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Port Kembla BHP Steelworks, Australia: Post-war Immigrant Histories of Architecture, Urbanism and Heritage

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Abstract

Following BHP Steelworks redundancies in the 1980s and 1990s, shops, banks, service storefronts, even Public Bars, which lined Wentworth Street in Port Kembla, have for decades vacated the premises such that in 2019, except for the site of the Red Point Artists and café the scene was of an abandoned place. Interviews with participants that had worked at the Steelworks tell of a vibrant, busy and crowded Wentworth Street in the post-war period, lined with immigrant businesses and enterprises. This paper will approach the urbanism of Wentworth Street and Port Kembla from the lens of post-war immigrant history. It argues that such a lens reveals the links between the urbanism of Wentworth Street, its transition to vibrant culture and to neglected street, directly to the Port Kembla BHP Steelworks.

The paper explores this immigrant perspective in two ways, firstly outlining a history of transnationalism and transculturalism resulting from the sheer numbers of immigrants to Port Kembla; and secondly, looking at that urban environment via the lens of works by immigrant cultural producers, the children of immigrant workers at the Steelworks.

Port Kembla: BHP Steelworks and Wentworth Street

This paper examines the links between the post-war urbanism and urban history of Wentworth Street and the BHP Steelworks in Port Kembla, Australia from a perspective of immigrant labour and immigrant making. In the 1960s Wentworth Street, the main street in Port Kembla, a suburb in Wollongong, was thriving economically. Its buildings and facilities were re-invigorated by new “tastes” – new food tastes, new architectural and aesthetic traditions, and new socio-cultural activities and orientations – transported from Europe by the thousands of immigrants arriving and settling in Port Kembla and Wollongong. Six decades later, in 2020, in an aspiration for a new future,

a nascent “creative industry” and a few “boutique enterprises” of Wentworth Street tend to turn away from the Steelworks, not as a quietened or passive site that is promoting itself as integral to a “greening” environmental future, but a particular reorientation away from its machinic, industrially productive but polluting history. Immigrant labour is also absent from the new agenda and from local memory or recollections of the past. Immigrant history in relation to local narratives tends to be limited and compressed to the immigrants that actually experienced it, rather than as shared local history. Like the industrial steelworks skyline that hovers in visual proximity to Wentworth Street, this paper attends to history as a gap between selective local narratives and the immigrant contribution to and making of the nation that can too often be intermittently erased from critical areas of research.

We learn about diversity in streets in Woodcock’s work on Sydney Road, a proposal for multicultural planning in Sandercock’s early work, and the various ways that migration shaped Australian cities in a recent anthology of essays.¹ Beynon’s 2009 essay on new aesthetic housing traditions that altered the appearance of streets in Richmond (inner suburb of Melbourne) brings an architectural and heritage investigation to this area.² A problem with Port Kembla is that such empirical evidence of signs, or the presence of immigrants, the urban street cultures that were integral to the vibrancy of Wentworth Street, has all but disappeared. In 1989 a team of eminent scholars led by James Jupp investigated Wentworth Street and it was the only regional site of interest in their study of ethnic urbanism.³ The team found that Wentworth Street “is not ‘ethnic’ in the sense of Lygon Street in Melbourne, or Norton Street in Leichhardt, Sydney, where an overwhelmingly non-Anglo flavour predominates.”⁴ Their report notes the street comprised four to five pubs, and that only nineteen of the 160 businesses in the street had an ethnic character, with seven Macedonian and Croatian, five Italian and three Greek. The team’s observation also recorded one “in every six [premise] was either disused, for sale, for lease, or not open to the public” and that the east, “more ethnic” part of the street, furthest from the steelworks, was the “most desolate and run-down part of the street.”⁵ Despite this quantification of neglect and abandonment of Wentworth Street, and the BHP redundancies that had made media headlines, the researchers did not seem to appreciate the connection and impact on the urbanism and lack of “ethnic” character of Wentworth Street due to the loss of jobs or economy.

The research approach of this sociological team depends on “signs of ethnicity” as empirical materiality but is insistent in immigration research across many disciplines – anthropology, geography, architecture and urban history. It depends on fieldwork and actual immigrant presence as evidence of immigrant contribution. In a paper exploring the dual question of histories that are unwritten and/or unwritable, Mark Jarzombek formed the term “ethnographies of presentism,” questioning a dominant use of “ethnographic methods” in contemporary research which may overlook other questions of history. Here I deploy this term as a way of exploring the limits and scope to this approach in immigrant-focused research on urbanism and architecture. If the signs of ethnicity were absent from Wentworth Street in 1989, what are the risks to the immigrant history of Port Kembla? Indeed, in the above study, Wentworth Street was subsequently dismissed as a street with a concentrated ethnic presence. The underlying argument in this paper is that such research approaches produce a systematic bias which evolves into hegemonic perspectives of local history of place, and a consistent disavowal of immigrant contribution. And yet, ethnographic methods may also be used as a mode of resistance to the omission of immigrant architectural history altogether.

With a focus on immigrants as agents of the history of Port Kembla in the period 1945-1979, the paper provides a lens on architectural history as intersectional between industry, labour and immigration. The notion of the local is intersected firstly by the transnationalism and transculturalism that immigration, work and settlement entails, and secondly by a psychic or subterranean landscape hidden within the fabric of streets and industrial sites.

Brief Histories of BHP Steelworks and the Site of Port Kembla

Industries of extractions, especially coal mining, were already altering the lands of the Illawarra escarpment in the early 1800s, later to be linked by railway to Port Kembla. Photographs of this early colonial period illustrate the massive clearing of cedar and other flora, the new dairy landscape marked by boundaries and fences, and a few farmhouses dotting this cleared landscape. Industry and economic exploitation was integral to this early era of colonisation. The 1817 Land Grants to five colonists was the precursor to fatal territorialisation of Indigenous lands. Cedar cutters cleared the forests; dairy farming drained the land of its fertile abundance; fences, borders, roads and railway carved up the continuity of topography; and tunnels, dredging and draining obliterated the flora and habitats of fauna. Hoskins Iron & Steel (HI&S) and Australian

Iron and Steel (AIS) purchased two major portions of land in the mid-1800s, on which the Kembla Steelworks was built. By 1883 networks of tunnels, chimney stacks and hoisting machinery physically materialised the operations of this industry, which along with a railway built to transport coal extracted at the escarpment of Mt. Bulli reveals the extent of the erasure of First Nations Country. The site on which the steelworks first opened in 1929, later to be purchased and expanded by BHP (1935), was *a priori* supported by infrastructure of territorial appropriation under British colonial power with land grants, roads, railway and the port, and now expanded to a major and more physically and economically dominating strategy and industry.

The so-called Illawarra Garden of waterways and creeks, coastal lakes, estuaries and lagoons that for thousands of years sustained thriving entrepreneurial Indigenous communities/Dhawaral peoples, was destroyed. Added to this destruction of country and livelihood was the control, exploitation and eradication of the Aboriginal peoples. A Wodi Wodi woman interviewed on a Radio National ABC programme noted that it was not called Port Kembla by her ancestors, but Kembla Warra.⁶ Critical to Indigenous independence was the site of Wongwongorong (a hill named Red Point and later renamed Hill 60).⁷ Wongwongorong was surrounded by water on three sides, with access to two lagoons and one large lake, in addition to three off-shore islands.⁸ In the 1920s this site comprised built housing and Aborigines were netting fish which were sold directly to non-aboriginal residents. In 1942, despite official protest letters, independent economy and legal structures, this Indigenous settlement at Wongwongorong was evicted by the Central Illawarra Council.⁹ Many moved to the huts provided at Coomaditchie Lagoon, and Coomaditchie Reserve survives to this day.¹⁰ The Illawarra Aboriginal Land Council proposes that any narrative about the Aboriginal peoples in Wollongong should start with Hill 60 as the most significant place – as both ancestral site of the dreaming and as a place of forced eviction.¹¹

Narratives focusing only on “culture and identity” can too often diminish how industry, economy and political aspirations are entangled with civic urbanism. In Port Kembla militant and bureaucratic strategies of colonisation are co-productive with mining, steel manufacture, cedar cutting and agricultural industries including dairy farming – and are foundational to the history of Wentworth Street, Port Kembla. Kembla, meaning plenty of wild fowl, was territorially and radically altered into Port Kembla. From a planning perspective the Five Land Grants *a priori* implemented an (il)legal/unceded appropriation of lands which determined the future histories of the sites, and the

embedded power structures that continue to impact on the lives of all peoples.¹² To narrate this via a historiography of progress, wealth and the actions of industrialists is to bracket out how this history is contingent on the subjugation of other human subjects. The aim is not for a totalistic historiography but to examine fragmentary intersections of contested histories across multiple actors that effect place and architectures.

In 1945, BHP was one of the biggest industrial corporations, and gained membership on the Commonwealth Immigration Planning Council (CIPC), thus facilitating an active participation and role in the national immigration programmes in the post-war period.¹³ Prior to 1949 the Federated Ironworkers Association (FIA) union opposed mass immigration, arguing that it would reduce work standards. In a momentous about-turn, the first Australian Minister for Immigration, Arthur Calwell, supported by the FIA shift to the right end of its constituency, the FIA joined the agenda for mass immigration. Calwell negotiated directly between BHP and FIA, resulting in agreement to employ immigrants in the least attractive jobs, and to ensure all new employees joined the union.¹⁴

In 1945, following four decades since the 1901 Immigrant Restriction Act, the Australian population was more than 99% of Anglophone heritage. Mass immigration would amount to a total reorientation of the historical trajectory of Australian society, and yet as preeminent scholar on migration James Jupp consistently argues, Australian immigration has been strategic, planned and controlled. Following the recruitment of Displaced Persons (DP effective to 1953), the diminishing numbers from the United Kingdom and the so-called 'desirable' countries (Netherlands, Germany, Scandinavia), as well as assisted passage agreements (Malta 1948; Netherlands 1951; West Germany, Italy 1951)¹⁵ new source countries were needed. A massive immigrant labour recruitment campaign of the Australian government was for "single" "able bodied men" from southern Europe.¹⁶ As advised by BHP, these immigrants, eager, less reluctant to undertake hazardous, dirty, risky jobs, best served for those labours that "Australians did not want." Industry interests forged new exploitative modes of production, economies of labour and new managerial methods as immigrants from southern Europe, with no English language skills, allocated a status as "unskilled labourer" were directed to work at the Port Kembla steelworks.¹⁷ The impact on Port Kembla is revealed in the housing which grew from 700 in 1931 to 2000 by 1949, and continued to escalate exponentially.

In 1975 one estimate was that 20,715 workers were employed at the steelworks. Statistics on the number of redundancies varies: one source estimated workers would be reduced to 18,400 by the end of 1982 after the redundancy packages were accepted.¹⁸ This means in the second half of 1982, 1550 steelworkers and 300 tradesmen were estimated to lose their jobs. It is a complex and unclear picture: other sources present data that in addition, around 7,000 workers lost their jobs between 1981 and 1983 as the steel industry encountered technological changes while responding to macro-economic challenges.¹⁹ An official government document states that BHP's workforce was reduced by approximately 10,000 employees between May 1982 and May 1983.²⁰ It is difficult to know how effective the union (Federation of Ironworkers Union) was at this time. Was it a gradual process as different Sections of the Steelworks closed: No 1 merchant mill was first shut down, then No 2 Merchant Mill, The 36 Inch Mill, the Tin Mill? Eventually, the Steelworks produced only slabs and coils.²¹ Some workers were transferred to other sections; others took voluntarily redundancy.²²

The magnitude of the massive losses of jobs led to out-migration of immigrant workers and their communities, depleting residents in Port Kembla and resulting in the closure of businesses in Wentworth Street.²³ Unemployment was higher in the non-English speaking workers, and not all could afford to live elsewhere.²⁴ Such statistics were further detailed by the recollections from participants interviewed for this project.²⁵ Participant views reinforce the unfair processes of job cuts. One participant views the strategy as “ethnic cleansing” in the steelworks. He describes how workers were herded into and held captive at the fields of Kembla Grange Golf Club while the union officials laid out the situation. Only two to three people were of Anglo-Celtic backgrounds, he states, in contrast to 130 people from the Tin Mills production unit, 80% of whom were of Macedonian background. People who had worked in BHP for over 20 or 30 years were subjected to processes of physical and medical tests to legitimate the pathway for their redundancy, he says. For him and many others it was a terrifying prospect – in their 20s, 30s and 40s they worked a demanding shift-work regime at the steelworks – while in the 1980s many, in their 50s, watched their work futures become non-existent.

Local Urbanism: “My Backyard”²⁶

In “Building a Culture: Architecture and Art in the Illawarra,” pencil perspective drawings and documentation sketches by Hardy Wilson of a homestead, an iconic image of colonial architecture, sets a scene referred to abundantly by academic and independent architectural historians as an origin of Australian architecture.²⁷ The chapter’s author, Joseph Davis, ends with a reference to the woodcut prints, “My Backyard” and “Cultured Landscape” by Riste Andrievski, an artist who grew up in Cringila, looking upon the steelworks not only as a monumental image of industry and nation building, but also as a monstrous scale of “the hell his father has experienced.”²⁸ Like Andrievski, the playwright Bill Nescovski wrote three major works about the destructive consequences of life in Cringila for immigrant families, before his own life ended abruptly at the age of 26 due to cancer.²⁹ Andrievski and Nescovski are the children of the immigrant workers at BHP Steelworks.

Many, a large majority of the able-bodied young immigrants who entered the steelworks, were married but their families – wife and children – remained at the homeland, while enough funds were accumulated to pay for their migration.³⁰ The distance and separation caused a brutal disruption to family which continued into subsequent generations. Andrievski and Nescovski were separated from their fathers. Many others were separated for years, and arrived in the 1960s and 1970s. They grew up in Port Kembla immersed in its vibrant but chaotic urbanism and often violent culture. As artists, their distinct works in visual art and literature, are both outside and inside the context, and thus offer an alternative lens to socio-spatial histories tying industrial space to the domestic space of the home and to the urban space of the street.



Figure 1. Riste Andrievski, *Industrial Urban Landscape*
(reproduced courtesy of the artist).

Andrievski's early works (Figure 1, *Industrial Urban Landscape*) capture the proximity of the industrial urban landscape "as if in the backyard" of Cringila where he lived. His early etchings of Wentworth street draw our attention to the architectural hybridity of the street, its steep topography rising to the east, the cars that fully line both sides and, in subtle ways, the people that are integral to its character and urban culture (Figure 2). These works present a realism but their black-and-white patchiness captures an emotive force – of the dirt and grubbiness, the foreboding discharge from the BHP chimneys that is like hail or rain – images of the precarity and uncertainty of the realities.

Neshkovski's first play, *Say Goodbye to the Past*, is a comic-tragedy set in a suburban home in Port Kembla. Its main protagonist, Ilinka, is a Macedonian Australian woman in her mid-60s who has raised two children in Australia. Her husband "Dimche," who worked in the steelworks, has died and her children have left home and assimilated into Australian society. The play, however, opens onto a different imaginary of Ilinka's past life, when in her homeland, Macedonia, both she and her husband were actors in the theatre. In the play Dimche pays her frequent 'visits' during which together they act out scenes from their former roles in classic dramas as actors. The play points to important aspects of the connection between the steelworks, immigration and the urbanism of Port Kembla in the post-industrialisation era. Many of the immigrant Steelworks workers died before their time. This is not a subject that the participants enjoyed talking about, and if pressed to elaborate, they would lower their voice to a

whisper and tell for example about a woman on arrival in Australia after separation from her husband for five years, to find that he was killed in an accident at the Steelworks. Investigation of one cemetery in Wollongong indicates that a large number of men died often twenty years before their wives at prime adult age in their 40s and 50s. The realism of isolation is for Ilinka a threshold for the fictional reconnection to her dead husband, as well as to a time when literature and fiction were performed on the stage, deploying her professional skills and training, and not as a blurring between reality and fantasy within the material boundaries, the bricks and mortar, of a suburban home.³¹



Figure 2. Riste Andrievski, *Life after Soladeratie*, Wentworth Street, Port Kembla (reproduced courtesy of the artist).

Findings

In 1984 when The Macedonian Welfare Association was first established, it was located at 111 Wentworth Street. In 2019 it is one of the few facilities servicing immigrant communities that has remained in Port Kembla, located around the corner from Wentworth Street, on Allen Street. In the 1970s and the 1980s the population of Macedonian-Australians in the Illawarra escalated to about 20,000, and was supported by bilingual staff who worked at medical surgeries, pharmacies, travel agencies and grocery shops.³² Similar to the history of other immigrant services it was the initiative and agency of a few Macedonian-Australian people, and namely Mendo Trajcevski who in 1983 submitted an application to the State Department of Youth and Community Services (YACS) seeking funding to service their community, the youth and the many who had been made redundant by the BHP Steelworks. Their client base is currently over 4000 and includes meal delivery and support for elderly,

including the 36 elderly who participate in programmes at the centre weekly.³³ On arrival in Australia in the 1960s and 1970s many of the now elderly Macedonian-Australian citizens were employed at the BHP Steelworks, many were made redundant in the 1980s, some moved to Warrawong or Wollongong, but in their weekly meetings, the facility became a hub of memories and histories of Wentworth Street, Port Kembla and BHP Steelworks (Figure 3).

In 2021 our research team organised two tours with participants who were past BHP workers. With the support of Bluescope one was an organised bus tour of the BHP Steelworks itself (20 participants), and after a brief lunch, the second was a walking tour of Wentworth Street (8 participants), following from the Collegion in the west to Tinotto cakes, in the east, two endpoints that bracket the multicultural narrative of Wentworth street in the 1960s and 1970s (Figure 3). The many pubs are noted, and recollections about the Steelworks Pub, their name for it (the Top Pub) is where many immigrant workers began their shift as others ended it, a punctuation and pause to the relentless physical and dangerous shift work. Thus at 5.30 to 6.30 a.m. – there was the smell of bacon, sausages and eggs – a meal prior to starting the shift at BHP. Wentworth Street was indeed likened to the red-light district in Amsterdam with brothels dotted along the street and a visible urbanism of sex workers. Yes, one reason was that the majority of the BHP immigrant workforce were single men (though many had families and children back in the homeland), for many, language was against them. Further discussion revealed that this was not a new activity in Port Kembla. Established as a port since 1883, in addition to dockworkers, Kembla was visited by sailors arriving on ships from many places all over the world, temporary visitors who sought out illicit pleasures as well as supporting illegal merchandise and exchange. Pubs, alcohol and sex work did not originate in the post-war period; the police and government restrained activity but while diminished it remains integral to Wentworth Street. The participants also whispered about all the dodgy crime and criminal businesses (drugs) that was rampant in the street – pointing to a pastel lemon restored/renovated elegant two-storey premise on the corner of Wentworth and Fitzwilliam Streets. The pubs established in late nineteenth century to serve then iron and coal workers, re-established their affluent business servicing steelworks workers, in the post-war period. The Top Pub is a heritage listed building, but remains neglected waiting to self-destruct.

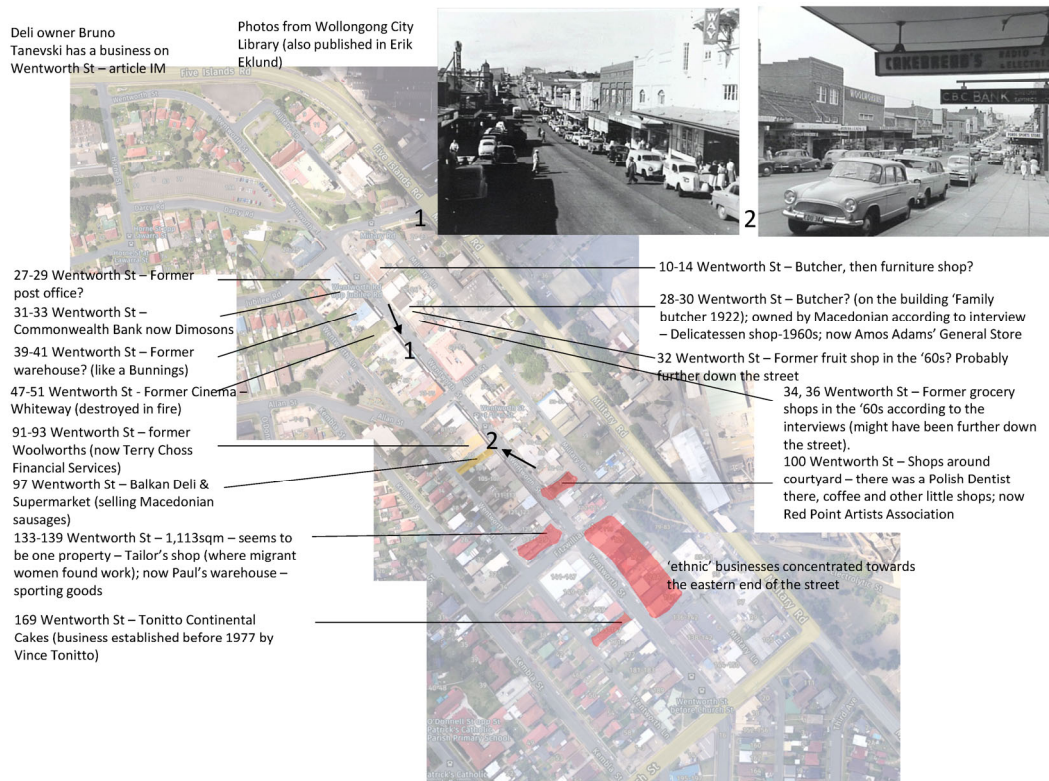


Figure 3. Map of Wentworth Street Port Kembla – annotations of recollections of past immigrant BHP workers referring to the 1960s and 1970s (image compiled by Mirjana Lozanovska and Alexandra Florea on Google map. Photograph 1: Wentworth Street, 1950, Arthur Cratchley Collection, P07/P07689. Photograph 2: Wentworth Street, 1961, Arthur Cratchley Collection, P09/P09056. From the collections of the Wollongong City Libraries and the Illawarra Historical Society).

For a street of 200 premises to have five or six banks is a physical and urban manifestation of the economic growth – the participants pointed to sturdy buildings of institutional architectural expression. BHP immigrant steelworkers borrowed and took out loans – for the construction of new housing, for new businesses, to save for children and social events. New types of food stores including a Burek Shop, a Delicatessen, a food store owned by people from Velušina, a fruit shop owned by people from Gavato, a grocery store and the Tinotto Cakes (the only one remaining, and where we ended our walk with an espresso and a cannoli; Figure 4). Hardware stores, tile shops, tailors and seamstress workshops, photographic studios on the upper levels provided for the necessities of the lives of immigrants beyond their subjugation at the BHP Steelworks. The current Red Studios enterprise has adopted the existing but unusual open U-shape urban model – set away from the street boundary with small shops and a landscaped area in the middle. Participants recalled

it as the place where a dentist of Polish descent, a bakery and coffee shops were located. These can be seen as a reinvigorating architecture and urbanism.

Neshkovki's play resonates with the absent cinema on Wentworth street. All the participants search for the place of the cinema - now a vacant lot. Their faces, some more elderly than others, light up when they describe an image of large numbers of people emerging from the cinema. Films of languages of the ethnic communities were shown in the cinema. In the 1970s Macedonian is the second most used language in Wollongong and Port Kembla. At this intersection of nostalgia and the now voided and abandoned street, the participants recalled that Wentworth Street was always crowded and was known for its social life and street promenading: "vrijat," they said, conjuring the buzzing of hundreds, thousands of insects. Port Kembla, they affirmed, was the best place to be at that time, better than Wollongong. There was not enough space in the buses, and people hung at the doorways, street life was vibrant. There was the annual billy cart race, but there were also street fights and street youth that attacked ethnic groups.

In the 1980s due to the redundancies by BHP Steelworks, many of the immigrants, by then with their families, left Port Kembla and Cringila.³⁴



Figure 4. “Walking tour” with past immigrant BHP Steelworks workers: narrating Wentworth Street Port Kembla (Photographs by Pia Solberg, MCCI).

Conclusion: Lost to History

In a thought provoking presentation Mark Jarzombek outlined that history writing has traditionally deployed the use of published documents such that it raises a question about history that is “unwritable” as well as unwritten. These “unwritable” histories, and he used an example of a painting of a Mongolian emperor and its (inadequate) interpretations, he argued, provide different ways to understand the world, but are lost, or inaccessible to history. However, I would like to take up where he left off, and the implied criticism of “how to define orality” or what he called “ethnographies of presentism” by which my understanding is a criticism of histories that evolve from fieldwork, especially participant interviews.

I am equally critical of interviews as a favourite-of-the-month research methodology, especially when it is hardly critically analysed, historically evidenced or contextualised, and also when individual participant responses are rammed through digital programmes to ascertain what passes as quantitative data even if as few as ten participant responses were obtained. Research methodologies have their particular limits and shortcomings, and can be grossly misused. However, participant and oral histories can also provide significant thresholds for rethinking history and historiography, especially when major histories are omitted and systemic biases persist.

Local history, like national history, depends on ‘historians’ and how the historian reiterates vocalised and popular interests. How can a history of the urbanism of Port Kembla and its relation to the steelworks be written which does not dismiss the lives of those whose able bodies serviced the operation and endured the extreme conditions of the interior environments of the steelworks?³⁵ Oral history, as has been shown in the rewriting of histories, can be an act of resistance, a resistance to simplification as well as to obscurity of the histories of entire communities. Those same immigrant subjects became Australian citizens and contributed to the economic viability of Wentworth Street in Port Kembla in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. They, and their children, also created the vibrant liveliness of Wentworth Street that current nostalgia points to. Corporeally, ontologically and historically these subjects connect the steelworks to the civic space of the street as two entangled spatio-temporal environments and histories.

The post-war immigrant labour history of Port Kembla exposes the formative link between the transnationalism of immigrant labour recruited to work at the BHP

Steelworks and the socio-spatial transformation of Wentworth Street into a trans-cultural environment. Here I have intersected a normative conception of the “local,” “locality” or “local urbanism” with histories that were instrumental to such locality. Immigrant recruitment, arrival, labour and settlement in the post-war period is contingent on trans-national and trans-cultural forces and conditions. The facility/building of the Macedonian Welfare Association (MWA) becomes a significant metaphoric and literal space of difference in Port Kembla. Located on Allen Street, just off Wentworth Street, it is a place which has been continuously operating in Port Kembla (first on Wentworth Street, and then relocated/hidden around the corner in Allen Street). It is in this unrenovated building that many elderly women and men who had worked at the BHP Steelworks, lived nearby and frequented Wentworth Street, meet weekly.

Why do immigrant pasts tend to be “lost to history”? Is this a double erasure – firstly pre-emigration pasts, prior to becoming a migrant subject is all but eclipsed on arrival. Then after decades of contribution to the nation, and to the architectural and built environment, their making, contribution, reinvigoration of the local urbanism is again evaded from local narratives and the systemic bias within research approaches to national and local history. Research focusing on immigration can tend to omit formal archival research, and immigrant participants are often considered “hard-to-get to” in oral/research methods. Why? Potential participants are just around the corner from Wentworth Street and meet weekly, very keen to tell their stories. Do Australian scholars not undertake research beyond the English language? What about more formal archival methods and documents? There are many potential trajectories, land titles, businesses, immigration records. And local journal productions like the bi-lingual journal *Komnac / Kompas* initiated by the visionary Mendo Trajcevski and published by the Macedonian Welfare Association. He also supported *Wollongong's Migrant Heritage Places Study* (2007) comprising Meredith Walker’s invaluable report, “First Accommodation for Migrants Arriving in Wollongong Post World War 2.”³⁶ This document contains significant detail about the urbanism of Cringila on immigrant arrival and accommodation. Are these documents too difficult to access? Or can an open historiography direct the historian’s expertise and skills to alternative ways of knowing and knowledge as incomplete but examining multiple makers of history.

The MWA is precisely a continuing heritage place through practice, a spatio-temporal architectural manifestation; a receptacle of history. At the Macedonian Welfare

Association a potentially written history based on empirical, archival data and documentation interfaces with an “unwritable” history, as the site, the building and its interior space interact and are inscribed by stories, language, memories and a daily dual homeland.

Endnotes

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⁸ Organ, *Illawarra*: Appendix 2 & 3.

⁹ Organ, *Illawarra*.

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¹⁴ Lever-Tracy and Quinlan, *A Divided Working Class*, 172.

¹⁵ National Archives of Australia: Secretary to Cabinet/ Cabinet Secretariat [I]. “A2700, Curtin, Forde and Chifley Ministries: Cabinet Minutes and Agenda, 1941-49; 538, British and Alien Migration to Australia,” 20 October 1943.

¹⁶ National Archives of Australia: Department of External Affairs [II], Central Office. “A1066, Correspondence Files, Multiple Number Series with Year and Letter Prefixes, 1944-1948; G45/1/1, Migration. Australian Policy (Including White Australia Policy),” 1944-48.

¹⁷ National Archives of Australia: Department of External Affairs [II], Central Office. “A1066, Correspondence Files, Multiple Number Series with Year and Letter Prefixes, 1944-1948; G45/1/1, Migration. Australian Policy (Including White Australia Policy),” 1944-48.

¹⁸ Editor, “Port Kembla Steelworks: Redundancy Offer to Volunteers,” *Canberra Times*, 26 June

1982, 3.

¹⁹ Julianne Schultz, *Steel City Blues: The Human Cost of Industrial Crisis* (Ringwood, Vic: Penguin Books, 1985), 45-46.

²⁰ "Australian Iron and Steel Industry" In *House of Representatives Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration*, Joint Committee of Public Accounts, 1986, 13.

²¹ Interview with Andrew Gillespie 24 March 2022.

²² Interview with Andrew Gillespie 24 March 2022.

²³ Ian H. Burnley, *The Impact of Immigration on Australia: A Demographic Approach* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001).

²⁴ Lever-Tracey and Quinlan, *A Divided Working Class*, 193.

²⁵ Interviews with participants including the following: John Lacey, 8 December 2020; Michel Saliba, 9 December 2020; Riste Andrievski, 15 February 2021; Metodija Gjorgovski, 15 February 2021; Jovance Kantaroski, 15 February 2021; Nadia Colarusso, 16 February 2021; Dragan Grozdanovski, 16 February 2021; Borjanka Temelkovska, 16 February 2021; Andrea Uzinovski, 16 February 2021; Iraklija Janevski, 17 February 2021; Tihomir Jovanovski, 17 February 2021; Mijal Sajdovski, 17 February 2021; Olga Sajdovska, 17 February 2021; Francesco Frino, 22 February 2021; Boris Dimitrievski, Gjorgi Ginoski, Trene Gjorgievski, Pavle Koloski, Kiro Markovski, Sisoja Poposki, Trajce Rudevski, 24 March 2021 (MWA workshop); Jose Acosta, Ramazan Akkoc Jose Jara, Alberto Navarrete, Jorge Papagallo, Carlos Orellana 5 April 2021 (Men's Shed workshop); Andrew Gillespie, 24 March 2022.

²⁶ Riste Andrievski, "My Backyard," 1995 (view of the Steelworks), 115 (opposite page).

²⁷ Joseph Davis, "Building a Culture: Architecture and Art in the Illawarra," in Jim Hagan and Andrew Wells (eds.), *A History of Wollongong* (Wollongong: The University of Wollongong Press, 1997), 217-30.

²⁸ Joseph Davis, "Building a Culture," 228.

²⁹ Blagoja (Bill) Neshkovski [editor, Maurie Scott], *Three Plays* (Rockdale, NSW: Macedonian Literary Association, 1991).

³⁰ Interviews with participants as listed above.

³¹ Neshkovski's literary works written in the 1980s are informative about a very different era of Australian multiculturalism and the avant-garde forces in theatre as in the other arts. The play was not marginal or performed within an ethnic community setting, but was performed at a then 'avant-garde' theatre. Ilinka was played by Faye Montgomery and Dimche by David Ives, Sasho (the son) was played by a recent NIDA graduate, and the Director was Des Davis (none are of Macedonian Australian background). Bill Neshkovski was posthumously awarded a Special Award for distinguished contribution to Australian literature in the 1991 NSW Premier's Literary Awards. If the arts have always been part of Port Kembla, as one RN interviewee claimed, how diverse are the current versions, and how is the diversity of the arts legacy of Port Kembla integral to current identity and/or heritage reclamation?

³² Interview with Verica Sajdovska (Macedonian Welfare Association of NSW Inc), 10 September 2020, 12 July 2021.

³³ Macedonia Welfare Association of NSW Inc.

³⁴ See Robynne Murphy, *Women of Steel*, a film that tells the story of the fourteen-year campaign and case against BHP-AIS, the longest running sexual discrimination case, from 1980-94, and its win led to a change in workplace law. Robynne Murphy, *Women of Steel* (ABC Television, 2020).

³⁵ See Andrew S. Johnston, *Mercury and the Making of California: Mining, Landscape, and Race, 1840-1890* (Colorado: University Press, 2013) for a powerful history on architectural history, industry and their intersection with histories of race.

³⁶ Meredith Walker, "First Accommodation for Migrants Arriving in Wollongong Post World War 2" *Wollongong's Migrant Heritage Places Study* (2007). See also M. Walker and J. Peterson (ed) & Illawarra Migration Heritage Project Inc., *Every Story Counts: Recording Migration Heritage: A Wollongong Case Study*, (Wollongong, NSW: Illawarra Migration Heritage Project Inc., 2015).