

Title: The Long Road to Welcoming Communities? National Structures and Place-based Initiatives for Newcomer Settlement, Integration and Inclusion in Canada's Small Centres

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Keywords: Canada; Immigration; Small Centres; Welcoming Communities; Regional Immigration Strategies; Neo-liberalism.

Abstract: This paper builds on the analysis of the organization of direct and indirect services for newcomer settlement, integration, and inclusion in Manitoba's 'small centres' (Silvius & Boddy, 2023). In other works, I have demonstrated 'the neoliberalization of refugee well-being' (Silvius, 2016), how the Canadian government organizes and conceives of refugee resettlement in its 'whole of society' approach (Silvius, 2020a), and the widespread efforts of non-governmental and community actors to ensuring newcomer well-being in Canada (see, for example, Jowett et al, 2020; Silvius, 2020b; Silvius et al, 2021). Here, I further consider who performs the 'work it takes to welcome newcomers' in Canada's smaller centres within a national context of 'Welcoming Communities' governance structures.

To govern newcomer settlement, integration and inclusion in a (neo-)liberal governance framework (see Lowe et al., 2017), the Canadian federal government delegates critical responsibilities to other governmental, non-governmental and private agencies, as well as individual citizens, thereby framing and guiding, rather than directly controlling, settlement, integration, and inclusion work undertaken by others. While this devolution of responsibility may not be surprising amidst a federal system and after the 'neoliberal turn' in public policy, the actual practices by which Canadian state and society receive and welcome newcomers warrant closer scrutiny.

This is particularly so as it pertains to newcomer settlement and retention in Canada's 'smaller centres' – cities and towns outside of traditional newcomer receiving metropolitan areas that are increasingly the focus of much policy attention for 'welcoming and retaining' newcomers due to demographic challenges and labour market needs. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), the federal department responsible for organizing and funding federal settlement services, offers a clear conception of 'direct' and 'indirect' services in its model for newcomer settlement and integration. However, the expectations around who does such 'work to welcome newcomers' are less clear, as they necessarily rely on the efforts of not only federally supported settlement service provider organizations (SPOs), but a range of non-newcomer centred agencies: schools, municipal governments, economic development agencies, religious organizations, labour unions, voluntary associations, and others.

In other words, to be successful in achieving its goal to create welcoming communities, the federal government attempts to mobilize Canadian society and guide outcomes while relinquishing considerable control over the specific mechanisms required to attain these outcomes. 'Welcoming Communities' efforts, therefore, are simultaneously national and local in scope, as the national context for facilitating such 'place-based initiatives' has been some time in the making. While the federal government sets the parameters, mandate, and capacity for the settlement sector through funding decisions and guidance, the act of building 'Welcoming Communities' occurs by leveraging vast contributions across Canadian society as a whole. To illustrate this argument, I demonstrate the history and structure of Canada's Welcoming Communities initiatives, Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs), and formal and informal service delivery as it pertains to 'place-based' efforts in Canada's smaller centres, drawing on my research on service provider organizations (SPOs) and community-based newcomer service provision in the Canadian Province of Manitoba.

While this paper is based on the Canadian case, the research behind it was developed as part of collaborative efforts between Canadian and Japanese researchers and service personnel to conduct international comparative

work in Japan and Canada on small centre immigration and settlement. I am hopeful that it will be of interest to JAMPS' membership.

Selected Works

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