METROPOLIS BRITISH COLUMBIA

Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Diversity

Working Paper Series

Engaging the Migrant Community outside of Canada's main Metropolitan Centres:

Community Engagement—the Welcoming Community Initiative and the case of Greater Victoria

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Metropolis British Columbia

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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ENGAGING THE MIGRANT COMMUNITY OUTSIDE OF CANADA'S MAIN METROPOLITAN CENTRES: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT—THE WELCOMING COMMUNITY INITIATIVE AND THE CASE OF GREATER VICTORIA

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1. Introduction: Political inclusion as a yardstick for successful integration

Political inclusion is a key component of successfully integrating immigrants and minorities into the fabric of a society. The participation of immigrants, ethno-cultural groups, and visible minorities in the political process is perceived to be both a yardstick of their successful integration, as well as a way of managing growing diversity within a society. From a theoretical perspective, Tariq Modood (2007) has recently advanced the idea of *civic multiculturalism,* where he calls for a conceptual shift regarding group-related political claims and rights, from an emphasis on cultural identities to one on procedural rules. Under the rubric of civic multiculturalism, immigrants and minorities would be expected to integrate into a society through exercising various civic, political and social rights but would not be forced into a (culturally) dominant national mode of inclusion. Sites for executing these citizenship rights are not exclusively defined by the state but are also defined by a multiplicity of actors in civil society, including community organizations, media, and religious communities, all of which act as representatives of migrant and minority groups. These types of civil society actors engage in the public arena, and thus, according to the underlying normative expectations, contribute to the development of mutually beneficial modes of diversity management. From this perspective, civic multiculturalism is "aimed at fostering dialogue, respect for difference, to seeking common ground and negotiated accommodation" (Modood 2007, 130). The hope is that by providing concerned groups with a "voice" in the political and policy process, they will contribute to the development of more legitimate and effective policy responses regarding the political inclusion of newcomers and minorities.

A whole range of—at times conflicting—political aspirations, however, are projected onto the idea of including immigrants into the political process. Terms such as civic or community engagement address both the desire of governments for greater efficiency and legitimacy within the policy process, as well as the desire of community groups to act as serious partners in these policy formation processes. The link between integration and political engagement in scholarly debates, however, has predominantly been studied with a view to immigrants' representation in electoral politics (Bevelander and Pendakur 2009; Gerber 2004; Siemiatycki and Saloojee 2002). Conversely, the issue of community engagement for immigrants seems to be harder to grasp and, given the broad spectrum of communal contexts and actors, more difficult to assess in its effects. Another limitation of this past scholarly work is its disproportionate focus on national models of integration and accommodation of diversity (Cairns et al. 1999; Entzinger and Biezeveld 2003; Favell and Modood 2003; Hollifield 1994; Joppke 2004, 2007; Kymlicka 2001; Parekh 2006). In this respect, scholarly debate often fails to appreciate that regions or cities are also a laboratory for deliberating, developing and implementing multicultural and integration policies (Vasta 2007).

Accordingly, an urban-centred perspective addresses an under-researched issue in this field: the role of governance at different levels of policy making and the involvement of major community stakeholders in deliberating the political meaning and institutional response to the challenge of accommodating newcomers and minorities. In turn, this perspective raises various research questions: How does the general commitment to the recognition of diversity and the protection of minority group claims turn into initiatives, policies and institutional change in urban contexts, where such issues are most pertinent in day-to-day life? What is the appropriate way of producing and implementing

such policies? What kind of "urban citizenship" (Bauböck 2003; Penninx 2009; Rogers and Tillie 2001; Tolley 2003; Stasiulis and Bakan 2003) emerges when immigrants and minorities are included in the political process?

This paper focuses on processes of deliberating and "negotiating" questions of diversity at the urban level with respect to the Greater City of Victoria (Capital Regional District; CRD) and the community engagement formed in the context of the government-sponsored *Welcoming and Inclusive Communities and Workplaces* (WICPW). This perspective shifts the focus from Canada's main urban centres with their high density of immigrants and ethno-cultural organizations to an urban centre with a smaller, more dispersed, and less organized immigrant community. The Welcoming Community Initiative is a pertinent case study for two reasons: First, the WICPW included an extensive community engagement component. Since the summer of 2009, a host of community groups and stakeholders in Greater Victoria have formed a so-called *Community Partnership Network* (CPN), an organization designed to deliberate on how to improve the immigrant integration experience in Victoria. The WICWP is, therefore, a significant development in that it goes beyond the simple provision of information to the community, also containing an authentic consultation process built into its very institutional design. Secondly, the WICWP initiative is an example of community engagement that is dependent on the involvement and contribution of community members or stakeholders. More than in other policy areas, the accommodation of diversity is critically dependent on the knowledge, expertise, and involvement of communal actors. Accordingly, a top-down, government-led approach can widely be perceived to be at odds with the very rationale of recognizing and empowering newcomers and minorities.

In the first section, the paper will elaborate the link between the concepts of community engagement and the civic inclusion of immigrants. The second section will shift the paper's focus from the conceptual to the concrete by focussing on Greater Victoria and situating the WICWP initiative in the context of the city's immigration patterns and forms of political advocacy. Analyzing the findings of our empirical research, the third section will examine the community engagement process in Victoria and highlight its challenges and opportunities. Here we emphasize how the community engagement process unfolds in a way that, at least in parts, is specific for the institutional and political setting that shapes Greater Victoria as a smaller metropolitan area. In the concluding section, the findings from our case study will be discussed in light of the broader theoretical claims related to community engagement and how they play out in a city whose immigrant support infrastructure is limited compared to what exists in Canada's major metropolitan centres.

Our study draws upon two qualitative research traditions. First, we analyzed the WICWP initiative and the concomitant formation of a community partnership network as a case study of community engagement in the field of migration and integration policy. For this purpose we conducted a series of interviews with community stakeholders and government representatives in the period from April 2009 to June 2010. Second, in our data collection we relied on forms of participatory observation. As representatives of a local university, we were an active partner in the community engagement leading up to a "summit" in Victoria in March 2010, deliberating on ways to make the city a more welcoming community. The quality of this initiative and the number of community representatives it involved provided us with an excellent insight into the opportunities and challenges that such an outreach initiative has to face. Although we take Victoria as a single case study, our study also has an

indirect comparative perspective as the structural features shaping the community engagement process in BC's capital are implicitly compared to the well-studied urban metropolitan cities of Vancouver, Montreal or Toronto.[1]

2. Political (community) engagement and civic inclusion of migrants

The idea of promoting community engagement to tackle critical policy issues is neither new nor specific to the concerns of political and social inclusion for immigrants (Mowbray 2005). Two trends have been of critical significance with respect to how community engagement relates to issues of civic, social, and political integration of immigrants. First, attempts to promote migrants' political engagement resonate with wider trends in contemporary public policy. The involvement of community groups in the policy process is widely perceived to be a key component of the *New Public Management* approach. With its focus on deregulation, accountability, and marketization, this strategy puts considerable emphasis on the role of citizens as clients (Doern and Wilks 1999). While this might not have been its primary target, this approach has contributed to the emergence of more extensive network relationships (Rhodes 2000a, 2000b). The consultation process has been a key element to the success of this market-oriented policy-making that was originally developed in the 1970s in response to concerns about a patronizing state (Marsh 2000). Reflecting this rationale, community engagement contributes to the effectiveness of an approach that is designed to reduce government responsibility, promote a managerial ethos, and stimulate private-public interaction.

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1 This paper builds on a broader study "Giving new subjects a voice: Cultural diversity in the health care sector" (2006–2010, financed by the Volkswagen Foundation). This international study, conducted by Elmar Braehler, Patrizia Nanz, Carlo Ruzza, and Oliver Schmidtke, focuses on patterns of political inclusion and policy change in urban centres (Vancouver and Montreal in Canada); see: Schmidtke, Ruzza, and Falge 2010.

A similar logic of policy process re-structuring can be detected in the field of settlement services and diversity management. As Hiebert and Sherell (2009) argue in their study of the settlement industry in BC, the task of integrating newcomers to Canada has undergone a process of decentralization in terms of handing down responsibility to the regional and local level. Following a neoliberal logic, this policy field has been transformed by the federal and provincial governments' attempts at outsourcing responsibility for settlement services to community organizations, harnessing the involvement of community groups, and seeking greater efficiency in the spending of public resources. These changes have, however, been coupled with an influx of additional public funding, thereby creating new opportunities to develop multicultural policies and integration programs. The expansion of the settlement sector has gone hand in hand with the decentralization of service provision and the inclusion of local partners in the settlement process. It is with respect to the latter aspect that, to a certain degree, community engagement has played a significant role in the transformation of settlement services across Canada.

Under somewhat different political auspices, and developed as an encompassing device across different policy fields, New Labour in the UK systematically employed community engagement as a vehicle for addressing policy shortcomings and for gaining policy input from marginalized groups (i.e., community engagement became the central governmental project of the Blair years). At the core of this strategy was a commitment to bringing actors at the sub-national level more fully into the policy process. New Labour's approach to community engagement was driven by the "need to link national policy, regional governance, city strategy and local action in a coherent whole so that top-down and bottom-up initiatives are mutually supportive" (Carley et al. 2000). Beyond a managerial approach to bringing in communities, a

normative agenda of good governance, fairer representation of community interests, and civic empowerment provided the—what some critics called rhetorical[2]—rationale for reaching out to community stakeholders (Tiesdell and Allmendinger 2001; Edwards 2008; Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2003). Based on this comprehensive attempt at policy innovation, key elements of the New Labour community engagement strategy that havecritical relevance to the integration and inclusion of newcomers can be identified:

- *Making policies more appropriate to local, on-the-ground problems*: This orientation is driven by the consideration that effective problem definition and problem solving depends on using local knowledge and expertise. Community engagement is designed to involve local actors by moving beyond traditional barriers between government agencies and community stakeholders. As a result, government policies are expected to gain greater public acceptance and legitimacy.

- *Strengthening the collaboration between different levels of government and community organizations:* A critical aspect of moving policies closer to local communities is the recognition of the importance of sub-national levels of governance, which become decisive in facilitating community inclusion within the policy process. Local governance in particular is entrusted with promoting community partnerships, soliciting input from various civil society actors, and overseeing the implementation of new policies.

- *Strengthening government-citizen relations:* Community engagement involves an important normative claim regarding the democratic character of the governance process. It is conceptualized as a response to growing

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2 Taylor alludes to the criticism that the Blair government faced in this respect: fragmented programs and divisive competition among localities for funds; community involvement that often was more window dressing than a sustained effort to harness the knowledge and energy of local actors; and a systematic marginalizing of elected local councils in regeneration processes, either through top-down directives or reliance on private sector agencies and special purpose bodies (Taylor 2002, 113).

public mistrust towards government and the need to involve groups who traditionally have been alienated from party politics and government policy-making. In this respect, it resonates with the key findings of social capital literature regarding the growing disconnect between society and public institutions.

- *Active involvement of community representatives:* One key expectation of community engagement is that it is done in a meaningful and open manner. In this respect, engagement ranges from sharing information to active public consultation and participation in the policy decision-making process.

Underlining the conceptual link between community-oriented governance and active participation, King and Cruickshank summarize the key elements of community engagement as follows: for them, appropriate "community development practice" involves

> continuity and sustainability of good engagement, trust and local relationships; opportunities for deliberation; the ability to deal with anger and the legacy of previous poor engagement; tailor-made opportunities for various stakeholder groups to participate; . . . facilitat[ing] joint influence over issues; mak[ing] use of community 'hubs' and existing communication linkages, understand[ing] the engagement needs and aspirations of community groups and produc[ing] effective engagement networks. (King and Cruickshank 2010, 3)

Their conceptual understanding of community engagement closely reflects the expectations of community organizations to such an initiative. In contrast to perceiving community outreach primarily as a government procedure for a more streamlined and effective policy process, community groups often see it as a genuine opportunity for a meaningful involvement in the decision-making

process. From this perspective, community engagement is primarily a vehicle for empowering formerly marginalized groups and for giving a voice to those who are affected by policy decisions. Here the perspective is decisively directed toward grass-roots initiatives and their input into the political and policy process. The underlying idea of community engagement resonates strongly with migrants and minorities who have demanded a stronger say in a process that is programmatically directed at encouraging their inclusion and input yet is often orchestrated in a top-down, state- or elite-dominated manner.

Considering the range of (normative) expectations brought to bear regarding community engagement, it is worth pointing out that the scope and effect of community engagement is not exclusively shaped by the intentions of the actors involved but also by the structural environment in which these processes take place. As we will illustrate with regard to our case study of Victoria, the community engagement processes reflect particular political opportunities, institutional arrangements and the resources that actors have at their disposal. In this respect, the form and results of community engagement are critically dependent on the political-discursive as well as the institutional context in which they unfold.

3. Welcoming Community Initiative—managing immigration beyond the urban centres

3.1   Victoria Capital Region as a destination for immigrants: The European bias and relatively small ethno-cultural communities

Community engagement relies on a vibrant form of advocacy within civil society. This form of advocacy, with respect to the issue of accommodating diversity, relates to the forms of organized representation exercised by migrant associations and stakeholders in the community. The size and composition of

the immigrant population plays a critical role in this regard. Victoria Capital Region shows some peculiar characteristics in this respect: Compared to the major urban centres of Canada, which attract over 70 percent of all new-comers (Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver), the size of Victoria's immigrant population is rather modest. While immigrants constitute almost 40 percent of Vancouver's population, they make up only around 20 percent of Greater Victoria's, closer to the BC average. It is noteworthy, however, that the demo-graphic composition of Victoria is characterized by some important peculiari-ties: First, as shown in the following graph, the vast majority of Victoria's im-migrants arrived before 1991. In this respect, Victoria has a relatively "old" and well-established immigrant community compared to cities such as Vancouver or Toronto.

Second, and related to the first point, is the fact that Victoria has a rela-tively European-centric immigrant population with a lower presence of visible minorities. While Victoria's immigrant population is changing in accordance with broader trends in Canada as a whole—specifically, a dramatic decline in immigration from Europe coupled with a significant increase from Asia—its change is much slower and less distinct than that of a city such as Vancouver. It is also worth pointing out that Victoria also has a considerably smaller pro-portion of visible minority residents in comparison with other BC communities. This demographic reality came up repeatedly in the community engagement discussions, often framed in terms of Victoria traditionally being a "European" or "white city."

Proportion of immigrants by period of immigration to Victoria

- Immigrated before 1991
- Immigrated between 1991 and 95
- Immigrated between 1996 and 2000
- Immigrated between 2000 and 06
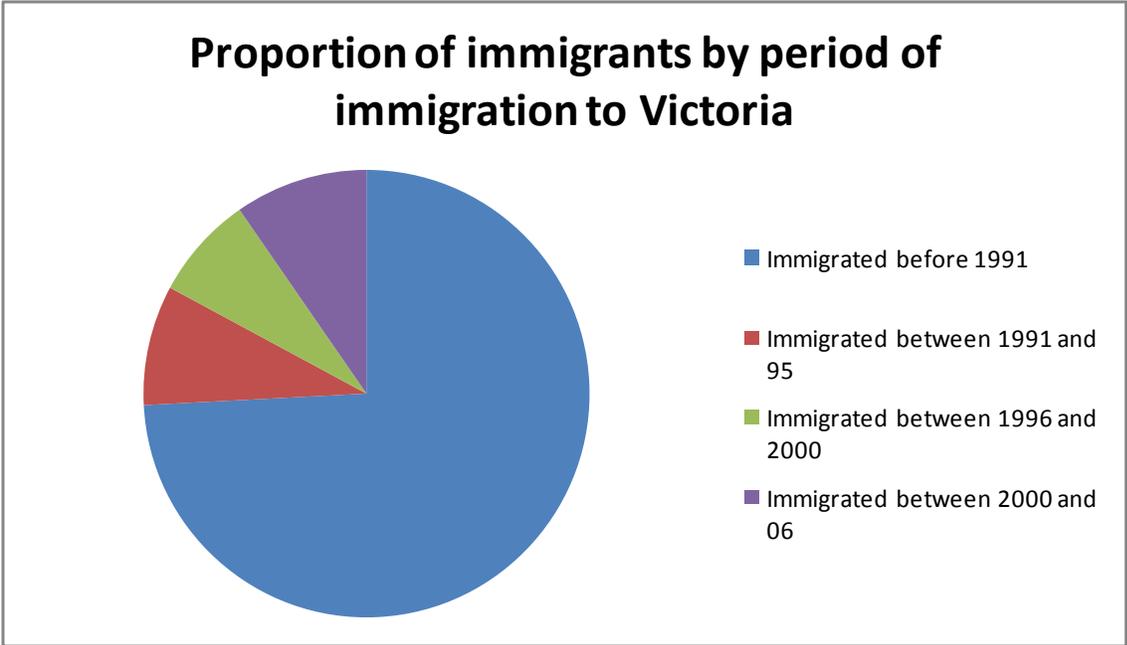
Data Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada

POPULATION DIVERSITY IN VICTORIA CAPITAL REGION, GREATER VANCOUVER, AND BC

- Aboriginal
- Visible minority
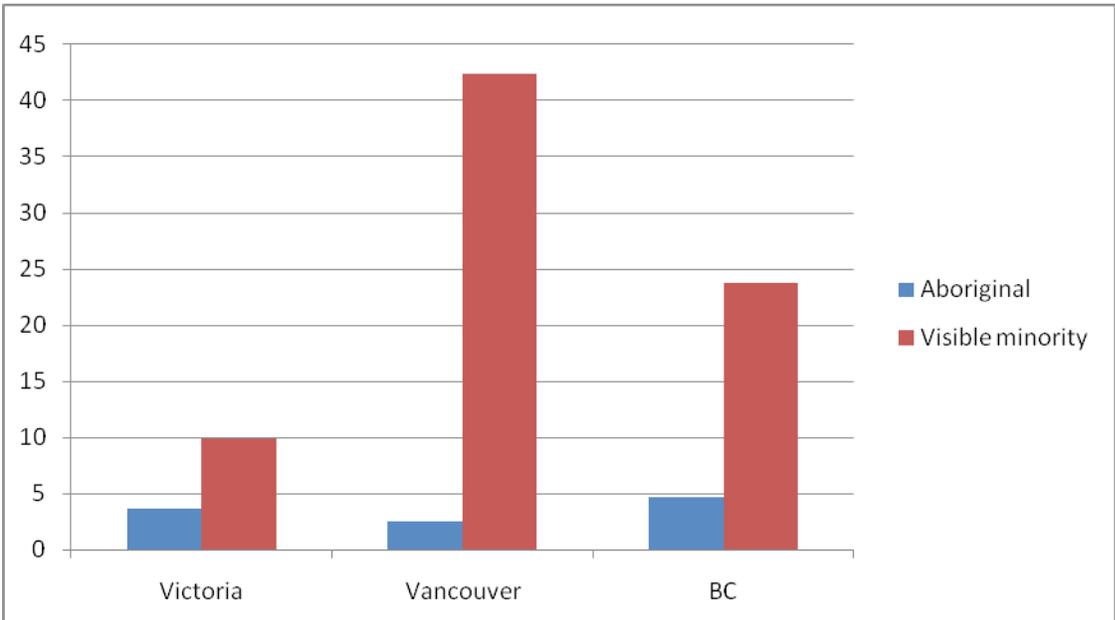
Data source: 2006 Census, Statistics Canada

In national comparative perspective, the relatively low proportion of visible minorities in Victoria becomes even more apparent. As the following graph indicates, there is an enormous difference between Victoria and Canada's major cities in this regard. Even compared to cities that are not among the three largest urban metropolitan centres (such as Calgary), Victoria has a much lower proportion of visible minority residents.

PERCENTAGE OF VISIBLE MINORITIES IN SELECTED CANADIAN CITIES (2006)
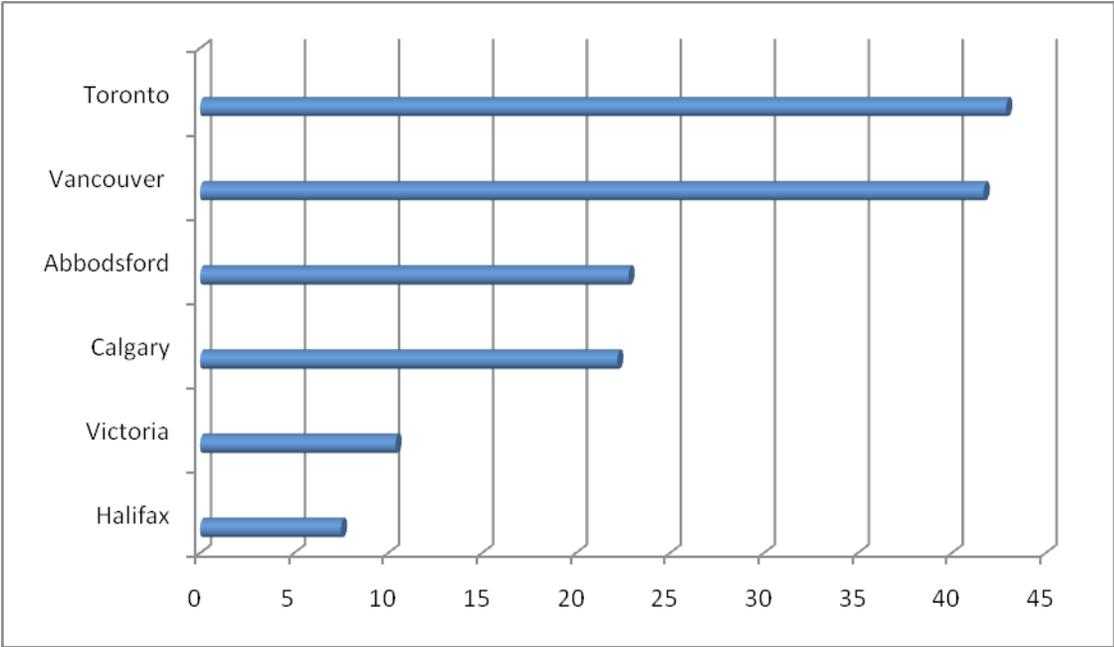
Data source: 2006, census, Statistics Canada

The small visible minority population in Victoria reflects both the timing of immigration and the origins of the region's immigrant population. As the following table shows, even in the most recent immigrant cohort, two English-speaking, Western nations were among the top three sending countries to Victoria. While in Vancouver (and in BC as a whole), immigrants from China, India and the Philippines predominated, Victoria's immigrant population originated largely from the USA and the UK.

TABLE 1: DESTINATION COUNTRY OF IMMIGRANTS TO BC IN 2005–2009

TOP 10 SOURCE COUNTRIES	BC	VICTORIA CMA	VANCOUVER CMA
China	24.7%	12.5%	27.8%
India	13.5%	6.7%	12.2%
Philippines	10.2%	7.4%	10.8%
Korea	5.8%	5.5%	6.1%
USA.	5.6%	15.3%	4.2%
Taiwan	4.6%	3.1%	5.1%
UK	5.1%	11.0%	3.6%
Iran	3.2%	-----	3.7%
Japan	1.4%	3.2%	1.3%
Pakistan	1.1%	-----	1.2%
Other Countries	25.4%	36.3%	24.4%
Total Immigrants	211,239	1,482	180,826
Percent of Total Immigrants	100%	0.7%	85.6%

Data Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Considering the implications for managing diversity, it is important to take note of what obstacles newcomers in Victoria have to deal with, for instance with a view to linguistic capabilities. A comparison with Vancouver and the rest of Canada is pertinent in this respect: compared to the rest of the country, the Greater Victoria area attracts only about half the immigrant population without any knowledge of either official language (for example, 19.6% with no knowledge of English in Victoria versus 36.1%, 39.7%, and 42.% in Canada, BC, and Vancouver, respectively). In a nutshell, ethno-cultural and linguistic diversity are less evident in Victoria compared to levels in Canada's metropolitan centres, or in British Columbia as a whole. Accordingly, Victoria has only recently experienced the types of demographic changes that major Canadian cities have witnessed for the last two decades.

Table 2: Immigrants' Knowledge of Official Languages, 2005–2009: No English and French Only

	All Ages		Ages 5-14		Ages 15-19		Ages 20+	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
BC	83830	39.7%	18110	65%	7879	53%	48820	31%
Vancouver CMA	76547	42.3%	16878	68%	7329	56%	44181	33%
Victoria CMA	1316	19.6%	284	39%	103	27%	714	14%
Canada	451377	36.1%	105636	60%	37768	45%	240334	26%

Data Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Partly due to the relatively small size of the individual ethno-cultural groups and their restricted resources, Victoria has a limited number of group-specific organizations. Rather, immigrants and minorities are primarily represented by two larger organizations: the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria (ICA) and the Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society (VIRCS). Their mandates are primarily to provide services to newcomers in Victoria, to facilitate their inclusion and full participation in the community, as well as to serve as an advocate for immigrants. Their expertise is also often drawn upon by municipal and provincial government authorities, where they frequently assist in an advisory function. ICA describes its mandate as being "advocates for the human rights of people of all cultures."[3] In this regard, these two organizations have the dual roles of providing the local immigrant population with settlement services, as well as acting as the public spokespersons for the concerns and needs of Victoria's immigrant population.

3.2   Community engagement in the Greater Victoria area

The Welcoming and Inclusive Communities and Workplaces (WICPW) program is a pertinent example of how processes of community engagement unfold in an urban context such as Greater Victoria. In its organizational design,

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3 See this organization's website: www.icavictoria.org.

the Program requires the involvement and contribution of community members and groups. Also, the policy issue at stake, the goal of developing steps toward becoming a more "welcoming community," is prone to engage a whole array of groups and organizations with a stake in this issue. At the same time, while opening up unique opportunities for wider community engagement, such an initiative faces structural challenges and institutionalized constraints.

3.3   Pre-given structures: Competition, service specialization, and financial challenges

To fully understand how the community engagement strategy unfolded in the case of Greater Victoria, the WICPW program needs to be discussed with a view to the broader social context in which it unfolds. In this respect, we need to draw our attention to the conditions of a *pre-existing* context of a particular political community that determine both their very starting point and their constant frame of reference (Parekh 2006; Carens 2000).[4] These conditions include the existing modes of locally specific governance and established institutional frameworks that exist in Victoria, with their respective forms of resource disparity and asymmetrical power capacities between actors. It is important to note that these conditions have shaped the previous experiences of different community groups and members. These past experiences have become an integral part of the political process of deliberation. They critically shape the perspective of civil society actors on community engagement, as well as their interest in participating in the deliberation process in the first place. In other words, the continuous power struggles between various actors within civil society over material and symbolic capital create a specific constel-

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4 This is not to say that the federal and provincial WICPW program (and their resulting policies and programmatic outcomes) will not have any impact on the current structural and institutional settings, which instead is an empirical question open for future social scientific research. However, it demonstrates that the WICPW initiative first encounters a specific status quo in Victoria that shapes the actual interaction process before any potential changes can occur. This situation must be taken into serious consideration.

lation between different community groups and members, which may affect their courses of action in the future (i.e., through negative experiences of mis-recognition, exclusion, marginalization, and so forth) (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992).

Although mid-sized urban centres such as Victoria have become more eth-nically and culturally diverse over the last decades, they still have relatively small ethno-cultural communities compared to major metropolitan centres such as Vancouver, Montreal, and Toronto. The *quantity* of communities signi-fies the number of organizations that potentially could provide various kinds of services within urban centres. Similarly important, however, is the *qualitative* question as to how much political pull these groups have, i.e., to what degree is their number great enough to bear influence on public agendas and policies. In mid-sized and small urban areas, ethno-cultural community organizations often operate under tight restrictions with respect to the resources and infra-structure that they can rely upon.[5] Given these limitations, the concerns of ethno-cultural communities are often represented by larger settlement agen-cies that cover a wide range of services and programs for immigrants and newcomers.

The pre-existing social context encountered by the WICPW in the Greater Victoria Area is characterized by two active settlement agencies providing var-ious services for immigrants and newcomers: the Inter-Cultural Association Victoria (ICA) and the Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Society (VIRCS). Both are established, non-profit, community-based agencies that cater to various

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5 It is worth noting that the situation of BC's capital region differs significantly from the metropolitan area of Vancouver. An umbrella organization such as Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Services Agencies of BC (AMSSA), representing a coalition of over eighty-five organizations providing multicultural and immi-grant settlement services in Vancouver, is absent in Victoria. Instead, ICA and VIRCS offer and coordinate immigrant programs and services with only a very limited degree of coordination with other community organizations.

groups of newcomers including permanent residents, refugees, and temporary workers. Both organizations offer settlement services as well as language programs (e.g., ESL). Yet, while the range of services offered by these two agencies is comprehensive, they have begun to differentiate what services and activities they offer in recent years due to structural changes and institutional constraints, with a shift towards specialization and niche building.

Since the early 2000s, as our interviewed experts have pointed out, the provincial government's funding strategy has changed from a core-based to a project-based strategy. This shift has primarily affected both organizations' service provision but has also affected their ability to undertake political advocacy and community engagement in BC's capital region. Before the recent change in the government's funding strategy occurred, both agencies could provide comprehensive services and programs for newcomers and immigrants without having to worry about the future financial sustainability of their operations. This earlier period, characterized by relative material security and long-term planning, allowed these groups to function as a secure support base for immigrants, as well as cooperate and engage in joint initiatives with other civil society organizations, such as a common leadership workshop with the Red Cross (Interview, Manager Red Cross, February 2010; Interview, Coordinator, Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Society, April 2010; Interview, Manager, Saanich Department of Parks and Recreation, November 2009). Organizing around a project-based funding strategy, however, no longer permits these two organizations to engage in intermediate- and long-term planning. Instead, relying on short-term projects and operating in an environment of continuous uncertainty about the material sustainability of the organization's operations has changed the role that these agencies play within the wider community.

The reliance on short-term, project-specific funding has critical repercussions on these agencies' capabilities in terms of political advocacy. First, there is a rather mundane, albeit critical, implication for organizational resources that can be dedicated to genuine community engagement and political advocacy: The absence of core funding and the ongoing pressure to acquire sufficient funding to maintain basic services and programs results in a consequential lack of time and resources that these organizations can dedicate to engagement and advocacy. Another result of this shift in funding schemes is a more competitive funding environment for these community organizations, and closely linked to this development, a noticeable change from program cooperation to program specialization. In other words, this competitiveness over financial assistance and material resources has created a situation in which both agencies were forced to specialize in particular areas of settlement services. Specialization and niche building respectively here are seen not only as the functional separation of tasks within immigrant services and programs, but also, more importantly, as a reactive and inevitable adjustment to the altered funding conditions in order to avoid future competition.[6] These processes of specialization, in turn, have reduced the room for cooperation, and thus challenge both organizations' ability to advocate for immigrants and their various claims in a concerted effort.

The project-based funding scheme also has implications for how both organizations define their advocacy role. The continuous reliance on (short-term) funding creates certain tensions: On the one hand, there is the undeniable

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6 As our experts have asserted, while VICRS—similar to ICA— offers a range of services and programs including English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, job training, main settlement services, computer skills training, and family support, the former has put a stronger emphasis on the employment program, including ESL classes that focus in particular on job seeking (Interview, Coordinator, VICRS, April 2010). By contrast, ICA's emphasis has shifted more towards ESL and settlement programs insofar as this organization now specializes in offering comprehensive and progressively advanced ESL class levels from 1-6, which enables immigrants to meet the language requirements of the Canadian labour market (Interview, Coordinator, ICA, June 2010) .

pressure to adopt the respective donor's (government, foundations, private businesses, and so forth) agenda, and to allow the donor to partly dictate the specific target groups for services and programs.[7] Funding now comes with expectations about the basic orientation and objectives of initiatives. Often, short-term funding schemes create considerable pressure for settlement organizations to operate—organizationally and infra-structurally—primarily as a service and program provider. On the other hand, there is the commitment that these organizations have as advocates for the immigrant community. What emerges from our interviews and participatory observation is that this tension between a dependency on funders' priorities and the objective to be a genuine spokesperson for the concerns of the entire community affects the ability of these organizations to serve as effective political advocates.

At the same time, these organizations often lack the capacity to effectively gauge immigrants' needs and demands, and to then communicate these desires to policy makers. This in turn leads to the mainstreaming of immigrant services and claims.[8] Firstly, as mentioned above, rare organizational resources need to be dedicated to the acquisition of new funding; forums dedicated to open deliberation and exchange with community groups compete with more immediate financial and organizational concerns. Secondly, financial dependency often leads to the de-radicalization of political claims by community organizations. As one of the community experts lucidly stated, organizations

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7 This can be exemplified by temporary workers in Victoria. As an expert clearly formulated in our interview, temporary workers are often not considered for immigrant services and programs. This is not to say that they are not allowed to have access to these (re)sources. However, this particular status group is restricted by its unique legal situation and can only access most services by paying for them, as the government does not consider them as their primary target group for services and programs (Interview, Coordinator, VICRS, April 2010).

8 Mainstreaming, according to the Oxford Dictionary, is adopting those "ideas, attitudes, or activities that are shared by most of the people and regarded as normal or conventional." In our context, the government has successfully been able to mainstream the very concept of community engagement towards the potential inclusion of disadvantaged and previously excluded groups into the process of consultation, deliberation, and policy-making. However, this mainstreaming of engagement has had the considerable side effect of silencing and disciplining relatively extreme and radical voices calling for broader societal change.

such as VIRCS are constrained in their political action insofar as they try to "avoid possible conflict of interests" (Interview, Coordinator, Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Society, April 2010). Working under the pressure to operate as mere service providers as opposed to genuine political actors constitutes a considerable constraint on the ability of these agencies to act and speak on behalf of immigrants, as any action taken—or point-of-view put forward—that is incongruent with funders' interests may mean a potential loss of funding. This process of mainstreaming and de-radicalizing claims can produce a cycle of political absenteeism among smaller immigrant and ethno-cultural groups. Being dependent on the superior capacity of bigger settlement agencies and at the same time finding insufficient opportunities to make their voices heard can lead to lasting forms of alienation from the political process.

3.4   The Welcoming Community Initiative: Challenges to inclusiveness and politically effectual advocacy

The federal and provincial government's Welcoming and Inclusive Communities and Workplaces (WICWP) program is innovative in its explicit attempt to engage community stakeholders. In the BC government's Call for Proposals, WICWP funding candidates were required to demonstrate that they could rely on a broad community partnership to carry out their proposed initiatives. The BC government's website states: "this program is about capacity building at the community, provincial and regional levels, developing broad, long-term partnerships across sectors and stakeholder groups, and serving as a catalyst for systemic change."[9] In this respect, the idea of involving community stakeholders and launching a broadly based consultation process is incorporated into the very make-up of the WICWP initiative. This is relevant

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9 See: http://www.welcomebc.ca/wbc/service_providers/programs/welcome_program/index.page (accessed June 27, 2010).

in two ways: First, community engagement and deliberation is a formal re-quirement for carrying out the "demonstration projects"; a host of partners are therefore involved in planning and carrying out these initiatives from the very start. Second, WICWP does not promote a set of fixed policy; the agenda is deliberately left open and subject to community input. Rather, the specific meaning of "welcoming" and "inclusive" in policy terms is deliberately left to the community partnership to determine. In this respect, the WICWP program is genuinely geared toward what we described earlier as a form of community engagement that relies on a bottom-up consultation process, where commu-nity participants can expect to help design rather than simply approve policies in the field.

In more theoretical terms, the initiative's rationale intends to foster the facilitation of intercultural dialogue or "multilogue,"[10] as James Tully (2007, 28) has put it, and provides valuable institutional spaces and settings for intra-communal exchange and cross-cultural cooperation. In other words, this unique program structure allows (at least according to the normative idea) equal opportunities for those involved in terms of formulating their claims and critique while having room for communal self-expression and self-represen-tation. This is also to say that just as a truly general public opinion can only emerge from a multilogue between different but equal citizens, multiculturally constituted community engagement can emerge and enjoy legitimacy only if all the constituent community organizations and groups are allowed to par-ticipate in its formation process (cf. Parekh 2006; Young 2000). This norm of

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10 "Multilogue," as opposed to "dialogue," better portrays the relational character of the process of decision making. It goes beyond the general binary constellation of majority vs. minority and so forth by considering "also . . . the other members of the system of gover-nance, whose present form of rights *and corresponding rights to resources* will be affected by any alteration in the prevailing norms of mutual recognition of the members" (Owen and Tully 2007, 282, emphasis original).

inclusiveness,[11] however, faces particular challenges with a view to its practical implementation. We will come back to this point shortly.

As has been previously mentioned, every funding or donor scheme generally sets (or at least influences) the community's agenda in determining the specific target groups for services and programs. While the government's welcoming initiatives foster the very idea of down-handing responsibility to the community, it sets up an institutional framework which clearly focuses on an agenda driven by economic imperatives.[12] Consequently, community organizations intending to acquire resources and funding for subsequent projects often anticipate the priorities of the businesses' and governments' respective agendas. Although in the case of the WICWP initiative there is an official acknowledgement of relinquishing responsibility to community groups, it would be naïve to assume that the discursive context in which this initiative unfolds does not shape the way problems are framed, priorities are determined, and action is recommended. As Foucault (1989) has asserted, there is no reality to which a discourse tries to correspond but, conversely, the discourse itself constitutes reality. This is to say, with regard to the discourse of community engagement, that this "regulated practice" (Foucault 1989, 90) dominated by the state, constructs the object in the first place. By doing so, the state sets the boundaries and regulations of the discourse to which, *inter alia*, community actors have to respond and adjust.

In this respect, community engagement—in particular under the circumstances of financial dependency—seems to be shaped by direct and indirect state regulation (i.e., top-down as opposed to bottom-up). This is linked to the

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11 Or, as Habermas famously puts it, "only those norms can claim to be valid that meet (or could meet) with the approval of all affected in their capacity *as participants in a practical discourse*" (Habermas 1995, 66, emphasis original).

12 The WICWP program emphasizes the integration of immigrants into the workforce, both in terms of this initiative's stated priorities and how it is institutionally embedded in the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development.

aforementioned point of political de-radicalization of claims by making them compatible to mainstream approaches. As emerges from our interviews with representatives from smaller community groups, community engagement is perceived by some to be substantially dominated by government actors in-sofar as stakeholders in the community have to act and respond in accor-dance with the discourse's guiding normative ideas and concepts, which have been pre-formulated by the state. As some of our interviewees have asserted, there has been a recurrent concern within the community that WICWP, "might tend towards celebrating cultural diversity only on the surface" (Interview, Instructor, The Equity and Human Rights Office at the University of Victoria, October 2009; Interview, Board Member, Ethno-Cultural Advisory Committee, April 2010). The priorities of this initiative were often described as adhering to market-driven priorities.[13] Our interviewees did not claim that the community engagement was shaped by a tendency to openly exclude certain perspectives (for instance, the discussion of endemic forms of racism, and so forth). Rather, they described the process in terms of a pre-set agenda regarding the need to describe the problem and channel a course of action in a particular way.

As another interviewee stated, there is concern that the government is not genuinely committed to the importance of ethno-cultural diversity and is only marginally willing to take up policy innovation suggestions from the com-munity (Interview, Board Member, Ethno-Cultural Advisory Committee, April 2010). This reflects the feedback effect described earlier: As the concerns of some of the smaller and—in terms of their public influence—marginal com-munity groups have often been ignored or downplayed by government actors,

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13 The interconnection between multiculturalism and capitalism (Žižek 1997; see Kymlicka 2007 for critical view of this intercon-
      nection) and the rationale of "selling diversity" (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002) has been pointed out quite frequently in academic
      discourse.

these groups now have little incentive to commit to a new community engagement process.

However, as pointed out, there are *potential* opportunities associated with WICWP in terms of bringing different voices from the community together in the process of deliberation, allowing it to draw upon local and issue-specific knowledge. In this context, two initiatives are worthwhile to be mentioned: the Community Partnership Network and ICA's Global by Design: The Competitive Advantage event.

Established in the summer of 2009, the Community Partnership Network (hereafter CPN), a conglomerate of different community groups and stakeholders, has aimed "to develop the Capital Regional District's capacity to more effectively attract, welcome and integrate newcomers into our communities, workplaces, organizations and institutions."[14] In forming this network, ICA invited seventy-five organizations throughout the region to participate. However, only twenty of them responded positively—either through participating directly or by showing interest in future cooperation. The network consists of a variety of community organizations[15] and stakeholders, such as educational institutions (Camosun College, University of Victoria), the Canadian Red Cross, branches of the Greater Victoria Police, as well as the Saanich Department of Parks and Recreation and the Single Parent Resource Center. The recruitment strategy for this initiative followed a pragmatic rationale: prior, well-established contacts were used to reach out to the community and attract organizations' interest in the initiative. This reliance on a pre-existing social network proved to be instrumental in successfully recruiting established community stakeholders. At the same time, however, it risked ignoring already marginal-

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14 http://www.icavictoria.org/community/partnership (accessed June 27, 2010).

15 It is worth noting here that ICA's competitive service agency in BC's capital region, VICRS, has not been part of the Community Partnership Network.

ized and disadvantaged ethno-cultural and immigrant groups (intentionally or unintentionally) while reproducing existing unequal distributions of symbolic power.

Against this background, it is not surprising that visible minorities and smaller (and often less well connected) immigrant or ethno-cultural groups were far less well represented than larger and well-connected community organizations.[16] The former were not easily included into what Taylor calls a "web of interlocution" (Taylor 1989). The reasons for this are multifaceted. However, our study shows that in a smaller urban setting with established and well-connected community stakeholders, there is a strong tendency—often in spite of good intentions—to reproduce an existing framework with clearly assigned roles and degrees of influence for the actors involved. This again feeds into a situation where smaller community groups feel discouraged from participating and the policy agenda is instead set by a small group of organizations that can more easily voice their concerns. The CPN had to confront this very challenge: While being open to a wide range of community organizations ("open invitation"), it has struggled to develop effective strategies to engage with many marginalized groups. From a theoretical perspective, Parekh has pointed to a cycle of withdrawal and political marginalization: he argues that some groups, such as "the new immigrants and those who have long been marginalized and silenced," exist as "a frustrated minority" that tends to "withdraw into itself in a mood of deep sulk" (Parekh 2006, 306).

In a similar vein, some of our interviewees have argued (while recalling their past experiences) that even though they, as community groups and members, were included in the decision-making processes, they were often

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16 See http://www.icavictoria.org/community/partnership/about.

disappointed by the lack of commitment from political authorities. One illustrative example from our interviews comes from a former member of an Advisory Committee for a Ministry. In the past, this person had the mandate to evaluate the government branch's service in terms of its diversity components in the areas of health care and family support. Reflecting on the role of his organization, he recurrently alludes to the lack openness and genuine commitment that government representatives have shown toward the process. Such perceptions of having been sidelined and used as a token without any real influence in a consultation process critically shape the willingness of community members to engage again in community engagement. Moreover, the degree of government representatives' commitment—or rather, lack of commitment— to the consultation process has an important effect on community groups' willingness to be involved themselves. In our case study, government officials usually come from the middle or lower level. This reinforced the common perception that community engagement initiatives are likely to have little influence on the actual policy process, which in turn raises general concerns about the entire feedback loop within the branches of government (Interview, Ethno-Cultural Advisory Committee, April 2010). The cycle of apathy and inaction, as critics put it, results in discouraging committee members, and this disillusionment seems to feed into an unwillingness to engage in new forms of state-sponsored community engagement.

The Global by Design: The Competitive Advantage event revealed a similar picture in terms of its inclusive- and exclusiveness. Like the Community Partnership Network, the key question for the ICA has been, "how can the Capital Region ready itself to integrate existing and new immigrants into our workplaces, institutions, and neighbourhoods?" (Interview, Coordinator, Inter-Cultural Association Victoria, June 2010). By inviting community leaders

and initiating a community-wide *multilogue* among them, the Inter-Cultural Association has aimed to create "collaborative leadership." Such a collaborative inclusive approach is considered to be a "prerequisite for [future] success" for tackling the issue of creating a more welcoming community. The ICA's structure of participation, however, reveals similar problems: Like the CPN, there has been little participation from provincial government officials. Further, representatives from the municipal level have been totally absent from the ICA process. Instead, participants involved in the deliberation process are predominantly from the educational sector (i.e., local universities and colleges) as well as from the wider community of Greater Victoria (mainly participants of the CPN). Like the CPN, the ICA's one-day round table discussions witnessed limited participation by representatives from immigrant and ethno-cultural groups or from local businesses. Although the initiatives were designed to reflect principles of genuine deliberative democracy, the actual interaction process again raises a whole range of questions concerning the inclusion of marginalized and disadvantaged immigrant and ethno-cultural groups in the deliberation process (Young 2000). The community-wide representation of divergent claims and forms of knowledge, that is, determining who speaks on behalf of whom, cannot satisfactorily be answered while members and groups affected by the deliberation's outcome choose not to be involved in the deliberation itself. The reasons here are again multifaceted. However, from the perspective of many smaller community groups, it was the initiative's centralized strategy, i.e., its top-down (and allegedly patronizing) approach that kept them from participating (Interview, Instructor, The Equity and Human Rights Office at the University of Victoria, October 2009; Interview, Board Member, Ethno-Cultural Advisory Committee, Victoria, April 2010). Against this background, it is not surprising that, if visible minorities speak, it is more

often through non-profit organizations from the wider community, as opposed to smaller ethno-cultural organizations. To some extent, it seems that these smaller groups have lost, at least partly if not entirely, an interest in participating in discussions and deliberations on issues affecting the integration of immigrants.

CONCLUSIONS

The WICWP initiative is an intriguing example of how a community engagement strategy can provide a fruitful environment for new policy initiatives and grass-root projects aimed at fostering a more welcoming and inclusive urban setting for ethno-cultural/immigrant communities. The formation of the Community Partnership Network and the related projects funded under the WICWP scheme illustrate how even in smaller urban centres such as Victoria, community-based initiatives can set the agenda for accommodating new-comers and promoting their representation through political inclusion. Many of the key elements of a genuine process of community engagement were present: for example, openness to community group involvement, government commitment to soliciting input in a critical field of policy development, and policy solutions oriented towards locally-specific issues.

Yet, at the same time, this political engagement strategy unfolds in a particular institutional and political-discursive context. Some of the opportunities and constraints that we encountered might be peculiar to Victoria. We assume, however, that to a certain degree they are likely to be characteristic of smaller urban centres outside of Canada's metropolitan centres (with their well established migrant and minority organizations). First, the structure of representing these groups' interests and acting as agents of political advocacy is shaped by the prominence of a small number of settlement agencies and the relative ab-

sence or weakness of smaller ethno-cultural community groups. Traditionally, political advocacy and at least partial access to the decision-making process in policy formation was left to those organizations that provided settlement services in the community. Second, past experiences of marginalization in the policy process contributed to a sense of "disenfranchisement" among smaller ethno-cultural communities. The barriers to including these groups have therefore proved to be considerable. Third, political advocacy and community engagement takes place in a context that in recent years has been shaped by a growing degree of uncertainty regarding core funding for these settlement agencies. The emphasis on short-term, project-based funding poses severe limitations on the organizational resources that these agencies can dedicate to community engagement and to collaborative initiatives.

In light of these structural constraints, both the Welcoming Communities Initiative and its reliance upon a community-based partnership consortium face two central challenges in the context of Greater Victoria: First, without being able to rely on a pre-existing institutional framework and having to overcome the legacy of inactive, at times marginalized, ethno-cultural groups, it proved to be challenging to come up with an effective, comprehensive, and inclusive community engagement strategy. Community organizations outside the migration and settlement sector often did not perceive the issue (creating a more welcoming community) to be appealing enough to dedicate any high-ranking representatives or significant resources to the partnership (reflecting how marginal the issue still is for many smaller urban communities in Canada). Similarly, smaller ethno-cultural organizations did not endorse the open invita-tion to participate in the community partnership network, either due to limited resources or due to prior experiences of marginalization in the policy process. Second, while implicitly linked to the very rationale of the WICWP initiative,

meaningful collaboration between government and community organizations appeared to occur only on rare occasion. In particular, the involvement of municipal authorities was minimal, severely limiting the ability of the community partnership to have a substantial impact on policy formation.

What emerges from our study is a more nuanced understanding of the preconditions that are needed for a genuine political engagement process. Political engagement that lives up to the expectations of community stakeholders from a grass-roots perspective is critically dependent on a sustainable process of trust-building among stakeholders in the community and on providing them with the necessary organizational resources to become involved. Smaller urban centres such as Victoria demonstrate a need for a long-term and sustainable strategy to engage these community stakeholders, as well as to foster exchanges between them and representatives in the (municipal and provincial) policy community.

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