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Urban Governance, Multiculturalism and Citizenship  
in Sydney and Vancouver

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**URBAN GOVERNANCE, MULTICULTURALISM AND CITIZENSHIP  
IN SYDNEY AND VANCOUVER**

by

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**Abstract:** In both Canada and Australia the provision and financing of services and programmes arising from high levels of immigration issues involve federal, state / provincial and municipal levels of government. National governments manage immigration but the impacts are expressed sub-nationally, so there is an on-going process of negotiation between national and state / provincial governments over who pays for the services and programmes needed by immigrants. At the local level, the same types of issues arise. This paper focuses on municipal services in Sydney and Vancouver and through survey research addresses the success with which local government has initiated multicultural planning in response to cultural diversity across its range of functions. We ask, how multiculturally ready are local governments in the two metropolitan areas to serve their diverse populations?

**Key words:** public services, local government, multiculturalism, diversity

### **Governance, Multiculturalism and Citizenship**

In this paper we examine how local government has addressed the challenge of multiculturalism in the metropolitan regions of Sydney and Vancouver. Both cities have received large numbers of migrants, most recently from the Asia-Pacific region, giving them among the most multicultural populations in the world. While federal governments set overall migration numbers and states/provinces provide settlement services and/or funding, it is often at the local level that pressures are felt for a wide array of government services to assist new migrants and non-English speaking background (NESB) populations to settle. Local governments do have some authority over these domains, but also constraints on their power and resources to provide for the needs of new communities. Moreover, an increasingly multicultural population raises questions related to equity and access to government, as well as complex issues concerning urban governance and citizenship. The research discussed here is an initial attempt to explore this intricate area and reports the results of a survey of certain multicultural policies and practices conducted by local governments in both Sydney and Vancouver. We consider how these issues are approached in two former 'white settler colonies' on the Pacific Rim to show how multiculturalism is addressed by the tier of government that is 'closest to the people'.

The study is informed by a growing discourse on the challenges posed to urban planning by post-modern theory raised by authors such as Sandercock (1998), Fincher and Jacobs (1998), and King (1996). Following a literature review, and background material concerning the legislative and policy framework of the two city regions, the paper presents the results of survey work in Sydney and Vancouver. This analysis ascertains broadly the existing multicultural policies relating to access and equity issues for non-English speaking populations in each metropolitan region. Overall, this comparative approach allows insights into different policy frameworks existing in these regions. The results both highlight the very real constraints under which local governments operate, but also suggest some of the new roles that councils can be expected to play with regard to multiculturalism.

## **Responding to Multiculturalism at the Local Level**

When they appear in the city, residents with different histories, cultures and needs inevitably disrupt the normative categories of social life and urban space. Their urban experiences, the focus of their struggle to redefine the conditions of belonging to society, are reshaping cities (Sandercock 1996, 114).

Postmodern cities have been characterized by urban theorists, planners and social scientists variously in terms of celebration, acceptance, distrust and outright conflict. In some instances there is open hostility to those who are perceived as different or marginal. In other cases, there is a vacillation between an acceptance of the opportunities which difference affords, and a rejection of it as destructive to community norms (Fincher and Jacobs, 1998). This is unsettling both planning theory and practice, as academics and practitioners grapple with multiple needs and demands of different groups within the city. Of course, the postmodern city goes beyond a mix of multicultural groups, incorporating 'different genders, ethnicities, ideologies, races, classes, sexual orientation, nationalities, theoretical difference of every shape and form' (King 1996, 2). Nevertheless, our attention here focuses on the multicultural city where citizens' rights and obligations have varying and sometimes conflicting allegiances to each other and society as a whole.

But what exactly is meant by multiculturalism, and what role does (or should) local government play? For the purposes of this study, multiculturalism refers primarily to policy and governance: the official portrayals of national identity, and the progressive attempts to transform service institutions in order to embrace cultural difference. It is a disputed term because even at the broad, national-scale, cultural difference is difficult to conceive, describe and plan for. Indeed, for over thirty years, varying definitions of multiculturalism have been posited in both Canada and Australia (see for example Office of Multicultural Affairs, 1989 and Qadeer 1997, 482).

Reviews of contemporary urban governance and multiculturalism reveal a mixed picture. Fincher and Jacobs note a chronic vacillation 'between celebrating and enhancing ... diversity, on the one hand, and regulating and repressing it, on the other' (Fincher and Jacobs 1998, 1). Celebrations of difference and diversity are certainly to be found within the metropolis, especially in an attempt to capitalize on tourism potential and other economic activities. One example is the use of slogans by municipal authorities that applaud local cultural diversity. Another is the popularity of multicultural festivals featuring food, dance and artworks by different resident communities. Indeed, one of the most 'palatable' forms of cultural interaction is that of the ethnic food store and restaurant (Thompson, 1999). However, while food is an important vehicle for cultural communication and education, migrant communities are beginning to see this as a somewhat inadequate acknowledgment of their presence and contribution (Hage, 1998; Lozanovska, 1997)

At the same time, conflicting claims over space in the local neighbourhood are evident as cultural groups assert rights of belonging. The residential landscape has often been a site of struggle where different residential forms are replacing or modifying existing buildings. Indeed, the large dwellings sometimes associated with wealthy immigrant families, pejoratively termed 'monster houses', have been one focus for some of this conflict (Ley, 1995). Heritage controls have also been a source of residential land use conflict. These regulations, with their North American or Eurocentric origins, fail repeatedly to take account of what is important to migrant communities (Armstrong, 1994). On a broader scale, residential policies which advocate consolidated development forms do not accommodate the extended family living which many non-English speaking communities prefer (Antonios 1994, 51). Proposals to construct temples and mosques often meet with community opposition (Dunn, 1999). Planners need to be able to mediate between different cultural groups and to counter those community protests grounded in misunderstanding, stereotyping or racism.

Local government has a potentially important role to play therefore in addressing multiculturalism although it has been sometimes recalcitrant (Watson and McGillivray, 1995). In part this can be explained by local government's traditional focus in both Canada and

Australia on the basic service delivery of 'roads, rates, and rubbish', and a more recent need to address challenges of sustainability and economic restructuring (Dollery and Marshall, 1997; Elcock, 1993; Wilson and Game, 1994). But this neglect cannot be justified today given the obligation to provide equitable access to even the most basic of services. Together with the growth of more complex modes of human service delivery at the local level, better understandings of multicultural communities are imperative. Economic constraints passed on from national to local governments may impede the process of equitable service provision, but so do narrow ideologies of what constitutes local government's role. It can be argued that the local level is where the sense of belonging is most important (Lippard, 1997) and that local government is uniquely placed to provide an appropriate response. Indeed, the responsiveness of local government to cultural diversity contributes to the development of citizenship in a multicultural community. By making its services more accessible and equitable, this level of government opens up the possibilities for citizen participation in the democratic processes, as well as ensuring that all constituents are able to use the services provided for them. In addition, broad-based definitions of citizenship reinforce the acceptance of difference and diversity within and between ethnic groups. They can also be used to argue for respect across other expressions of difference such as gender, class and sexual orientation.

Despite the growth of theoretical interest in multiculturalism and urban governance, there has been a dearth of empirical studies that assess the extent to which local governments have taken up the challenge of multiculturalism. We begin by examining the role assigned to local government within a hierarchy of multicultural policy making and programme delivery.

### **Policy and Legislative Background**

Our concern is with multiculturalism and 'urban governance'. By this latter term we mean the relationship between civil society and the local state within the city (Gleeson and Low, 2000). However, not only local government but other levels of governance, as well as non-government organizations, provide funds and/or services under the rubric of immigration services or multiculturalism. Both Sydney and Vancouver operate within a federal system where all local governments are subordinate to their respective state and provincial

counterparts. Local government has no independent constitutional existence in either Australia or Canada. Despite these superficial similarities, some interesting comparisons emerge from the literature comparing local government powers (Parkin, 1984; Graham et al., 1998). A major contrast is that municipalities in Canada are the 'primary institutions' of urban government, whereas in Australia this position is taken by state authorities and their public agencies. Though there is some variation between states and policy areas, Canadian municipalities typically assume the major policy-making and service delivery responsibility for 'locality-sensitive services' – police, public schools (through Education Boards), urban planning and land-use regulation, various welfare services, certain public housing, public health, and so on. All, however, depend upon a local property tax, the Canadian levels being very heavy by Australian standards, and consequently Canadian local councils vary considerably in their financial ability to provide a full range of services for their constituent populations (McMillan, 1981). These differences provide a starting point in the comparison of urban governance and multiculturalism issues.

### *Sydney*

Forbes (1993) notes that the idea of 'multiculturalism' was imported into Australia from Canada during the early 1970s (also Jupp, 1991). The first federal acknowledgement of the need to address multiculturalism came in 1973 with the publication of 'A Multicultural Society for the Future' by the Australian Labor Party Minister for Immigration, Al Grassby. Later in the decade the conservative coalition of the Fraser Government adopted progressive recommendations arising from the Galbally Report. This included the establishment of Multicultural Resource Centres (MRCs), multicultural television, federally funded workers for cultural groups, language tuition and translation services. During the 1980s the Hawke Labor government set up an Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) within the powerful Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet to implement a national 'access and equity strategy' in the federal bureaucracy (Dunn, 1998). In 1995 the OMA announced 'a national project [to] develop specific strategies and policies for provision of local government services in relation to people from non-English speaking backgrounds' (Commonwealth Government and Australian Local Government Association, 1995, 16). However, this never eventuated. The conservative federal coalition government under present Prime Minister John Howard

subsequently removed the OMA from the Prime Minister's Department and finally abolished this body in 1998 (Dunn, 1998). Nonetheless, the Commonwealth Government (federal level) continues to contribute extra funding to multiculturally diverse local government areas through a Grants Programme which targets localities with special needs.

At the state level, a commitment to implement access and equity throughout New South Wales (NSW) was established by Labor Premier Neville Wran in 1983. Every department and agency was directed to produce its own policy, called an Ethnic Affairs Policy Statement (EAPS) to address cultural difference. The production and implementation of these statements were monitored by the NSW Ethnic Affairs Commission (Wran, 1983). Local councils were not bound by this new policy, so in 1987, the NSW government through its Department of Local Government (DLG), launched a specially designed strategy to encourage councils to develop their own Local EAPS (LEAPS). This pilot project required councils to develop a 'management plan [to] ensure that all council services are both accessible and appropriate for all residents, regardless of their ethnic, religious or cultural background' (NSW Department of Local Government 1988, 7). Despite a mixed assessment of the success of the pilot scheme, an official evaluation recommended that the DLG extend the introduction of LEAPS to all councils in NSW (Mitchell 1990, 3). By 1996 at least 30 of Sydney's local councils (about two-thirds of the total) had developed a LEAPS access and equity plan or report.

In the late 1990s, the NSW government made further efforts to legislate for 'access and equity' within local government. The Minister for Local Government established a Reform Task Force with a sub-committee on Social Planning to ensure that all councils carried out a detailed social plan integrating issues relating to non-English speaking background (NESB) people, among other groups. Another requirement mandated councils to provide annually details of programmes undertaken during the year to promote services and access to services for people with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In addition, the 1993 NSW Charter of Principles for a Culturally Diverse Society provided an influential 'external' policy framework for monitoring local practice in Sydney's local councils. Institutionalized across all state legislation, including the *Local Government Act*, 1993, the *Principles* were formulated in the following terms:

1. All individuals in NSW should have the greatest possible opportunity to contribute to and participate in all levels of public life.
2. All individuals and public institutions should respect and accommodate the culture, language and religion of others within the Australian legal and institutional framework where English is the primary language.
3. All individuals should have the greatest possible opportunity to make use of and participate in relevant activities and programmes provided and/or administered by NSW Government institutions.
4. All NSW public institutions should recognize the linguistic and cultural assets in the NSW population as a valuable resource and utilise and promote this resource to maximize the development of the State (Ethnic Affairs Commission Act 1979, s.3).

Dunn (1998, 26) notes 'The NSW state government's legislative insistence upon A and E [access and equity] plans in local government may prove to be an effective way of enforcing the provision of services in an equitable fashion and of enabling all citizens to participate in local governance.' Yet at the same time, councils quite rightly complain that they have been given expanded responsibilities within a framework of contracting resources (Thompson et al., 1998).

### *Vancouver*

In metropolitan Vancouver the responsibility for addressing the challenges posed by multiculturalism lie mainly with the Federal and British Columbia (BC) Provincial governments. Canada was the first country in the world to adopt a Multiculturalism Policy in 1971 under the Liberal Party government of Pierre Trudeau (Kobayashi, 1993; Kymlicka, 1995). Today the Federal Government administers its obligations under the 1988 Canadian Multiculturalism Act through Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), an agency with branches in BC. This agency determines who will be granted citizenship and refugee status to Canada (except in the French speaking province of Quebec) and identifies annual numerical targets for entry into the country (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 1999). The Federal government also funds immigrant settlement programmes through CIC, Human Resources

Development Canada and Heritage Canada (Heritage Canada, 1999). At the provincial level, the BC Government has become more committed to multicultural policies and programmes only since the early 1990s. Under its own 1993 Multiculturalism Act, it now provides a range of services, including settlement councillors, English language instructors at various language institutions, community based programmes and heritage language (e.g. Mandarin Chinese and Japanese) instructors. In addition, the Community Liaison Branch of Multiculturalism BC administers settlement services and provides multiculturalism grants to non-profit community organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Ministry Responsible for Multiculturalism and Immigration BC, 1999).

As in Australia, local government in Canada has been reactive to policy changes set by higher levels of government in its approach to multiculturalism. Indeed, Abu-Laban (1997) argues that although there has been increasing acknowledgment of the importance of immigration, race and ethnocultural diversity in Canada, there has been a systematic neglect of how these factors impact at the city level, particularly in terms of jobs, education and housing. In the case of metropolitan Vancouver it can be reasonably argued that this has been because local government in BC has only been accorded minimal powers to carry out relevant policy and programmes. Despite the perception of Canadian cities having wider powers than those in Australia, in British Columbia (BC) their roles have traditionally been limited, and include delivering services such as local roads, security (fire and police), libraries, parks and recreation, local planning and development controls, and the implementation of policy determined at more senior levels of government (Chapman and Wood, 1984; Tindal and Tindal, 1995). Nonetheless, in the last decade or so the Vancouver region has embraced Asia-Pacific business and trade and positioned itself, like Sydney, as a Pacific Rim city (Hutton, 1998). Consequently a 'new wave' of programmes and policies for multiculturalism and anti-racism has emerged, although mainly at the BC government level (Mitchell, 1993).

It is important to note at the outset that, unlike NSW, there is no mandatory legislation which requires local councils to implement access and equity approaches to its services, neither is there specific funding. Nonetheless, local government discretionary spending on multicultural services is empowered under the auspices of the BC Municipal Act. Indeed, in 1999 councils

were given rather broad powers under this legislation to deliver a wider range of services to meet local community needs, including social planning for multiculturalism and multicultural services, and providing grants to local ethnic NGOs. As in NSW, BC's municipalities have to assess the relative worth of spending on multicultural services in light of the many other (and growing) demands upon municipal property taxes, and considering recent declines in funding from higher levels of government.

Despite these variances in legislative and policy frameworks, all local councils have a responsibility to acknowledge their multicultural character. We next consider how councils in Sydney and Vancouver are endeavoring to make their services accessible to all members of the community. The different emphases on local government obligations towards multiculturalism (higher in Sydney, lower in Vancouver), together with the more recent increase in Vancouver's NESB populations, suggest that the delivery of municipal services for a more diverse population is likely to vary between the two metropolitan regions.

### **Multicultural Service Delivery by Local Government**

A comparative survey of the two metropolitan regions provided an overall comparison between local government's readiness in regard to multicultural services in Sydney and Vancouver. Methodology varied somewhat between the two cities, although some common survey questions were adopted for the comparison. This allowed an assessment of the provision of access and equity policies, ranging from culturally sensitive employment programmes to specific programmes for non-English speaking communities and interaction with non-government agencies. The questions were carefully designed to indicate the degree of commitment by local councils to supporting multiculturalism and delivering services in an equitable and easily accessible manner for all residents. The commentary and Tables 1 to 4 report on the use of:

- interpreting and translation services
- distribution of policies to a range of sites and organizations
- consultation and participation programmes

- targeting of specific groups in the community
- contact with cultural advocacy groups

Conceptually, these indicators range from the simple (and generally low-cost) generation of broadly-worded multicultural policy documents, to more targeted (and typically more expensive) participation techniques for engaging non-English speaking communities within any jurisdiction, and on to even more specific programmes such as the nurturing of local migrant NGOs.

All the indicators used in this survey suggest multicultural services were far more developed by local governments in Sydney than in Vancouver. For instance, the surveys found that by 1997 in metropolitan Sydney at least 30 out of 45 councils (67 per cent) had some kind of official multicultural policy compared with seven out of 22 councils (33 per cent) in metropolitan Vancouver by 1999.

#### *Interpreting and related services*

Lack of English is often seen as the greatest barrier to access to services and participation in the local community (Blackwell, 1994). Consequently, councils have a responsibility that they communicate to all residents about the services available to them. The overall provision of different interpreting and translation services among local councils in metropolitan Sydney was much higher when compared to councils in metropolitan Vancouver (see Table 1). While the use of 'on-site interpreters' is roughly the same in both locales, a much higher percentage of Sydney's local authorities provided a wider range of facilities. Multi-lingual pamphlets, bilingual staff and the Commonwealth Government's Translation and Interpretation Service were the most frequently utilised. Sydney council officers also used other means to communicate, including bilingual volunteers, migrant resource centres and referral agencies. Several respondents in both cities said that clients brought their own interpreter. The Sydney results indicated that while many councils had set up these facilities, very few used them regularly for producing multilingual signs, pamphlets and letters. In fact, although clearly superior to the range offered in Vancouver, all the translation services available in Sydney appeared to be only sparingly used. The Sydney survey indicated the best overall rate of usage

was by the councils' community services departments. Yet even here responses showed only 16 per cent of departments accessed any kind of interpretation or translation service more than once per week. Fully 69 percent 'rarely' or 'never' used such services. For Town Planning, four percent used them once per week and 74 percent rarely or never. These low levels of usage are surprising and may indicate ignorance of some of the more innovative and unusual services, as well as the problematic perception by officials that there is no need to translate documents or assist clients with verbal communication.

**Table 1:** Councils using interpreting and related services

| Interpreting/translating services | Sydney<br>Per cent<br>(n=40) | Vancouver<br>Per cent<br>(n=22) |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Bilingual staff                   | 59                           | 36                              |
| Telephone interpreter service     | 41                           | 9                               |
| Multilingual pamphlets            | 40                           | 32                              |
| Multilingual letters              | 39                           | 14                              |
| On-site interpreters              | 27                           | 27                              |
| Dual handset phones at counters   | 12                           | 0                               |
| Community notice boards           | 8                            | 5                               |

Notes:

Sydney figures record Town Planning Departments that responded to the survey

Source: Multiculturalism and Local Governance Survey UNSW 1996

Vancouver source: Personal interviews, 1999.

### *Consultation, participation and dissemination*

The comparative survey established that a broader variety of participation techniques is used more widely in Sydney than Vancouver to access NESB populations (Table 2). In Sydney, three-quarters or more of all respondent councils had used advertising, public meetings, publications, discussion papers, focus group meetings or workshops, advisory and consultative committees or polling. By contrast in Vancouver, no more than a quarter of councils had made recourse to any of these techniques. However, only further research can establish whether the participation process has resulted in NESB populations in Sydney being better heard, or heeded, than those in Vancouver.

Similarly, the research disclosed that Sydney councils were more likely than Vancouver to utilise different sites and representatives to communicate with cultural groups. Some sites were used by Sydney councils more than others (libraries were recorded by 100 percent of councils polled), yet the wide ranging nature of these (e.g. ethnic organizations, religious centres and migrant resource centres) indicates an appropriate awareness in Sydney that councils needed to go outside the traditional information sharing modes in order to reach more people in the community.

**Table 2:** Councils using consultation and participation techniques for Non-English speaking background (NESB) minorities

| Technique used         | Sydney<br>Per cent<br>(n=40) | Vancouver<br>Per cent<br>(n=22) |
|------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Public meeting         | 100                          | 14                              |
| Advertising            | 100                          | 14                              |
| Focus group/workshop   | 96                           | 14                              |
| Publications           | 93                           | 27                              |
| Advisory committee     | 77                           | 14                              |
| Polling/survey         | 73                           | 14                              |
| Consultative committee | 73                           | 9                               |
| Discussion paper       | 73                           | 5                               |
| Advisory committee     | 77                           | 14                              |
| Seminar/conference     | 46                           | 0                               |

Source: As Table 1

### *Targeting and contacting cultural advocacy groups*

The survey also showed that Sydney councils were much more likely than Vancouver councils to have developed techniques for approaching specific cultural groups and sub-groups, such as NESB women (Table 3). Sydney town planners' responses indicated that they often worked through consultation processes to specifically target different cultural groups. As one respondent stated: "in exhibiting planning related material we target the ethnic groups that would be affected and prepare translations or use language aides to ensure they have the opportunity to comment". Others targeted specific cultural groups (for example, indigenous

people, gays, the differently-abled) if there was a development proposal that was judged to directly affect them. They also used special programmes and officers, cultural or community networks, general customer service improvements in accessibility and in some cases, the development of cultural and economic policy statements.

**Table 3:** Councils targeting specific groups with special programmes and services

| Group targeted                        | Sydney<br>Per cent<br>(n=40) | Vancouver<br>Per cent<br>(N=22) |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Elderly NESB                          | 68                           | 14                              |
| NESB Women                            | 58                           | 5                               |
| Small or hidden ethnic groups         | 56                           | 5                               |
| Children in ethno-specific child care | 32                           | 0                               |

Source: Sydney figures indicate the survey responses from Community Services Departments. Otherwise as for Table 1

Many health departments in Sydney have tried to increase immunization rates through child-care centres, schools and places of employment programmes. In some cases, ethnic community workers assisted with increasing immunization rates. Some departments undertook training in food handling for small businesses, focusing on specific ethnic groups. Rubbish removal and recycling were also areas of concern and one council used specially prepared pamphlets in community languages for educational purposes. Another council prepared a public and environmental health management plan that set short- and long-term strategies dealing with programme expansion. Different representatives from indigenous and NESB groups were invited to participate on technical advisory teams in an effort to expand council services and render them more culturally appropriate.

The survey also indicated that Sydney councils had more frequent contact with a range of different cultural advocacy groups than councils in Vancouver (Table 4). The higher levels of formal consultation mechanisms recorded in Sydney no doubt contributed to this situation and so offer the beginnings of a systematic coverage of diverse local communities.

**Table 4:** Councils with frequent contact with specified cultural advocacy groups

| Cultural advocacy groups | Sydney<br>Per cent<br>(n=40) | Vancouver<br>Per cent<br>(n=22) |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Ethnic organizations     | 65                           | 9                               |
| Migrant resource centres | 63                           | 14                              |
| Cultural associations    | 55                           | 14                              |
| Religious leaders        | 45                           | 5                               |

Source: Sydney respondents were General Managers, otherwise as Table 1

### *Summary*

A number of observations can be made about the distributions embedded in the survey results. First, when compared to Sydney, Tables 1- 4 record a much lower percentage of Vancouver's councils offering interpreting and translation services or using participation techniques for NESB communities. There also appeared to be a much lower willingness among a majority of Vancouver's local councils to communicate with different cultural groups or their advocacy organizations. Despite high levels of European immigration into Canada during the 1970s there appears to have been a much stronger commitment to multiculturalism in Australia. Many innovative programmes were introduced at the Australian federal level by both the Whitlam and Fraser governments (as opposed to the privileging of 'bilingualism' or French as well as the English language by former Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau and his federal government in the same period). The pro-multiculturalism government of Hawke/Keating during the 1980s and early 1990s offered stronger encouragement to local government through the auspices of the Office of Multicultural Affairs, until its demise in 1998 – a period when the federal government in Canada was more pre-occupied about Quebec's distinct status under the Constitution, and its possible secession from the nation (Cook, 1995).

While federal and state governments have attempted a more comprehensive approach to multiculturalism than local governance, the Vancouver survey results indicate a 'patchwork' of local responses to multiculturalism. There would seem to be a significant 'policy gap' between the 1980s' high immigration levels with consequent demographic change at the local level, and the relatively low commitment to multicultural services by local councils. There are, of course, exceptions. Thus in-depth responses from the Vancouver survey recorded that the largest (and richest) 'core' municipality – the City of Vancouver - has supported a small but innovative Social Planning Department since the 1970s. This Department has had a significant impact on planning and delivery of council services to the multicultural community (Edgington, 1999). In addition, several local politicians in this and other core municipalities (such as the former Mayor of Vancouver, Michael Harcourt) have had a personal commitment to social planning and the multiculturalism issue. The City of Richmond, another 'core' municipality, has received high levels of migrants over the last 20 years, leading eventually to higher degrees of participation in the late 1980s. It also resulted in the targeting of municipal services to new population groups, mainly overseas Chinese from Hong Kong, although not without local conflicts (Domae, 1998). By contrast, 'outer municipalities' in metropolitan Vancouver, such as Abbotsford and Coquitlam, which had recorded a growing incidence of NESB populations in the 1990s, hardly utilised multicultural policies and programmes. Local government planners in these municipalities commented that an overall lack of resources was a significant reason why they could not pursue even a minimal level of multicultural programming. Indeed, because social planning was not a compulsory service under section 530 of the BC Municipal Act, councils or ratepayer groups seldom recognized it as a priority. In many of the smaller 'outer' municipalities there was especially a feeling that multicultural problems were too complex and expensive to be borne by local government alone without further budgetary assistance from the provincial government. Because of a much smaller rate base than the larger 'core' councils, there was little ability (or even willingness) to take on additional responsibilities beyond the traditional range that municipalities were already expected to provide.

## Conclusions

This paper has offered a description and analysis of local policy issues (and experiences) associated with large-scale international immigration in two Asia-Pacific city-regions, Sydney and Vancouver. A comparison of local (municipal) responses to immigration and multiculturalism was presented, based on survey work and site visits, and informed by the burgeoning research literature in the field. We have argued, in accord with the theoretical literature, that local government plays an important role in providing accessible and equitable services. It has a special responsibility for multiculturalism as it is often at the front-line of each city's changing demographic composition.

It is clear that multicultural policies are generally more developed among Sydney local governments than in metropolitan Vancouver. This is due in part to the obligations of the former under NSW state legislation to undertake formal multicultural programming, and perhaps as well to differences in scale. While Sydney appears to have done well, we have seen that multicultural services are not necessarily well used. Moreover, resource and jurisdictional constraints are impediments in both metropolitan areas to fuller local responses to international immigration. Thus local authorities both in Canada and Australia lack full constitutional status, and this no doubt conditions and constrains attitudes among elected officials and municipal staff, as well as limiting the scope of effective response. Historically, the expansion of local government services beyond the traditional focus on town planning and development regulations, waste disposal, and health and building inspection, has been restricted by state/provincial legislation. But the situation is now much more flexible. In NSW *The Local Government Act*, and in BC *The Municipal Affairs Act* both give councils sufficient autonomy to involve themselves in all manner of policy. However, it is almost certain that the stronger mandatory legislation in NSW, together with the political and institutional advantages delivered by the LEAPS initiative, gave Sydney local councils superior results over Vancouver in the comparative access and equity survey. It is also significant that in Australia, the federal government contributes directly to local governments according to formulae devised by the Local Government Grants Commission, which offers additional weighting for NESB populations (Murphy, 1998). Other issues include organizational,

political and attitudinal constraints. Despite the substantial role that federal and state/provincial governments have in this policy area, local political support (either by councillors or by key staff) is another critical factor influencing the degree to which local government implements effective multicultural policies.

One area for further research is the extent to which the relatively limited commitment of local authorities to multiculturalism in Vancouver represents a serious barrier to full citizenship among new immigrant cohorts. As pointed out earlier, the more extensive provision of techniques and services in Sydney does not by itself guarantee that NESB populations are effectively incorporated into the decision-making process. The comparative role of supporting NGOs in each city also needs to be addressed.

As a final comment, there remains a general impression of the inadequacy of the overall local policy response in both settings. In part this may relate to the difficulty of accommodating new demands within traditional local government systems and planning processes, a point underscored by Sandercock (1998). There is also the sense of a 'policy lag' effect as planners catch up with the recent wave of immigration, not surprising in light of the unprecedented pace and distinctive nature of the most recent phase of international immigration. It will clearly take some time for the local authorities in both metropolitan areas to 'digest' the implications of the immigrant inflows of the past decade and a half, especially as local councils have many other demands on already stretched budgets. Comparative surveys, such as those employed here, enable councils to gain an understanding of their performance when measured against other locales, and hopefully encourage them to make further efforts in responding to the needs of their constituents.

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