination, and opens a platform for an ethical recalibration of and within research, challenging research that is limited to objective methods. There has not to date been productive interest in this area of immigrants' role in industrial space – its architecture, landscape, and heritage - or its dual and simultaneous making of a modern and multicultural Australia.

To prepare for exhibition has meant not only the practical task of making our findings visible, but also, through a series of team workshops, to generate debate and discussion around visualisation as a problem/opportunity of what is made visible, and the method by which it is made visible, and therefore our possibility and limit of observational and documentation ambitions. In the preparation of the exhibits, each team member's focus on the visual has, as Kaja Silverman stated, prompted them to take on the task to look again (Kaja Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World*, 1996). To look again has a greater affinity with community collecting practices. To look at the research data and to listen can evolve as a pairing, dialectic and tension of text (words) and visual data/creative works, that aims to open dialogue and exchange, rather than make a conclusive knowledge. In this process, an exhibition also becomes a way to pay homage to the back breaking work of post-war immigrants and the many participants that took part in our project, directly as interviewees and workshop participants, and indirectly as those immigrant subjects and communities that have taken part in this field of immigrant industry networks.

We offer selective insights into the creation, running and heritage commemoration of immigrant contribution to - company towns, work camps, factories, - small businesses and the associated industrial infrastructure and landscapes using interdisciplinary approaches from architecture, urbanism, landscape, heritage and memory studies. We reveal how labour and domicile environments of refugees and immigrants shaped Australia internally, highlighting their interaction and competition with other groups. Examples are drawn from the populous southeastern states; recipients of the largest numbers of post-war refugees.

Our grateful thanks to Paolo Baracchi and Ferdinando Colarossi and the Co.As.It (Italian Assistance Association) in Melbourne for their collaboration and for hosting the exhibition.

The exhibition was made possible by the Australia Research Council Discovery Project DP190101531 (2019-2022), *Architecture and Industry: The migrant contribution to nation-building 1945-1979*, with an interdisciplinary team from The University of Melbourne, Deakin University, The University of Tasmania and The Australian National University.

Exhibition Team

Mirjana Lozanovska, Deakin University
David Beynon, The University of Tasmania
Anoma Pieris, The University of Melbourne
Andrew Saniga, The University of Melbourne
Alexandra Dellios, Australian National University

Research Assistants

Brian Duong, Jinyuan (Harry) Wu, Dhanika Kumaheri, Renee Miller-Yeaman, Yasmin Rousset, Simeon Chua, Alexandra Florea, Qiaochu Tang, Freya Su, Van Krisadawat.

We respectfully acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands across Australia featured in our exhibition and pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging. This includes: the Wonnarua people and the Taungurung people, traditional custodians of the Maitland region and the Benalla region respectively [Migrant Camps]; the Ngarigo people, the traditional owners of the Snowy-Monaro region [Snowy Hydro]; the Dharawal (also written as Tharawal) people, the traditional owners of the Port Kembla, Illawarra region [Port Kembla Steelworks]; the Kokatha people, the traditional owners of the land on which Woomera is located [Woomera]; the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong/Boon Warring peoples of the Kulin Nation [Melbourne Suburbs].

Migrant Camps

Alexandra Dellios

Networks of accommodation and labour

Understanding the network of Department of Immigration run centres that accommodated new arrivals is central to understanding post-war immigration and industrialisation in twentieth century Australia.

From 1949, Australia's newly-established Department of Immigration administered a network of 'Reception and Training Centres' and 'Holding Centres' that received, processed and assigned work to migrant arrivals (those who had no family or sponsors in Australia to accommodate them). Officers within the Department worked closely with the Department of Labour and National Service and the newly created Commonwealth Employment Service (CES). They arranged for arrivals to find work where they were most needed. This system of allocation and movement was closely monitored in the early years of the scheme; it required that migrants accept allocated jobs and report to their local employment office whenever they moved or changed jobs. Bonegilla, in north-eastern Victoria near Albury-Wodonga, was the largest camp, processing approximately 320 000 people. It has received the most attention.



Top Left

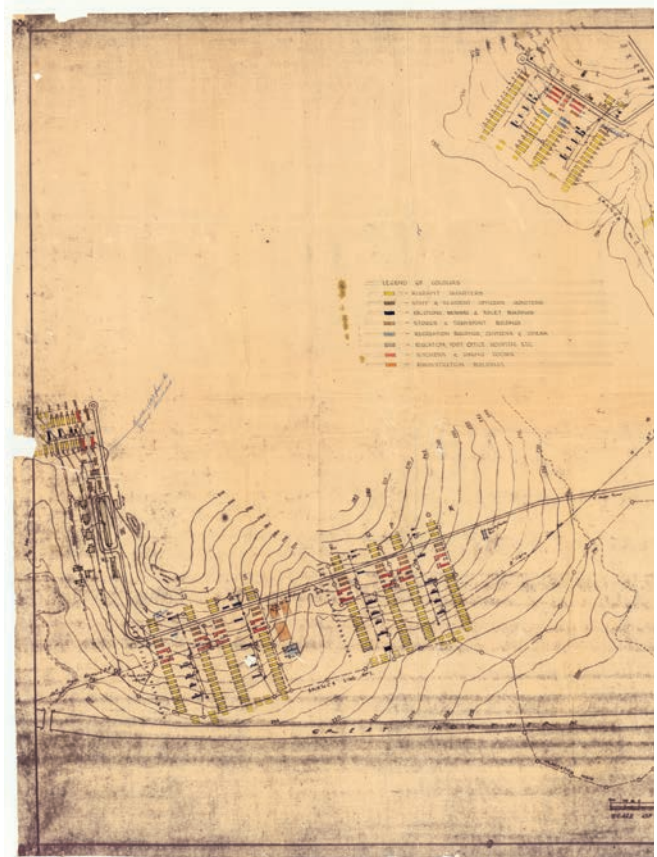
Workers leaving Burlington Mills, 1963, [Athel D'Ombra collection, Cultural Collections at University of Newcastle]

Bottom Left

Inside Burlington/Bradmill Industries Mill at Rutherford in the 1950s, weaving ribbons, Image courtesy of National Archives of Australia, B4498, 102E9

Right
Greta Camp Layout, Image courtesy of National Archives of Australia, A12872, 1949

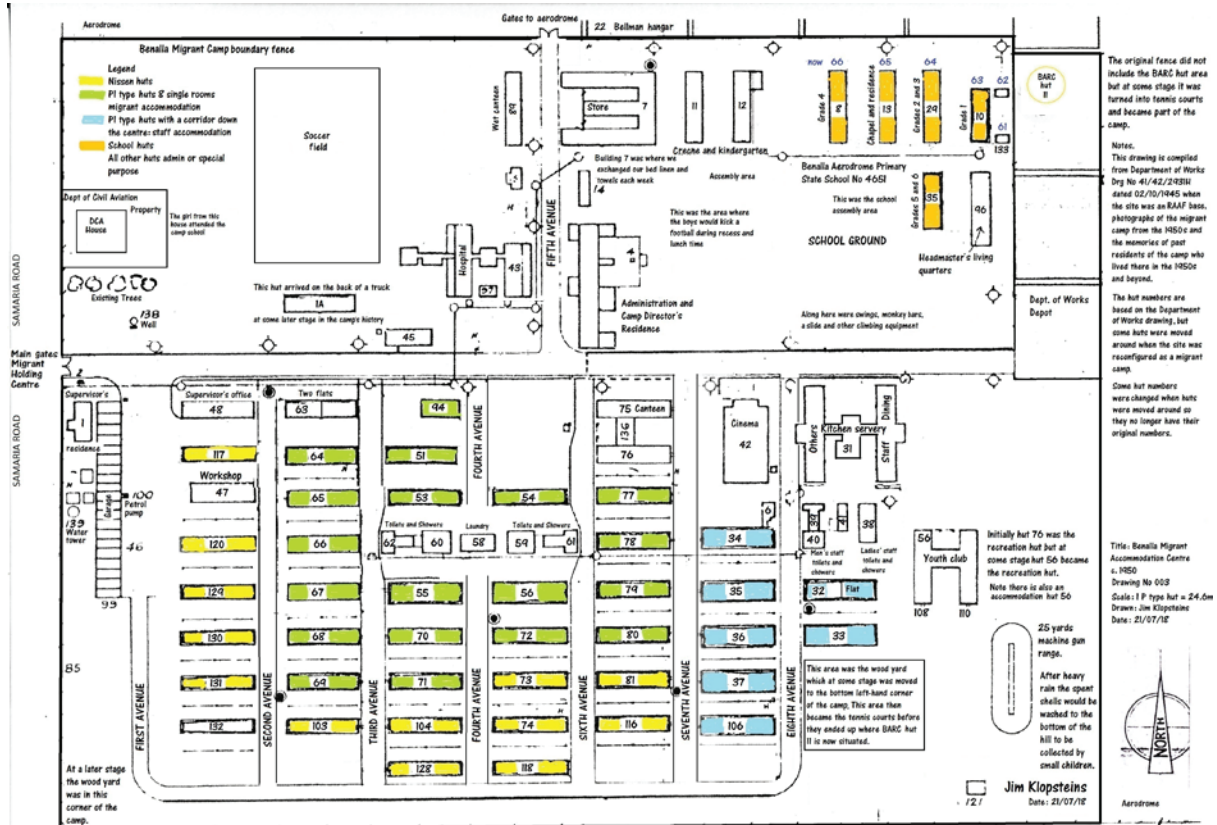
Greta and Benalla were two other Department of Immigration Centres. They were reappropriated Department of Defence training sites. Greta (in the Hunter Region of NSW) consisted of two centres. Greta's Nissen huts, the 'Silver City' portion of the camp, operated as a 'reception' centre during the peak years of immigration (1949-1954). Silver City was a transitory place that 'processed' and 'dispersed' migrant labour and offered short-term accommodation. Greta's wooden barracks, known as 'Chocolate City', housed the so-called dependents of 'breadwinners', workers allocated to industry. Some were sent as far as Queensland to cut cane, others worked closer by, in Newcastle or Wollongong steelworks, at State Rail, or on the Snowy Mountains Scheme. Greta's Silver and Chocolate cities accommodated over 170,000 Displaced Persons and assisted migrants from 1949 to 1961. They came from all over Europe, but especially Eastern and Southern Europe. Benalla (in north-eastern VIC) was a Holding Centre, and it was unique for accommodating primarily single working mothers and their children for long periods. Benalla accommodated approximately 60,000 from 1949 to 1967, and 500 or so lived in the camp for up to ten years. Greta and Benalla, and the network of other camps to which they were connected, are important places in the history of Australia's post-war immigration and industry boom. The family stories of the people who appear in this exhibition often contain periods of time in many camps, beginning sometimes with Bongeilla (or Northam in WA), and progressing on, depending on work availability, to places like Benalla, Greta, Parkes, Cowra or Scheyville.



Voy Ilic recalls climbing Mount Molly Morgan near Greta many times, raiding the Army rifle range behind it and looking for .303 calibre brass shell casings; he dug up spent bullets from the earthen mounds:

"I would assemble the bullets into their shell casings, polish up the brass and copper and the end result was a collector's item to trade among the boys."

Cited in Alek Schulha's *Beneath the Shadows*, 106).



Above
 Jim Klopsteins' 2018 map of Benalla Migrant Camp drawn from memory

Far Left
 Women outside the Latoof and Callih factory in Benalla in the 1954 (Benalla Migrant Camp Exhibition)

Left
 Courtyard of Latoof and Callih, 1954 (Benalla Migrant Camp Exhibition)

Why were so many unsupported mothers and children accommodated at Benalla for so long?

- Single women had to work to satisfy their conditions of entry to Australia (married women with children were exempt)
- Childcare responsibilities made it difficult for them to work and save up enough money to escape the camp system
- Eventually, Benalla offered child-care and primary schooling on site (it was one of the first camps to establish a creche for very young children, enabling women to work)
- Both the Federal and Victorian Government promoted the decentralisation of industry; the CES directed migrant labour to factories set up in regional locations in the early years of the immigration scheme.
- Benalla town had 2 factories established in the post-war era, which took advantage of nearby migrant labour. Latooof and Calill clothing and Renold's Chains. Women living at the Benalla Migrant camp could work in the factories and have their young children minded in the camp child-care facility or primary school. Many women were also employed in the camp itself, in the kitchens or as cleaners or orderlies. Older children went to high school within Benalla town.

Right
T.H.E Heyes, Secretary of the Department of Immigration to the Director of Employment, detailing projected movement of dependents in prescribed Holding Centres across the country, 11 May 1949 (Image courtesy of National Archives of Australia, NAA B550, 1949/23/3432)

Left
Unsupported women residing in centres, July 1955, penned by Hazel Dobson, Department of Immigration Social Worker (Image courtesy of National Archives of Australia, NAA A437 1950/6/173)

July 1955

UNSUPPORTED WOMEN RESIDING IN CENTRES

Centre	Deserted		Separated		Unmarried		Total
	Wives	Girls	Wives	Girls	Mothers	Daughters	
Bonagilla	2			2			4
Benalla	6	13	4	38	15	4	80
Somers	7			1		1	9
Greta		4	6	24	5		39
Scheyville		2	2	7			11
Cowra	1			8			9
Wacol		2	2				4
Widals	1			3			4
Woodside	1	1		11		2	15
	18	22	14	96	20	7	175

Total no. of children of above women - 319

Jan 1950 - 278 widows & unmarried mothers in centres (with 1477 children)

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA,
LR
DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION,
CANBERRA, A.C.T.
11th May, 1949.

The Director of Employment,
Warwick Building,
15 Hamilton Street,
SYDNEY, N.S.W.

ALLOCATION OF DEPENDANTS OF DISPLACED PERSONS
HEADWINNERS TO HOLDING CENTRE ACCOMMODATION.

Within the very near future it is anticipated that a large proportion of our Holding Centre accommodation programme will be realised. So that orderly allocation of dependants to these Holding Centres from the two major processing centres might be achieved, it is proposed to feed dependants from Bathurst and Bonagilla into specified Holding Centres.

2. The holding establishments which will be in operation when the programme is fully realised and their capacities are :-

New South Wales	Victoria	Queensland
Cowra 2000	Somers 1000	Wacol 600
Urquinty 1000	Benalla 800	Enoggera 500
Parkees 1200	West Sale 500	Cairns 200
Greta No.1 1500	Rushworth 1000	Stuart 500
Greta No.2 2800		
Scheyville 1000		
Total 9200	Total 5000	Total 1800

NOTE: Mildura University may be available at end of 1949 - capacity 1000.

South Australia	West Australia
Woodside 1000	Northam 1000
	Cunderden 500
(Total capacity Woodside 2000 part of which required for Reception and Training facilities)	Total 1500

5. The intake into Bathurst and Bonagilla, when the latter is fully operating by the end of May, will be approximately in the proportions 5 to Bathurst and 5 to Bonagilla. To equate the smaller holding capacity in Victoria to the larger processing facilities in that State, it is necessary to incorporate in Bonagilla's zone of dispersal, certain Holding Centres situated in other States. Assuming a constant proportion of dependants through all centres it is proposed to allocate Holding Centre accommodation as follows:-

Reception and Training Centre.	Holding Centre to receive dependants.
Bathurst, N.S.W.	Parkees, Greta No.1 & 2 and Scheyville.
Bonagilla, Vic.	Urquinty & Cowra, N.S.W.; Somers, Benalla, West Sale, Rushworth and Widals (when available end of 1949), Victoria; Wacol, Enoggera, Cairns and Stuart, Queensland.

J.
no march



Family Life in Greta

If the migrant family consisted of a male ‘breadwinner’, temporary family separation under the terms of the two-year work contract with the Commonwealth was almost inevitable from 1949 to 1952. People found ways around this—through weekly or monthly visits, or requests for new job placements or accommodation.

Adults also took on extra work—in addition to their allocated employment in industry. They aspired to escape from the communal showers, the poor heating and cooling, and the lack of privacy. But we should also consider the possibility that some families preferred the communal environment of the camp, shielded as it was from the xenophobia of mainstream Anglo-Australian society. A range of factors kept some families living in camps for years.

Elizabeth Matt (nee Lodo), remembering the foods, smells and personalities of Greta, cited in Schulha’s *Beneath the Shadow of Mt Molly Morgan*

“[Zenon] He would set up his van outside the main gates and sell residents items like veal, pork mince, continental sausages, kielbasa, brawn [?], pork trotters and brown bread. At the same time the women would put in their orders for the following Saturday. As a result of the influx of ‘migrant food’, the smells wafter over the camp as borscht (Russian soup), goulash, gowompky (cabbage rolls), luski (noodles) and pierogi (Polish dumplings) were cooked on primus burners in nearly every barrack.”



Top

Zenon Kmak and his van, seen here building his house, with the van he used to sell smallgoods at Greta Migrant Camp in the background (Courtesy of Alek Schulha).

Bottom

Friends outside their hut in Greta’s Chocolate City (L-R) Alex Stajkowski, his wife Christine holding baby George with daughter Christine and son Alex in front, and Mrs Eliza Musialik with husband and son John in front, baby’s name unknown. (Courtesy of: Newcastle Libraries, Hunter Photobank, File ID: MA3)

Family Life in Benalla

Jim Klopsteins was born in a refugee camp in Germany after the war. At the age of 2, in 1950, he migrated to Australia with his mother Emma (38, born in Latvia), and brother Harijs (12) under the auspices of the International Refugee Organisation. After passing through Northam, the family eventually found their way to Benalla, where Jim lived from the age of five to seventeen. He moved out in 1965, when he got a job in Melbourne. He explains his mother's situation, and why she stayed in the camp so long: *"This goes back to the factory fodder stuff. The thing is, she worked at the clothing factory. It was slave labour. The pay was terrible'. Single women couldn't get out of the camp. I think there was a pound of spending money left after you paid accommodation... They got paid a pittance. As soon as my brother got a job he moved out of the camp, as soon as I got a job... I'd moved to Melbourne. She stayed there till '67. It was a trap."*

In contrast to his mother, Jim reflects with ease on his childhood in the camp: *"I just spent my time wandering around. The camp was a safe place, but I used to wander, on my own as a young kid... It wasn't bad. There was 40 or 50 kids in the camp, and we amused ourselves."*

[Citation: Oral History, 22 October 2016]

Top
Camp kids', teenagers together at Benalla Migrant Camp, early 1960s; Jim is the tallest, in the centre (courtesy of Jim Klopsteins)

Bottom
Children playing in between the huts of Benalla (Courtesy of: Benalla Migrant Camp Exhibition, sourced from Chaszczewski family photos)





Migrant Camps as Heritage Places Today

Since the 1980s, post-WWII migrant communities, especially the children of adult migrants and displaced persons, have rallied to commemorate their places of reception and temporary accommodation. Bonegilla, the largest and the best preserved, has received the most public and official attention as a remembrance place to celebrate the post-war influx of European migrants. Other sites have received less attention, even though they were part of a network that supported post-war industrialisation.

Benalla

Community groups have invested their time and money to save their migrant heritage places from demolition or misappropriation. The Benalla Migrant Camp Inc, a coalition of former 'camp kids' who grew up in Benalla camp, led by local Sabine Smyth, successfully saved the remaining huts from demolition by securing listing on the Victorian Heritage Register in 2016. However, they have struggled to maintain a funding source for repairs and heritage interpretation efforts, and local council have shown little interest in preserving the huts. Nonetheless, Benalla Migrant Camp Exhibition continue to run well-attended reunion events and host a dynamic web presence with a burgeoning digital storytelling component. Testimony from former Benalla camp kids stress the strength and perseverance of single working migrant mothers in an assimilatory and often xenophobia post-war Australia.

Top Left

Benalla's 50th Anniversary Reunion, marking 50 years since its closure, held in Aviation Museum Hangar, Benalla Airport, November 2017.

Top Right

Commemorative plaques to the Military and Migrant Camps erected on-site at Greta in 2021.

Bottom Left

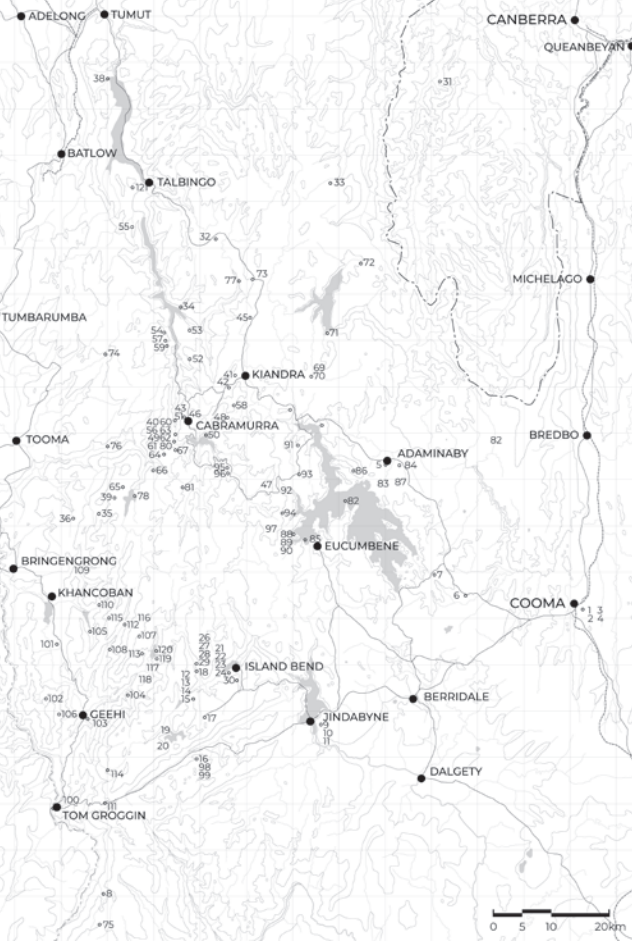
Tourist signs going up near site of former Benalla Migrant Camp, by Benalla Migrant Camp Inc. November 2021.

Bottom Right

The only on-site physical remnants of Greta Migrant Camp, 2015.

Greta

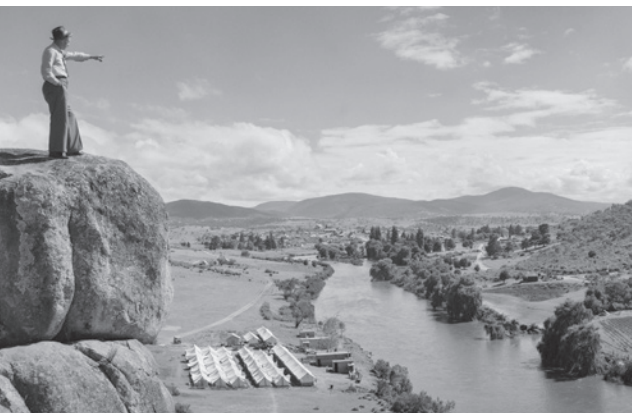
Alternatively, Greta has no on-site remains, with the exception of a few roads and some old footings from former buildings. The site has been privately owned since the 1980s and inaccessible to the public. Some structures from the original camp have been moved and re-appropriated for other uses across the Hunter region. Nonetheless, reunions have been held near the original site of Greta since the 1980s, and there have been a few publications on the history of Greta as both a migrant and military place. A small monument was erected near the original entrance to the camp in 2021, with funds from local council (Greta Tidy Towns and Cessnock Council). In 2020, Alek Schulha published *Beneath the Shadows of Mount Molly Morgan*, containing the images and personal accounts of hundreds of former migrant residents of Greta, a "warts and all" account. The overwhelming response has prompted him to continue collecting stories, and a second volume is underway.



Snowy Hydro

Anoma Pieris

Feted as one of Australia's great engineering achievements, the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme was a frontier for technological advancement, transnational expertise and migrant labour from 1949-74. The scheme, shared by New South Wales and Victoria, diverted twelve major rivers and seventy-one creeks, establishing a network of 16 dams, 8 power or pressure stations, and 12 trans-mountain tunnels spread across more than 1.2 million acres of mountainous territory. Intervention at an industrial scale permanently altered the riparian alpine landscape, home to the Krowun-tunkoolong of East Gippsland, the Bidawal of far East Gippsland, and the Ngarigo of the Monaro plains, who had been displaced by pastoralists during the previous century. The scheme employed tens of thousands of post war immigrant workers from thirty different countries, alongside Australian and foreign experts. The large numbers of non-Anglophone European migrants and Displaced Persons that sought employment on the Snowy—estimated to be a total of 60,000 of the 100,000 employed over the lifetime of the scheme—were human trail blazers marking a change in Australian labour policy when non-Anglophone labour-migrants became central to the industrial transformation and growth of the nation.



Top Left

Snowy Towns and Work Camps. Drawn by Brian Duong based on Brad Collis, *Snowy: The Making of Modern Australia* (Melbourne: Coretext, 2015), 97, overlaid on State Library of NSW: General map of the Snowy Mountains area, Maps 1165.

Bottom Left

Scenic Jindabyne and the valley of the Snowy River, camp in foreground. National Archives of Australia, NAA: A11016, 19

Facing Page

The remains of the original township of Adaminaby, inundated and relocated during the 1950s when the Eucumbene River was dammed to form Lake Eucumbene, the largest reservoir in the Snowy River Hydro-Electric Scheme. Anoma Pieris [AP] 2015.





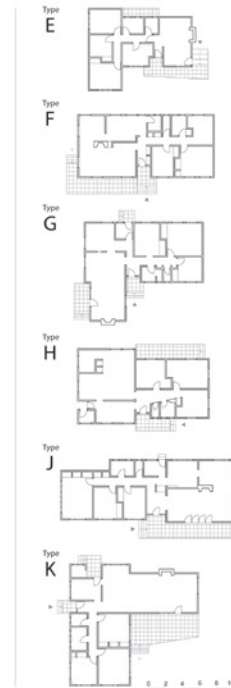
Company Town

Aspects of the vast architectural infrastructure that supported the scheme involved creating new towns and expanding older townships such as Cooma (the Scheme's headquarters), Cabramurra and Khancoban, and the inundation and relocation of Adaminaby, Jindabyne and Talbingo. Cooma North, the Snowy Mountains Authority (SMA) company town was the scheme's administrative nerve centre connecting the work townships of Island Bend, Cabramurra, Eucumbene, Jindabyne, Geehi, and Khancoban and the prefabrication workshops at Cooma and Jindabyne. An interconnected and temporary network of 121 investigative camps, construction camps, and town camps erected with the commencement of each phase of the project saw parallel increases in the town's population which swelled with the arrival of Australian and international administrators, engineers, and workers and greatly diminished in the 1970s with the closure of the scheme.

Right
Cooma North Housing based. Drawn by Bryan Duong based on National Library of Australia, NLA: SMHEA map G9871.N33, 1952, and Google Earth and other sources.

Above
A children's play ground at workers' camp on project. Photo: Australian News and Information Bureau photographer W. Pedersen. NAA: A1200, L49693.





Top Left
Cooma Housing. NAA: A11016, 591

Bottom Left
Cooma Housing. Photos: AP

Top Right
House Plans. Drawn by Dhanika
Kumaheri. Courtesy Patrick Swain

Cooma Housing

Cooma North's housing characterised the Snowy Scheme's transience accumulating 700 demountable or prefabricated, two- or three-bedroom timber cottages for families, single-person canvas tents, twenty-man timber barracks, and eight-by-eight-feet SMA-designed timber snow huts with flat roofs of corrugated iron. Because the Snowy Scheme was populated through a selective recruitment process in Europe and Britain and its employees ranged from highly trained to skilled and unskilled workers, work assignments determined the social hierarchy. Cooma North, home of staff officers, and Cooma East, for subordinates, were divided by a railway track. "Aussies" were separated from "Wogs."

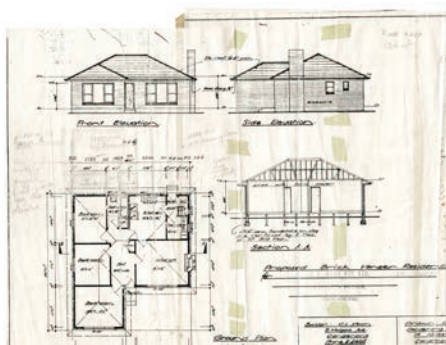
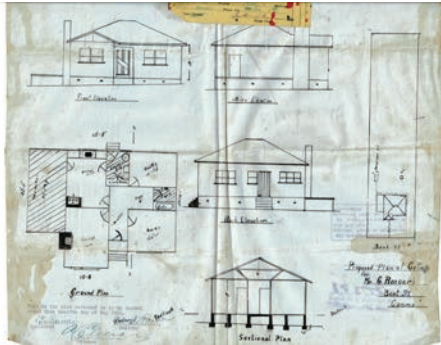


The Giuseppe (Joe) Roncari Odyssey

Life stories of individual immigrants weaving through the scheme's work camps and townships help us humanise the overwhelming anonymity imposed by the massive infrastructure and modular accommodation that typifies industrial projects of this scale. Giuseppe Roncari left his natal town of Cerro Veronese for the Italian army in 1941, serving in an anti-aircraft battalion, which was defeated by British and Australian forces at Elbeida, Libya. He was captured and transported to the Bangalore, No. 1 group of Prisoner of War camps. Leaving Bombay for Australia on the troop ship *Mariposa* in 1944 he was diverted through Cowra to the St Ives Control Centre and employed in a government farm.

After the war, following repatriation, the plentiful diet of lamb enticed Giuseppe (Joe) Roncari back to Australia in 1949, to Wee Warrah, a two-roomed cottage on the Warrah station, later bringing his wife Angelina over, as the station cook.

Recruited for the Snowy Scheme in 1954, Joe Roncari retrained in smithery and was appointed to chiselling the massive tunnel drill-heads, working first at a tented camp at Guthega and then at Jindabyne. He built his first, weatherboard, double-fronted home at 22 Bent Street in Cooma South, embellishing his front lawn with a circular Italian-style fountain with a gargoyle head, designed by his friend Angelo Rosetti. Once the Snowy scheme approached completion in 1963, he and eight other naturalized Italian families migrated interstate to Victoria and settled in Dandenong, an outer suburb abutting farmlands with several farm equipment manufactories. There, Joe Roncari commissioned his second, weatherboard, cream brick-veneer, double-fronted builder-home at 5 Belmont Avenue in a cookie-cutter working-class suburb.



Previous page

Left
Giuseppe Roncari's overseas journeys.
Drawn by Yoke Lin Wong

Right
Joe Roncari's journeys within Australia.
Drawn by Yoke Lin Wong

Top left to right
Giuseppe Roncari's family home in Cerro Veronese
A poster appealing for the safe return of the two Roncari brothers taken prisoner during World War II
Joe Roncari and Angelina (Angela) at Wee Warrah

Bottom left to right
The Roncaris' Home at 22 Bent Street Cooma
The Roncaris' Home at 5 Belmont Avenue Dandenong
The Roncari family during the 1960s (left to right): (back row) Ronald, Alexander (Sandro), Tosca; (front row) Angelina (Angela), Joe and Frank

Italians To Build For C'wealth

Canberra. — An Italian firm— S. A. Legnami Pasotti —has been given the contract to build most of the administrative village at Cooma for the Snowy River scheme.

This will mean the early transfer of the headquarters of the scheme from Sydney to Cooma.

The Minister for National Development (Mr. Casey) said that the firm had undertaken to finish the work within 12 months. It would bring out all buildings and cottages complete and would provide a staff of skilled workers.

The headquarters building for the Snowy Mountains Authority, 100 cottages and a hostel for 224 were in the contract.

Mr. Casey said that the first power from the scheme should be available in four years.

National Library of Australia

Internationalisation

Many Australian and international contractors built cottages and barracks, employing timber construction and testing prefabricated components. The Italian firm Legnami Pasotti Societa per Azioni and the Dutch firm Civil and Civic, both, built parts of the magnificent 51,000 square foot, three-story, Snowy Scheme head office complex [cover image]. Pasotti built a prototypical section at their factory in Brescia, shipping prefabricated timber components and materials and brought 300 Italian builders to Cooma under engineer G. Ciotti. The firm also constructed a 224-person hostel, a staff dining hall, and a further 132 cottages in Cooma North.

The Snowy Scheme is celebrated as the birthplace of Australian multiculturalism. This exhibit suggests that for non-Anglophone labour migrants employed on the scheme, industrial systems, cosmopolitan networks and transient facilities supported their social heterogeneity. They were able to resist cultural absorption and subordination to Anglophone values. But the closure of phases of the scheme and dismantling of temporary architectures saw the dispersal and absorption of Snowy workers into other Australian towns and cities. A sense of collective distinctiveness through cultural identification proved harder to sustain. The Snowy's heroic infrastructure now reinvigorated with the second phase of the scheme has in the most part overshadowed these material and experiential adjacencies and confluences that conditioned migrant belonging.

Above

News item: Barrier Miner (Broken Hill, NSW : 1888 - 1954), Thursday 21 December 1950, page 6, National Library of Australia

Right

SMA Base Workshops, Polo Flat, Cooma. Photo: AP

Facing Page

Cooma, Festival of the Snows, October 11-19, 1958. Cooma International Club float moves along a Cooma Street during the grand procession. Photo: Don Edwards. NAA: A12111, 1/1958/17/13





BANK OF
NEW SOUTH WALES
ESTABLISHED 1867

CHEMIST

MENSWEAR

MURPHY'S

NEW ZEALAND

NORWAY

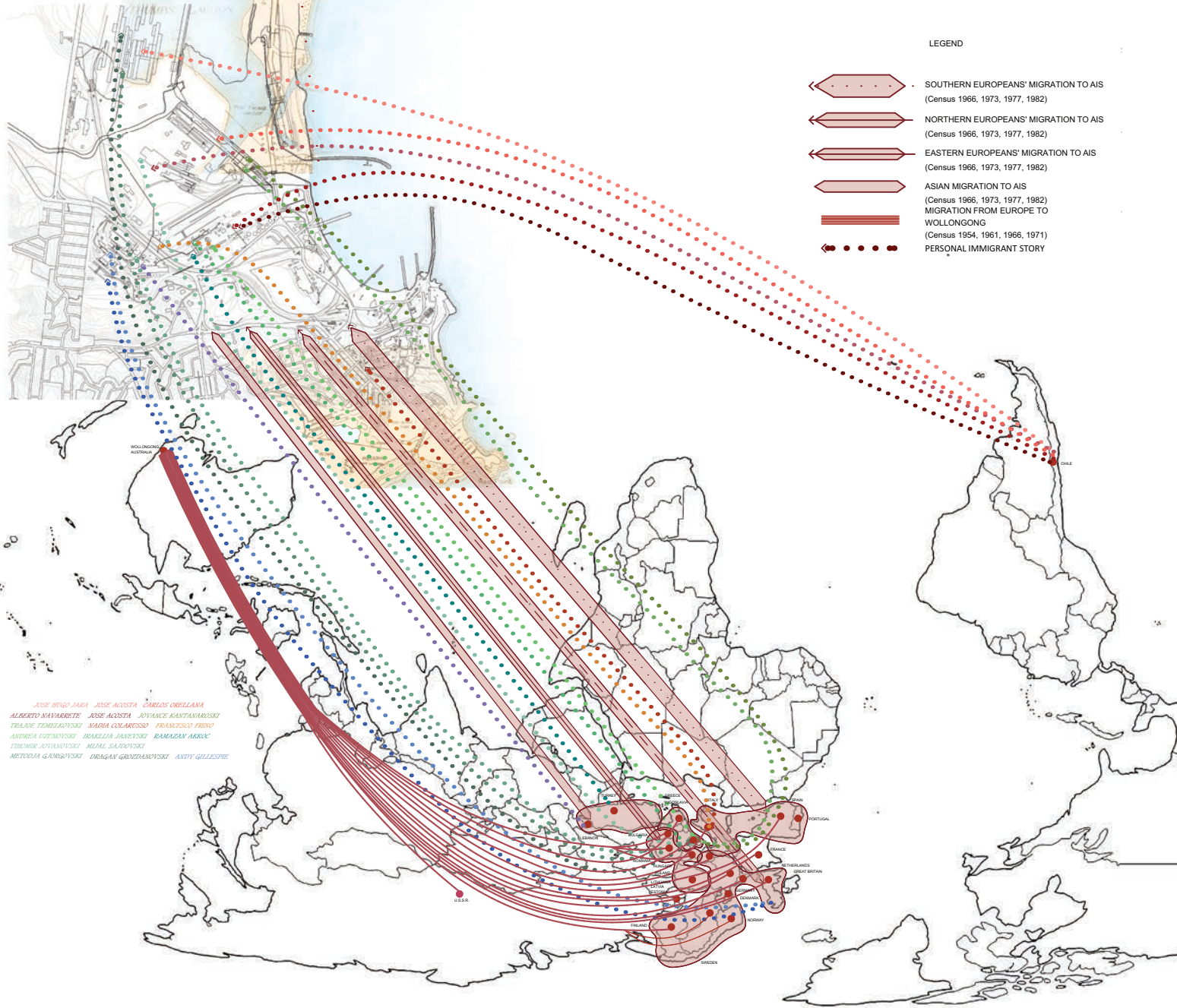
SWEDEN

HUNGARY







SWITZERLAND

INTERNATIONAL GUILD OF WOMEN

HOUSE TO CWA & BABY HEALTH CENTRE



LEGEND

- 
 SOUTHERN EUROPEANS' MIGRATION TO AIS
 (Census 1966, 1973, 1977, 1982)
- 
 NORTHERN EUROPEANS' MIGRATION TO AIS
 (Census 1966, 1973, 1977, 1982)
- 
 EASTERN EUROPEANS' MIGRATION TO AIS
 (Census 1966, 1973, 1977, 1982)
- 
 ASIAN MIGRATION TO AIS
 (Census 1966, 1973, 1977, 1982)
- 
 MIGRATION FROM EUROPE TO WOLLONGONG
 (Census 1954, 1961, 1966, 1971)
- 
 PERSONAL IMMIGRANT STORY

JOSE DIEGO JARA JOSE ACOSTA CARLOS ORIELLAYA
ALBERTO MAVARRBETE JOSE ACOSTA JOVIANCI KAVYANARUKSI
TIBORC FEMELZOVSKI WALTER COLARESSI FRANCESCO PIRRO
ANDREA UZENEVSKI DRAGLJA JANEVSKI RAMAZAN AKROK
TIHOMIR JOVANSKI MILAL SAJDOVSKI
METODJA GAVRKOVSKI DRAGAN GROZDANOVSKI ANDY GILLESPIE

Port Kembla Steelworks

Mirjana Lozanovska

Spaces of Labour

Port Kembla is a suburb of the town of Wollongong, located on the scenic Illawarra eastern coastline of Australia, 80 kilometers south of Sydney. In 1956, post-war labor migrants made up 41% of the workforce at the Broken Hill Propriety Limited (BHP) Steelworks industry in Port Kembla, Australia. By 1959 the BHP Steelworks at Port Kembla had three new blast furnaces (four in total), a new hot strip mill, and iron-ore sintering plant; and the size of the workforce had grown to 22,884. Coal mining cemented Port Kembla's identity as one of Australia's heavy industrial sites in the early twentieth century, but in 1947, an era of new manufacturing industry was built on migrant industrial labor. Studies in migration and architecture focus on expressions of ethnicity and how immigrants shape Australian suburbs and streets, with emphasis on major cities. In this work, research tools, methods and perspectives are extended to apprehend the industrial town and landscape by examining the role of transnational migrants of non-Anglophone backgrounds in the post-war national economic growth and production of BHP Steelworks of Port Kembla.

Architectural fieldwork which focused on understanding and documenting the physical character and textures of the industrial environment and ethnographic methods added a new dimension to historical and archival research and documentation. In order to gain a record of the worker's experience of the spaces, interviews were conducted, including 14 individual interviews, and two group workshops. These were followed by a tour with 20 participants of the BHP Steelworks and Wentworth Street (the main street) in Port Kembla. The aim of the tour was to acknowledge collectively the immigrants' contribution and to offer an alternative vantage point (raised on a bus) from which to view their relation to the steelworks, one from which they can speak.

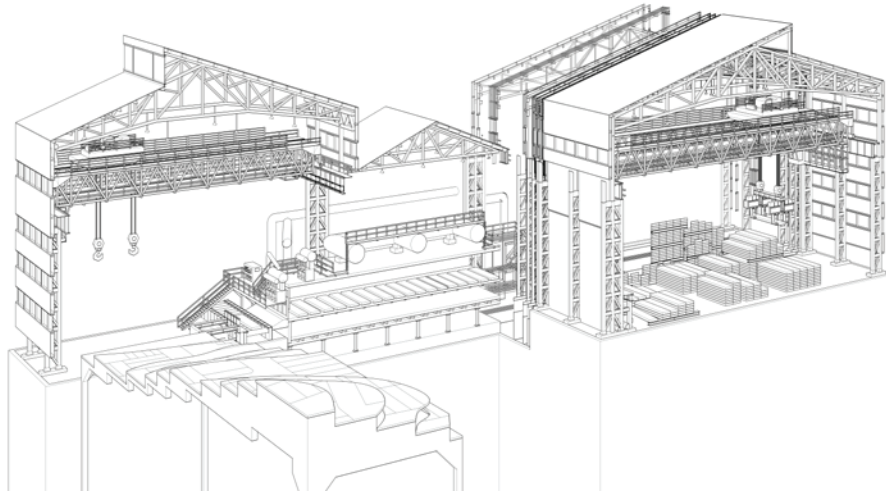
Left

Transnational Spaces of Labour : Map of International Migration and BHP Steelworks, Port Kembla

- Lines of 'mass migration' to Wollongong, Australia as result of post WWII war campaign (1945-1979)
- Lines of southern European migrant labour to BHP (AI & S), Port Kembla (1945-1979)
- Lines of participants in BHP Port Kembla (data from interviews, workshops, tour 2020-2021)

Map conceptualized by Mirjana Lozanovska, execution by Alexandra Florea (with assistance from Qiaochu Tang)

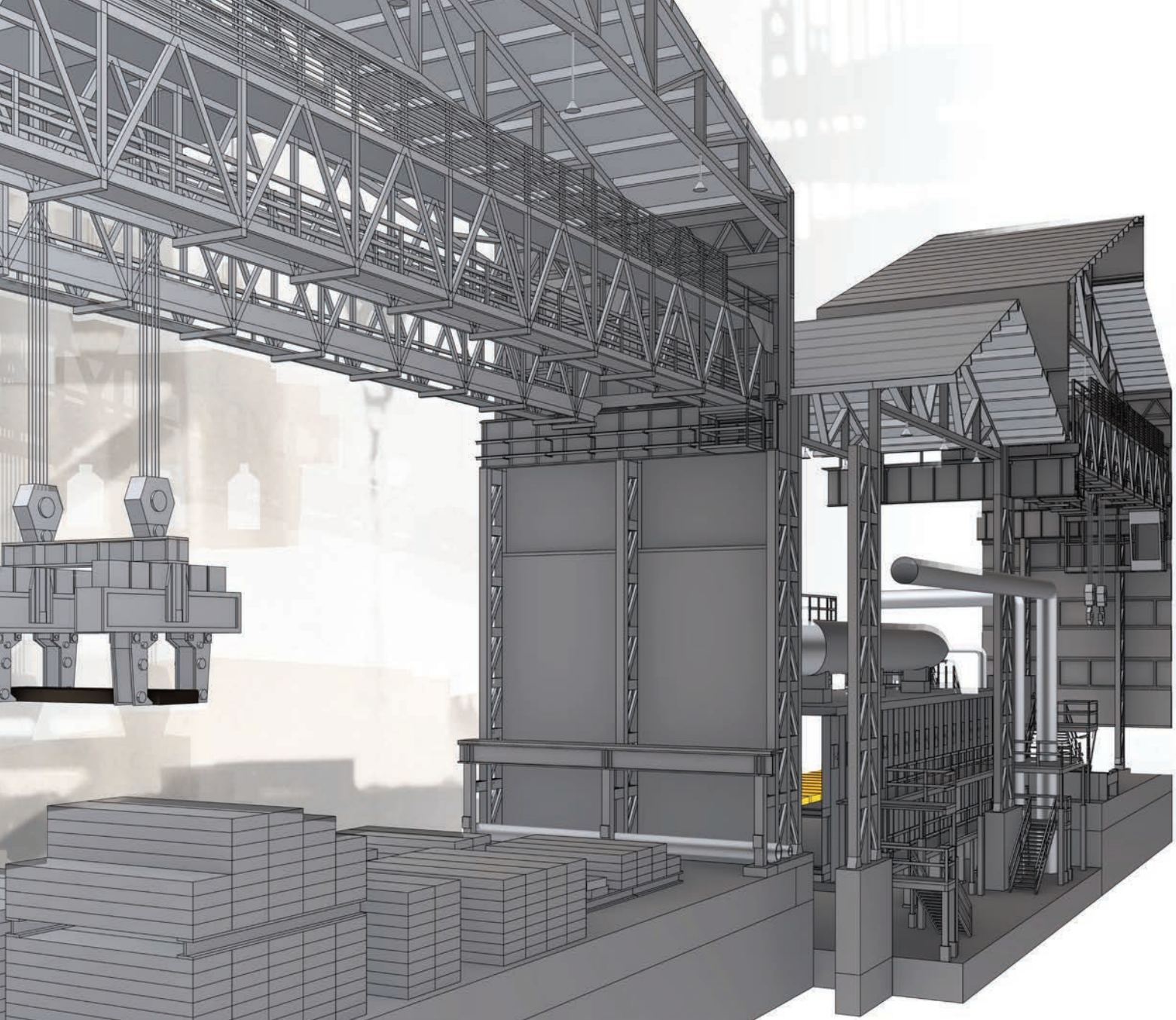




The approach to this exhibition evolves from a conceptualization of industry + architecture, or industrial architecture, as spaces of labour. There is an unsurprising lack of architectural histories on industrial buildings with a reference only to a few prominent examples, the AEG Turbine Factory (1908) by Peter Behrens and the Fagus Factory (1911) by Gropius and A. Meyer, noted for the contrast of their monumental exterior with their systematic and structural order of the interior. The approach here situated in what might be called a 'gap' but is more precisely a web of effect and affect between the industrial buildings as 'things' (structural, material, functional) and their other significant role both as spaces in which people work and labour, and in their role in the metanarratives of the economy and the nation. The site, architecture, and landscape of BHP Steelworks in Port Kembla is entangled with such narratives of progressive modernism and simultaneously raises additional forces – national economies and politics - and additional conditions – lives that are made or unmade. There are numerous studies about BHP Steelworks as a corporation, its production and international expansion, as well as its corporate infrastructure of industrialists

(not least publications by BHP), and these are essentially linked to Australian nation-building. Studies about coalmining, historical as well as the trials and tribulations of coalminers has also entered the Australian national imaginary. Australia's mass immigration campaign in the post-war period of 1945-1979, following four decades of the White Australia Policy, however, transforms the place of BHP Steelworks Port Kembla into a distinct space of transnational labour and non-Anglo-Celtic trans-culturalism. It is this double lens of 'otherness' – labour and migration – through which the industrial architecture and landscape of BHP Steelworks in Port Kembla is explored.

Above and Right
 Model section of BHP Steelworks, Port Kembla:
 Hot Strip Mill + Slab Yard, with model of section of
 Cringila, the suburb where many immigrant workers
 lived in the period 1945-1979. Model conceptual-
 ized by Mirjana Lozanovska, digital and physical
 execution by Qiaochu Tang (with advice Julie Pham,
 and research assistance, Alexandra Florea).



Visual representation of the Port Kembla BHP Steelworks is dominated by distant and aerial photographs that celebrate the vast scale of the complex and the speed of its growth and expansion. It is difficult to comprehend the scale – it is not a building, it is not an urban plan, it is not a landscape design – a problem that is compounded by a lack of access to the plans or documentation of its structures (which remain inaccessible due to corporate privacy). The vocabulary of an industrial complex is thus not easily deciphered by a vocabulary we conventionally deploy for architecture.

We wanted to gain a closer look of the complex as spaces of labour that were effective in the period 1945-1979. The model thus cuts out the vastness of its geographic scale and tries to direct our attention to the interior. The interior zooms in to one section (miniscule relative to the its totality) and zooms to its structure and the operational tools, and within it hundreds of workers would be physically facilitating the machinery. , We hope this interior space resonates with an echo of the descriptions and the workers' experience of – the Coke Ovens, the Sinter Plant, the Blast Furnace, the Hot Strip Mills – in the words of past BHP workers.

Right
(B & W) Mark Strizić (b. 1928 Berlin – 2012) BHP Steel Mill, Port Kembla, 1959 (gelatin silver print, 35.7x24.8) Courtesy of Monash Art Gallery, with special appreciation to Helen Boer, Copyright The Estate of Mark Strizić.

Next page
(colour) Riste Andrievski, Crane Work Station (BHP Steelworks), Port Kembla 2021. Riste Andrievski is an artist and photographer who grew up in Cringila looking upon the steelworks as a monumental image of industry, and a hellish subterranean environment that his father, and many of the community he knew, experienced daily. Riste Andrievski participated in the BHP Steelworks tour in 2021, where he took these photographs. Courtesy of Andrievski.





Ми се плачи. I want to cry. И плачам, кога ќе се сеќавам, и плачам. дури сега. озбилно ти велам – од жешки работи, од тешки работи, од тежина, од прашина, сее. Од трчај, буфтај, џабе. И тоа е. (Sisoja Poposki)



Courtesy Tode Shafkulevski

TIN PLATE Production of steel sheets, cut pieces, filled boxes ; cans, various thickness of steel sheets, equipment/machinery. Cleaner in Tin Plate - shovel and broom, no safety gear - this was not like a cleaner of an office, metallic dust. (Dragan Grozdanovski)

Strip Mill 'GADNA RABOTA' - spray everywhere, poisonous vapour - oil, hot acid. Picker line - apply acid for cleaning the steel sheets; terrible to breath noxious, 'lime water.' Comprised 12-13 lines of production; 4 to cut the sheets and pack in boxes - strapline. All under one roof. (Dragan Grozdanovski)



Courtesy Tode Shafkulevski

I would come to the Pacific ocean - crying, homesick, very unhappy, heat, red dust – lonely – very hard, conveyors, noisy; the dust stuck to you, you could not wash it off clothes. I became very thin. (Jovance Kantaroski)



Courtesy Jovance Kantaroski

Sinter plant smoky, noisy, very hot; red dust that stuck to your clothes. Could not wash it off. (JK) Safety glasses , wear mask; Conveyors – sinter – hot rocks. Very hard labour, pick and shovel from floor onto conveyors; white burns around eyes (Iliya Klinevski – sinter plant 20 years – 1990s, (Jovance Kantaroski)



што не правевне. What didn't we do? Worked with shovel in the Sinter Plant - conveyor, pick up fallen material; it was dusty, noisy. My husband came in 1961, fell ill; redundancy (no compensation). Died at 62. I was widow, worked at BHP. (Borjanka Temelkovska, above)



Courtesy Dragan Grozdanovski



Photograph courtesy MCCI, copyright Pia Solberg

Discrimination very bad Foreman – treat you really bad, they didn't say 'Sam' or 'Jorge' come here, they call you by whistling; 'not by name'. And it was very strong that word (hesitate to say it) 'wog'. Or they said 'Eh you wog, come here.' (Jose Acosta)

(This was in the mid 1970s at the height of Whitlam's Multicultural Australia era)



Photograph courtesy, Giorgi Ginoski

Obviously working hard down there. I can say I am ok, still alright. I lost a lot of friends down there. I lost about 18-20 working mates (Jorge Papagallo)

I am happy, look, in one piece.

Coke Ovens wooden clogs, lost eyelashes, eyebrows, hair burnt. Dusty, steamy, smell – of coke (JK). *Како трендафил (Like a rose)* (S.Popovski).

Battery – a gallery of batteries. On the top of the batteries was very hot. The batteries are heating the ore. (T.Rudevski). You are working on the ovens. Hard to work, heat from the ovens, walk on the top of the ovens, it was brick – hot. Clean up dropping of coke, open the hole, with shovel return the coke into the oven, cover it up. At that time, no safety gear – wooden clogs provided. (Jose Acosta)



Courtesy Carlos Orellana

I started working at No. 1 BATTERY COKE OVENS, and No. 2 shut by then, No. 3 completely shut, No. 4 Battery Working, then No. 5 and 6 new ones. Hot 750 degrees. Seal had to put it around the hole. Always steam – 51 ovens steam pipes boxes – belong to each – 2-3 m high, (small battery). Open at the top. Very hot on the floor, steam at the top. (Jorge Papagallo)

Supervision at Coke Ovens: woven asbestos cover head; heat resistant coat (down to ankles). He was in there for 30 seconds – come out – another guy suited up. Reheated steel ingots. (Michel Saliba)

In all the departments of BHP , the Coke Ovens was the worst place. You did not want to go there. Not by choice – only if you got sent there. It was dirty. (Ramazan Akkoc)



Crane Chaser Father Carlo Pasqualin (arrived 1954), worked at the Port; shift work – we had to be very quiet at home. Massive ships, overhead cranes. Accident 1969 - slipped and fell at the port. Port Kembla Hospital, Prince Alfred Hospital, Sydney: died at 42 years old. In those 15-16 years paid off the house. Reported accident – no compensation, 'just a migrant' - no work, no pay. (Nadia Colarusso)

Crane Drivers all died before their time. Sat in cabins, high up near ceiling (at the time, no doors). Fumes, vapours (acid, hot oil), gases, rose upwards. ПРЕД ВРЕМЕ ИЗУМРЕА

*Cvetko Ohridsko *Andrew Žabjani Lazec *Ivan Ohridsko
There were many who worked on Cranes (Croatian, Serbian, Lebanese)



Photograph courtesy MCCi, copyright Pia Solberg

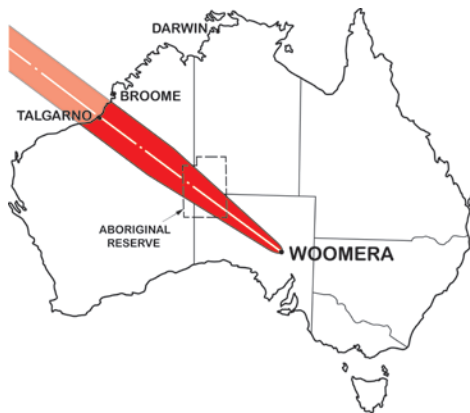
Woomera

Andrew Saniga

Woomera Village and the Long-Range Weapons Establishment

This exhibit explores aspects of the experiences of migrants who worked in Woomera, a place located on Kokatha lands 500km north-east of Adelaide, South Australia. More than 400 central and eastern Europeans who could not return to their homelands after the Second World War – mainly Czechoslovakians, Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Poles, Ukrainians, and Yugoslavians – were sent to Woomera between early 1948 and January 1949. They served part or all of a compulsory two-year work commitment employed within the Department of Works and Housing (DWH) across a vast array of jobs.

The DWH was charged with building a village that would house and service the workforce associated with the Anglo-Australian Long-Range Weapons Establishment (LRWE). The setting-up of the LRWE included building construction camps along with all kinds of infrastructure within the Woomera Prohibited Areas (WPA) so as to create a functioning weapons-testing range thousands of square kilometres in size. The establishment of a centreline of a flight path for rocket testing (most infamously for the 'Blue Streak' program) extended all the way to the Eighty-mile Beach in Western Australia where another village, Talgarno, was established.



Left

An early 1950s map showed the location of Woomera and how the centreline of the rocket testing easement spanned the continent (and beyond) and passed over an Aboriginal Reserve, multiple pastoral leases, along with inland Australia's extensive arid lands. Source: Department of Supply and Development Commonwealth of Australia, c.1947-56, The Joint United Kingdom – Australian Long Range Weapons Project in Australia, p. 2. Plan drawn by Stany Saniga, 2022.



Right
DWH workers meet stockmen from a sheep station neighbouring Woomera, circa 1948, on the lands of the Kokatha people. Source: Blazejowski family collection; Photographer: Bronislaw Blazejowski.

The European migrant workers who helped build the LRWE's facilities worked alongside defence force personnel, ex-servicemen, private contractors, and others. They lived together in construction camps of canvas tents and make-shift structures along with army-style ablution blocks and mess halls. The caste system and military-style discipline were 'cold-comfort' for some, simply because such a lifestyle resembled the years spent living within military camps during the Second World War, including the refugee camps in Europe post-war.

It was ironic for war-weary European migrants to be sent to work on a project that revolved around the production of a huge outdoor laboratory to test weaponry that ultimately would fuel the arms race. In so doing, they were inadvertently placed at the coalface of Australia's internationally significant role in the deepening Cold War. Perhaps an even greater irony existed in the fact that the European migrants, displaced from their own homelands, were deployed at the will of the Australian Government, and thus were probably mostly unaware that the Government's activities at Woomera also involved the displacement of Aboriginal people, mainly the Kokatha, from their tribal lands.



Top Left
The Estonian 'Desert Bushmen' at Woomera in 1949 with Guido Laikve back row second from left. Source: Guido Laikve.

Top Right
Guido Laikve and Uno Tuvike in canvas tent with their standard issue equipment in 1949. Source: Guido Laikve.

Bottom Left Kostas Tymukas (centre) and Algimantas Žilinskas [right]. Source: Andrew Domaševičius-Žilinskas,

Bottom Right
Beer bottle tops at the ruins of the Phillip Ponds construction camp, Woomera. Photographer Rudi Saniga, 2022.



The migrant experience at Woomera is distinctive in other ways. The arid environment was extreme: its temperatures, vegetation, geology, and landforms made a unique work and recreational lifestyle that bore little resemblance to Europe. Woomera was built on a treeless plain. Drinking water had to be piped-in from hundreds of kilometres away. From alighting the aircraft in 40+ degree heat to dust-ridden camps and back-breaking pick and shovel jobs, Woomera had as much potential to shatter hopes of a new life as it did to foster a pioneering spirit and enduring camaraderie. As Estonian Guido Laikve put it: "We became bushmen, in the desert...it had nothing to do with reality, it was really totally different living." (Laikve, interview, 2022).

Many migrant workers ended up in Adelaide after Woomera and established new lives. In attempting to track their movements it seems like some 'disappeared', perhaps a result of them changing their surnames, or departure from Australia, or merely the result of lives cut short.

This exhibit presents a number of select brief biographies across the various cultural groups. These are presented amid photographs, models and artefacts.



Left
Algimantas Žilinskas walking
near the Phillip Ponds construc-
tion camp, circa 1949. Source:
Andrew Domaševičius-Žilinskas.

Here there is desert surrounding us for hundreds of miles and Australia's rocket testing station is being prepared. New roads are being established through the desert, a railway has been extended, and telephone lines are being put up as well as other activity. We live in tents. The living conditions are not pleasant but the wages are very good. The men receive between £22 and £28 per fortnight as well as meals. The work is not hard. I hope to work here for 6 or 7 months and return to the city having saved £300. Then, if there is still no opportunity to return home to Europe, to build some sort of home.

Jonas Mockunas (1917-75) diary entry 25 April 1949
[Trans. Jonas Mockunas (son) January 2022.]

Select Brief Biographies

Estonians:

Heino Laikve (1902-75),

Erich Laikve (1928-89)

Guido Laikve (born 1931)

Latvians:

Anrijs Blūmentāls (1912-67)

Mīlija Blūmentāls (born 1915)

George Bergtals (born 1912)

Nicolajs Bergtals (1914-74)

Lithuanians:

Česlovas Dubinskas (1906-93)

Jonas Meškauskas (1909-89)

Kostas Tymukas (1920-82)

Algimantas Žilinskas (1924-96)

Polish:

Bronisław Blazejowski (1923-91)

Jerzy Borejko (1922-93)



The Workmen's Framed Tent, designed by Department of Works and Housing Chief Executive Engineer, J.J.W. Gray circa 1949, was intended to make living conditions within the construction camps more comfortable. It was a solid structure that encased the pre-existing canvas tents.

In this image the canvas tent can be seen through the flywire gauze. The tent was suspended from beams within the structure. The structure had a corrugated iron roof and walls and metal flywire gauze windows and door.

Left

Source: Avriël Kain. Photographer Lance Kain.



Two Lithuanian migrant workers, Česlovas Dubinskis (centre, standing) and Jonas Meškauskas (right, standing), stayed-on for ten years, working in the DWH's Drawing Office in Woomera. They lived in quarters designated for DWH staff located in Woomera West which was initially a construction camp, but ended-up taking on a number of functions in support of the nearby Village.

This garden adjacent to their quarters was created by voluntary labour. It gave them an opportunity to nurture plants and even to establish a bee hive among other activities.

Left

Source: Australian Lithuanian Archive.



Left
Kostas Tymukas (right) and Algimantas Žilinskas [centre] at work in the Drawing Office of the Department of Works and Housing, Woomera. Source: Andrew Domaševičius-Žilinskas,



Right
A survey team in Woomera circa 1949, with man on far right believed to be Guido Laikve. Source: Andrew Domaševičius-Žilinskas.

The militaristic culture engendered a can-do attitude which was fortuitous considering the enormous challenges the DWH faced in remote and resource-poor conditions. In the name of progress, workers and officials alike were driven to innovate. For example, many European migrants took up quasi-professional/technical roles because the DWH had found it difficult to attract Australian workers into the desert. Engineering, surveying and drafting within the DWH's Drawing Office were the most notable of the European migrant workers' activities.

The European migrants were eyed with suspicion due to their heritage and connections to the Second World War, plus that their homelands had subsequently become occupied by the USSR. Some foreign powers (mainly the USA) feared that the Australian government lacked stringent control and monitoring. The creation of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) in March 1949 stemmed in-part from fears of espionage at Woomera. As a consequence, Woomera's bid for a high-security environment ostensibly consisted of tightly guarded gateways into the area, but there were also an array of puerile measures – locking DWH engineering drawings away at night, screening mail and conducting random interviews as a form of 'soft interrogation.' These actions were bemusing for some of the European migrants, especially those who during the war had been dogged by machine gun-wielding Gestapo.

Active and vigorous workers' union representation created tensions due to the forced interweaving of communism upon European migrants' collective identity. Although they could be both 'left' and 'far right' leaning, for many European migrant workers a rejection of the USSR's occupation of their homelands implied tacit distaste for workers' unions' communist overtones.



Woomera had three churches. When the building work on the Catholic Church began, Jonas and I designed the access roads, footpaths, square, and provided all kinds of technical assistance without any payment. We also helped to transport sand and gravel for construction on Saturdays. We bought two "stations" and received a promise that our names would be engraved under them. However, the chaplain (military) forgot to do this. Every Sunday we made a donation for the maintenance of the church. When the church was consecrated, many priests, even a bishop, came. The local Catholic newspaper published the names of the donors and helpers, however our names were absent. One Irishman who did not attend church, but donated £50, was publicly acknowledged as the finest Catholic.

Česlovas Dubinskas

I was always with you (1992)

[Trans. Edita Varnas and Andrew Domaševičius-Žilinskas.]

Česlovas Dubinskas and Jonas Meškauskas devoted their labour and money to establishing Woomera's Saint Michael's Catholic Church, including the purchase of two Stations of the Cross. There are normally fourteen Stations of the Cross, each depicting moments in the journey of Jesus's last days, from being condemned to death, to various moments of suffering along the way to being crucified and then buried.

Dubinskas's and Meškauskas's philanthropic gesture went unacknowledged. In memoriam, this exhibit includes a series of fourteen historic and contemporary images, printed on canvas, that illustrate an interpretation of the thematic journey underpinning the fourteen Stations of the Cross.

The images thus present aspects of the journey of European migrant workers in Woomera, whilst also depicting what remains of some of the sites where migrants worked and lived.

Today large parts of Woomera's past exist in various states of ruin as its historic fabric continues to be reclaimed by the indigenous arid landscape.





(facing page top)

Station iii: Faltering. Self-doubt. Why here? The strain of developing a new life in the face of ongoing pain and suffering. Workers on the Pimba to Woomera rail line. Source National Archives of Australia, NAA: D874, NB47

(facing page bottom)

Station v: Selfishness. Who will help? All have their own needs. In the face of selfishness, selflessness emerges in support others. Remains of rail bridge on the Pimba to Woomera rail line. Photographer Rudi Saniga, 2022

(top left)

Station iv: Camaraderie. Mutual support for each other's predicaments. Joining forces to overcome hardship. Sharing experiences and reminiscences for homeland and culture. Migrant workers at Lake Koolymilka circa 1948 with Jerzy Borejko (right), a 'bush carpenter,' with saw strapped to waist. Source: Blazejewski family collection. Photographer Bronislaw Blazejewski.

(bottom left)

Station viii: Understanding. Incongruence of ideas leads to respect for each other's position. Exchanging ideas and developing an appreciation of the exotic. Detail of salt lake at the margins. Photographer Rudi Saniga, 2022.

(top right)

Station ix: Despondence. Hardships persist. The road ahead seems fraught and unrelentingly difficult. Tents at the Lake Koolymilka construction camp at night. Source: Blazejewski family collection. Photographer Bronislaw Blazejewski.

(bottom right)

Station x: Disrespect. In being stripped of identity and a past, one is challenged to accept and adjust to a new life. Ruins of floating platform once part of recreational infrastructure associated with Lake Koolymilka. Photographer Rudi Saniga, 2022

Melbourne Suburbs

David Beynon

Footscray, Springvale & beyond

This part of the exhibition explores the impact of communities who arrived in the 1970s and 1980s. By the 1970s, federally funded projects no longer supported or provided en masse employment for refugees or immigrants, shifting the burden of broad governmental economic support to the development of individualised pathways and community frameworks. Unlike the immigrants who had previously arrived to work on major government-financed or supported industries or infrastructure, these new arrivals were sometimes able to rely on state or local government for assistance with settlement, but otherwise needed the support of their own developing immigrant communities to develop economic independence. Many were channelled into a range of manufacturing and service industries, most immediately in the vicinity of two hostels, the Midway Migrant Hostel in Maribyrnong and the Enterprise Migrant Hostel in Springvale. These hostels' residents came from a variety of backgrounds: Vietnamese, Cambodian, diasporic Chinese, Lao, and others – and represented a distinct change to Australia's demography at the time. While some found work in existing factories, many of these new settlers founded small businesses and other enterprises. As a result, these new immigrants reinscribed suburban neighbourhoods with their distinctive cultural as well as economic imprint, most immediately in Springvale, Footscray and other suburbs where they originally settled, and then across metropolitan Melbourne and – as parallel developments were happening in Sydney, Brisbane and other Australian cities – across the country.

Right

Aerial Photographs of Footscray and Springvale in 1984, with Midway and Enterprise Hostel sites shown in red (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Victoria, Left Ringwood (3831-241), Right Melbourne (3896-131))





Changing Streetscapes

Through their hard work, entrepreneurial abilities, willingness to engage with existing commercial needs and ability to provide products and services that were previously unavailable or unknown in Australia, these new communities have thrived. This variety of uses, indicative of rich histories and creative adaptations of found conditions, have elevated previously marginal parts of metropolitan Melbourne to become central to the city's developing identity. Enterprising refugees and immigrants have succeeded in transforming manufacturing, commercial and retail districts with new types of businesses and industries as well as new community, cultural and religious institutions. Sometimes these transformations have meant entirely new buildings and architectural types. However, in many cases, it is the uses of existing buildings rather than their physical forms that have been changed. Comparing the present-day streetscapes of Springvale, Footscray and many other suburbs with those of earlier decades, many of the buildings remain the same, but their usage, signage and identities have been profoundly transformed.



Left
Comparative view of corner of Barkly Street
and Nicholson Street, Footscray: Above
(Rose Stereograph Co., between 1920 &
1954?: State Library of Victoria collection);
Below: (Authors, 2022)

Next Page
Top
Comparative view of 284c Springvale Road, Springvale: left
(Springvale Historical Society, 1993); right (Authors, 2022)

Middle
Comparative view of 234-238 Springvale Road, Springvale: left
(Springvale Historical Society, 1987); right (Authors, 2022)

Bottom
Comparative view of 307-313 Springvale Road, Springvale: left
(Springvale Historical Society, c.1980); right (Authors, 2022)



Workers, Inventors and Entrepreneurs

The most obvious visual representations of this enterprise have been new constructions and the trans-formation of retail streetscapes. However, it is also important to recognise industries that have less public profile. Many men worked in the factories of Melbourne's western or southeastern suburbs. However, many women worked as machinists doing piecework or collectively filling contract orders for garment companies. This machining work has been vitally important for livelihoods of these communities, but their spatial transformation of existing spaces and buildings has largely been invisible to the public. Nevertheless, the ingenuity of these workers is demonstrated by their invention of a number of hand-held tools to assist their work. Other people started business supplying or selling foodstuffs and other products that otherwise weren't available in Anglo Australia at the time. Here are some excerpts from stories about their labour.

My mum was sitting in front of the sewing machine at home and she picked strawberries as well during the day . . . during the night she do that [sewing]. My dad worked for Cadbury, the chocolate factory in Ringwood. Dad was very proud of how he made chocolate. (Bon Nguyễn)

My job was to print, to put the batch number on the element, and also to make the element for the stove . . . I said to my boss, "Can I work during afternoon shift so I can go to school?" Very nice boss . . . he said ok. . . That's how I could go to school during the day from 8:30 to 3:30. Then 4 o'clock I went to factory for afternoon shift until about 1 o'clock . . . for two years, In 1983 I finished my high school certificate. By 84 I got into first year pharmacy school. (Richard Lim)

Being an immigrant my mum, my aunts during the 80s and 90s sewing was massive back in the day . . . all the aunties would get together and they would win those big contracts, all in refurbished and retrofitted garages, all the machines would be lined up, they'd win the contracts, bring all the material home and make it. And we'd be there as well helping on the weekends, everything would be joined. (Sophanara Sok)

A lot of people got involved in sewing, machinists to be exact, overlocking, So we had to make a few different tools to help, to rationalise the work, to simplify, [make it] easier to work. So we have not only designed but created a few little tools like that. Say for example for the collar, how to turn it quickly inside-out, to thread elastic too So what we have is like a very very early design . . . prototype kind of thing . . . (Kim Bùi-Quang)

Top Left
Trần family at work, St Albans, 1987. (Vietnamese Museum of Australia)

Top right
Hand-held tools for threading waistband elastic, invented and constructed by Thủy Trần to assist garment construction. Materials: recycled coat hanger wire, North Sunshine, 1988 (Vietnamese Museum of Australia)

Bottom left
Hand-held tool for inverting material corners for collars, invented and constructed by Phước Bùi-Quang to assist garment construction. Materials: coat hanger wire, pen nib surround, Richmond, 1987 (Vietnamese Museum of Australia)

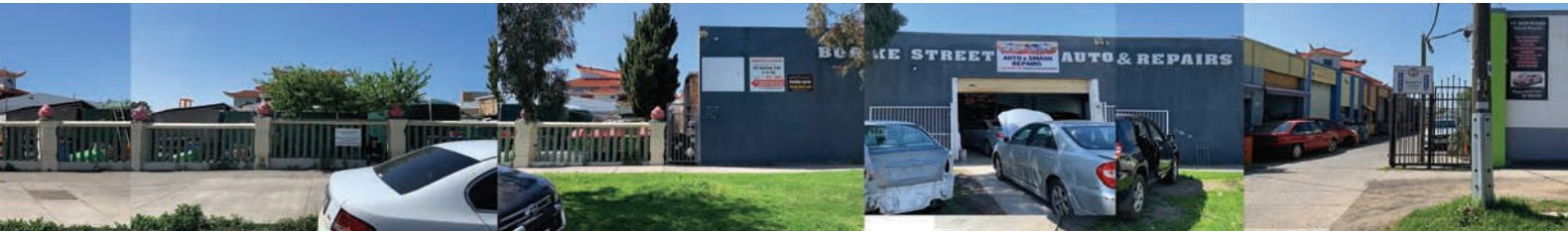
Bottom right
Tool for spooling borders, hung from ceiling of workshop. Invented and constructed by Liêm Đức Trâm at Holden Factory, Port Melbourne. Materials: recycled steel plate, 1984 (Vietnamese Museum of Australia)



Next page

Streetscape montage descriptions - from top to bottom
Hopkins Street (South side), Footscray
Springvale Road (West side), Springvale
Buckingham Avenue (West side), Springvale
Regal Drive (Guan Di temple), Springvale
Burke Street and Mullenger Road (Quang Minh temple), Braybrook





Migrant Camps

Alexandra Dellios



Biography

Alexandra Dellios is a historian and senior lecturer in the Centre for Heritage and Museum Studies at the Australian National University. Her research considers the public and oral history of migrant and refugee communities, their experiences of settlement, and working and family life.

She is Chair of the Editorial Board for Studies in Oral History, a founding member of the Australian Migration History Network, and Executive Committee member of the Association of Critical Heritage Studies.

Acknowledgements

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Research assistant: Anne Claoue-Long.

Snowy Hydro

Anoma Pieris



Biography

Anoma Pieris is a Professor of Architecture at the Melbourne School of Design. Her most recent publications include the anthology *Architecture on the Borderline: Boundary Politics and Built Space* (2019) and *The Architecture of Confinement: Incarceration Camps of the Pacific War* (2022), co-authored with Lynne Horuchi.

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Thanks to several research assistants who have contributed to this project including Renee Miller-Yeaman, Yoke Lin Wong, Yvette Putra, and Michael Pearson.

Port Kembla Steelworks

Mirjana Lozanovska



Biography

Mirjana Lozanovska is Associate Professor in architecture and Director of the Architecture Vacancy Lab at Deakin University. Mirjana's work investigates the creative ways that architecture mediates human dignity. Her books include *Migrant Housing: Architecture, Dwelling, Migration* (2019), *Ethno-Architecture and the Politics of Migration* (2016); and creative works *Venetian Blinds*, 2021; *Iconic Industry*, 2017. Mirjana was co-editor of *Fabrications* 2018-2021.

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Woomera

Andrew Saniga



Biography

Andrew Saniga is an Associate Professor at the University of Melbourne. His research includes a history of landscape architecture in Australia and his book, *Making Landscape Architecture in Australia* (2012) documents and explains key designers and projects with an emphasis on the mid-twentieth century.

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Research assistants: Michael Pearson, Jack Wilde and Yvette Putra.

Melbourne Suburbs

David Beynon



Biography

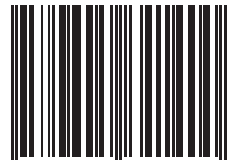
David Beynon is an Associate Professor in Architecture at the University of Tasmania. His research involves investigating the social, cultural and compositional dimensions of architecture, and adaptations of architectural content and meaning in relation to migration and cultural change. His current work includes investigations into the multicultural and postcolonial manifestations of contemporary urban environments and the creative possibilities for post-industrial architecture in Australia and Asia.

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